OVERLAPPING LIVES: CULTURAL SHARING AMONG FIVE GROUPS OF JAPANESE CANADIAN (NIKKEI) WOMEN

by

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ABSTRACT

The year 2002 marks the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the first recorded arrival of Japanese immigrants in 1877. Since then the Japanese Canadian population has grown to over 65,000 people living in various parts of Canada. This dissertation concentrates on Nikkei (Japanese Canadian) women, specifically on five different generational groups of these women. The focus is on the relationships between prewar and postwar immigrant women as well as between the generations within these two groups. Special attention is paid to how memories are fashioned, experiences related and interpreted, and ultimately how the cultural knowledge developed in these relationships has come to affect contemporary Japanese Canadian communities. This dissertation documents the shifting interpretations of immigrant status, of gender performance, of ethnic identity, and of the nature of Japanese Canadian culture in Canada. The thesis addresses five groups of Nikkei women: 1) the Issei, or prewar immigrants who migrated from Japan in the 1920s; 2) the Nisei, or daughters of the Issei; 3) the Sansei, the granddaughters of the Issei; 4) the Shin-Issei, or postwar immigrants who immigrated in the late 1950s to mid-1970s; and 5) the Shin-Nisei, or daughters of the Shin-Issei. It shows a culture of socially organized diversity within its bounds and a display of Japanese Canadian-ness to the outside world. The cultural knowledge which emerges is viewed as a creative interactional process.

The research informing the dissertation is longitudinally based over twenty-five years, spanning the years between the mid-1970s, when the first data were collected, to the beginning of 2000. It is based on the life histories and the narratives constructed by each generation of women to explore their past, their relationships with their relatives and friends of both genders, and their perspectives on being Japanese within a Canadian context. These women evaluate the experiences and understandings of their mothers and grandmothers, or alternately their daughters and
granddaughters. The narratives provide ethnographic sketches of each group and the cultural and interactional issues that reflect upon their experiences in both the Japanese Canadian and in the Canadian communities. These narratives are posited against my own experiences as a Japanese Canadian woman of the Shin-Issei generation. They are presented as intersecting experiences organized by pre-defined stages of the women’s life-cycles, namely reasons for coming to Canada, early days as an immigrant or a descendant of immigrants, the years of war, postwar years, and their lives in the present. A constant theme is the reflection on the past as well as their ongoing experiences and on the continual shaping of their Japanese Canadian identity. The narratives demonstrate how gender, racialized identity, the status of being immigrants and the descendants of immigrants, language and cultural competency affected the lives of Nikkei women in Canada. They offer us a glimpse into the dynamic interaction between the restraints of social structure and the power of the individual, and in so doing, illustrate the strategies these women used to overcome conflict and to construct a distinct Nikkei culture in Canada. Nikkei women’s narratives reflect their active resistance within a gendered and racialized world, how they balance their autonomy and the traditional connectedness to their cross-generational relationships and how they deal with conflicting values in order to incorporate their lives into local as well as mainstream Canadian society.
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Way of Seeing

The world in which we live varies greatly, from nation to nation, region to region, community to community, and within historical time. The world we live and the reality we perceive vary greatly, according to young and old, men and women, as we interpret while moving through our own biological time.

Modernity and technology eliminated and lessened some of the differences. We are living in a global community, a transnational, twenty-first-century community.

Information, data, and knowledge: culture is always around us, like the air we breathe, like the air we take in and out in order to live. Yet how often do we think about breathing? How many of us are conscious of culture?

When physical or mental pain penetrates our body and mind, we then realize how intricate our bodily functions are and how vulnerable our minds. We then understand how complexly and wonderfully we are built, and we try to cope with our limitations. It is a wonder.

The same thing could be said about culture. When we encounter something new and different, we notice and recognize difference. Yet, as we become acquainted with this difference, slowly its novelty disappears and it becomes a part of us. We store it somewhere in our memory.

When we are learning and experiencing something new, we see and discover the things that, earlier, we had not registered.
We go through this experience when we raise our children,
taking them from helpless infants to persons of the world.

Each step of their discovery we share - - the excitements and frustrations,
the things that we relearn by seeing them through their eyes.

Do their achievements and discoveries in becoming persons of the world evoke our lived experiences? Experiences that we have forgotten or have buried deep in our pasts?

Do they trigger our senses, as does a work of art that enables us to see our world in a new light and within a new order?

When we are hungry,
we become more sensitive to food and the scents that surround us.
When we are sad, we see and hear things that evoke our sadness,
and we search for comfort.

When we are happy,
we see and hear things that evoke our cheerfulness, and
we attempt to share our sense of joy and delight with others.

When we are in love,
we see nothing but the object of our love.

When we feel rejected,
we see everything in a negative light,
and we feel that everybody and everything is against us.

I notice when I place a bundle of colourful pansies in the kitchen
that, suddenly, the room springs to life.
Blue, dark purple, and yellow begin to dance, telling me about the other colours in the kitchen.

When my husband wears something blue, his pale blue-grey eyes become prominent.
Or, at least, that is when I really notice they are blue.

(yuko shibata, march 2002)
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This dissertation is a study of Japanese Canadian (Nikkei) women. It traces a gradual shift in their interpretation of emerging Nikkei culture and ethnicity and of the process of becoming Japanese Canadian. The narratives on which the work is based illustrate a complex and conscious process which enlivens the continual interplay between Japanese traditions and the unfamiliar Canadian context. Sharing such narratives constitutes the very process of forming this new distinctive culture. The narratives reveal the forces of self-expression, Japanese women's resilience and the demands of immigrant culture in facing the constraints of racialized identity, ethnic visibility and the disempowerment caused by the historical times in which they occur.

The concentration is specifically on five different generational groups of Nikkei women with the focus on the relationships between prewar and postwar immigrant women as well as between the generations within these two groups. The five groups of Nikkei women are: Issei (prewar immigrant women),\(^1\) Nisei (daughters of Issei), Sansei (granddaughters of Issei), Shin-Issei (postwar immigrant women),\(^2\) and Shin-Nisei (daughters of Shin-Issei). The term “Nikkei” is used as an adjective to describe Japanese Canadian culture, tradition, and community (e.g., Nikkei

\(^1\) Japanese women who emigrated from Japan to Canada prior to the Second World War.

\(^2\) A group of Japanese immigrant women who, as wives of repatriated Japanese Canadian men and of Kika-Nisei men, came to Canada during the late-1950s to the early 1960s. Some came as independent technical immigrants or as wives of Japanese technical immigrant men from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s (Ujimoto 1973:43).
culture, Nikkei tradition, Nikkei community). For its International Nikkei Research Project the Japanese American National Museum (1999:2) defined the Nikkei as “persons of Japanese descent and descendants, who have immigrated from Japan and created unique communities and lifestyles within the context of the societies in which they live. It includes persons who have returned to Japan where they constitute separate identities from the Japanese population.”

For the past two decades I have explored Nikkei women’s interpretation (or reinterpretation) of their past experiences in relation to the present and the future. The life narratives they shared with me have revealed how their culture has been transmitted and interpreted. These resilient individuals have constructed and reconstructed meaningful and enduring cultural identities, transmitting them both within their own generation and between different generations. By internalizing and redefining their ideology and values within a cross-cultural context, Nikkei women continue, both directly and indirectly, to participate in the creation of Japanese Canadian history. In this process, they share their culture not only with their family members, children, grandchildren, friends, and Nikkei community members but also with Canadians. It is essential that we hear their life histories and narratives.

Just as Greda Lerner (1977, 1979) placed American women in American history, so I shall place Japanese Canadian women within Canadian history. I will do this by showing their concerns -- from home and family to the larger community -- and by illustrating the importance of their contribution to Japanese Canadian communities both past and present. The role of Nikkei women

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3 Harry Kitano (1969) first adopted the term “Nikkei” 日系 (日=Ni Japanese, and 系=kei descent or origin), an abbreviation of Nihonjin keito (日本人系統). He felt that generational terms may become less meaningful as new generations are born and new Issei arrive from Japan. He pointed out that the term “Nikkei,” which includes all of the generations, may become more appropriate as time goes by. Zaigaihojin 在外邦人 (在=zai situated, 外=gai out, 邦人=hojin Japanese) or Kaigai zairyu hojin 海外在留邦人 (海外=kaiggai overseas, 在留=zairyu living or residence, 邦人=hojin Japanese) are the terms used for Japanese residents abroad.
in the formation of the Japanese Canadian community has been largely ignored. Although scholars have shown some interest in Japanese Canadian women’s contributions in recent years, so far no one has explored just how their contribution has affected the current Japanese Canadian community. Thus it is crucial to investigate these women and, in so doing, to capture the pattern of shifting identities in their life narratives — a pattern that traces a gradual shift in how they interpret Nikkei culture as they share their cultural knowledge, experiences, and memories with others.

How do they talk about their families and friends, about their communities, and about other Japanese Canadian women? How do their life courses and historical processes affect the formation of such identities as “Japanese,” “Japanese Canadian,” and “Canadian”? As they told me their stories, they authored their own biographies. As Ruth Behar (1993:228) argues, telling one’s life story involves constructing the self and the world. It involves restructuring experience and connecting past and present (Cruikshank 1990, 1998; Myerhoff 1978; Plath 1980, 1987; Slim and Thompson 1993). As Elvi Whittaker (1995:283) points out: “In the postmodern world, it is an academic’s duty to note that all narratives point to innumerable sub-texts, other stories demanding to be told. Not only are these stories parallel and parenthetic versions, but they also contextualize events broadly and point to unities of experiences or disunities of opinion.”

Historical events both in Japan and Canada, along with major policy changes in Canadian immigration laws (Driedger 1996; Hawkins 1978, 1989; Knowles 1997) affected the flow of immigrants from Japan to Canada and, consequently, the nature of immigrants and their community. Obviously, the history of Japanese Canadian women must reflect and record the activities and events in which they participated. History, both collective and individual, is a result of circumstances. This being the case, in the following chapters I provide a brief history of the circumstances of Japanese Canadians and offer ethnographic sketches of five subgroups of
Japanese Canadian women, ranging from the pre-Second World War years to the late 1990s. These ethnographic sketches are based on the narratives of twenty-five Nikkei women. The narratives reflect the sociocultural situation within which these women found themselves and illustrate the relationship between the Japanese Canadian community and the mainstream Canadian community. They demonstrate how gender, racialized identity, being immigrants (and the descendants of immigrants), and language and cultural competency affected the lives of Nikkei women in Canada.

I do not claim that the following ethnographic sketches offer a definitive representation of Japanese Canadian women, nor do I present an “abstract universal” of Japanese Canadian women. As Kevin Dwyer (1977:146) cautions us, such abstractions result in “informants [being] dissolved into a generalized humanity driven by presumed universal interests.” What I attempt to do is to describe the diverse nature of each small subgroup of Nikkei women (i.e., Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Shin-Issei, and Shin-Nisei) according to their life narratives and histories. I investigate their interactions with different groups and generations of Nikkei women and attempt to delineate their shifting identities over the course of their lives.

I explore the personal experiences and choices pertaining to what Nikkei women claim to be - - as women, immigrants, and descendants of immigrants. These ethnographic sketches should enable the readers to gain a better understanding of the process of cultural sharing involved in how Nikkei women shifted from being “Japanese” to being “Japanese Canadians,” from being

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4 Some scholars distinguish “life history” from “life story” and “life narrative.” For example, Angrosino (1989:3) defines “life history” as “a narrative that records the entire span of a life” and “life story” as something that “highlights a few key events or focuses on a few important relationships.” I use all three terms interchangeably as, following Blackman (1991:56), I believe that “life history” is an all-encompassing term that “offers rich ground for the study of personal narratives, conceptualizations of the self, the structuring of life accounts, the personal configuring of culture, gender differences in the expression of life experiences, relationships between anthropologists and the people they study and more.”
“Nikkei in Canada” to being “Canadians.” How did Japanese Canadian women share their lives, their lived experiences, their hopes, expectations, and discontents with other groups of Japanese Canadians? I include my own life narrative whenever the Nikkei women with whom I spoke evoked my own memories and personal history. I do this because their understanding of their sociocultural history enabled me to make sense of my own.

**Nikkei Terminology**

Japanese immigrants in North America can be divided into several subgroups. The first generation who emigrated from Japan to Canada are referred to as *Issei*一世. The term “Issei” has both a generic and a specific meaning with reference to Japanese in North America. It is applied to all immigrants from Japan, and its literal meaning is “first generation” (*ichi*=first, or one, *sei*=generation, or era). Similarly, *Nisei*二世, *Sansei* 三世, and *Yonsei* 四世 refer to the second, third, and fourth generation, respectively. *Kika-Nisei* 帰加二世, or *Kibei-Nisei* 帰米二世, refers to second-generation Japanese whose parents sent them back to Japan for education and/or other purposes (*ki*=return, *ka*=Canada, and *bei*=America [Beikoku was once a common word for the

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5 Hiebert’s comprehensive paper (1999) presents an overview of late twentieth-century immigration to Canada and its impact on the social geography of Greater Vancouver, particularly during the years since the major policy changes of the 1960s. The 1996 Census Canada points out that Canada’s visible minority population has doubled from 6.3 per cent in 1986 to 11.2 per cent in 1996, with a heavy concentration in Toronto and Vancouver. Thirty-one per cent of 1.8 million residents in Vancouver are visible minorities – about one in three residents (see Mitchell 1998). In the case of Japanese Canadians, a 1998 study by United Way Services indicates that people of Japanese ethnic origins in the Lower Mainland numbered 16,040 in 1991 and 18,165 in 1996, a relatively small increase compared to that of other visible minority groups in Greater Vancouver.

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6 Norbeck (1953) points out that the Japanese are the only immigrant group in North America to be known by a linguistic term and to be characterized according to the unique personality of each generation of descendants stemming from the original group. Takezawa (1995) also indicates that Korean Americans have a generational classification similar to that of Japanese Americans, even though it is not as well established as the latter.
United States). Most people in this group have several years of formal Japanese education. Early studies of the Japanese in North America focused upon the Issei and Nisei as well as the Kika-Nisei. More recent works have focused upon the Nisei and Sansei. Postwar Japanese immigrants are referred to as Shin-Issei 新一世 (shin=new) and their children are called Shin-Nisei 新二世. Sometimes they are also referred to as Ijusha 移住者 (iju=migration, and sha=person) rather than as Imin 移民 (immigrants), the latter being a negative term used with reference to prewar immigrants.

Overlapping Experiences

This dissertation evolved out of my earlier research on the acculturation process among Issei and Shin-Issei women in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia (Shibata 1980). The acculturation process was often seen as a linear process involving moving from a subculture to being part of a dominant mainstream culture (Beals 1982; Broom 1943, 1947; Broom and Kitsuse 1955; Caudill 1952; Caudill and DeVos 1956; Conner 1972; DeVos 1954; Kitano and Sue 1973; Norbeck and DeVos 1972; LaViolette 1945, 1948; Makabe 1976; Petersen 1966; Redfield et al.1936; Shapiro

7 People often label repatriated Nisei as Kika-Nisei. However, these two groups should not be conflated as Kika-Nisei were educated and socialized in prewar Japan while repatriated Nisei were educated and socialized in postwar Japan. Repatriated Japanese Canadians were Nisei, and a majority of them were minors when they were sent to Japan along with their parents, who had decided to sign the repatriation paper. This paper was the so-called Repatriation Order, which was proposed in 1945 by Minister of Labour H. Michell. About 4,000 Japanese Canadians went to Japan under this order and about half of them returned to Canada in the late 1950s to the mid-1960s. Many repatriated Japanese Canadians and Kika-Nisei returned with their Japanese spouses. Some of them referred to themselves as “Ripaato” and “Kika-Nisei” interchangeably (Kage 1998).

8 Sometimes they are also called Shin-ijuusha (shin=new; ijuu 移住=migration; sha 者=person), rather than Imin 移民 (immigrants). In Amerika monogatari [American Story], Nagai (1949:20) describes his encounter with Imin on his way to Victoria, British Columbia: “They were packed into the dirty steerage of the ship more like baggage than human beings.”
1955; Wallace 1952). A few took exception to this view (e.g., Bateson 1935; Clark et al. 1976; Fortes 1936; Green 1970; Ianni 1958; Lebra 1972; McFee 1968; Thurnwald 1932, 1938). My own experiences told me that the process of acculturation was never linear and simple. Thus my earlier research attempted to provide not only ethnographic data pertaining to Japanese Canadian women and their contribution to Nikkei history but also to offer a better understanding of their acculturation processes. I believed that I could do this by collecting their life histories and, at the same time, merging the social distance (Mills 1959) between the subject (i.e., Japanese Canadian women) and the researcher (i.e., myself). I believed that I could do this because we shared some cultural history. Owing to a change in Canadian immigration policy in the 1960s, the 1970s saw the largest number of Japanese immigrants arrive in Canada since 1907. It was also the time when, due to its rapid economic growth, Japan began to obtain a prominent position in various parts of the world.

My research has been ongoing since the mid-1970s, even though my involvement with the Nikkei community has waxed and waned due to my own life course. Between then and now, social issues and anthropological theories have changed; most of all, I have changed, as have the women I interviewed and with whom I spoke in the 1970s. Many Issei women have now died, and Shin-Issei women are continuing to explore their lives in Canada. Since the time of my

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9 In the peak year of 1973 immigrants from Japan totalled 1,105. See Tables 1 and 2.

10 Two of my original thesis committee members left my committee right after my comprehensive examination in 1975. They indicated that my proposed project was too subjective, that it was not "science at all," and that the life history method of data collection was "too old fashioned." Furthermore, they informed me that "culture and personality" was "out of date."

11 At this point in my life, upon meeting me nobody would say, as did one of my 1970s committee members: "Dear girl, how old are you? Your parents must be worrying about you."
initial research the literature on the Nikkei experience has grown remarkably.\footnote{12} The events associated with the 1977 Centennial Celebration of Japanese Canadians encouraged the forging of a positive Japanese Canadian identity; this change gained momentum for the redress movements, which reached their peak in the fall of 1988.\footnote{13} These movements opened a dialogue within Japanese Canadian families and communities as well as between them and the rest of Canadian society. In October 1992, HomeComing'92, a conference for Japanese Canadian, was held in Vancouver. Out of 800 participants, about 600 came from outside of British Columbia. For many of them it was the first time they had returned to their birth place since 1942.


\footnote{12} For the literature published prior to 1976, please refer to Shibata (1977). In Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English, Chao (1997) indicates that a growth of Chinese literature in English transformed the Chinese community in Canada, leading it from silence to voice. A parallel phenomenon occurred among Japanese Canadians.

\footnote{13} On 22 September 1988, the Canadian government issued an official acknowledgment of injustice to the Japanese Canadian community for how it was treated during the Second World War. This acknowledgment was signed by former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Art Miki, the past president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians. See R. Miki and C. Kobayashi 1991:138-139.
Toronto, Ontario (Yamada 2000); novels (Kogawa 1981, 1992; Ito 1998; Goto 1994; Sakamoto 1998); biographies and autobiographies (Nakano 1981; Amano 1987; Morita 1986; Kiyooka 1997); works on Issei women and their experiences as “picture brides” (Makabe 1983 and the English translation in 1995; Kudo 1993; Ayukawa 1995); and on Sansei (Makabe 1998).

Since the 1990s research has spanned many different areas: the ethnic identity of prewar Japanese in Edmonton (Nakahara 1991); a Japanese community in transition and conflict from 1935 to 1951 (Nunoda 1991); Hiroshima immigrants living in prewar Canada from 1891 to 1941 (Ayukawa 1996); the transforming identities of Japanese Canadian women writers (Iwama 1999); old-age health care among Nisei parents and their adult Sansei children (Hayashi 1999); silence and memory among Nisei women evacuees and their Sansei daughters (Oikawa 1999); the social construction of memory (McAllister 1993, 1999); and the work and family experiences of Winnipeg Nisei women (Kang 1996). There are studies of pre- and postwar Nikkei women and their acculturation experiences (Kimura 1993; Shibata 1980); of English-Japanese language switching among Nisei and Shin-Issei (Shima 1992); and of identity constructions of pre- and postwar Japanese Canadian Buddhist immigrants compared to those of Vietnamese Buddhist immigrants (McLellan 1993). The most recent addition to the Japanese Canadian experience of the war years is Teaching in Canadian Exile (2001) by the Ghost-Town Teachers Historical Society and Frank Moritsugu. As the Nikkei infrastructure continues to strengthen, the literature of Japanese Canadians continues to expand. At present, in various Nikkei communities across Canada, there are numerous events planned to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Japanese Canadians.

In the post-redress period of the early 1990s, many Nikkei began to see changes in their communities and to examine several important issues: high intermarriage rates, problems in intergenerational communication, a lack of Japanese language retention, and the role of postwar
immigrants (i.e., Shin-Issei).

While there have been many studies on prewar Japanese Canadians, there are still very few studies on postwar immigrants. So far some attention has been paid to the study of relationships between pre- and postwar groups. These studies have shown that each generation of Japanese Canadians has both similar and dissimilar characteristics. These characteristics change over time and within each generation. What are they and in what circumstances do they occur? What makes us different from other Canadians? Is it shared values or moral assumptions? There are substantial cultural and historical differences between Japanese and Japanese Canadians; however, other than citizenship and nationality, there is no definitive line that separates these two categories. What urges Nikkei women either to keep their “Japanese Canadianness” or to discard it? When we investigate cultural identity construction, the shifting selves of Japanese Canadians, it is essential to examine the relationship between the various subgroups because this affects the formation of the present Nikkei community.

Despite a relatively small number of incoming immigrants during the immediate postwar years, when we look at the Nikkei population we see that one-fourth of it is made up of postwar immigrants (Census Canada 1996). In the Greater Vancouver area, where I conducted my research, the postwar immigrants make up over one-quarter of the total Japanese Canadian population of approximately 18,000 (Kobayashi 1989; Cleathero and Levens 1998).

There are


15 If we add the number of long- and short-term visa holders, and of seasonal tourists from Japan, then altogether the postwar population of Japanese and Japanese Canadians accounts for more than one-quarter of the Nikkei community. The 1996 Statistics of Overseas Japanese (海外在留邦人数調査統計) indicates 4,320 hold long-term visas. See Table 3. A recent increase in Japanese language publications (Adoballoon アドバルーン; Canada Japan Business Journal カナダジャーナル; the Canada Jiho カナダ時報, Canada West Tourist News カナダウエスト; the Escape Magazine ザエスケープマガジン; the Fraser ふれいざー; Vancouver Shinpo バンクーバー新報; Oops ウップス) is another indication of a strong Japanese Canadian presence.
very few studies on postwar immigrants (Kurokawa 1971; Ujimoto 1973, 1989; Shibata 1980, 1998; Shima 1992), and this group is often excluded from studies of Japanese Canadians. As mentioned earlier, so far very little attention has been paid to the study of the relationship between the pre- and postwar groups or to their interactions with regard to the formation of a contemporary Nikkei identity and community. In order to respond to the problems facing this community we need to know about each of its subgroups and how they interrelate to form a complex network of socially constructed categories based on age, generation, gender, economic status, and language competence (English and Japanese). Only by understanding the diverse nature of the Nikkei community can we offer some answers to the questions that it faces.16

Becoming a Nikkei Woman: Commitment

In recent years I have become aware of the need to identify discrepancies in the official record of recent Nikkei history. The memories and experiences of recent Japanese Canadians have been selectively recorded; in fact, it seems as though the Shin-Issei are not included in the history of Japanese Canadians. For example, consider the entry written by Ayukawa and Roy concerning the Japanese in the Encyclopedia of Canada’s Peoples (Magocsi, ed. 1999:842-80): under the subtitle “Migration,” we find little information on postwar immigrants and only a brief description of the postwar immigrant group. Despite well-grounded writing on the history of the Japanese in Canada, the writers (a Nisei historian and her co-author) fail to see how postwar immigrants contributed to the Japanese Canadian centennial celebration. For instance, despite the pivotal role

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16 In 1941 the total population of Canada was 11,506,655. This included 34,629 Chinese Canadians and 23,149 Japanese Canadians. However, the 1996 Census on Ethnic Origins shows that there were only 18,165 Japanese Canadians in Greater Vancouver, in contrast to 264,190 Chinese Canadians, 91,445 East Indian, and 33,340 Filipinos. It is often said that Japan exports “goods” but not “people.”
of Shin-Issei in assembling the photo exhibition for *A Dream of Riches* and the trilingual book that came out of it, all credit went to a Sansei photographer: "Tamio Wakayama is a talented photographer with several publications to his credit. Two of his books, *A Dream of Riches* (1977 [sic]) and *Kikyo* (1992), deal with the Japanese-Canadian experience" (Ayukawa and Roy 1999: 851). Elsewhere, a Nisei Canadian writer\(^{17}\) says: "Dream of Riches [sic] [was] written, edited and organized by Tamio Wakayama" (Watada 1999:89).

I acknowledge Tamio Wakayama’s artistic talent as a photographer and his work as a coordinator for the project. However, the book was the product of a group effort by the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project (JCCP) and was produced by prewar immigrants (Issei, Nisei, Kikainese, Sansei), postwar immigrants (Shin-Issei), and their Canadian friends. The JCCP encouraged cultural sharing and was comprised not only of its own members, but also of numerous volunteers and many others who supported the project, despite the cold reception we received from the Vancouver Nikkei community in the mid 1970s.\(^{18}\) Despite our differences in age, generation, and nationality, JCCP members instigated a movement towards cultural sharing within the Nikkei community, and, in celebrating the Japanese Canadian Centennial, we opened a new page of our history. It is rarely mentioned that Shin-Issei played a crucial role in this project -- a project that affected the course of recent Vancouver Japanese Canadian history when, in early 1981, a group of JCCP members and other concerned Japanese Canadians organized the JCCP

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\(^{17}\) Generally Watada is known as a Sansei writer/playwright and educator. Unlike his generational category: Nisei, his works reflect upon Nikkei experiences closer to his cohort: Sansei.

\(^{18}\) The Japanese Canadian Citizens’ Association (JCCA) and the Consulate General of Japan, Vancouver office, refused to support our project. Both organizations felt that our project would rejuvenate bad past memories and ruin our hard-earned good relations with the Canadian government. The majority of the members of the Japanese Canadian community shared this sentiment. Sometimes we were called *Aka* (赤= red), an old fashioned Japanese term for “communist.”
Redress Committee.

In his speech at the tenth anniversary redress banquet in Vancouver on 18 September 1998, the then president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians, Randy Enomoto, a former JCCP member who had played an important role in the redress movement in the 1980s, revealed his thoughts on events that had occurred in 1975 (when Michiko Sakata, a Shin-Issei, called together a group of Japanese Canadians -- a move that eventually led the formation of the JCCP). Reflecting on the recent past, Enomoto commented that it was a time when he, a Sansei, began to see his personal history and Japanese Canadian history in a different light. His newly acquired perspective was stimulated by the people who were born outside of Canada -- the Shin-Issei:

For the first time, I was exposed to persons of Japanese descent who were unencumbered with the shame of the internment and who had lived their lives in a straightforward manner, without the doubts of internalized racism. In personal terms, I moved from an inward dwelling person to one who began to seize power in the external world . . . The redress movement began with Muriel Kitagawa’s protests to the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property in the 1940s, but I credit the outside influence of the shin issei or ijusha for kick-starting dormant sansei like myself in the Vancouver area in the 1970s. (JCCA Bulletin, October 1998:8)

Vancouver Nikkei Communities: Collecting the Past and Sharing with Others

In the mid-1970s, many Japanese Canadians did not want to look back on their past. They wanted to focus on the present, on being referred to as a “model minority” (Hosokawa 1969; Kitano and Sue 1973; Petersen 1966, 1971). Many did not want to acknowledge or re-experience the agony of the past. They did not want to go back to a time when they were known as “second-class citizens.” Over the past two decades, however, they have begun to accept their history and to see it in a positive light. Shikataganai (“it cannot be helped”), a concept used by Issei and the older generation of Nisei, is being used to help contemporary Nikkei move towards a constructive frame of mind -- one in which they will be able to say, “let us learn from our past.” Japanese Canadians needed a myth that they could share and transmit with pride, both with themselves and with other
ethnic groups. Through the 1977 centennial celebrations, Japanese Canadians gradually regained their confidence. They began to share their history, their knowledge, and their experiences with other Canadians. The group statement of the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project—a statement that was agreed upon only after many hours of deliberation—conveys the meaning of the centennial celebrations for Japanese Canadians.

In tracing the journey of our people through time, in going back to our roots, we find ourselves made whole, replenished in spirit. We return from the journey deeply proud of our people, of their contribution to this country. Let us also examine ourselves. Having gained our freedom and established our respectability, we must not lose sight of our own experience of hatred and fear. Too often we have heard “damn Jew,” and “lazy Indian” from those who were once called “dirty Japs.” The struggle of the generations and the meaning of the war years is completely betrayed if we are to go over to the side of the racist. Let us honour our history and our Centennial by supporting the new immigrants and other minorities who now travel the road our people once travelled.

(JCCP, 1978:170)

Yet, in the post-redress period of the 1990s, I have been hearing the term “internal racism” applied to the Nikkei community. This reflects concern about conflicts between various subgroups in the community, particularly those between the prewar group (who, either directly or indirectly, experienced internment during the war) and the postwar group (who did not). I also hear talk of “cultural appropriation,” of being violated by “non”-Japanese Canadians. What happened to the spirit the JCCP envisioned not only for Japanese Canadians but also for mainstream Canadians? It is time Japanese Canadians took a critical look at their communities.19

The Dream of Riches: Japanese Canadians, 1877-1977

I played a part in the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project (JCCP), and I remember clearly the

19 It is interesting to find that Nguyen (2002), an Asian American literary critic, calls for Asian American intellectuals to re-evaluate their rigid theoretical assumptions about politics, race, and social change by recognizing the diversity within the Asian American population and its various ideologies.
opening night at the Vancouver Centennial Planetarium on 14 June 1976. It was prior to the actual celebration year because the JCCP wanted a chance to generate interest in Japanese communities across Canada in preparation for the real celebrations. Among the guests of honour on opening night were community dignitaries, media people, Nisei, Sansei, Shin-Issei and Issei. There was a busload of Issei who supported and encouraged us throughout the project and shared their memories, experiences, and photos. After the ceremony people rushed into the exhibition room. I was surprised to see the Issei’s delighted faces as they talked with their friends about the painful experiences of their past. They were enjoying the process of remembering the past, of sharing their nostalgia and fond memories. Some were delighted to see images of their youth, while others were disappointed at not being able to find theirs. I remember Kuni standing and talking with her friends in front of a picture of a young girl in kimono.

Do you remember that pretty girl? I wonder where she is now. By now she is the mother of a couple of children and living comfortably somewhere in Canada. I wouldn’t recognize her if I met her on the street now... Indeed it has been a long time.

Many Issei were gathering in front of the pictures and sharing their memories with their friends. It was a reunion. It seems that they accepted their hardships and struggles in Canada as a part of their lives, and they acknowledged this philosophically. I listened to their conversations as one listens to background music, feeling happy that we had created an official and legitimate opportunity for them to talk, share, and feel pride in their past. However, this feeling did not last long. One of the Nisei expressed concern that the exhibition did not adequately portray what it

Another reason for holding this celebration early was to attract Japanese media while they were in Vancouver for Habitat’76. In the year of the Japanese Canadian centennial (1977), the English version of the exhibition travelled across Canada while the Japanese version travelled across Japan.

Mrs. Matsumoto is one of the Issei women who shared with me her life histories and narratives.
meant to be Japanese Canadian. "See, you people did not put any of our famous Nisei in the
exhibition. This is not Japanese Canadian history!" Comments from the Sansei and Shin-Issei
also reflected their dissatisfaction with the exhibition. According to them we had not made any
statement concerning the wrong-doing of the Canadian government during the Second World
War: "Why did you people not spell out the injustice of the Canadian government? You people
are too soft!"

Diversities Within
We need to understand the complex nature of identity construction among Japanese Canadian-
people who are often assumed, not only by outsiders but also by Japanese Canadians themselves,
to constitute a homogeneous group. The event at the Planetarium offers a good example of the
complex nature of identity construction among Japanese Canadians in 1970s Vancouver. To
understand the situation we need to exercise a reflexive historical awareness. For the most part, the
Issei accepted the past; they were grateful that they had the opportunity to be a part of this
celebration. Some of the Nisei had wanted to forget the past and had not shared their experiences
with their children, the Sansei. In their turn, some of the Sansei had only very recently accepted
that they were Japanese Canadians, and they had not known of their parents' and grandparents'
past. Some of the new immigrants were outsiders and bystanders at this event; they saw Japanese
Canadian history according to their own direct or indirect experiences of the Second World War.22
As J. P. Hill (1992: 812) points out, "different peoples give form and meaning to events,

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22 There is still unfinished business associated with memories of the Second World War. Many countries (e. g., Japan, Germany, and now Switzerland and France) and individuals are still searching for new national identities. Generational factors also affect this process. See Erlanger 1997.
socializing the past into narratives and other embodiments of historical consciousness that have significance in contemporary circumstances.”

In remembering opening night I am also reminded of the time that JCCP members argued for many hours about “the history of Japanese Canadians” and about how to assemble that history so as to best reflect “our past.” For some of us it was the first time we had talked about and discovered our parents’ and grandparents’ past, the first time we had worked with other Japanese Canadians. For some, it involved recalling bitter memories; for others (myself included), who are newcomers to Canada, it involved creating a new history.

Learning to See

Shin-Issei involvement in the Nikkei community is not well documented. This is largely due to their ambivalence towards their own identity. The majority of Shin-Issei identify themselves neither as Japanese nor as Japanese Canadians. However, this has been gradually changing. During the late 1960s and early 1970s many Shin-Issei were facing various challenges: some had difficulty looking for work or were struggling with their new jobs; some were young parents who were barely managing to survive with their young families; and some were feeling alienated from their children, who were quickly learning Canadian ways and the language and culture of the outside world, all of which were still foreign to them. Over a few decades the Shin-Issei, along with other Japanese Canadians, were gradually acquiring a set of new cultural values and patterns in order to cope with life in Canada. This aspect of the Japanese Canadian community has never been fully explored. The more I investigated, the more I felt a need to speak out on behalf of this postwar immigrant group.23 I began to see the community and the history of Japanese Canadians

23 Following Klein’s suggestion that we cannot speak for others but can speak out for them, Reinharz (1992: 16) explored feminism and methodology in her seminal work, Feminist Method in Social Research.
from the perspective of a Shin-Issei and to situate Shin-Issei within recent Nikkei history. As I listened to people and learned to understand the community, I ceased to be an observer who recorded and described historical events, an anthropologist and researcher who only provided information. I became a woman who shares stories with other Japanese Canadian women. “Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and the splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see” (Haraway 1988:583, emphasis mine).

Thus Donna Haraway expresses my own discovery of the process of cultural sharing among Nikkei women – a process that enabled me to become and to accept myself as a Nikkei woman. It was a process of enculturation, a process that involved internalizing the external world while objectifying the internal world. It is similar to Liz Stanley’s (1992, 1993) notion of relating to a feminist epistemology and a feminist ontology through the notion of self. In my case, the relationship was between Japanese Canadian women’s selves, and my own shifting self. This led to an exploration of my own life and to my using it as a way of presenting this thesis – a thesis on life writing and auto/ethnography. My cultural sharing with Nikkei women created memories, my own as well as those of other Nikkei women. My acquired theoretical knowledge, lived experiences, and narratives became one as I learned to adapt and to accommodate myself to my new environment. I have learned how to see and how to become more aware of cultural differences and similarities.

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24 Hortense Powdermaker does not use the term “cultural sharing.” She does, however, note that “the very process of living and growing older is a source of learning and increasing self-awareness” (Powdermaker 1966:12).

25 Johannes Fabian writes how he transformed from anthropologist into an ethnographer when he realized that ethnography is based on communication and language. This gave “some reality” to his project as praxis (Fabian 2001:2-3). In my case I transformed from an anthropologist into a Shin-Issei woman with an ethnographer’s eye.
Cultural Sharing

Anthropological knowledge seeks to explain as well as to demonstrate contextual relativity (Scholte 1972:446). As a Japanese, a Japanese Canadian, and a middle-aged female anthropologist, one of my jobs is to provide explanations for Nikkei culture by relating to my own experiences.26 Thus I explored Japanese Canadians, specifically Nikkei women’s life narratives, from the perspective of a Shin-Issei who participated in the formation of the postwar Vancouver Japanese Canadian community from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s. Barbara Myerhoff (1979:18, emphasis mine) has suggested that

> Working with one’s own society, and more specifically, those of one’s own ethnic and familial heritage, is perilous, and much more difficult. Yet it has a certain validity and value not available in other circumstances. Identifying with the “Other” - - Indians, Chicanos, if one is Anglo, blacks if one is white, males if one is female - - is an act of imagination, a means for discovering what one is not and will not be. Identifying with what one is now and will be someday is quite a different process.

Indeed, my research involved a different process. I had never felt the “collapse of professional identity” that led Dorinne Kondo (1986:79) to “a sense of vertigo, and to a fear of the Otherness - - the Japanese elements - - in the self . . . to the point of identification led also to a disturbing disorientation, an uncertainty as to which role I was to play.” What began as research to shorten the social distance between a young female anthropologist and her subjects in the mid 1970s has ended two decades later with the former identifying as a postwar Nikkei woman. I moved from being a visiting graduate student and Japanese citizen adapting to Canadian culture to being a postwar immigrant woman.27 I am writing an ethnography of a particular group of Japanese

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26 I have shared my experiences as a Shin-Issei woman at the Nikkei Heritage in Transition Symposium in Montreal, October 1994 (see Shibata 1994).

27 Even though I have lived outside of Japan for more than half of my life, I still maintain my Japanese citizenship. Legally, I am a Japanese subject living in Canada with a permanent resident visa. The relationships between ethnic identity and citizenship is another interesting area to
Canadians. I am writing for culture (Brumann 1999), and I am writing about socially shared knowledge - - knowledge with which different generations of Japanese Canadian women think, feel, and interact. This knowledge allows them to be aware of living in a common world which encourages sameness and fosters an image of shared social experience (Wikan 1992). It allows them to share languages, traditions, symbols, and memories and so to create a shared history. This is what I refer to as "cultural sharing."

I define cultural sharing as a continuous process of interaction between an individual and those with whom she comes in contact. It is not limited to overt cultural elements (Linton 1936; Swartz 1982) but, rather, includes covert factors and emotive phenomena. It is through the process of becoming a Japanese Canadian, through dealing with problems of cross-cultural and intra-cultural conflicts, that a Nikkei woman interprets, reacts, adapts, and then shares her experiences. As discussed earlier, A Dream of Riches, assembled by the JCCP, offers a good example of cultural sharing. Our diversity became our strength, and this connected the individual and the collective, the specific and the universal, the Japanese Canadian and other ethnic groups (including mainstream Canadian society). It also involved links with the Japanese in Japan as, in 1977, the year of the Japanese Canadian centennial celebration, the Japanese version of the exhibition travelled to various cities in Japan while the English version travelled in Canada. Cultural sharing is also a process of cultural transmission. Each individual creates inter-, intra-, and cross-cultural space within which she shares and creates intersubjective space with another. People are thus connected by both personal and collective histories. In this process the individual is the centre of action. A. Irving Hallowell (1967:313, emphasis mine) points out the essential role of the

28 In this sense, I am talking about transnational cultural sharing.
individual in cultural contact.

In a lineal sense cultures never have met nor will ever meet. What is meant is that peoples meet and that, as a result of the processes of social interaction, acculturation—modifications in the mode of life of one or both peoples---may take place. Individuals are the dynamic centers of this process of interaction. If perceptible differences in the mode of life of either people result it means that new ways of acting, thinking, and feeling have been learned by individuals.

Individuals are free to develop many alternative styles of living within broad cultural boundaries, as long as they have competence within the culture within which they are operating. Language and cultural competence, as well as socio-economic situation, strongly influence each Nikkei woman's cultural identity. Despite all these constraints, each woman identifies with a lifestyle that corresponds to her worldview, which, in turn, is based on her relationship to the outside world throughout her life course (Schutz 1967; Watson and Watson-Franke 1985; Plath 1980). Women often remain with the family, specializing in domestic roles, and people see them as having a lesser role in contributing to the public spheres than that played by men. However, their roles are crucial with regard to the enculturation and socialization of future generations. Women are major transmitters of culture (Mercer et al. 1989; Karmiloff and Karmiloff-Smith 2001).

I take the interactionist point of view, which holds that we are always open to change. Individuals can continue to grow, but only to the extent that others allow or confirm that growth. My earlier research on the acculturation process among Issei and Shin-Issei shows their resilience and their ability to reconstitute meaningful, enduring cultural identities and values. This contradicts previous studies, which describe Issei women as the least acculturated group among Japanese

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29 Gordon Mathews (2000), however, discusses cultural identities within the “mass-mediated” and “cultural supermarket” world---a world in which those of us who live in affluent societies can purchase our cultural identities from the global cultural supermarket.
Americans (Conner 1972; Kikumura 1979). To outsiders their lives seemed isolated, yet upon closer examination I found a complex social and cultural structure -- one that they carefully crafted, choosing it over various alternatives (Shibata 1979). Japanese Canadian women's life narratives indicate how their roles, status, and values have changed over the course of their lives. Directly and indirectly each woman's life course intersects across generations as she learns and adapts to her cultural identity as Nikkei woman.

In *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Ruth Benedict (1946) concluded that challenges awaited those Japanese who were anticipating the effects of a newly introduced "de-mok-ra-sie" (democracy), the postwar Constitution. She surmised that the postwar Japanese were facing a difficult challenge, and she suggested that they follow the example of the American Nisei:

> The Nisei in the United States have already lost the knowledge and the practice of the Japanese code, and nothing in their ancestry holds them rigidly to the conventions of the country from which their parents came. So too the Japanese in Japan can, in a new era, set up a way of life which does not demand the old requirements of individual restraint. (295)

In a sense, my research begins where Ruth Benedict's ends. Did the Nisei, Sansei, Shin-Issei, and Shin-Nisei in Canada really lose "the knowledge and the practice of the Japanese code" of individual preferred in the prewar Japan? Were they free from "individual restraint," living within a culture where individuals chose their cultural identities and exercised their own personal demands on the collective "expectation" (p. 293)? Did they demand self-discipline as did the Issei? How much had altered over the generations and in what form did the Japanese code remain among Japanese Canadians in their personal, individual, and collective cultural identity? How did Nikkei women narrate their strategies and responses in order to overcome conflicts and constraints? What were the emotions that accompanied the shift in their consciousness?

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30 A well known and well disputed book on Japan. For detail, see Kawashima (1950); Bennet and Nagai (1953); and Sofue (1960).
Collecting Life Narratives and Histories

Life narratives are the basic medium in which we speak, think, and understand others. It is the most appropriate language, therefore, to comprehend Nikkei women's lives in the cultural context. The sharing of life narratives bring people into human contact with one another. The act of sharing such narratives ties the process of understanding oneself to creating an identity and to making sense of past experiences - all from the perspective of the present. Our very identities, our very selves, are tied to narratives (Freeman 1997:174). Following Julie Cruikshank, I use a model of life history collection which:

... begins by taking seriously what people say about their lives rather than treating their words simply as an illustration of some other process. By looking at the traditional dimension of culture as a resource to talk about the past, we may be able to see life history as contributing to explanations of cultural process rather than as simply illustrating or supplementing ethnographic description.

(Cruikshank 1990:1-2)

She discusses the importance of oral history as a way of documenting cultural change and continuity. However, I shall go one step further as the oral history collection method does not limit us to document cultural change and continuity only. The combinations of differing narratives and multiple life histories allow us not only to add voices not heard in conventional history and to bring out unknown and hidden histories of people - - women, indigenous people and immigrants, e.g. First Nations people (Radin 1920,1926; Kelly 1978; Cruikshank 1990; Ridington 1988, 1990), of refugees and undocumented immigrants (Freeman 1989; Chaves 1991; Whittaker 1995), of urban dwellers (Myerhoff 1978; Mathews 1996; Finnegan 1998), but also to comprehend the present world where we have to coexist with our diversities. They offer us a better understanding of our world so that we may create communities that can sustain our diversities. Among the works on Nikkei women there are several works (Kikumura 1979; Makabe 1983; Kudo 1983; Amano 1987; Glenn 1986; Nakano 1990; Ayukawa 1990; Kiyooka 1997) that dwell, with the
exception of Glenn's work, on prewar women and their descendants. Postwar Japanese immigrants' experiences are still to be discovered in order to fully comprehend Nikkei histories. In a sense I aim to describe Nikkei cultures, written from the perspective of a Shin-Issei, that is "thickly described" (Geertz 1973:14) to make sense for Nikkei people and to those who are familiar with them.

The life history/narrative/story method I have chosen provides an ideal tool to offer us multivocal narratives and commentaries on Japan and Canada to enrich the historical diversity which has been lacking in the past. Thus the method allows me to capture several perspectives: 1) how Nikkei cultures, communities, and histories are created and revealed; 2) how each Nikkei woman's life course and its processes are directly and indirectly affected by these external factors; and 3) how each individual acts as an active agent using her institutional knowledge, cultural values and advice from significant others to author her subjective/life career while creating multiple and shifting identities. Narrated life histories not only provide a rich ethnographic portrait of Japanese Canadian women, but also enhance our understanding of Japanese Canadian history.

My research investigates how, throughout their lives, different generations of Nikkei women describe experiences, construct narratives, and share knowledge. Life narrative collection allows me to explore how Nikkei women organize a diversity of experiences to create a common thread of Japanese Canadian cultural identity. My knowledge of the Japanese language and of both Japanese and North American culture, as well as my own achieved status as a Shin-Issei and as a participant in the recent history of Japanese Canadians, facilitates my documenting cultural understandings of emotions and personhood as they influence the social life of Nikkei. I acknowledge, however, that there is no such thing as the perfect researcher (Riessman 1987).

Personal narratives are particularly rich sources because, attentively interpreted, they illuminate both the logic of individual courses of action and the effect of system-level constraints within which those courses evolve. Moreover, each life provides evidence of
historical activity - - the working out within a specific life situation of deliberate courses of action that in turn have the potential to undermine or perpetuate the conditions and relationships in which the life evolved. (The Personal Narratives Group eds. 1989:6)

Listening to and sharing the life narratives of Japanese Canadian women allows me to explore how they select and interpret their past in relation to the present and future, and it enables me to delve into the processes of cultural sharing. Catherine Riessman (1993:3) refers to personal narrative as talk organized around consequential events. A teller in a conversation takes a listener into a past time or “world” and recapitulates what happened then to make a point, often a moral one . . . Respondents narrativize particular experiences in their lives, often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society.

By examining basic and perennial anthropological issues pertaining to discussions on questions of cross-cultural translation, ethnographic interpretation and ethnographic explanation by various anthropologists (Abu-Lughod 1991; Appadurai 1991; Jackson 1989), Andrew Strathern (1995) delineates either the universals or the particulars, either the global or the local, either the outsider or the insider aspects of anthropological practice. He then cautions us as follows: “Difference is always only contextual. At the widest level all anthropologists must operate with a concept of common humanity in their studies of others, but what it means to them has varied greatly” (p. 180). According to Strathern, what confronts us is an “endlessly varying hybrid form” of culture, and he challenges us to produce a hybrid theory to comprehend this ever-expanding “sphere of variation.”

I attempt to explore Strathern’s notion of “sphere of variation” - - a sphere that is created according to “internal and external ethnic boundaries” (Barth 1969). I do this by analyzing the life narratives of five subgroups of Nikkei women in order to understand their commonalities and differences. Following Mary Pratt’s (1992) “contact zones,” wherein one encounters the dynamics of continuous negotiation of power, I shall refer to spheres of variation as “comfort
zones" - the places where Japanese Canadian women's cultural sharing processes occur and intersect. Unlike contact zones, however, comfort zones are so familiar that those within them are unaware of the dynamism of culture change. Can these comfort zones be referred to as "home"? As places where one can obtain a sense of belonging? The cultural sharing processes of Nikkei women encompass the particulars and universals of each group and each generation, connecting both individual and collective and creating Nikkei spheres of variation in Canada. Nikkei women are constantly engaged in the process of cultural transmission: enculturation, acculturation, and adult socialization. I have written an ethnography of the particular - an ethnography concerned with socially shared knowledge, which enables different generations of Japanese Canadian women to think, feel and interact so as to gain a better understanding of their own emerging culture.

**Searching for Connections: What is a Japanese Canadian?**

Given the diverse and complex nature of Japanese Canadians, we have to delve not only into the lives of different generations but also into the lives of individuals in order to understand present Nikkei communities and how their members relate to each another. What determines a "Japanese," "Canadian," or "Japanese Canadian" behavioral pattern? Is it thought processes? Are these unique to Japanese or to Japanese Canadians? Is it the "replication of uniformity" (Wallace 1970:22) among the Japanese Canadians? Something attributable to their common roots? Or is it the "organization of diversity"? (p. 23) To what extent does a diversity of habits, of motives, of customs coexist within the boundaries of the Nikkei community? Clark et al.'s (1976) research on three generations of Japanese-Americans and Mexican-Americans shows that no one "particular" identity pattern belongs to one ethnic group. When looked at separately, various "Japanese," "Mexican," and "North American" traits were not uniquely "Japanese," "Mexican," or "North American." Hamaguchi's (1996) research findings on the profiles of "mutual-reliance"
and "self-reliance" among Japanese, North Americans, British, French, and other groups echo and reflect Clark et al.'s findings. He found no one particular profile belonged to any one nationality. These findings may indicate that the research method failed to penetrate the complex level of shared ideas and personal experiences, and that it failed to capture how collective life and cultural identity are constituted.

The features distinguishing Nikkei culture from other cultures emerge from "a unique combination of factors which are not unique in themselves" (Vansina 1970:177). These features occur during the course of any given life as an individual selects or rejects options, learns (or not) from experience and through education, and makes decisions and modifies them. What is the nature of the integrative force that attracts each Japanese Canadian woman? How does each woman's isolated cultural knowledge come to be a part of Nikkei culture, showing culture traits specific to her group, to her generation, and to her subculture in relation to her understanding of Canada? I soon began to notice how several themes were continuing to surface, to echo and re-echo throughout Nikkei women's life narratives. Gender, for example, mattered greatly as did notions of exclusion, generational issues, and what it meant to be Japanese Canadian. It is fascinating to see how Nikkei women's narratives reflect their active resistance within a gendered and racialized world, how they emphasize the importance of their autonomy and, at the same time, how they experience connectedness through mutually supportive cross-generational relationships. Their life narratives reflect how each woman works to expand her social networks, to create a place she can call "home." Economically, socially, and culturally, these women incorporated their lives into local as well as mainstream Canadian society. The narratives illustrate how they had adjusted conflicting values while searching for a stable community. Through this process, Nikkei culture has become distinctively different from Japanese culture while retaining selected elements of the latter, such as language, art, and chosen customs.
Portraits of Five Groups of Japanese Canadian Women

I present my findings by paying attention to life writing (Little 1980; Rose 1993), feminist autobiography (Stanley 1992 &1993), auto/ethnography (Ellis and Bochner eds.1996, Ellis and Bochner 2002; Reed-Danahay 1997), and women’s lifecycles (Ryff 1985; Neugarten 1968, 1985; Hareven 1977; Hareven and Adams 1982; Stewart 1977). This work is based both on my research and on my own life experiences as a Shin-Issei, as someone who participated in the formation of the postwar Vancouver Nikkei community from the mid-1970s to the beginning of 2000, as someone who has moved from early to middle adulthood, from being a single woman to a married woman, from being a wife to being a mother. According to Reed-Danahay (1997:2):

Autoethnography stands at the intersection of three genres of writing which are becoming increasingly visible: (1) “native anthropology,” in which people who were formerly the subjects of ethnography become the authors of studies of their own group; (2) “ethnic autobiography,” personal narratives written by members of ethnic minority groups; and (3) “autobiographical ethnography,” in which anthropologists interject personal experience into ethnographic writing.

I am writing about a “sphere of variation” within five different generations of Nikkei women. In portraying five subgroups of Nikkei women, I focus on how they described and rewrote themselves and on how their notion of selfhood shifted over time. I explored their shared ideas and assumptions about their personal experiences as women, as immigrants and descendants of immigrants, and as Japanese Canadians. These portraits offer us not only a lost community, a vibrant Nikkei community that existed in the prewar years, but also an instance of how the active restructuring of experience connects past and present.

In the following chapters, by focusing upon language, culture, and emotion, I explore how Japanese Canadian women shared their lives with other groups of Japanese Canadians. Through these sketches, I hope to find connections among Nikkei women and to understand their personal experiences and choices, their presentations of self - - as women, immigrants, and members of
generations as well as individual Nikkei women. Several themes surface throughout the narratives. Some are specific to one group, some are not. I chose to focus on four specific themes: (1) gender, (2) exclusion, (3) generational issues, and (4) being Japanese Canadian. The first and third themes resonate not only among the Nikkei but also among women in general as certain experiences seem to transcend race and culture. The fourth theme is specific to Japanese Canadians, belonging to them due to their visibility, their blood heritage, and their shared language.

Chapter 2 presents the background to the dissertation, a brief history of Japanese Canadians, and my two stages of research on the Japanese Canadian women over several decades. I also discuss how I transcribe, translate, and present life narratives. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 present ethnographic sketches of Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Shin-Issei, and Shin-Nisei women. In dealing with these five subgroups of Nikkei women, I show how each group deals with issues related to gender, exclusion, generation, and being Japanese Canadian. Chapter 5 continues to explore these four themes by incorporating my own experiences and summarizing the ethnographic sketches and pointing out similarities and differences between each subgroup. I also explore how prewar regional cultures gradually transformed into present-day Nikkei culture.

31 Klukhohn, Murray, and Schneider (1953:53) echo a well-known dictum: "Every man [sic] is in certain respects a) like all other men, b) like some other men, c) like no other man."
CHAPTER TWO

Background for the Study

A: A Brief History of Japanese Canadians

Overseas migration from Japan began in 1868, the year of the Meiji Restoration, when Japan came out of its seclusion. At first, Japanese migration was heaviest to Hawaii and then to the United States, but once the introduction of restrictions barred them from setting foot on the Pacific Coast via Hawaii, they began going to Canada and to South American countries such as Peru and Brazil (Cornell and Smith 1970). They were looking for economic betterment, and they intended to use the cash they earned to improve their social standing in Japan. These people were often referred to as *watari dori* (birds of passage), and most of them were ambitious young men with a "dream of riches." The majority of them worked as seasonal labourers and hoped to return to Japan as soon as their dreams had been realized. They responded to Canada’s demand for frontier labours in fishing, logging, mining and farming. Yet the realization of their dream of riches remained elusive.

It is not known exactly when the first Japanese immigrant arrived in Canada. There are many records of shipwrecks and of Japanese survivors, dating back as early as 1834 (Adachi 1976; Nakayama 1921; Shimpo 1975). Although precise details are not available, it is generally believed that the first Japanese, a sailor by the name of Nagano Manzo, arrived in Canada in 1877. Prior to 1896 (when imperfect records began to appear), no record was kept on the number of Japanese who arrived in British Columbia (Canada 1902). The major flow of Japanese immigrants to Canada began in the late 1870s and increased rapidly in 1887 when the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) started a direct steamship service to Japan from Vancouver. Since then, the Japanese
Canadian population has grown from a small number of immigrants (which, before the Second World War, were mainly concentrated in British Columbia) to more than 65,000 people (Census Canada 1996) living throughout the country. See Tables 1 and 2 for pre- and postwar immigrants.

Table 1: **Japanese Immigrants to Canada: 1907 - 1934**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
<th>CHILDREN (age of 0-15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>6945</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>475 (total)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Postwar Immigrants to Canada: 1946 - 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>IMMIGRANTS FROM JAPAN</th>
<th>Total number of immigrants to Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946-55</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>146,000 (1965)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-65</td>
<td>1,716</td>
<td>194,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>209,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>183,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>164,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>147,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>121,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>122,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>184,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>218,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>187,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>149,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>114,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>84,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>112,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>143,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>128,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>121,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>89,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>88,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>84,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>99,219</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>152,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>161,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>191,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>216,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>232,751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>252,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>255,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>223,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>212,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>225,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Citizenship and Immigration Statistics, Canada.
Based on historical events and major policy changes that affected the flow of immigrants, the nature of immigrants, and their community, the history of the Japanese in British Columbia can be divided into seven stages.

1. 1877 - 1906: The Pioneer Years
The beginning of Japanese immigration to Canada. Most were male immigrants who were seasonal wage earners with no intention of staying in Canada permanently. The majority of them were engaged in British Columbia’s primary industries: fishing, forestry, mining, and farming.

2. 1907 - 1928: Life in White British Columbia
The outbreak of the anti-Oriental movement culminated in the Vancouver Riot of 1907. As a result of this riot, the Dominion of Canada and the Japanese government established a “gentlemen’s agreement” that restricted the flow of Japanese immigrants. Only 400 immigrants were allowed to enter Canada each year.

The irony of this is that the government imposed a limitation on male immigrants but not on female immigrants. Many women arrived as “picture brides,” and their arrival altered the structure of the Japanese community and transformed the transient mentality of the Japanese immigrants. Women stabilized men’s lives, and the community grew. After 1907, with the immigration of women, the birth rate among Canadian-born Japanese began to increase rapidly. Then a new problem began: White agitation against Canadian-born Japanese Nisei.

3. 1929 -35: Growth of Japanese Communities
In 1931 the ratio of male and female Japanese immigrants was 10:7, whereas the ratio of male to female Chinese immigrants was 10:1. The more stable family life became, the more determined the Japanese Canadians were to stay in Canada. The sojourner mentality transformed into a
permanent settler mentality. As the Japanese communities grew, so did problems relating to social identity, assimilation, and a viable future. The Nisei were Canadians by birth, but they were denied the rights of citizenship, just as their Issei parents had been. They did not have the right to vote and were barred from many professions. White Canadians reacted to the growing number and stability of Japanese Canadians, with the “Japanese problem” and “peaceful penetration” being much discussed topics. The British Columbia government went to great lengths to keep the Japanese, Chinese, and “Hindus” at the bottom of the social and economic ladder.

4. 1936 - 48: Exclusion and Destruction

The outbreak of the Second World War was used to legitimatize the removal of Japanese Canadians from the west coast of British Columbia. Japanese Canadians comprised a small minority, making up less than 0.2 per cent of the total Canadian population and only 2.7 per cent of the population of the province of British Columbia, which is where they were concentrated. Over 22,000 Japanese Canadians lived in British Columbia in 1942: 13,000 were Canadian citizens by birth; around 3,000 were naturalized citizens; and around 5,500 were Japanese nationals who had resided in Canada for 25 to 40 years, the majority of whom were women. On 24 February 1942, eighty-one days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Canadian government ordered a mass evacuation of “enemy aliens.” This evacuation was completed by the end of October 1942. The Nikkei community was destroyed, and individual families were broken up. A new, harsh life began in a variety of locales, the internment camps located in the interior of British Columbia: Tashme, Greenwood, Slocan City, Lemon Creek, Popoff, Bay Farm, Rosebery, New Denver, Sandon, and Kaslo; self-supporting projects: Lillooet, Bridge River, Minto City, McGillivray Falls, and Christina Lake; sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba; and other cities in Canada.

The conclusion of the war did not end problems for Japanese Canadians; rather, it marked the
beginning of another kind of struggle. Their loyalty was still questioned, and the government offered them two choices: (1) return "home" to Japan or (2) move east across the Rockies. British Columbia did not want its Japanese Canadians. See Map 1 and 2.

Map 1: Japanese Canadians in Internment Camps in British Columbia

Between March and June 1942, a total of 2,161 Japanese Canadians were placed in road construction camps. Many of them subsequently were allowed to join families in the interior detention camps by October 1942. During February to October 1942, more than 22,096 people were displaced: 60.2% Canadian-born; 14.6% Naturalized Canadians; 25.2% Japanese nationals (Census of Canada 1941).

5. 1949 - 65: Recovery and Resettlement

In 1949 Japanese Canadians were granted the franchise. It was during this period that they were transformed from "enemy aliens" into a "model minority." The Japanese Canadian community grew in various parts of Canada. However, Japanese Canadians were now more dispersed and more assimilated than they had been during the prewar years and so were not as visible as they had once been. A majority of Japanese Canadians now tried to assimilate into mainstream Canadian culture, and the rate of intermarriage for younger Nisei and Sansei rose.

During the late 1940s a large number of immigrants doubled the population of Canada. However, for Japanese immigrants the gate was still narrow. In 1952 the government altered the immigration law to allow the re-entry of the repatriated Japanese Canadians: Nisei and Kika-Nisei. For the first time during the postwar period, Japanese immigrant women began to arrive in Canada, many of them being the wives of repatriated Japanese Canadian men.

6. 1966 - 77: Expansion and Diversification

In 1966 a new immigration law introduced a point system that allowed new types of Japanese immigrants, the so-called "technical immigrants" (gijutsu-imin). In the peak year of 1973, approximately 1,100 Japanese immigrants entered Canada.

The post-war immigrants, "Shin-Issei," were quite different from the prewar immigrants. The majority of the Shin-Issei came as independent immigrants and, unlike prewar immigrants, did not have to rely on relatives or the Prefectural Association (Kenjin-kai). Unlike the Nisei and Sansei, who were influenced by the Issei's Meiji values, the Shin-Issei had been educated and socialized after the war.

1977 was the centennial year for Japanese Canadians. In Vancouver, this was the year that saw the beginning of the Powell Street Festival; and 1979 saw the formation of the Taiko group Katari.
Taiko (drumming group). Some Sansei began to discover their parents’ and grandparents’ past and to regain their roots and identity.


With the centennial year behind them, many Nikkei began to accept their ethnic history and to see it in a positive light. Consciousness raising was well under way, and the campaign for redress began to emerge. Major actors for the redress movement included former members of the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project. On 22 September 1988 the government of Canada and the National Association of Japanese Canadians signed the Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement.

In October, 1992, HomeComing'92: Kikyo, a conference for Japanese Canadians, was held in Vancouver. Of 800 participants, about 600 hundred were from outside of British Columbia. In Vancouver the National Nikkei Heritage Centre was completed and, on 22 September 2000, the Japanese Canadian National Museum held its inaugural exhibition: Re-shaping Memory, Owning History: Through the Lens of Japanese Canadian Redress.

B: Fieldwork

Research, 1975 - 76

My first research on the acculturation process of Japanese-born women residing in Vancouver (who were either naturalized Canadian citizens, landed immigrants, or holders of long-term visitor’s visas) was conducted between September 1975 and August 1976. Selecting those Nikkei women was problematic since the 1971 Census did not include a breakdown of Japanese group membership, which, for census purposes, was determined partrilineally. Thus Japanese women who married non-Japanese men were not included in the figures.
For three months I worked on building up a rapport with Vancouver's Japanese community, participating in various community organizations and activities. I was a participant observer at social events sponsored by the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (JCCA); I attended religious services at ethnic churches (United Church and Buddhist Church); and I turned up at bazaars held by various community social organizations. I also worked as a volunteer at Language Aid (where I helped prewar and postwar immigrants), was involved in Tonari Gumi (TG), Japanese Volunteers' Association, conducted a Japanese women's orientation group, and worked with the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project (JCCP) to mount a photographic exhibition of Japanese Canadian history.

Together with the information I gathered from secondary sources prior to conducting my fieldwork, I located sixty Japanese women (fifteen Issei and forty-five Shin-Issei) and distributed

1 The Japanese Canadian Citizens Association is the oldest existing Japanese ethnic organization. It was established in 1932 and focused on enabling Nikkei to gain the franchise.

2 Language Aid (established in 1972) was developed by a group of concerned individuals (who were themselves new immigrants) to respond to the growing awareness of the daily problems of non-English-speaking residents in the Greater Vancouver area. It offered information referral, counselling, interpretation, translation, and home visiting services in five different languages. In 1976 it was amalgamated with Multilingual Social Service and became the Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities (MOSAIC).

3 This association was founded in 1973 to provide social, recreational and educational programs and services for the Japanese Canadian community.

4 This group met in the spring of 1976 and was sponsored by the Women's Resources Centre and the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of British Columbia. Orientation classes provided information on shopping, the school system, the medical system, and social services. Topics were open to the needs of Japanese women.

5 This consisted of an annotative bibliography on Japanese Canadians (based on 1975 Japanese and English resources) that was published in 1977. During the process of gathering this information I became extremely angry about our faceless "history" and at British Columbia's racist treatment of Asian immigrants. I also reflected upon my mother's stories (which I had
a basic survey and questionnaire consisting of sixty-one questions (in closed-answer form) in order to gain information on their background (see Appendix B and C). I did not regard this population as a statistical "sample" of Nikkei women; rather, I attempted to study the widest variety of Nikkei women I could find in Vancouver. During the interview the women asked me many questions concerning my background; my impression of Canada, its people, and customs; the position of women vis-a-vis marriage and career; and my future plans. These interviews were not strictly structured and I did not use a tape recorder. Through my community activities I had had previous contact with many of the interviewees. Later, in order to illustrate the complexity of the lives of Japanese Canadian women, I collected life histories from four Issei women and four Shin-Issei women whose experiences differed yet complemented each other. They graciously accepted my request to share their life experiences with me. It was at this point that I began to use a tape recorder.

The majority of Issei women came to Canada in the 1920s and 1930s, while the majority of Shin-Issei women came between the 1950s and the 1970s. Issei women belonged to my grandmother's generation and were in their late seventies and early eighties. Many of them were widows and were living alone in and around the 300 block of Powell Street (adjacent to Chinatown). This is one of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhoods and is known as Nihonjin Machi (Japantown). It is reminiscent of the once flourishing prewar "Little Tokyo." Shin-Issei women lived in various areas in Vancouver and ranged in age from their late twenties to their mid-heard as a child) and upon Japan's conduct before and during the war in many Asian countries. I did not know where to direct my anger, sadness, and frustration. I told my former adviser the late Dr. Michael Egan that I was too angry to be objective and was not suited to conduct research. He told me that so long as I knew where I stood I was qualified to continue with my work.

6 This was the symbol for all Japanese Canadian communities in the province. See Nakayama (1921); Ito (1969: 700); and Shimpo (1975).
forties. The older Shin-Issei came to Canada as wives of repatriated Nisei or Kika-Nisei in the 1950s, while younger women came as independent "technical immigrants" (gijutsu imin) or as wives of technical immigrants.

Despite the differences in age, background, personality, and length of stay in Canada, there were many similarities among these two groups of women: motivation for leaving Japan, discrepancies between "dream" and "reality," problems pertaining to language and child-rearing, and the strength and flexibility implicit within their life histories. Issei women's life histories illustrated resiliency and a capacity to reconstitute meaningful, enduring cultural identities and values. Shin-Issei women's life histories reflected their concerns about their children as they explored and adapted to their new cultural environment in the mid-1970s.

Research, 1996 - 1997

Twenty years later, with my gained identity and life experiences as a Shin-Issei as well as updated anthropological knowledge, I collected life narratives from four groups of Nikkei women in order to explore how Nikkei culture has been transmitted, interpreted, and constructed. I investigated how Nikkei women described their conflicts with, and accommodation to, Japanese and Canadian/North American values. I did this by examining how they selected and interpreted past experiences in relation to major events in the history of Japanese Canadians and by investigating their shared cultural knowledge (e.g., language, traditions, customs, values, and patterns of

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7 As for kika-Nisei men who returned to Vancouver right after the government determined they could do so, many spent several years establishing themselves in Vancouver and then went back to Japan to find a wife. This pattern was similar to that followed by prewar Issei men.

8 Ujimoto (1973:43) indicates that among his sample of 100 technical immigrants there were 78 men and 22 women. More than half of his male subjects were married (41) but only one woman out of 22 was married at the time of emigration.
Based on my earlier research and my association within the community, and with the help of a social worker who had been working with the community since the early 1970s, I put together a list of prospective interviewees. My goal was to interview a cross-section of Japanese Canadian women from different generations. I sent out introductory letters and, one and one-half weeks later, followed them up with telephone calls.

From summer 1996 to spring 1997 I conducted my research among twenty-one Nikkei women in Greater Vancouver and Victoria. I categorized these groups according to the mother’s generation because maternal influence is dominant in children’s enculturation and socialization processes. I interviewed seven Nisei women (daughters of Issei). Initially, I was only looking for four Nisei women. I compiled a list of prospective candidates from various Japanese Canadian community organizations (e.g., the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association, Tonari Gumi: Japanese Community Volunteers’ Association, and religious organizations) and then selected sixteen prospective Nisei women. Following the procedure set out by the University of British Columbia Ethical Committee, I sent introductory letters to these sixteen women before contacting them by phone. Upon receiving my letter, one woman phoned me to ask why she was chosen as she was clearly “too ordinary.” After I replied that her name has been mentioned by several people in the community, I sensed a mix of surprise and delight in her voice: “Oh, is that so?” I answered her questions about my research and she responded that she would be happy to participate in my project. Yet she continued to insist: “But you know, I am too ordinary” (a comment often heard from Issei women). She was the second Nisei woman who agreed to participate in my research; however, I was not so lucky with other Nisei women. One woman flatly said “No!” when I phoned and identified myself, while others were simply unreachable. One woman was eager to help but could not be interviewed as she was recovering from an illness.
As the number of Nisei women on the list of sixteen dwindled, I went back to the larger list and sent out yet more introductory letters.9

I am not the only one who has had a problem getting Nisei to participate in projects. One of my colleagues, who had also been conducting her research in the Nikkei community, mentioned that she also had a difficult time getting interviews with Nisei. Herself a Sansei, she indicated that the Nisei had been interviewed too often since the Redress Movement.10 They often felt exploited and were unhappy that few results emerged from the research in which they had participated. Some indicated their negative feeling towards the Japanese media, which had very little knowledge of Japanese Canadian history and which described Japanese Canadians as “exotic” and “old-fashioned Japanese.”11 “How about [if I interview] your mother?” I asked one of my Sansei friends since her mother’s name was mentioned by several people in the community. She replied, “No. She does not know how to articulate her ideas.” I was astonished by this reply and told her that her mother does not have to “articulate” her ideas. I simply wanted to listen to her experiences, just as I had to those of the Issei women. When I asked other Sansei women about the possibility of interviewing their mothers, they often said that they would ask them. Yet whenever I inquired in more concrete terms, they would say such things as, “they are getting old”

9 This time I extended my research to Victoria. Eventually, seven Nisei women gave me the opportunity to interview them. I included all seven women rather than eliminating three of them (which would have resulted in a match with the number of interviewees from other generations) as this was the generation with which I had the least connection.

10 In the past couple of decades, many scholars as well as the Japanese and Canadian media have interviewed members of the Japanese Canadian community. Interest in Japanese Canadian studies, both in the social sciences and in literature, has increased tremendously since the 1988 Redress Agreement.

11 My colleague told me that she had to rebuild confidence by telling herself that Nisei were simply tired of having strangers ask so many questions ( “Who likes it, right Yuko?”).
or "they are busy." I took these responses to be negative and did not pursue the matter further.

Of the seven Nisei women, all but one had been born during the 1920s and had been socialized in southwestern British Columbia. They had been assimilated into Canadian culture through their secondary education and, until 1949, were without the franchise.

Three of the six Sansei women (granddaughters of Issei) whom I interviewed were the daughters of the Nisei women interviewees. They were born between the late 1930s and mid-1960s. The oldest was born in Vancouver and the younger two, due to their families' relocation and resettlement during and after the Second World War, were born and raised outside of British Columbia. At the time of the interviews, they were in their early thirties to early sixties.

Four of the Shin-Issei women included in this study had been interviewed for my research in the 1970s, and they had immigrated to Canada between the late 1950s and the mid-1970s. Two of them resided at the same location as they had when I first interviewed them in the 1970s. Three were wives of Kika-Nisei, and one was the wife of a "technical immigrant." They were in their early fifties to early sixties at the time of the interviews.

Two of the four Shin-Nisei women were daughters of the Shin-Issei of the study born in the 1960s. The Shin-Nisei women were in their mid-thirties to early forties. I included a woman who was born in Japan and came to Canada with her parents when she was six years old.

In total there are five mother-daughter pairs: three among the Nisei and Sansei, and two among the Shin-Issei and Shin-Nisei. I tape-recorded all interviews except for one (with a Shin-Issei woman who declined to be recorded). They lasted from one and one-half to several hours. I used a brief guideline (see Appendix D), although I was constantly modifying it in order to maximize

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12 I originally hoped to interview matching pairs of mothers and daughters, but I decided against it. Unlike Sansei women, Nisei interviewees were happy to introduce their daughters to me and they, in turn, graciously accepted my request for interviews. Shin-Nisei women were also eager to speak about their mothers and encouraged me to interview their mothers.
each woman’s interests and concerns. From the interviews I extracted a chronology of each woman’s life, noting her major life events in relation to her personal history, family history, and sociocultural history.

Nikkei Communities in the 1990s

Compared to the cohesive and homogeneous prewar Japanese communities\(^\text{13}\) that existed before Japanese Canadians in British Columbia were dispersed in 1942, postwar Nikkei communities are heterogeneous. The first generation of Japanese Canadians is composed of the Issei, who immigrated to Canada between 1900 and 1920; the second generation is composed of the Nisei (who were born to the Issei between the 1910s and 1930s); and the third generation is composed of the Sansei (the older of whom were born to the Nisei in the mid-1930s, but the majority of whom were born in the 1940s to the 1960s).

Today, Vancouver’s Japanese Canadian community is the largest in Canada,\(^\text{14}\) consisting of a small number of Issei, the rapidly aging Nisei, older Sansei (who went through the internment experiences), and younger Sansei (who are in their thirties to fifties). There are also the Yonsei,

\(^{13}\) Nunoda’s (1991) Winnipeg Japanese community study indicates that, upon closer investigation, it was not as homogeneous and cohesive as it was when first presented to the outsider. The Vancouver community is no exception.

the fourth generation descendants of Issei. A majority of the Yonsei (children of the Sansei) have multiple ethnicity. They are the children of intermarriage. According to a 1989 demographic study, in the under-thirty-seven age group, or the Sansei generation, about 90.2 per cent of women and 88.4 per cent of men married partners of another ethnic background (Kobayashi 1989:33).

Also now a part of the Nikkei community are the Shin-Issei, a majority of whom came during the early 1970s as technical immigrants, and the Shin-Nisei. There are also long-term visitor’s visa (i.e., working-holiday visa) holders, business and academic researchers and their dependents, and tourist visa holders, all of whose numbers increased during the 1990s (see Table 3).

Table 3:

Japanese Nationals in Canada (Japanese Passport Holders)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>total 総数</th>
<th>long-term 長期滞在者*</th>
<th>permanent 永住者</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>25,493</td>
<td>9,777</td>
<td>15,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>12,548</td>
<td>4,535</td>
<td>8,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Vancouver</td>
<td>11,108</td>
<td>3,744</td>
<td>7,364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Vancouver Japanese Consulate Report, July 1, 1996
* business visas: 1,836; researchers and students: 2,291; government official: 37; other: 371. Work-holiday visa holders: 3,500 are not included in the above figures. At present, the quota is 5,000.

15 A majority of the Yonsei (children of the Sansei) have multiple ethnicity. They are the children of intermarriage. According to a 1989 demographic study, in the under-thirty-seven age group, or the Sansei generation, about 90.2 per cent of women and 88.4 per cent of men married partners of another ethnic background (Kobayashi 1989:33).

16 The working-holiday visa was introduced in 1986 to promote Canadian and Japanese cultural exchange. In 1998 this quota was raised from 3,500 to 5,000 per year.

17 Due to Japan’s economic recession in the 1990s, the number of this group is decreasing. Many Hoshugo gakko (Japanese supplementary schools) in North America have closed.
Compared to two decades ago when I did my initial research, the geographical clustering of the present-day Vancouver Nikkei community is not very prominent. Over the past several years a few well known social organizations (such as the JCCA and Fujiya, the largest Japanese grocery store) have moved away from Japantown. Only two social institutions remain in the area: the Vancouver Japanese Language School at 475 Alexander Street and the Vancouver Buddhist Church at 220 Jackson Avenue. In the fall of 2000 Tonari Gumi (Japanese Community Volunteers' Association) moved from 378 Powell Street to 511 East Broadway, and Sakuraso (housing for Japanese seniors), which was located on the second floor of 378 Powell Street, has been sold. The Aki Restaurant, which had operated and trained many sushi chefs and, since the early postwar years, used to operate in the old Japantown area near Oppenheimer Park, has recently moved to downtown Vancouver. During the prewar years many community activities

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18 Since 1988, the Vancouver Japanese Canadian community has been trying to build a centre for all Japanese Canadians. The National Nikkei Heritage Centre Society, which was composed of several organizations in the community, finally completed the National Nikkei Heritage Centre (often called Nikkei Place), a multipurpose complex in Burnaby, British Columbia in the fall of 2000. Slowly it is gaining ground as a geographical centre for Japanese Canadians not only in British Columbia but also in Canada. It houses the Japanese Canadian National Museum.

19 The JCCA has represented the social, cultural, and political interests of Japanese Canadians in the Greater Vancouver area since the 1930s. It served as the major source of community information and support for those Japanese Canadians who returned to Vancouver after the wartime restrictions were lifted in 1949.

20 Vancouver's Chinese community, which has more than ten times the population of the Japanese Canadian community, is now facing a similar problem. It has been trying to revitalize Vancouver's Chinatown, which, for the past several years, has been facing competition from the newer suburban Chinatowns in Richmond, Coquitlam and Burnaby. See Howell 2002.
took place in Oppenheimer Park. And the Powell Street Festival has been held in the park every summer since the Japanese Canadian centennial year (1977).

C: From Aural Material to Written Text

In my encounters with Issei and Shin-Issei women over the years, all spoke variations of Japanese. Knowing that I spoke Standard Japanese, no Issei women used their native regional dialect but, rather, conversed with me in contemporary Standard Japanese laced with Nikkei Japanese.

When I came here, people thought I was too snobbish because I talked in polite Japanese. I had to learn a rough and crude imin go [immigrant language] but now I am so

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21 This was where the prewar Japanese Canadians' proud baseball team, Asahi, played and attracted many spectators. See Pat Adachi's Asahi: A Legend in Baseball (1992). At present Jari Osborne, a Chinese Canadian film maker, is working on a National Film Board production devoted to the Asahi baseball team.

22 It is a celebration of Japanese Canadian art, history and culture, and it involves sharing Japanese food, creative arts, community displays, demonstrations, and performances. The Powell Street Festival Society claims that the festival, which began in the summer of 1977, is Vancouver's oldest community celebration.

23 Due to a lack of funds and volunteers, the 2000 Powell Street Festival was held indoors at the newly renovated Vancouver Japanese Language School. However, Japanese Canadian community members demanded an outdoor festival, and so it was returned to the park in 2001.

24 Standard Japanese was also mixed with such Japanized English words as booi (boy=son), gaaru (girl=daughter), booshin (boss), sukuuru-booi (schoolboy, a domestic worker), mauntii (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), and so on. Similar languages were spoken when Wagatsuma interviewed Akemi Kikumura's mother, Chie, who spoke informal Japanese to her daughter Akemi and formal Japanese, with "difficult" words and vocabularies, to Wagatsuma, thus indicating her educational background (i.e., she was a jyogakko graduate, a Japanese native speaker). See Wagatsuma and Kikumura (1986: 4). See also Kiyooka (1997) regarding how he collected his mother's narratives in Tosa dialect and, with the help of a Japanese translator, translated them into English.
used to it I feel uncomfortable speaking in polite Japanese. (Kuni 1976)

Some Issei women continued to speak Standard formal Japanese throughout my interviews, while others shifted from formal to informal Japanese once our association became more like one between grandmother and granddaughter, or between friends, than one between subject and researcher. Some encounters were formal, and I would take notes; others were informal, taking place over a cup of green tea with Japanese sweets or a cup of red tea served on English china with cookies (or even lunch or supper). When I began to collect the life histories of the four Issei women, I introduced a tape recorder. Later, I transcribed these tapes and then translated them into English. In relation to their work on Tlingit narratives, Nora M. Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer have discussed the difficulties involved in transcribing oral material and translating it into written material. What they say is also relevant to the problems I encountered in translating Issei women’s voices and expressions into written form:

> [At] each stage of the recording of oral literature, something gets lost . . . when the story is written down, we lose everything about the voice . . . when the Tlingit text is translated into English, we lose the original language -- the way the storyteller put his or her words together to create a special and unique performance of an event that will never be repeated . . . When the story is read by a person outside the culture of the storyteller, the cultural context is lost. Information and assumptions shared by the composer and original audience may no longer be shared. This applies not only to persons totally outside the Tlingit culture, but to younger generations within Tlingit culture.  

(Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1993: 6-8)

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25 *Imingo* is a Japanese Canadian version of Japanese combined with many regional dialects (e.g., *Wakayama-ben*, *Hiroshima-ben*, *Kumamoto-ben*, and *Nagasaki-ben*) and mixed with some English words. See Hikosaka 1994 and Kage 1977. The translator of Roy Kiyooka’s (1997) *Mothertalk* spoke of the difficulties he encountered when trying to translate Mrs. Kiyooka’s *Tosa-ben* (the Tosa dialect used in Shikoku) into English (Matsuki Masui, a translator, personal correspondence, May 1995).

26 Even though they agreed to be taped, at the beginning of our recording session the women seemed very self-conscious about the “machine” on the table. However, as soon as their memories became more vivid and the conversation began to flow, they forgot its existence. Later, I could sense that they were eager to be on tape.
In this dissertation I use Japanese words and sentences whenever I feel that they best evoke the Nikkei women I encountered: their voices, their words, and the ways they expressed themselves. I believe that readers who are familiar with Japanese or with Japanese Canadian culture can share some of my experiences with these Nikkei women. Furthermore, by seeing and reading these women's words in Japanese, the reader can experience the life narratives of Japanese Canadian women in their own terms.

My encounters with Shin-Issei women were conducted in the same manner as were my encounters with Issei women. Verbatim narratives have been edited in order to better express the texture of the women's characteristic speech and thoughts, to better evoke their individual vocabularies and styles of interaction (Myerhoff 1978:30). Some narratives were given in both Japanese and English (e.g., the narratives of Shin-Issei women collected in 1996-97), and all differed according to the individual and the generation. I underlined any words that the women particularly emphasized. All tapes were transcribed and translated by me.

All my interviews with the Nisei women were conducted in English. To varying degrees Nisei women often added Japanese words, mostly nouns and adjectives, to their statements. Two women frequently used the Japanese particle “ne” な at the end of sentences, just as Japanese women today use “yo” ね or “nee” ねえ as an interactional particle. All my interviews with

27 Words given an English pronunciation are indicated in italics; words given a Japanese pronunciation are indicated in Japanese.

28 A few women switched to Japanese when they recounted their parents' or uncles' narratives.

29 One was a repatriated Nisei and the other had a Kika-Nisei sister who joined her family in Canada after the war (she was eighteen and had been away for ten years). “Yo” or “nee” meaning “don't you think so,” “don't you agree,” or “right.” See Maynard (1990:125) for a grammatical explanation. Unlike Hikosaka (1994), I found that none of the Nisei women I interviewed used “yuu-ra”(you) or “mii-ra” (us) (‘ra’=tachi, suffix for plural).
Sansei women were conducted in English and, as with the Nisei women, their use of Japanese words and sentences varied from individual to individual. One Sansei woman who was competent in both languages used onomatopoeia to describe her experiences.30 I also noticed that, as the interview progressed, her use of Japanese increased. In the latter part of the interview, she was speaking in Japanese more often than English.31 Many Sansei women inserted Japanese words - - nouns, adjectives, set phrases - - into our English conversations. Whenever Japanese words were pronounced with Japanese rather than English accents, I inserted them in Japanese. For example, one of the Sansei woman gave me a family recipe: a quick miso soup for chilly winter mornings (it was the soup she used to have in the winter before going off to school):

I would get a cup and omisoみそ [soy bean paste], about oosaji ippai no miso 大さじ一杯の みそ [a table spoon of miso], and katsuo irete かつお入れて [put bonito flakes], one bunch de oyu o irete でお湯を入れて [and pour hot water over], soshite mazete sa そして混ぜてさ [then stir it, and], misoshiru みそしる [Voila! Here is miso soup].

My interviews with Shin-Issei women were conducted in formal standard Japanese, which, as the interviews progressed, often became more informal. These women did not use English words as often as did the Nisei and Sansei women.32 My interviews with Shin-Nisei women were conducted in English, and these women used fewer Japanese words and phrases in their narratives than did any of the other English-speaking Nikkei women. Unlike Sansei women, Shin-Nisei

30 This happened quite often when she was narrating about her grandparents, parents, relatives in Steveston and her experiences in Japan (e.g. sara sara さらさら [rustling sound], guzu guzu ぐずぐず [slowly]).

31 I wonder if this was a reflection not only of her competence in Japanese but also of that fact that she felt comfortable throughout the interview, during which I responded to her in Japanese fashion.

32 Because modern Japanese is full of Anglicized Japanese words (e.g., “apaato”[apartment], “depaato”[department store], “oo eru”[Office Lady= Japanese for women office workers]), I differentiate “Japanese-English” words from “English-English” words.
women used few Japanese nouns and adjectives, and Japanese sentences or set phrases. The interviews were conducted so as to accommodate their work schedules. Sometimes they were conducted at their workplace during their lunch breaks, sometimes at their homes in the evening, and sometimes at my home or office. The length of the interview ranged from two and one-half hours to several hours over one or two sessions.

D: Writing Ethnographic Sketches of Nikkei women - Weaving Individual Narratives

I have written an ethnography about different groups of Japanese Canadian women intending to explore what Strathern calls a “sphere of variation” with the aim of highlighting the possible parameters of socially shared knowledge in the Nikkei community. The concern has been to provide immediate access to the diversities and similarities in the lives of women who are held together by common threads of heritage, identity and experience. While the documenting of individual lives in lengthy narratives from each woman interviewed would have given one kind of depth to the notion of experience, I have chosen to attempt a weaving together of the narratives. The commitment of my work to the construction of knowledge in interaction, to cultural sharing and identity building as processes makes this a stronger choice. It is thus a record of lives not lived in isolation, but rather in generational groups in continual interaction to deal with the common problems of bringing together Japanese traditions and ideas about the good life while, at the same time confronting prejudice, a devastating war and the many difficulties of making a living. This permits me to not only focus on individual differences but also to make more visible shared knowledge as it is formed in the context of wider social and historical events. It also allows me to

33 Interestingly, the term *Oshogatsu* (New Year’s celebration), which often appears in the interviews with Nisei and Sansei women, never appears in interviews with Shin-Nisei women nor in interviews with Issei and Shin-Issei women.
make clearer the contrasts and similarities in the different stages of the immigrant women's life cycles - reasons for coming to Canada, early days as an immigrant or a descendant of immigrants, the war and postwar years and, finally, life in the present. The integrated narratives illustrate the variations and similarities of experience in each group as well as the shifting interpretations given by each generation of women to gender, to race and a stigmatized identity and to the status of being immigrants. The following five ethnographic sketches are not in any way definitive or generalized representations of Japanese Canadian women. Such quantitatively oriented work is left to other researchers. The concentration is purposely on a small number to permit the depth that only this can give, as well as to the nature of interpretation and memory as influenced by the present in rewriting the past. Again the process of rethinking the self is the core of my presentation.
Table 4: Five Groups of Nikkei Women 34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Name ( *=pseudonym)</th>
<th>Entry to Canada</th>
<th>Interview (J=Japanese, E=English, M=Mix)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issei 一世</td>
<td>Kuni b.1895</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1975-1981 (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hanako b.1901</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1975-1982 (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kinori b.1904</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>1975-1982 (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satsuko b.1906</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1975-1982 (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisei 二世</td>
<td>Lillian b.1922</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ellen b.1922</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fumiko b.1929</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mary b.1930</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E/M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Midge b.1930</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E/M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aya b.1930</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eiko b.1935</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E/M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sansei 三世</td>
<td>Setsuko b.1936</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naomi b.1949</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E/M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mayumi b.1952</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E and J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joan* b.1956</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996/97 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patti b.1965</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carolyn b.1968</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hana* b.1933</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>1976 ; 1997 (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taeko* b.1933</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1976 ; 1996 (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yoko* b.1949</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1976 ; 1996 (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shin-Nisei 新二世</td>
<td>Martha* b.1962</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Catherine b.1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nancy* b.1966</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haruko* b.1966</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996 (E)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

34 I contacted the women of the study (except the Issei women who died in the 1980s and the 1990s) in the summer of 2002 to update their lives and discussed the use of pseudonyms in my writing. Several women chose to be known by their Japanese names. The majority of Shin-Issei and Shin-Nisei women, however, chose pseudonyms.
CHAPTER THREE

Ethnographic Sketches of Prewar Women and Their Descendants

A: Issei Women

Although coping with their old age, many Issei women were still active in the early 1980s. Since then their numbers, along with those of older Nisei women, have decreased.

Yuko-san, I have nothing to tell you or to teach you. I am an old widow living alone. See, I am too ordinary for you. I don’t think it is good to interview me for your study.

This was how an Issei woman responded to me when, in 1976, I expressed my hope of collecting her life history. She was one of four Issei women (Kuni b. 1895; Hanako b. 1901; Kinori b. 1904; Satsuko b. 1906) who shared their stories with me during my initial research on Japanese Canadian women, and she was not alone in declaring herself to be “too ordinary” to have anything interesting to tell me.

Among these four Issei women were two widows, one with children and the other without. Both of these women were typical of Japanese Canadian women of their time. Upon arriving in Canada as young wives in the 1920s, they began moving around to various remote areas of British Columbia, working as cooks in logging or fishing camps, while their husbands worked as booshin (foremen of Japanese work crews) until they could accumulate enough money to establish lives in Canada. During the Second World War they lived in internment camps in the interior of British Columbia, and after the war they returned to Vancouver with their husbands to begin rebuilding their lives. The other two Issei women were also married. One was the wife of the Vancouver Japanese Language School’s principal and was herself a teacher. She had no children. The other woman had four children and was the wife of a photo studio owner. Before the Second World War she managed her own photo studio. These women did not spend the
prewar years moving around in British Columbia with their husbands, nor did they spend time in
the camps established by the British Columbia Security Commission during the war years, as had
so many other Japanese Canadians; rather, one had moved to a self-supporting camp\(^1\) and the
other had moved to Alberta. They were both financially independent and required no help from
the government. All four Issei women returned to Vancouver in the early 1950s to rebuild their
lives. At that time they were in their late forties and mid-fifties, and their husbands were in their
sixties and seventies.

These four women differ from one another with regard to their pre-Canadian backgrounds,
their reasons for coming to Canada, and their lives in Canada. Yet their life experiences do show
some similar patterns. While these women were of my grandmother’s generation, their
experiences resonated with those of my mother and, in some respects, with my own (even though
I was born and raised in the postwar “new” Japan). As a young child I heard about my mother’s
experiences during the prewar and war years, how she bore two daughters and eventually lost
everything in what is now North Korea. At that time North Korea was a Japanese colony known
as Shingishu 新義州, and it was there that, after graduating with a degree in forestry from the
National University in Hokkaido in 1937, my father worked at the Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry. In many ways, the Issei women’s life stories reflected my own experiences as a
Japanese woman who spent her early to middle adulthood in Canada. Their narratives reflected the
sociocultural history of their times as well as the clash between the Japanese Canadian community
and mainstream Canadian society. They spoke of how race, language, and culture affected their
lives.

\(^1\) The so-called “self-support projects” (non-government operated) were located in Lilloet,
Bridge River, Minto City, McGillivray Falls, and Christina Lake.
Encounter

At the time of the interviews, the Issei women were in their seventies and eighties and lived in the vicinity of Japantown as well as various other parts of Vancouver. Due to “picture bride” marriages there was a great age difference between wives and husbands, a twelve- to fifteen-year gap not being uncommon. The majority of Issei women were widows by the mid-1970s. Although they had all lived in Canada for over half a century, the language and cultural knowledge with which they were most comfortable were Japanese. Many indicated that the first time they had real contact with Canadians and Canadian culture was when they left Vancouver at the time of forced exile. Although many had tried to learn English and many had acquired Canadian citizenship in the early 1950s, they identified more closely with Japan and Japanese culture. Yet many said that, whenever they visited Japan, they realized how different they were from those who lived there.

Reasons for Coming to Canada

Y: 3 What made you come to Canada [dooshite kanada ni kitano]?
どうしてカナダに来たの?
R: honno nisan nen dake to omotte kitanoni konnani nagaku narutowa nee. ほんの二三年と 思って来たのにこんなに長くなるとはねえ。 [I thought I would stay here for just a few years. I never planned to stay this long, you know]. (Kuni)

Many Issei women had never intended to remain in Canada. Some thought a couple years of hard

2 My small sample from the original study indicated that, in the mid-1970s, 75 per cent of Issei women were widows.

3 Y=Yuko Shibata; R=respondent.
work was worth leaving home for, and they took their chances in the *Amerika*\(^4\) that their future husbands promised them. Others believed that joining their relatives or teaching Japanese Canadian children in Canada for a couple of years was their fate. They all had dreams about and expectations of America. The oldest woman in the group had been born in 1895, and the youngest had been born in 1906. Each woman freely chose to leave Japan. They left with the hope of making a fortune and of realizing endless possibilities. The words *Amerika* or *gaikoku* (foreign country) ignited their imagination, for many of those who returned to Japan had talked about these places. Not surprisingly, their expectations were fostered by their own backgrounds and personal aspirations. Perhaps this was enhanced by the fact that many Issei women had attained the highest level of education then available to women.

In Japan, prior to the Second World War, all children were required to attend six years of compulsory elementary schooling (*Junjyo shogakko* 尋常小学校), beginning at the age of six. After graduating from elementary school, some could attend an upper-level school (*koto shogakko* 高等小学校) for two or more years, while others could enroll in a five-year program at a women’s school (*jogakko* 女学校) or, if they were men, attend a middle school (*chugakko* 中学校). Only middle-class families could afford these longer courses of study, and, even in this class, it was uncommon for women to complete the women’s high school course. Three of the Issei women who shared their experiences with me had attended *jyogakko* 女学校. Receiving this higher education not only delayed their marriage but also encouraged them to acquire independence. Thus

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4 Early Japanese immigrants often referred to Canada as “Amerika” 亜米利加. These people simply had no idea how big North America was. For example, Mio village in Wakayama, the place of origin of a majority of prewar immigrants to Steveston, British Columbia, is called *Amerika mura* アメリカ村 (American village). Before Expo’86, which put the city of Vancouver on the world stage, many of my Japanese friends thought I was living in the United States, not in Canada. They did not seem to be aware that Canada and the United States were two different countries. It is also interesting to note that my high school atlas, issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 1961, does not list Canada in its index.
these women married rather later than was common in Japan at that time.⁴ Their experiences reminded me of the stories I had heard about my maternal grandmother, who left home in search of a suitable job (e.g., teaching, a profession that was open to women). At that time it was not customary for women from a “proper” family to be in the workforce. However, after she had finished attending jyogakko in Yamagata Prefecture, her family could not arrange to find her a suitable husband.⁵ She went to Hokkaido to visit her uncle and, eventually, became a school teacher. Later she married my grandfather, a second son of a Hiroshima rice farmer who worked as an officer for one of Hokkaido’s coal mine companies.

Issei women often stressed that they had chosen to come to Canada against their parents’ will rather than staying in Japan and marrying. Were their comments a reflection of a strong sense of independence? Or did they see Japanese men in America as rich and as offering them better prospects than men in Japan? Were they influenced by the pictures their future husbands sent to them? Stories indicate that some Issei men posed in front of the Hotel Vancouver, saying that they were its manager; while some, in borrowed Sunday clothes, stood in front of the Hollow Tree in Stanley Park. This was, and still is, a well known location for taking family pictures. Many men tried hard to enhance their bargaining positions, even going into debt to bring these women to Canada. Given this, it is not surprising that many women believed that these men were rich.

⁴ According to Japan’s first national census, which was conducted in 1920, the average age at which Japanese women first married was 23.2; the average for men was 27.4 years old (Office of the Prime Minister, 1975).

⁵ The word ‘suitable’ is crucial in this context since marriages were often arranged by matchmakers who assessed the similarities between sociocultural backgrounds of potential brides and bridegrooms. See Takie Lebra’s research on Japanese aristocracy, Above the Clouds: Status Culture of the Modern Japanese Nobility (1993), especially the chapter on marriage and the realignment of women and men. This practice is not limited to Japanese aristocracy.
The Issei women whom I studied came to Canada in the early to late 1920s. Kuni arrived in 1920 with the idea of returning to Japan after three or four years. Her matchmaker told her that the Canadian government had given her future husband twenty-five acres of land after his service during the First World War. The matchmaker also told her that the bridegroom was going to sell this land and return to Japan when he was no longer eligible for the draft.

You know, I had a *keiyaku* 契約 [an agreement/contract] with the matchmaker before I decided to come to America. After all, that was the reason I decided to come here. They told me that I could return to Japan within three to four years with the money which was supposedly coming from the land *Ojisan* [her husband] had owned. I was well prepared to work on the farm with my husband, but I would never have dreamed that he was a fisherman and that I would have to work as a cook for his camp workers. *Obasan damasareta yo, おばさんだまされたよ [I was deceived]!* Of course, I would not tell these things to my parents. It was no use telling the truth about my life in Amerika. They would only worry about me. So I wrote letters to my parents saying how happy I was in Amerika. But I should say I have no regrets. I felt I was punished because I was too spoiled. I accepted my life as my fate. Even if we regret things, we can never return to the point where we left, right?

She had met her future husband when he returned to Japan to look for a bride, and the marriage ceremony was conducted in the bridegroom’s hometown. He then returned to Canada, and she went to live with her in-laws, where she remained until she immigrated two years later. Her in-laws were good to her, but she was anxious for her husband to ask her to join him. In 1920 that finally happened, when she was twenty-six and her husband was forty.

Here is another example of a marriage which did not turn out as the bride, *Kinori*, had anticipated.

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6 Names are in boldface to indicate that individual women contribute to a shared story line, embellishing and extending it and offering contrasts. See Table 4 (page 56) for identification of the women.

7 Literally, *Ojisan* means “uncle.” The Japanese extend kinship terms to persons outside the immediate family (e. g., females and males of a similar age to mothers and fathers are referred to as “aunts” or “uncles,” sometimes even as “mothers” or “fathers”). See Fisher 1964; Goodman 1958; and Passin and Horiuchi 1977.
You know I did not want to get married, as I told you before. But that was onna no sadame 女の定め [the destiny for women] as my mother told me. I could not get away from it. So I decided if I was going to do it, why not with someone in Amerika? I took a chance. Well, that was a tragedy. At that time there was another marriage arrangement for me, with the son of a tea wholesale dealer in Japan. I wanted to come to Amerika so badly, I decided to accept the offer from the man in Amerika. I told my parents that he was the only one I would marry. Besides, my sister was already there and had written to tell me what a nice person my fiance was. He was the third son of a well-to-do wholesaler from Kyushu who used to retail soy sauce and kume gasuri 久米がすり [a well-known cloth from the region]. You see, his whole family cleared everything in Japan to invest their future in Canada.

Her father was against her decision, but she was determined to go to America. After the engagement she corresponded with her fiance for four years.

When I saw my name registered in my husband’s family domicile I felt really sad. I don’t know why. I felt sad being called Mrs. Oka, I suppose.

She then cited her haiku:

ni ku kakete okano koseki ni shirusarete
tsuma to yuu ji ni nazeaka sabishiki
[at age eighteen registered under the Oka’s domicile, I feel some sadness with the character “wife” by my name]

Kinori came to Canada in the winter of 1927 on the ship Alabama-maru. She was twenty-three and her husband was fourteen years her senior.

Yes, he looked very old, very different from the pictures he had sent me. I did not feel any affection towards him. He was like my father. I wanted to cancel the engagement, but I had wanted to come to Amerika so badly. You see, I used to hear that Amerikan ladies wipe their noses with silk handkerchiefs and throw them on the ground. I also imagined that all Amerikan ladies wore long dresses and sported bonnets for this is what I used to see in the pictures.

In the Japan of the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taisho (1912-1926) eras, girls were raised to be modest, unselfish, and subordinate, and family life was considered to be extremely important.

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8 See Kisaragi tanka kai, ed. 1972: 134.
(Karasawa 1958). The family was held to be the primary unit, individuals tended to disappear, and
self-expression was not encouraged. Yet the Issei women in my study came to Canada of their
own volition, to pursue their own dreams.

All four women indicated that their lives would had been quite different had they stayed in
Japan. It seems that an unfortunate family circumstance, such as a decline in wealth due to a
father’s death or bankruptcy, was a major factor in their deciding to risk their future lives. All
except one of the Issei women from whom I collected life histories attended Jyogakko, but only
one of them worked (as a teacher and in order to support her family) before coming to Canada.

**Hanako** came to Canada when she accepted an offer to teach Japanese in Vancouver to
Japanese children. However, a marriage proposition was tied to this job offer.

Well, for me, I was still too young. [**Yoi mo warui mo wakarya shimasen yo** 良いも悪いも
わかりやしませんよ] I had no concept of “good” or “bad.” I felt it would be all right . . .
definitely my mother gave it a lot more thought than I did. I was only a child then. I did
not think much one way or the other, whether it was good or bad. I only knew Mr. Sato as
the teacher of my younger brothers, so I thought it would not be so good to marry him.
While we were thinking it over, Mr. Sato approved of the marriage. He did not come back
because he trusted Mr. Imai’s [his former superior’s] judgement. So I thought it would be
OK [**maa nonkina mono desuyo** まあのんきなものですよ.] In those days it was not
customary to look for one’s husband by yourself, you see. So I let it happen. My mother
suffered much more than I did on this matter.

Hanako’s marriage was not a typical picture bride marriage, but it did follow a similar pattern.

Before she left for Canada, Mr. Sato’s father came to her house in Tokyo for the wedding, which
was held without a bridegroom. Mr. Sato’s photograph took the place of Mr. Sato. In May 1921
Hanako left Japan for Vancouver.

**Gaikoku** 外国 [foreign country] at that time was **somewhere far, very far away.** [**totte mo
toii tokoradattan desu yo** とっても遠い所 だったんですね] Nowadays, people don’t
think much about it, but at that time, it was a faraway place both mentally and
geographically. We exchanged a parting-cup with water: *mizu sakazuki* 水盃. The only person I could depend on was Mr. Sato. I trusted and believed that he would take good care of me. I was only twenty then.

On board the ship there were many picture brides who had never met their future husbands.

According to Hanako:

So many women did not know what their future husbands looked like. Later I shared so many sad stories about them, which I cannot describe in words. I eventually taught their sons and daughters. Fortunately, in my case my future husband used to be my brothers’ teacher. I was scared of him but at least I knew what he looked like. He was my only *tayori* 信頼 [trusted person] in Canada. And, of course, I knew I had to teach Japanese children. But many women did not know what was awaiting them.

It was spring when she arrived, and Hanako recalled the beauty of the journey to Vancouver by way of Victoria, Vancouver Island, and the Gulf Islands. Everything was green, and yellow flowers were blooming everywhere: “*Yumeno Kuninoyoo deshita* 夢の国のような [it was just like a dream land].” Hanako was the only Issei woman I interviewed who spoke of how beautiful it was when she arrived in Vancouver, and she was the only one not to refer to Canada as “Amerika.” Upon leaving Japan she was prepared to no longer see Japanese food or Japanese cultural phenomena. However, at her welcome party she was surprised with a beautifully arranged sushi dish. She had never dreamed of eating sushi on her first day in *gaikoku*, but there it was in Vancouver’s “Little Tokyo” of 1921. Japanese people were walking around, some in Western attire (e.g., suits and ties, dresses, bonnets, and parasols) and some in Japanese attire (e.g., *nihongi* "

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9 For happy occasions a parting-cup usually contains sake. A parting-cup that contains water indicates a life-long separation or death.

10 Vancouver’s “Little Tokyo” was the symbol for all Japanese Canadian communities in the province. See Nakayama (1921); Ito (1969:700); Shimpo (1975) for details.
The Early Days

Hanako began to teach the day after she arrived in Vancouver.

I was really scared of the students here. They were physically big and wore suits and ties. In those days this was uncommon in Japan, where only wealthy and prestigious people wore suits and ties. Also I wasn’t sure whether the children really understood me, even though they looked like Japanese in Japan. I was worried and scared. As soon as I opened my mouth they began giggling and laughing, but that meant they understood my Japanese. Although they teased me — “Hey, what a young teacher with a red hakama [culottes over kimono]” — and, chattered and laughed away, they were with me by the end of the day. They were jun 純 [rough and uncultured] but very pure. They had no pretentions whatsoever. They were very straightforward, I fell in love with them right away.

These children were probably why Hanako stayed in Canada for so long. Although at the time of my interview those “children” were in their sixties and seventies, she still referred to them as kodomo tachi 子供達 (children). When she arrived in Vancouver there were over 280 students and six experienced teachers in the Vancouver Japanese Language School. Hanako and her husband lived in the back of this school in a one-room apartment until they moved to a house on Pandora Street.

The Vancouver Japanese Language School was originally established in 1906 under the name “Japanese National School” (kokumin gakko 国民学校). At that time, the Nikkei community consisted mostly of newly arrived immigrants. Canada was their temporary home, and the policy of the Japanese National School reflected this fact. Except for one subject — English — the curriculum was identical to that of schools in Japan. This school was meant to prepare students for their eventual return to Japan. However, when Hanako arrived, the school’s policy was

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11 Many Issei women used this term for kimono. Some Nisei and Sansei still use the term.
gradually shifting towards language training, thus reflecting a new phase for the Japanese in Canada. Their early dreams had vanished, and the birds of passage had become permanent settlers. No longer was the purpose of the school to train a future generation of Japanese citizens but, rather, to train a future generation of Canadian citizens. The Nisei were to be educated in Canadian public schools. In 1921 the Japanese National School changed its name to the Vancouver Japanese Language School. It became an institution that taught Japanese language and culture. Yet when Hanako arrived, the majority of students were still being taught according to the Japanese education system, which meant all-day schooling in Japanese:

Many parents did not like Canadian public schools, often called *Hakujin gakko* 白人学校 [white people’s school]. They did not like the discrimination and the prejudice shown towards the Japanese. They wondered, “who would stay in this country with so much *haiseki* 排斥 [discrimination and prejudice]?” Yes, it was bad.

In our later conversations Hanako indicated that she had not directly encountered prejudice and discrimination but that, as a teacher, she was always conscious of it:

I was scared and worried for my children and was very sensitive about our Japanese customs and culture. We did not even eat our meals with chopsticks in front of White Canadians.13

I wonder whether this prewar habit of not using chopsticks stayed with some of the Nisei and Sansei as late as the 1970s. I noticed that some of them refused to use chopsticks, saying that they did not know how. Hanako and her husband, among others in the Japanese community, spent many hours trying to persuade parents to send their children to Canadian schools because they believed that it was important to encourage the Nisei to become good Canadians (Sato 1932, 1953).

13 Her comments reminded me of the time when I read *Tanemaki*, a collection of the Japanese Language School Students’ compositions, that reflected the sentiment of the time — not to offend their Canadian friends. One of the students wrote that even though she really loved Japanese pickles, she would not take them for lunch and eat them in front of her White friends because they really smelled bad and offended them.
By 1923 almost all Japanese Canadian children were enrolled in Canadian public schools; they learned Japanese at the Vancouver Japanese Language School after public school hours. Hanako sat through numerous committee meetings concerning the Vancouver Japanese Language School. She did not have any specific title, but she was the person who kept the records of most of these meetings. One of the associations with which she was involved was the *Boshi Kai* (Mother- Sister’s Association), which was established in 1923 and was a major link between students’ families and the school. Others were the Japanese Language School Educational Society (*Nihongo Gakko Kyooiku Kai* 日本語学校教育会) and the Society of Japanese Language Teachers Association (*Nihongo Kyooshi* 日本語教師会), which was also established in 1923. With the help of these organizations, the Japanese language schools in British Columbia overcame various hardships. These organizations set a guideline for Nisei education during the prewar years. In 1928 they rebuilt the Vancouver Japanese Language School in order to accommodate increasing numbers of Nisei (Canadian-born children) and in the 1940s they fought the Vancouver City Council’s anti-Japanese stance, which culminated in the closure of British Columbia’s forty-eight Japanese language schools.

While Hanako was working hard for Nisei education, other Issei women were preoccupied

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13 According to J. E. Brown, principal of Strathcona Public school in 1925, approximately 30 per cent of the students at Strathcona were Japanese Canadian, and, out of sixteen classes, they took 56 per cent of the top ten places. After five years, the numbers of the Japanese Canadian students at school increased 50 per cent (Ashworth 1979:105).

14 In 1920 there were seven Japanese language schools in British Columbia. Ten years later, in 1931, however, there were thirty-six schools. At the time of the exile in 1942, there were forty-eight Japanese language schools in British Columbia, and eight of them were in Vancouver (Sato and Sato 1980:161-162).

15 See the *Province* and the *Vancouver Sun* in the early 1940s to Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor 7 December 1941; Sato 1953; 1954 for more detail.
with reconciling their dreams with their realities. Right after arriving in Vancouver in 1920, Kuni purchased a set of Western clothes. A woman from the Japanese community took her to a shop that had been set up to cater to new immigrants. Proudly, she showed me a picture. She was carefully dressed in the fashion of that period -- a fashion that would prove to be totally unsuited to the life she would soon be leading. She sent a copy of this picture to her relatives in Japan. For a couple of months she lived with her husband in a boarding-house in the Japantown area.

Oh, it was a small place, smaller than this apartment. There was only one room and it had a bed, a kitchen area, and everything in it.

When she arrived she had discovered that her husband was not a farmer but a fisherman. The couple went out to work together during the fishing season. Kuni's husband was a booshin (foreman) for BC Packers on the south arm of the Fraser River, and he had twenty-five Japanese men working under him. He had been working there for many years. The year of Kuni's arrival was a bad year for fishers, and during that year she worked as a cook. After the fishing season, the couple went to a lumber camp where she again worked as a cook.

The old times were good. People took our credit. When we ran out of money we looked for a job and worked. The boarding-house owner waited for our payment until we got the money to pay. This kind of thing does not happen nowadays though. I was always worried about money because we were always short then. I knew I was prepared to work with my husband in Amerika, but I never thought of working as a cook in a logging camp or fishing camp. Ojisan loved to drink, and our money went on his drinks. But drinking was a social thing in the old days; the men gathered around drinking together with their fellow countrymen.

After working for a couple of years at various places in British Columbia, the couple bought a corner store on Vancouver's Powell Street for $1,000. Kuni operated the store while her husband continued to work for BC Packers. During the off-seasons, her husband helped her at the store.

At first we thought about buying a boarding-house, but there was not a good one to buy. In retrospect, it was a good idea that we did not do it. There were many boarding-house bankruptcies: the credit system ruined them. Besides, the flow of Japanese immigrants stopped in the late 1920s. With the arrival of many women and the growth of the Japanese
community, people had begun to settle in. In earlier days there were many single men around who needed a boarding-house. By the time I got the store and began to operate it, the boarding-house business was gone. You see, many men got married and the demand was gone.

She told me that she was capable of running the store without knowing English as most of her customers were Japanese. If she made mistakes her *hakujin* 白人 (white) customers pointed them out. Nostalgically, she told me about a group of students from the University of British Columbia who used to live in the Methodist Church boarding house (now a Buddhist Church) on Jackson Street. They used her store as a gathering place, studying and discussing their work while helping her out. One of the students became very close to her and her husband, looking after the store when she visited Japan in 1930.

Like many other Issei women, in her early days Kuni did not have close friends or relatives upon whom she could rely. Besides, the couple moved around a great deal and she did not have a chance to develop friendships. In our conversations, she often mentioned not having any children. She insisted that her hardships were minimal compared to those of women who had children. She saw many women going through incredible difficulties.

In the early days, there were not many *majime na hito* 真面目な人 [serious-minded men] around. There were many *dooraku mono* 道楽者 [playboys] then. I do not know how to describe *kuroo* 苦労 [the hardships] of women who had children. They stayed in Vancouver with their children in order to give them an education. The men went to earn money doing seasonal labour. Women were paid little, and they had to depend on their husbands for financial support. Often, however, the men got drunk and gambled, and they did not send enough money to feed and clothe their wives and children. Women suffered a lot.

But their *gaman* 我慢 [perseverance] kept their marriages together. They cried, but those women who suffered are now living comfortably. Yes, in our generation, women suffered a lot. We did not have any relatives to depend on. We did not know the language or cultural customs. We did not have close friends with whom to share our hardships. We cried and cried. And then the children came along. As I have said, many women stayed married because of their children. It was hard, indeed, Yuko [*Honto ni taihen datta yo, Yuko-san*] 本当に大変だったよ.
Kuni continued:

We were very isolated from our families in Japan. Now people find going to a foreign country easy. But see, at the time when I came here, it was very, very different. North America was a totally different world. We did not have enough information about North America. We had too many fantasies about this country. As I told you earlier, our dreams and the reality we faced upon our arrival were very different. But you know, once a woman got married, she had to stay married. That was okite 抱 [the rule] in our time. Leaving one’s husband and satogaeri 往帰り [returning to one’s home] was a disgrace for the family. Besides, we came to Amerika with great expectations, and people in Japan also had high hopes for us, you know. We could not turn down or ruin their dreams either, right? I suppose people might think this is nonsense.

Just like many other Issei women, Kuni accepted her life as it came.

Like many other immigrants before them, Japanese men were at the bottom of the Canadian social scale. The only way to express their frustrations was to drink and complain about their situation to their friends and fellow countrymen. While the men had an outlet for their frustrations, the women did not. So much the worse, they were forced to deal with the consequences of their husbands’ frustrations. Many men worked in primary industries as labourers, where they struggled with language problems, low wages, and discrimination. Housing was inadequate, and the women had insufficient funds with which to feed their families. Working conditions were difficult. Issei women often had occasion to make comments such as the following:

Our education was totally useless in Amerika. What a waste it was! Physical strength was essential then. (Kuni)

Economic needs and social pressures forced women to work as many of them simply could not afford to stay at home. Alongside their husbands, women cleared land and helped cut trees. They all worked: some as cooks in logging and mining camps, some in canneries, some as domestic servants or small storekeepers. Child-rearing was a woman’s responsibility. Many parents sent their young children to their parents in Japan so that they could work harder to make money, which was the primary concern of prewar Issei. According to Satsuko:
We were working too hard to overcome our material discomfort, to reach standards of middle-class Canadian living. We were too busy trying to make money and were alienating ourselves from our children.

Many Issei women held middle-class aspirations, believing that they could become part of mainstream Canadian society and possess all its material comforts. From the late 1930s to the early 1940s, many Issei women were finally beginning to settle comfortably into life in Canada, despite their cold reception on the part of mainstream Canadian society. Sadly, this enjoyment was not to last.

The War Years

After the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the federal government took immediate action to control the activities of the Nikkei communities in British Columbia. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) arrested thirty-eight Japanese who were considered to be "potentially dangerous" to national security and, subsequently, over 22,000 Japanese Canadians were "interned." Some 1,200 fishing boats, all owned or operated by naturalized citizens or Nisei, were impounded. On the advice of the RCMP, the forty-eight Japanese language schools in the province and the three Japanese newspapers published in Vancouver (Kanada Shinbun, Tairiku Nippo, and Nikkan Minshu) were closed as "precautionary measures." Even radios and cameras were taken away from Japanese Canadians (Adachi 1976; Shimpo 1975; Miki and

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16 Ann Sunahara (1981:66) points out that, under the Geneva Convention, the Canadian government could not have "interned" Japanese Canadians during the war because a majority of them were Canadian and naturalized citizens. Under the Geneva Convention only aliens may be interned. For this reason, the Canadian government used the term "detained."

17 The only ethnic newspaper circulated throughout the war was The New Canadian, an English and Japanese newspaper operated by Nisei. It began in 1937 as a semi-monthly publication, Voice of the Nisei. In 2001, however, not having enough subscribers in recent years The New Canadian terminated its operation.
On 24 February 1942, under the War Measures Act, the Canadian government ordered a mass evacuation of “enemy aliens” from the 100-mile coastal zone. Satsuko commented:

I still remember the time when ‘mauntii’ [RCMP] came and took away our cameras. Yes, I was so frightened. We were nothing but tekikoku jin 敵国人 [the enemy aliens]. Everything we worked for disappeared like bubbles [awa no yoo ni kiete shimatta 泡のように消えてしまった.] We tried so hard to become Canadians, but it was impossible.

This was the time the Murakamis’ photo studio was flourishing. Indeed, it was also the most productive period of their lives. Satsuko was thirty-six and her husband was forty-one and, they had four children ranging in age from four to ten. Her husband was sent to a road camp for several months (Adachi 1976:241; Shimpo 1975: 174-176). By the summer of 1942, the British Columbia Security Commission (BCSC) reluctantly allowed the Japanese to move as family units. The Murakami family moved to Lillooet, one of the self-supporting projects often referred to by other Nikkei as the “riches” camp. Only those who had enough money to show the government that they could support themselves during relocation were able to move to the self-supporting camps. They were allowed to take almost everything with them. Nobody knew how long the war would last. The Murakamis, being a self-supporting family, managed better than most other people. Their house on East 12th Avenue was rented out at twenty dollars per week.

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19 Between March and June 1942, a total of 2,161 Japanese Canadians were placed in road construction camps (e.g., Blue River, Yellowhead -- Revelstoke, Sicamous, Hope-Princeton, Schreiber and Black Spur).

20 The Nisei Mass Evacuation Group, which was formed on 15 April 1942, issued an open letter to the BC Security Commission opposing the unnecessary separation of families (Kitagawa 1985:37-44).

21 Normally each adult was allowed to carry 150 pounds of baggage and each child under twelve was allowed to carry seventy-five pounds. A family was allowed no more than 1,000 pounds.
After spending two years in Lillooet, the Murakamis' savings had diminished, the war seemed never-ending, and there was the problem of educating their four children. The town of Lillooet did not allow the Japanese evacuees to live within town limits. In the Nikkei settlement established four miles east of Lillooet, across the Fraser River (Miyazaki 1973:28), there was an elementary school but no secondary school. With no public transportation, and bicycles being too expensive, the children had to walk four miles every day. Even if they had had the money to buy bicycles, they could only be used during the summer. The Murakamis decided to move somewhere where they could find work and educate their children. In 1944 Mr. Murakami went to Vernon in the Okanagan Valley to look for a job, and the rest of the family moved there. During the fruit season all members of the family worked as fruit pickers. Gradually, Mr. Murakami began to resurrect his old trade of photography.

The outbreak of the war forced Hanako and her husband to leave the Vancouver Japanese Language School, which they had nurtured as though it were their own child. In June 1942 forty-one year old Hanako and fifty-one year old Mr. Sato moved to Alberta, where the Canadian Union College was located. Of the various options they had at the time, this one seemed best. Moving to Alberta meant that they were able to earn their living and did not have to spend money they wanted to save in order to eventually re-open the Vancouver Japanese Language School. They were to wait for ten years. Meanwhile, in Lacombe, Alberta, they managed the business of the Japanese Language School Council (ijikai 維持会), the Japanese Language School Educational Society (nihongo gakkō kyoiku kai 日本語学校教育会), and the Japanese library (nihon bunko 日本文庫).

The Canadian Union College owned over a thousand acres of land, which accommodated seventy to eighty cows, several horses, 200 to 300 chickens, honey bees, and over 300 male and

22. Many places in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario did not accept Japanese Canadians from British Columbia.
female students. There was no electricity, no gas, no running water. The college itself was self-sufficient. The couple lived like farmers and, for the first time in Canada, they dwelt among non-Japanese Canadians, mostly German and Russian Canadians. Hanako described her life in Lacombe as follows:

It was hard at the beginning, especially since we were “heathens.” But even at the end of our stay there, we were still heathens. Of course we got used to the life there, but we could not get converted, even after ten years, I should say. To become a Christian, one should stop questioning, and I could never do that. Being a teacher, I could not swallow and accept the Faith. But it was a very valuable experience for both of us. For the first time we were among non-Japanese. I learned how to grow a vegetable garden, how to can, and how to bake bread. Everything was quite new for me. Oh, we were not supposed to have coffee, alcohol, sugar, and meat... it was hard because we loved those “vices.” Another irony was that my husband did not do so well as a farmer. Later, he was transferred to the kitchen work where he worked with the women students.

During the long winter days, they visited various internment camps, where their former students and teachers lived. In 1944, with government permission, they toured British Columbia; and in 1946 they visited other provinces to see their former students and teachers. The following year they visited relocation camps in British Columbia, mostly in the Okanagan Valley (Sato and Sato 1969:339-389).

At the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Kinori, after moving between various remote logging camps in British Columbia, was finally living comfortably in Woodfibre, keeping house for her husband and children. The Woodfibre community was divided into two groups: those who left their valuables behind, expecting a swift return, and those who tried to take all their valuables with them. Each family could take only 1,000 pounds' worth of goods. Although what was left behind was to be guarded by the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property, it was never returned. Kinori’s family belonged to the first group, for her husband believed that they could return home with no problem. Kinori’s family and her Woodfibre Japanese community were forced to move
into a temporary camp located at the Pacific National Exhibition grounds in Vancouver. They were there along with other Japanese communities from the Pacific Coast. Conditions were bad. The family could not stay together because they were divided according to sex and age. There was a youths’ hall, a women’s hall (for women and children under six years), a men’s hall, and an elder’s hall. Kinori’s family stayed in this camp for four months.

Kinori’s baby was too young to cope with the drastic change. He cried and her neighbour complained; despite her efforts he became sick. It was two months before any doctors or nurses visited this temporary relocation camp. She tried to see a doctor but she was denied permission to leave the campground. When the doctors finally came, they pointed out that her son was undernourished and had to be hospitalized. Without treatment he would have become retarded. Kinori had not realized that her milk had dried up due to her traumatic experience and that her baby had not been getting sufficient nourishment for a long time.

I was so worried about my son. When I visited him in the temporary hospital I noticed some white spots in his eyes. I asked the nurse about it but she didn’t know what was wrong with him. Later the spots got bigger and almost covered his eyes. I demanded to see a pediatrician. It took me a long time to get permission. Finally I contacted the Nisei Mass Evacuation Group.

The Nisei formed the Nisei Mass Evacuation Group in reaction to the Mass Evacuation Order. The Canadian government had ordered that Japanese men and women be relocated separately, thus destroying the basic family unit. The Nisei Mass Evacuation group worked hard to get the general public’s support to relocate Japanese Canadians by family units. It took Kinori’s case and publicized it as a civil rights issue. Because of this her baby finally saw a pediatrician and was given an essential operation. Although this operation was able to remove the spots from his eyes, he never regained either his full eyesight or his full mental capacity. After their stay at the Pacific

23 Their letter to Austin Taylor, a British Columbia Security Commission officer, expressed their position quite well. See Kitagawa 1985:39.
National Exhibition Park the Okas moved to Lemon Creek, one of the British Columbia ghost towns that had been converted into a relocation camp.

My husband worked as a plumber. At the beginning he refused to work. He used to say, "I'm being called an 'enemy alien'; why do I have to work?" He was paid seventy-five cents per hour.²⁴

It seemed ironic to hear Kinori say that camp life was "heaven" compared to the life she had experienced before, when she was working hard day and night to make a living and to raise her children. In Lemon Creek she had time to enjoy her life for the first time, mostly practising her hobby—writing poetry. Indeed, she was quite active in a Haiku club in Lemon Creek.

Oh, I felt like leaving everything behind to travel and to make haiku just like Issa and Basho [17th century poets who travelled Japan to praise the beauty of life and nature]. It was my dream. How often it crossed my mind.

Camp life liberated Kinori from having to worry about whether or not her family would survive. For the first time since she had been in Canada she had security. Many Japanese women felt the same way as did Kinori. However, for Japanese men it was different. Used to being decision makers, bread earners, and the centre of their families (daikoku bashira 大黒柱), they found life in the relocation camps demoralizing. Their sense of pride was gone. In the early stage of the relocation period many men developed heavy drinking and gambling habits and constantly fought amongst themselves. Men had a hard time regaining their sense of self-worth and pride and redirecting their energy. Eventually, when life in camps became more settled, they began to create new lives: fishing, gardening, making Japanese gardens and tea houses, and conducting Japanese cultural talent shows and sports activities.

²⁴ Twenty-five cents per hour was the regular wage for Japanese Canadian evacuees during the war years. Kinori's husband was considered well paid. See La Violette (1948: 102-108) for the welfare of Japanese Canadians during the war.
Soon after the mass evacuation order, Kuni’s husband was sent to Slocan City. All First World War veterans were asked to work in the British Columbia interior, where there were many internment camps (e.g., in Sandon, New Denver, Slocan, Kaslo, and Tashme 25) The veterans’ job was to supervise the relocation camps. Meanwhile, in Vancouver, for several months Kuni observed the process of evacuation and the confusion of the Japanese community. She saw many of her friends leave for various camps in British Columbia.

It was like *iki wakare* 生き別れ [a life-long separation] to see my friends off to the camps because we did not know what was awaiting us.

Her small store was a gathering place where news were exchanged. The Nikkei community was completely paralyzed. Because it no longer had Japanese newspapers, and because many of its leaders had been sent to the road camps, the community was filled with confusion and uncertainty. Stories were fabricated, and people did not know what was awaiting them. Some thought that people were being killed in the camps. A dear friend of Kuni’s refused to go to a road camp because it meant being separated from his wife and young children. Because of his refusal he was sent to Angler, a prisoner of war camp, in Ontario (Nakano 1980; Kuwabara 1995). Kuni mentioned that she and her husband did not lose much property because they did not have much to lose. They owned the store and the house, but the land was not theirs. Her husband sold his fishing boat, to which he had finally acquired ownership, before his departure to Slocan. Kuni insisted on staying in Vancouver until the last train left. She went to the Marine Building where the Custodian Office was located, and asked for permission to stay until the end. She received special permission to do so because, after all, she was the wife of a First World War veteran.

I stayed in Vancouver till the 30th of October 1942, the last day of the evacuation order program. My train was the last one to leave Vancouver.

25 Tashme was named after Taylor, Shirras, and Mead, members of the BCSC. It is now called Sunshine Valley and is a resort.
She emphasized the fact that she was on the last train to the camp. Later in our discussion she told me, with a mischievous glint in her eyes, that she had some hope that the Japanese army would come and that she felt that some Japanese should be in Vancouver to welcome them. She waited every day for the Japanese army, but it did not come. By the time she left for Slocan she had sold everything in the store. She was forty-seven years old.

In Slocan a different life was awaiting her. Her dear friend and her children went to Slocan with Kuni and lived with her and her husband until the end of the war. Kuni lived in Slocan for nine years. In Slocan the residents of the internment camp lived communally. Kuni had no real occupation; she was, as she mentions below, just “killing time.” Many people gathered for classes in cooking, Japanese music, art, and poetry. People did not have to struggle to make a living, and everybody lived under the same conditions. There were no rich and there were no poor. She found the breakdown of economic distinctions to be a positive thing and referred to her time in Slocan as being “better than before the evacuation days.” Although it was very hard for many people to accept the fact that they were being uprooted and removed from their communities, for some life in the camps was not unpleasant. The physical environment improved gradually, and they began another life. Many women did not have to worry about feeding and clothing their children. Life stabilized. Since nobody was better off than anybody else, there was no competition.26

I was playing or killing my time in the camp. Everybody had a small lot on which to grow vegetables. Growing and showing off our produce was one of the big things in the camp. Once I tried too hard and gave too much fertilizer and killed my vegetables. I did not know how to grow vegetables.

26 Joseph Roucek (1966) also mentions some positive aspects of mass evacuation: (1) the evacuation of the Japanese from the coastal regions broke up a rigid hierarchy; and (2) it indirectly released the positive forces that were needed if Japanese Canadians were to secure political equality and economic opportunity.
People were paid 25 cents per hour to cut firewood for us, which used to be my job. I did not have to make *furo* [heating Japanese bath]. We really did not have much to do. It was not a luxurious life, but it was a stable and secure life for most of us. Everybody had the same type of house and the same living accommodations - - a two-by-four bed and a kitchen. Everybody was equal and we had a carefree life in the camp.

This newly established community ended, along with the war, in 1945. Now people were confronted with yet another difficult problem. In the spring of 1945, while Japanese Americans were free to return to their home on the west coast, Japanese Canadians were compelled to choose between “dispersal” east of the Rockies or “repatriation” to Japan. In early 1945 all persons of Japanese ancestry over sixteen years of age had to report to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to state whether or not they intended to “repatriate” to Japan. Those who did not wish to be repatriated had to “cooperate” with the government, and to provide as evidence of their “loyalty to Canada,” by moving east of the Rockies, where nobody welcomed them.  

This was the so-called Repatriation Paper. Many Nisei chose to go east, where there were more opportunities than in the west. Issei preferred to return to Japan. While older Nisei refused to repatriate to Japan with their parents, Nisei who were minors had no choice (Kage 1998). And so for the second time many Japanese Canadian families and communities were broken up.

Some Nikkei, like Kinori and her husband, signed the Repatriation Paper and encouraged

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27  See Adachi 1976; Shimpo 1975; Sunahara 1981 and others for details.

28  The so-called repatriation order was issued by the Minister of Labour in February 1945. Except for Saskatchewan, provinces east of the Rockies responded negatively, refusing to accept Japanese Canadians on a permanent basis. See Shimpo 1975: 270-286. Between May and December 1946, about 4,000 Japanese Canadians and Japanese Nationals returned to Japan. Over 50 per cent of these were Canadian-born.
others in the camps to do so as well. Mr. Matsumoto, however, decided to remain in Canada, and Kuni publicly supported his decision. Her husband tried to persuade other members of the Slocan community to stay in Canada. However, some felt that he had been co-opted, referring to him as a “black hairy barbarian” (kurogami-no-ketoo 黒髪の毛髪).

Kuni told me about the day when a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer came to talk to her. They began interviewing Japanese Canadians in April 1945, a couple of months before the defeat of Japan.

One day a government officer came and asked me about my decision concerning repatriation. He wanted to hear my decision. But I told him that a Japanese woman always follows her husband’s decision. He did not question me any more.

In 1948 the Canadian government granted the franchise to Japanese Canadians, and the following year the British Columbia provincial government followed suit. However, Nikkei were still not allowed to move freely. In 1949, when Japanese Canadians were allowed to leave the camps with permission, Mr. Matsumoto tried to leave Slocan. However, Kuni liked the countryside and did not want to return to Vancouver. Not knowing what was waiting for Japanese Canadians in Vancouver, she was afraid to go back. Furthermore, after several years of living in Slocan it had become her home. She enjoyed the slow, pleasant pace of country life and felt very safe there. Many of her friends suggested that she insist upon remaining in Slocan so that her husband would give up the idea of moving back to Vancouver. However, she finally left Slocan in 1951. Her dear friends wanted to go back to Vancouver with them but were not allowed to move back to British Columbia. They suggested that Kuni and her husband go to Toronto with them, but her husband did not want to go east: he loved fishing and wanted to return to Vancouver.

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29 Upon Japan’s defeat, Kinori’s husband changed his mind. Tsurumi (1962) in her study coins a term chinjimari gata チンジマリ型 (change one’s mind) and uses it as a category under which to list people like Mr. Oka.
Upon his return, he purchased a small fishing boat and, until his retirement in 1960, continued to trade his boats for bigger and bigger ones. Kuni bought another store located on Powell Street, on the site where the first office of Language Aid opened in 1972. Like Kuni, many other Issei women returned to Vancouver in the early 1950s. Before their return to Vancouver quite a few Issei women acquired Canadian citizenship.

The Postwar Years

By the end of the 1950s Mr. Matsumoto began to complain of bad health and wanted to retire. He decided it was time to go back to Japan. In 1960 they sold all their property in Canada and returned to Japan. Kuni was sixty-six and her husband was in his eighties. She told her friends that they were going to visit their family grave (ohaka-mairi お墓参り), implying that their trip was not permanent, but her husband told everybody that they were going to Japan “for good.” For a couple of months they lived with her husband’s sister, and then they purchased a house. Kuni and her in-laws hoped the house would keep Mr. Matsumoto in Japan.

I knew Ojisan could not stay in Japan for too long. He was too impatient. After less than a year we came back to Vancouver. Many people thought we were ghosts. Yes, I still remember the expression on their faces.

They moved into the Richmond Hotel on Powell Street. After a year, they moved into an apartment on Cordova Street facing Oppenheimer Park, where Kuni still lived at the time of our interview. Mr. Matsumoto died in 1973, when Kuni was seventy-nine. The couple did not have

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30 This was founded in 1972 in response to the growing awareness of the daily problems of non-English speaking residents in Greater Vancouver area. It provided information referral, counselling, interpretation, translation, and home visiting. It served five language groups. In April 1976 this organization was amalgamated into a new non-profit society called MOSAIC, offering multilingual social services.

31 Part of the custom of ancestor worship includes paying respect to one’s deceased relatives at the the place where they are buried.
any children or blood relatives in Canada. Her husband was the only person upon whom Kuni had depended, and now he was gone. She had been living in Canada for over half a century yet could not cope with her husband’s funeral because she could not speak English. My friend, a Shin-Issei who worked at Language Aid (then located in the 300 block Powell Street and later moved to 300 block East Hastings) assisted her in making preparations for her husband’s funeral. In 1974 Kuni took the ashes of her husband back to his family grave in Japan and, with her Japanese in-laws, held a memorial service for him. Her relatives suggested that she spend the rest of her life in Japan. They thought that there was no reason for her to stay in Canada after her husband’s death. She explained why she decided not to remain in Japan.

It is really true that whenever I return to Japan I feel the stiff, rigid social norm I had forgotten a long time ago. I am not so formal now. It seems to me that I am not a “real Japanese.” People in Japan are too formal and too confined. Here in Canada, I can say “hello” and the business will be over, but in Japan you bow and bow and comment about the weather, even though you do not really care about it. I don’t think I can go back to that formality any more. Also, my relatives over-protect me, and I cannot move around by myself.

Kuni felt close to her relatives in Japan but, at the same time, did not want to depend on them. Here in Canada she had many friends with whom to share her past experiences. In Japan there was nobody. She could not reminisce about her experiences in Canada with her friends in Japan, nor could they share their experiences with her as their personal histories were very different from hers. She also felt that life in Canada was care-free, and she liked it that way. In 1977 she returned to Japan and sold her property.

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32 Conner’s (1972) study notes that, due to their limited contact with mainstream culture, Issei women were the least acculturated of three generations of Japanese-Americans in Sacramento, California. Kimura (1979) also points this out.

33 “Kimama ni sugoseru 気ままに過ごせる” (can live her life as she pleases) was the expression she used.
It is funny that my relatives still want me back. They often mention that I should *make sure* that my *ashes* are sent to them.

The Lemon Creek camp was closing up, and the Okas moved to New Denver. Life in New Denver was very important for **Kinori**, and she began to immerse herself in Christianity. She decided, following a missionary’s advice, to send her son to a school for handicapped children in New Westminster. She believed that English was essential if Japanese Canadians were to survive in Canada, and she formed a group dedicated to learning.

I went around to houses to explain how important it was to learn the language. We would be associating more with White people, so it was necessary for us to learn English. We had a gathering of thirty-five. The teacher was Miss G.

She converted to Christianity, and eventually her whole family converted as well. In reflecting on this period of her life she commented:

> Without my involvement in Christianity and my Haiku Club I could not have survived. I hated the world, I hated myself. I really think Christianity saved me.

The following is a haiku she composed during this period:

*sei mo shi mo hin mo kunan mo nanikasen*  
*kamihitosuji ni mio makase naba.*  

> Life and death, poverty and hardships  
> no longer matter, if I follow God

生も死も 貧も苦難もなにかせん  
神一筋に身をまかせなば

In 1951, both Kinori and her husband acquired their Canadian citizenship, and the following year they moved to Nelson, where she found a job at a Roman Catholic hospital.

I worked at a hospital and my husband worked as a watchman and gardener. We were well accepted there. I was allowed to keep many keys. What a responsibility it was. People really trusted us.

This job gave Kinori self-confidence as well as financial independence. Her husband suggested

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34 Kanada Nikkei Godo Kyokai Kyogikai (Japanese Canadian United Church committee) 1973:8.
that they keep separate bank accounts, and so for the first in her life she opened her own account:

Oh, it was fun to watch my money grow; the amount got bigger and bigger. Then I realized what I had been missing before. I could not believe how much money my husband was getting before, and how much he was wasting on alcohol. He drank too much.

With her own money, she began to plan a visit to Japan to see her mother. She wrote home and found out that her mother had been dead for a long time. That was when her husband began to talk about moving back to Vancouver. He was getting old and his job was getting too hard for him. Kinori agreed, and in 1955 they moved to Vancouver and began to operate a corner store on Commercial Drive. She informed me that she wanted to buy a house but that her friends pointed out that a store could provide both a house and an income. The small confectionary store was registered under her name. She explained why:

On the way back to Vancouver I found out that my husband did not have any money. I could not believe it. He earned more than I did but did not have any money left when we left Nelson. I was ready to return to Nelson but could not. What could I have said to the people who gave us a nice farewell party? I could not return there because my husband did not have any money. So I told my husband that it might not appear right to register the store under my name because it would ruin his public face in the Japanese community, where a man is always considered to be the decision maker. But I told him that I was going to do it anyway. Besides, I was the one who bought the store. I did not want to be like my mother, not having any knowledge of and control over money. Her life was miserable. My husband did not argue with me. He said “That’s fine with me.”

In 1960 Mr. Oka died. Kinori described him as a good-natured man despite his drinking. When I accompanied her to the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) grounds in the summer of 1976, she recalled pleasant memories of her late husband and how they visited the grounds every summer for fun. She continued operating the store for a while after her husband’s death. During that time her store was twice broken into. Shortly after these incidents her neighbour, the

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35 I found this hard to comprehend, knowing that this was the site of her agony, the place where her much loved son took sick. But she simply remembered it as a pleasant amusement park where she had fun with her late husband.
Chinese Canadian owner of a corner store, was killed by burglars. She decided it was time to close the business and to take a vacation with her second daughter. In 1965 she visited her home country, for the first time since 1927. The Japan she knew and imagined was quite different from the Japan she saw.

Kinori often emphasized the fact that, against her wishes, both of her daughters had married *hakujin* 白人 (white men). She said that her eldest daughter had had a fiance in Japan:

> A white man stole my daughter [娘をとられたよmusume o torareta yo]. If my husband were alive he would have never allowed this to happen. And you know what? My second daughter got married to another white man. Oh, my family is ruined forever. It cannot be helped [しかたがない] but it really is sad, you know. There is no one to succeed our family name. The family line is destroyed now.

Interestingly, in our earlier conversation, she had told me about her positive feelings toward *hakujin*:

> When I was in Japan I did not like *hakujin* at all. But I began to like them after I started having some contact with them. They were more open-minded people than the Japanese. They do not look down at you because you are a house worker [i.e., domestic worker]. It’s none of their business, you know. I really like that. We Japanese have to learn from them. Japanese people look for other people’s shortcomings. They are too nosey.

It seems that Kinori had conflicting feelings about *hakujin*. However, she is not alone in this; her comments reflected many Issei women’s thoughts about their children’s marriages. Some proudly showed me photos of their children and their non-Japanese Canadian in-laws and grandchildren. Some pointed out, with a hint of sadness, that they could not go against the wind since most of their children have little contact with other Japanese Canadians, most of whom are their siblings and relatives. After her youngest daughter’s marriage, Kinori wanted to live closer to her Japanese friends, but her daughters did not like the idea:

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36 Japanese Canadians tried very hard to assimilate into mainstream Canadian life after the war so that they could not be accused of being non-assimilated immigrants and thus have to contend with another relocation or some other form of discrimination. They wanted to be invisible so that they could attain the same benefits as other Canadian citizens.
Probably they felt I was going to leave them. They also felt insecure whenever my Japanese friends visited me. You see, my daughters do not speak Japanese. But recently, you know what? One of them began to take Japanese lessons. Kinori lived in an apartment on Main Street owned by one of her sons-in-law, and she managed to exist on her Old Age Pension and the income from small investments. She was very attached to the Japanese community, where she could share her sociocultural identity. However, during the initial interviews in 1976 and 1977, she was living outside of that community. She explained why she had made this decision:

Of course, I want to live close to my friends, but most of them cannot keep out of other people’s business. They have to know everything around them. If there is a Japanese senior citizen’s home . . . I see the convenience of it but it would be too much for me. I’d rather be here.

In 1978 I saw Kinori in Japantown. She looked happy and informed me that she had moved into Sakuraso, the Japanese Senior Citizens’ apartment in Japantown. In the interview she stated that she was now in paradaisu (paradise). Her attitudes towards the Japanese community and Japanese people in general seemed to have changed. Her sister-in-law, whom she formerly described as “nasty,” was now a charming lady with whom she had had a wonderful reunion that summer (1978) in Toronto. The “gossipy and nosey” Japantown neighbours were now thought to be “warm.” She no longer went to church (formerly the focus of her life) and described Sakuraso as “a wonderful place”: “people are dropping in and out all the time and I do not even have time to call my daughter.” Being with her friends with whom she could converse in Japanese and could share her life experiences with, she was no longer lonely.

Satsuko’s children began university in Vancouver and when her youngest child graduated from high school her family decided to move back to Vancouver. This was in 1951, a year before they obtained Canadian citizenship. Like Kuni, Satsuko told me that she did not want to move
back to Vancouver. She had settled comfortably in Vernon and was having a new house built there. However, her husband was determined and told her. “I will make it again in Vancouver [mooichido vankuubaa de yatte miseru もう一度バンクーバーでやってみせる]. He was in his early fifties and she was in her late forties. They put all their valuables in a truck and drove off in the winter of 1953, taking the dangerous road from Vernon to Vancouver. Upon their arrival in Vancouver they searched for a site for a new photo studio. They decided to open their business on East Hastings, where they thought the location had some future. Mr. Murakami and Satsuko ran the business until their retirement in 1979:

> We really looked around but we could not find a good spot for me. Nowadays Powell Street is OK, but in the early 1950s it was really nothing. Little Tokyo was dead. It was really sad. But there were a substantial number of Japanese in the city by the time we came out. We were latecomers.

After a couple of months living in an apartment, they found a house on West 20th Avenue and began their new life. For a while Satsuko volunteered as a teacher at the Vancouver Japanese Language School. In the morning, she went downtown to work as a tailor in a men’s clothing shop, where she worked for eighteen years. In the evening she helped her husband develop films and make prints. “I don’t know how I managed,” she recalled. She continued this routine until her retirement in 1972.

In 1958 her eldest daughter was married. “Of course it is a ‘love marriage’ [mochiron renaikekkon desuyo 好論 恋愛結婚ですよ],” she told me. All of her four children married in the western fashion: renai kekkon (love marriages). Two of them married “hakujin-san,” and two married Japanese Canadians. She told me that it was interesting to have both a hakujin-san daughter-in-law and son-in-law. When the government brought the repatriation paper to them in 1945 they had signed it without hesitation. However, after their eldest daughter declared that she wanted to remain in Canada instead of going with the family to Japan, they reconsidered their
decision and decided to stay in Canada rather than break up the family:

You see, Ojisan had never thought about staying here permanently. I used to go to the bank not knowing how much money he was sending to his mother. You see, when we visited Japan in 1958 we took out some money from the bank. It was not much, due to the devaluation of the Japanese yen after the war. But for the first time I realized how much Ojisan wanted to return. The amount was quite a lot by the standard of the old days. So, when the time came we signed the repatriation paper. Then our eldest daughter told Ojisan that she preferred to go east instead of going back to Japan. You know what? She is the one living in Japan now.

The year their eldest daughter married was the year when their youngest child graduated from university. That same year they took their youngest daughter to Japan to introduce her to their relatives. In 1963 they purchased a house in the middle of an affluent neighbourhood in Vancouver. Satsuko told me how her husband loved buying houses. They often had big parties and invited both pre- and postwar Nikkei to their place. In 1970 they visited Expo'70 in Osaka and then travelled around Europe.

We expected to spend all our money in Japan but we were so well treated and did not spend much money. So we decided to go to Europe to spend the money. Oh, it was really nice. I especially liked the mountains in the Bavarian region in Germany. In France I did not understand anything. Italy was fun. You see, I worked with Italian women for so many years at the tailor shop that I was familiar with the sound of the language.

Among the approximately fifty Japanese language schools that existed prior to 1942, the only one to survive the war was the one on Alexander Street, the Vancouver Japanese Language School, which the Satos reopened in 1952. During the war it had been rented out to the Ministry of Defence, and it almost met the same fate as did other Nikkei properties liquidated by the Custodian of Enemy Property. In 1947 a number of the directors of the Vancouver Japanese Language School met in Toronto to discuss the future of the school. They decided that, given the situation of the Nikkei community, it was best to dispose of the building. They felt they had no choice. In that same year, Mr. and Mrs. Sato were delegated to return to Vancouver to carry out
this decision. Since they had spent nearly a lifetime developing the school, they felt that this task was akin to burying their own child (kodomo no osooshiki ni iku yoona shinkyoo deshita 子供のお葬式に行くような心境でした). In Vancouver their lawyer informed them that, since the building was public property, it could not be sold without the formal consent of its duly appointed trustees. The board of directors met once again in Toronto (Japanese Canadians could not return to the west coast without permission until 1949) to review its decision regarding the future of the school. The directors were divided into two groups, one that feared Japanese Canadians would never be allowed to rebuild their community on the west coast and who thus wanted to sell the building, and one that wanted to keep the school for possible future use. The debate between the two factions raged on until 1952. Finally the board of directors decided to preserve the school on Alexander Street. Today, few Japanese Canadians know of the efforts that were made to ensure the survival of the Vancouver Japanese Language School (Shibata 1986).

On 6 September 1952, eleven years after the closure of the school, the Satos obtained permission from the Ministry of Education to reopen it. On that date Japanese lessons began again in the gymnasium of the United Church at 220 Jackson Street because the original school was still being reconstructed. As in the prewar years, Mr. Sato was the principal and Hanako was a teacher. The photograph of Hanako and her husband with their new students in front of the Vancouver Japanese Language School shows that the postwar students comprised a more varied group than did the prewar students. The students now ranged from young children to adults and had varying levels of competency in Japanese. Hanako explained:

It was a completely different experience for us. This had to do with age differences as well as differences in the levels of students. In the old days, students began from the first grade. At that time more than half of the students at Strathcona School began from the first grade. After public school they walked a couple of blocks to the JLS. It was easy for them. But now, the students live far away from school; they have to commute.

Postwar students consisted of everyone from young children to older professionals, such
as doctors, nurses, and ministers, who wanted to learn the language. Everybody had different needs. In the evening we had a class for these students, but it was more like a tutorial session because everybody was at a different level. Also, parents were not as keen as in the old days. If the children did not like to continue, they accepted it. Many did not stay long enough to enjoy the language. After one month or so, many left. It was hard to get a feeling for the students as a group.

In 1966, they retired from teaching. Hanako recalled their early retirement days:

Although it was lonesome not seeing the students it was nice to be at home. We had been living for the “public” so long that we had no privacy to speak of. If we had children of our own, the circumstance would have been different. Our house was always open for students and guests. In the old days, “teacher” was setshoku 聖職 [sacred profession] and we had to be different from ordinary people. I was often talked about. “Even though she is a teacher, she did this and that . . .” I did not feel really relaxed. I always felt that I was wearing kabuto [armour], and I was on guard all the time. I’m sure my personality contributed to this, but I think I became “kamaeru” [on guard] due to my many years of teaching. We were the topic of conversation. When we ate an ice cream cone or went to the movies, people talked about us. After our retirement, I really felt relaxed. It really was nice to have a quiet private life of our own.

Right after their retirement, her husband’s health began to fail, and Hanako’s chores increased. Although she retired from teaching in 1966, her activities continued. After their supposed retirement the Satos published three books based on episodes based in the history of Japanese Canadians in British Columbia. “Writing books” meant that her husband dictated and she took notes, edited, and published them. Hanako had devoted her life to the education of Nisei. When I asked her whether she could have accomplished what she did if she had had children of her own, she immediately replied.

Of course not. I could not have spent my full energy teaching. I can give you a good

37 A term often used to describe the teaching profession in Japan; in English it means “priesthood.”

38 In 1969 they published Kodomo to tomoni gojunen: (Fifty Years With Children). In 1976, Zoku - kodomo to tomoni gojunen (Building the Bridge) was published, commemorating the Vancouver Japanese Language School’s first seventy years. It was at this time that I first met Hanako in person. The Satos were writing yet another book, which, they told me, would be their last. That book, Kanshya no Isshoo (Living in Gratitude), was published in 1980.
example. Our good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Aoki, both of whom had a similar background to us, graduated from the teachers training college Shihan. They went to Cumberland to teach and we taught in Vancouver. My friend had five or six children. She raised "rippana shimin" splendid citizens, yet she could not teach and spend much time with the students like I had done. I did not have my own children but I have over 3,000 children all over Canada and Japan.

She then reflected on her life:

If I had been competent in the language, I could have done something bigger for the Japanese community. In the old days, we did not have to study English. When we needed some help, we had our children who could help us. I suppose we were spoiled. In the old days, we wanted more contact with the hakujin people, but we could not have that.

In the old days, teaching was called seishoku. We had to behave well to set a good example for our children. It seems that I still have this quality, so I cannot blend with others so easily. I am not like other people who enjoy their retirement years by taking a trip to Reno or sunny places or go bowling with their friends; I cannot say "yes" easily and join them. Probably this is the reason people say that I am snobbish.

Life in the Early 1980s

When I visited Hanako in 1982, both of us had changed. I was married and had a daughter, and Hanako had just turned eighty-two. Her husband had been in hospital for a couple of months and had just come back home. Although she was getting help from her "kodomo tachi" children, former students, looking after both herself and her sick husband was getting harder for her. She often used the term mijime miserable. Her mind was as clear and as sharp as before, but her body could not keep up with it. Nevertheless, she still talked and acted like a proper teacher, speaking clearly in polite Japanese, carrying herself well, with her silver-grey hair in place and her movements precise and graceful.39 I was reminded of something she had said to me at our initial encounter seven years ago as she aided her husband in greeting visitors in

39 It is interesting that Hanako was the only Issei woman whom I could not call Obasan; rather, I called her Hanako-sensei (teacher Hanako) throughout our conversation.
their living room:

I cannot go [die] before him. He cannot find anything by himself.
watashi wa sakini ikemasen. Sato wa namino jibun de mitsukerare masen kara. 私は先に行けません。佐藤はなにも自分で見つけられませんから。

It was very difficult to separate Hanako from her husband, who was ninety-one and often said:

"I wonder how long I will live. I feel sorry for Hanako having to look after me like this. It is already November now so I suppose I could survive this year." Hanako died in 1983 before her husband.

Reflecting upon her life in Canada, Hanako told me that hers was not the typical life of a proper wife:

I have been behaving or acting like a man, not like a woman in the Japanese traditional sense. I am not a traditional Japanese. I could not have done lots of things if I stayed in Japan.

Hanako described the changes that had occurred in her neighbourhood:

Nowadays, we cannot describe Canada as hakujin no kuni 白人の国 [white Canada] as we used to do. Vancouver is no longer English, white Canada. Look around this neighbourhood. There are many East Indians and Koreans. We no longer need to be ashamed of our ethnic background. A need for the Japanese language is also changing in the Japanese community. It is no longer a must, as it used to be. Parents speak good English, so children do not have to learn their parents’ language. This is how history changes but it is sad. [for us Japanese language teachers]

Kuni was another Issei woman who observed changes in her surroundings. She told me that, on her first visit back home in 1930, she found Japan relatively unchanged, although her family’s soy sauce factory had been converted into a theater. At the time of her second visit in 1960, the theatre had become a moviehouse; and on the third and fourth visits, she found that it had become a furniture factory and then an apartment complex, respectively. She commented that she felt that life in Japan was economically and environmentally difficult for old people. In contrast, life in
Canada was care-free, the environment spacious.

I don’t have any children, so anywhere I go I am always alone and lonesome, so it really does not matter where I end my life. My relatives in Japan always say, “It is best to be close to your ancestors, so please come home, Kuni-san.” My sister-in-law begged me to return to Japan before I die. I did not comment on her request. My relatives in Japan will get my ashes when I die but they won’t get me before that. I have been asking many people to send my ashes to Japan. For me, it makes no difference, but it matters to them.

In Japan, she found the cost of living high and life both too busy and too restricted. She saw no reason to live in such a place, preferring to live in Canada, in the more relaxed style to which she had become accustomed. She also felt that people in Japan were not as friendly as people in Vancouver. The only people in Japan who cared about her were her relatives. The rest were all aka-no-tanin 赤の他人 (total strangers):

You see, here in Vancouver, especially around this area, whenever I see someone who looks like a Japanese, we smile at each other to acknowledge our presence. But in Japan, you get ignored by people. They are cold people. I suppose that there are too many people and people cannot pay attention to everyone.

When I began my fieldwork I often saw Kuni at Language Aid, and she was often en route to or from her husband’s grave. I still remember her well-groomed white hair, her quiet but assertive voice and movements, and the precise and self-assured way she walked.

It is good exercise for me and besides I have nothing to do. The government gave me a lot [land] for the grave. You see, Ojisan was a giyuu hei 義勇兵 (First World War volunteer soldier). After I am gone, nobody will visit him.

She told me that she went to his grave at least once a month and that when the weather was nice she tried to go more often. She developed cataracts which were operated on in 1978. Due to her bad eyesight she often came to the Language Aid office with letters to be addressed. She loved to talk about her young relatives in Japan, her nephew’s sons and daughters, who often called her Haikara ハイカラ Obasan (meaning modern and westernized aunt). She would laugh and say:
Don’t you think it’s funny that they think I could speak English because I have been living in Canada for all these years? And you know what, I wouldn’t tell them how little English I know.\(^{40}\)

Since 1977 the Powell Street Festival, a mid-summer event at Oppenheimer Park, has been a special community event for Japanese Canadians. It is here that I often refresh my associations with many of my friends in the community. At the 1982 Powell Street Festival I saw Satsuko, but not her husband. She told me about her husband’s sudden death in the spring of 1981.

But I can’t be too sad about his death. Life has to go on. Here I am trying to keep the Sketch Club which Ojisan started.

Their house, which was too big without her husband, was now the home of two of her granddaughters who were at university. She took good care of them and made sure that they had enough to eat. She told me that sometimes she went grocery shopping three times a day because it was good exercise for her.

They are very different from my daughters. Probably times have changed. Through this experience I realize how easy my children were. My daughters were good; they respected me; they never screamed at me. Oh, my granddaughters, they are beyond my comprehension! My daughter advised me not to get involved too much. So I learned to observe as an outsider. Well, it is a good experience for me to live with the younger generation.

Satsuko looked back on her life and said that she felt fulfilled. She suffered no great traumas (except, of course, the Second World War), and did not experience the continuous suffering that was the lot of many other Issei women:

Probably my sister suffered more than I did. Financially, I did not worry at all. During the Second World War we went to Lillooet when my sister and children went to Greenwood.

\(^{40}\) One day she told me how frustrated she was not being able to read street names when she missed the bus stop to attend the funeral of one of her friends. She could not tell the bus driver where she wanted to get off and, consequently, arrived one hour late for the service. She asked me to make English alphabet flash cards so that she could practise her English.
Her husband was in the internment camp in Alberta. As for my children, they were good. I don’t remember having problems with them. I travelled enough and saw the world. Many of my friends tell me that my life has been a good one, and I agree with them. I am sure if I had not married Ojisan my life would have been quite different.

The last time I talked to Satsuko, she was ready to take off for yet another visit to Japan with one of her granddaughters. Many things were planned for Satsuko this time. One of the main purposes of this trip was to attend her stepfather’s fiftieth memorial service. She planned to visit the graves of her husband’s mother and her own parents.

Postscript

Every spring during cherry blossom season, I attempted to take Kuni out to the Nitobe Garden at the University of British Columbia. We never made it and we never will. The blossoms were gone when I had time, and it was too cold for her when we were both free. In the Spring of 1982 I had phoned her a few times to go Ohanami お花見 (viewing the cherry blossoms). No answer. She was working in her garden as usual, I thought. I tried again in the evening. No answer. Worried about her, I contacted my friend at Tonari Gumi. He informed me that she had gone to Japan again and that she would be back by the end of April. He was supposed to meet her at the airport. Yes, I thought, visiting Japan again. Kuni has been saying “this is my last visit to Japan” since I first knew her. I left a message for her with my friend as I was planning to be away from Vancouver and would not be present when she returned. I would see her on my return and ask her about the “real Ohanami” 本当のお花見 in Japan.

My friend called when I returned from vacation and informed me that Kuni had died in Japan on the way to the airport in Tokyo, where she was going to transfer to a flight to Vancouver. I

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41 Cherry-blossom viewing. Ohnuki-Tierney (1998) argues that, throughout history, cherry blossoms and their viewing have constituted one of the most significant dimensions of Japanese culture.
knew she was old but did not realize how fragile she had become. Although I knew that she had been well prepared for her death, I was not. That evening I dug out my old manuscripts on Kuni. In its own way, my bumpy writing described her well, at least for me. I could see and hear her talking and laughing with me. It was just like Kuni to die on the way to Vancouver. I was certain that all her relatives had again tried to persuade her to remain in Japan and had failed. As she used to proclaim, “Oh well, this time it is my last!” Despite her relatives “lecturing her to stay in Japan,” for Kuni, Vancouver was home. I believe that when she left Nagasaki for the last time, her mind and heart were in Vancouver. In June 1982 there was a memorial service for her at the Buddhist Church in her old neighbourhood, where her many friends honoured her memory.

B: Nisei Women

Of the seven Nisei women who took part in this study (Ellen b. 1922; Lillian b. 1922; Fumiko b. 1929; Mary b. 1930; Midge b. 1930; Aya b. 1930; Eiko 1935) at the time of the interviews, in 1996 - 97, two were in their mid-seventies, four were in their mid-sixties, and one was in her early sixties (the latter being the only one in the workforce). Three of the women were married to Nisei men, one was married to a non-Japanese Canadian, two were widows (one since 1980 and one since 1995), and one was divorced. All of them, with the exception of one who was born and raised in Saskatchewan, were born and grew up in what is now known as Greater Vancouver (Vancouver, Burnaby, and New Westminster) before the outbreak of the Second World War. At the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the older Nisei were in their early twenties; the others were pre-teens; and the youngest Nisei was eight. The Canadian government did a thorough job of eradicating Japanese Canadian communities along the Pacific coast. Consequently, in coastal areas, especially in parts of Greater Vancouver, it is now hard to imagine the once strong Japanese Canadian presence.
Encounter

At the time of the interviews, all the women except one had been living in Greater Vancouver and Victoria for over fifteen years. This meant that many of them had resided in the area during the height of the redress movement, which began in the early 1980s and culminated in the signing of the Redress Agreement between the Canadian government and the National Association of Japanese Canadians on 22 September 1988. Their narratives tell of their involvement in a movement that encouraged them to reconnect not only with their Japanese Canadian history but also to try to regain their lost communities. Many of them were actively involved in various Japanese Canadian community organizations. The older Nisei women were my mother’s age; the younger were contemporaries of my parents’ younger siblings. I often heard Japanese Canadians, including Nisei themselves, say that the Nisei are difficult people to deal with. Many Nisei often described themselves as *muzukashii* (difficult to comprehend), and I was told that the Nisei were both very self-critical and shy. One Nisei commented: “It is good that you, who don’t have hang-ups like us, are doing the research on the Japanese Canadians.”

Another Nisei woman said:

> You know, we are a difficult lot. Very complex and difficult. I am not a typical Nisei. You see, I talk too much about myself and our community. If I were an ordinary Nisei, I would not have participated in your project.

I obtained some of my knowledge about the Nisei through secondary sources (e.g., Adachi, K. 1976:157-178; Makabe 1976; Ayukawa b 1996:236-269), Issei women’s narratives about their children, and my Sansei friends’ comments about their parents, aunts, and uncles. However, I had very little direct contact with this group during my 1970s research in the Vancouver Japanese

42 I was curious about what she actually meant about “hang-ups” and wanted to inquire further. However, after being told “Don’t put the tape on yet!” I restrained myself and did not probe further. In retrospect, I think that I probably wanted to maintain the image of a “polite Japanese” by not asking too many questions right at the outset.
Canadian community. Some Issei women indicated to me that their children did not like them associating with a Shin-Issei and speaking in Japanese. From these women’s comments about their children I sensed that the Nisei disliked me because I was a Japanese from Japan who shared their mothers’ life narratives and experiences. Were they against me as a person, as a generic Japanese, or as someone who could speak the only language in which their mothers could freely express their thoughts? Were they against the rapport I was establishing with their mothers? Was the issue language, or something else?

In total, I interviewed and collected the life narratives of seven Nisei women. The narratives reflect diversity in age, birth order, family status, geographical backgrounds, and degrees of association with relatives. The older Nisei women were the most affected by British Columbia’s prewar racism and discriminatory practices. Their Issei parents and older Nisei competed with other Canadians at a time when job opportunities were already seriously restricted for Japanese Canadians. They were the ones who, throughout postwar Canada, looked after younger siblings and dislocated parents. Eventually, through their hard work both during and after the war, they gained acceptance. The rigid hierarchy crumbled, and the Nisei were scattered, free to pursue lives

43 I felt that some Nisei simply did not like the idea of someone talking to their mothers because they did not know what the latter were saying to me. I remember wondering about the real issue behind this conflict. It demonstrated the importance of a shared language that would have allowed them to understand their mothers and their past.

44 Later I found clues to possible answers to some of my questions in Sakamoto’s *The Electrical Field* (1998), where she describes the Nisei protagonist, Asako Saito, and her thoughts about her neighbour, a Shin-Issei woman whose innocence (she had not dealt with being a Japanese Canadian during the Second World War), Asako envied.

45 As has been mentioned, at the time of relocation in 1942, 95 per cent of Nikkei resided in British Columbia; 60 per cent were Canadian-born; 13 per cent were naturalized before 1923; and the rest were Japanese nationals, the majority of whom were women who had lived in Canada for more than twenty-five years.
quite different from the ones they had been expected to live.

All interviews (except one) were conducted in each woman’s living room surrounded by framed photographs of their children and grandchildren, Japanese dolls or prints and other “things Japanese,” together with a print of the Sansei artist Linda Ohama.\(^{46}\) Sometimes they offered me lunch or dinner after the interviews.\(^{47}\) On a few occasions, their Nisei husbands served us tea while we were in session. On one occasion the daughter of an interviewee joined in at the beginning of the interview. Due to their ailing health, or having to take care of their aging husbands, some women were reorganizing their living environments while exploring new challenges, such as taking Japanese lessons or offering their services to the community at large.

I asked the Nisei women to describe their lives up to the present time. My opening question was: “Tell me about your life, where you were born, and where you were raised” (see Appendix C). Some began right away and continued on with information about their parents. They would often stop and ask me, “Do you want me to say all these things?” Others began hesitantly: “Oh, I do nothing. [silence. Then, slowly] . . . well I’ll tell you what I know” or “You ask me questions, OK?”

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\(^{46}\) A print of Linda Ohama’s *Wataridori* (Bird of Passage) was one of the products of the redress movement’s fundraising efforts. It was sold to members of the Nikkei communities in the mid-1980s.

\(^{47}\) I wondered then whether my father, back in Japan, would serve tea to my mother’s friends or guests. My mother often noted that there is no retirement for women. A similar feeling was expressed by a seventy-eight-year-old housewife (Asahi Shinbunsha 1986: 15). My father, who was quite open and who allowed his three daughters to do almost anything they wanted, could not extend the same freedom to his wife. In his old age he expected my mother to serve him.
The Early Days: Family and Community

The Nisei women's narratives varied greatly, reflecting when and where they were born and raised, and whether they had lived in or outside of the Japantown area in Vancouver. It seems that, to both Japanese Canadians and Canadians, there is only one Japantown. However, the women's narratives indicate delicate boundaries that separated Japantown into at least two different worlds: (1) the area around Powell Street, Alexander Street, and adjacent streets where many shop owners' and their families lived, and (2) the Strathcona area, where not only Japanese Canadians but also many other ethnic groups lived (Marlatt and Itter, ed. 1979). There were also Nisei women who lived in a predominantly white environment and who associated with "hakujin friends" outside of Japantown (e.g., in other parts of Vancouver, Burnaby, and New Westminster). They had constantly experienced two different worlds because they lived away from "Japantown kids." Many were often sent to the Vancouver Japanese Language School on Alexander Street after attending "Canadian" schools. As one woman recalled:

The world was divided so that there were no words such as "Japanese-Canadians" and "Chinese-Canadians." Nothing in between. No hyphenated words then. We were

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48 We cannot ignore their birth order since many eldest children, whose parents could not speak English, functioned as a bridge between the two worlds. They were often their parents' interpreters and protected their younger siblings from the racism that they themselves had experienced.

49 Sometimes the women used the term "Japanese town."

50 After I asked what she meant by "Japantown kids," she explained that, when she was a child, Japantown kids "were the children of Powell Street business families who were of good standing and somewhat powerful in the Japanese Canadian community. They felt they were as powerful as their fathers or families in the community, and they behaved accordingly. Their English was not as good as that of the children who lived outside of the Japantown area (that is, not on Powell Street). Those children had more contact with English-speaking friends." She continued: "I think they didn't like us playing with Hakujin kids. They used to say 'Why do you play with THEM?' I used to say, 'They are my friends.'"
Japanese and they were Canadians, see: *Hakujin* (White people)\(^{51}\) and us.

The world looked quite different to a young child, however. **Eiko** remembered that her father, who had worked for a codfish cooperative, “kept books and things,” and went to work every day with “suits on” (it was uncommon for Nikkei to wear suits to work). She described Japantown in the late 1930s as it appeared to a child of three or four. And she drew a map of it, trying to locate places in her memory.

I have memories of, bits of memories of Vancouver. But I can’t locate, you know, what I think of Vancouver now. I can’t locate exactly, except I know where my family lived, I know the address where we lived. We lived on Alexander - - *Nihonjinmachi* 日本人町 - - and the Japanese Language School is here. And I remember tricycling, tricycling down to the other corner. I’m sure an *oter라* お寺 [temple] was there, on the corner. Yeah. So I have memories of crossing the street, tricycling to the end. . . . Here is *oter라* お寺 . . . there used to be a bread store - - a bakery - - and I remember there was a bread called Four X, and we used to go to buy bread . . . Other things I remember is that a church is here, Catholic . . . There is a little cross on the top: this is a strange image in my childhood memory. Yeah, yeah, my mother used to say *omeritya-san* オメリヤさん [Church of Mary].

This seemed to be a long, long walk for a child. And I remember mother and I walking there because we went there to Safeway to buy peanut butter. [Laughs] Very important. Yeah, yeah. And I remember it as the marker, I have to go for a long walk to go to Safeway. I have this memory that I have to go across that park to buy peanut butter, [laughs] . . . Yeah! . . . As a child you remember things, funny things, you know. Well, you remember things that were important.

Several blocks away from Japantown where Eiko lived, **Mary**, the daughter of a grocery store owner, described her house, which was located at the corner of Georgia Street and Hawks Avenue, where she had lived until she was nine: “We had a living quarter in the back. In old days it was called ‘cabin.’ It’s a row house.” **Midge**, the daughter of a carpenter, lived in the same area as

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\(^{51}\) All but one Nisei women used the term “*Hakujin*.” Literally, hakujin means White person. As the above quote indicates, among Japanese Canadians, the term is often refer to non-Japanese Canadians (“them”) as opposed to Japanese and/or Japanese Canadians (“us”).
Mary. She recalled her old home:

700 block East Georgia was exactly where the house was. This is now in MacLean Park, I think. The house across the street is still there, the even [number] side of the Georgia Street is still there, but the odd side has been destroyed and became a part of a park.\footnote{This area was part of an “urban renewal” project - - the MacLean Housing Project - - that was proposed by the city in the early 1960s. Four blocks of homes were demolished in 1968. See Marlatt and Iter (1979: 174-180).} ... Hakujin kids, there were some Japanese kids. There were hakujin, Italian, Russian, Ukranian ... and there was an English girl. We all went down to the corner, at Hawks, Hawks Avenue. It was a wide street at that time, and there was very little traffic. So we used to play games, run across, then, roller skating right on the road. And we all played together, boys and girls.

Both Midge and Mary were born in 1930 and grew up in Japantown until the mass evacuation, which occurred when they were twelve years old. Their lives and activities were mostly occupied with going to Buddhist and Christian Sunday schools, Strathcona Elementary School, and the Vancouver Japanese Language School on Alexander Street. Midge continued:

I played with non-Japanese kids and many Japanese kids teased me. Oh, some of them were really mean ... I think many Japanese kids suffered in Canadian schools because many of them could not speak English well. My two older brothers suffered with their lack of English. You see, I was the third child. By the time I grew up my brothers were speaking English. My eldest brother used to read the English newspaper and translated it into Japanese for my mother. He was choonan [the eldest son in the family].

The above narrative reveals how the birth order affected the ease with which children acquired English. Midge’s narratives reminded me of Shin-Issei women’s comments about their children’s English proficiency. They often indicated that they were very keen to have their older children maintain their Japanese so that they could act as mediators with the outside English-speaking world, while the younger ones tended to escape this role. Nisei women were often aware of their position as a channel between the Japanese world of their mothers and the Canadian world into which they, as Nisei, had been born. The eldest child felt this most strongly, as he or she was often expected to mediate between the two cultures. Older children often protected their younger
siblings from the outside world, and tried to spare them the hardships they had themselves encountered. When mothers brought their children to register for first grade, Nisei children often found themselves interpreting on behalf of their mothers.53

Ellen, one of the older Nisei women in my study, was born in 1922 and was the eldest child. She told me how she acquired her English as a young child as the public schools did not accept children who could not speak English. “There was none of ESL [English as a Second Language] business you have now. So, we were required to know English before we entered school.” She told me how her mother used to take her to the United Church kindergarten on Sixth Avenue and Columbia Street,54 on the other side of Cambie Street from her house. She then described the Fairview District around False Creek near the Cambie Street Bridge, where many Japanese worked at the sawmills. There was then a small Nikkei community located around Second Avenue.

She recounted a change in her environment when she was an eleven-year-old in Grade 6. It was at this time that her family moved into the Powell Street area, which she referred to as

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53 Richard Hirabayashi, in his talk at a Seattle conference entitled Nikkei Experience in the Pacific Northwest (May 2000), recalled that his eldest brother, Gordon, was the person who took him on his first day of school, while other classmates were taken by their mothers.

54 Sumida (1935) has written about Japanese assimilation in British Columbia, and he points to Christianity as a prominent factor in this. He suggests that the Christianization of the Japanese was steady among the Nisei generation because their Issei parents, who were Buddhists, were “permitting and even encouraging their children to adopt the religion of Canada” (p. 154). In the 1920s the United Church Japanese Mission Night School was opened to assist Japanese immigrants in adapting to the Canadian way of life, but it closed in 1933 (p. 122-23). This may indicate that, by then, Nisei were old enough to be interpreters for their Issei parents, who were also gaining English skills, and that the English classes were no longer necessary.
“downtown.”55 She described “downtown” as “a very different type of community all together.”56 Her memories of the Fairview district, where she had been born, were of a place of “mostly White people,” where she used to play with “White kids.” In contrast to this the Powell Street area, where “no white people” lived, was “all Japanese.” Ellen was the only Nisei woman who used the English term instead of the Japanese term [hakujin]. Her experiences at the two schools she attended -- Model School, where she took her first six years of elementary school, and Strathcona School -- were also very different. She had a few Japanese classmates in Model School but many more in Strathcona School.57

Different kind of school altogether. It was, I don’t know, it seemed to be about 60 per cent Japanese and 30 per cent Chinese, and the rest were mixed people, Jewish, and Russian, and all kinds of ... I am not so sure about but it seemed to me that most of the students were Japanese.

Ellen continued to describe her new environment. Even though there were many Chinese in Chinatown, Japanese Canadians did not have much to do with them. Nikkei were scattered all over town and up to Georgia Street, the present Vancouver Chinatown area, and all along Powell Street. She said that the Nikkei were treated differently from the Chinese. Japan had a diplomatic agreement with Great Britain, but this changed after Japan’s expansion into colonizing Manchuria

55 See Macdonald 1992:38-43. A map on page 39 shows the commercial land that covered the Japantown area on Powell Street in the 1920s. Indeed, it was a “downtown” when compared with the Fairview area where Ellen used to live.

56 A picture of Powell Street in the 1930s (VPL 21773, in Atkin 1994:68) illustrates the ambience of a lively and vibrant Nikkei community -- a community within which many Nisei lived their daily lives. No one could picture this past neighbourhood from looking at present-day Japantown.

57 The Strathcona School motto was “the School of Many Nationalities and Only One Flag” (Marlatt and Itter 1979:93).
and Korea, and then the subsequent activities of the Japanese army in Asian countries. Nikkei received “a lot of backlash here from White people.”

Ellen’s move was due to her grandparents’ decision to retire to Japan. They had a store on Powell Street, which they owned with her father. She described how some store keepers on Powell Street operated at that time and explained to me how her grandmother looked after her employees.

Employees - - they didn’t have many, one or two - - but they always fed them. Some of them were living there; sometimes they came from Japan and they didn’t have a place to stay. And this store used to be a rooming-house when the original owners had it. So there were lots of rooms up there. So when my grandmother went back to Japan, there was nobody to do that. So my mother moved to downtown and we all moved with her.

Due to the nature of her family business, Ellen was quite aware of discrimination toward the Japanese at that time. She told me about her uncle, who was sent to study pharmacy in the United States in order to manage the family business. However, because he was unable to practise his profession upon his return to Vancouver he went to Japan and started his own business there.

They called it a drug store but it really wasn’t a drug store because they were not allowed to dispense drugs or prescriptions. This was because of discrimination . . . You couldn’t even join the Pharmaceutical Association because they said that “we will not accept you because you don’t have [a right to] vote.” So it was a vicious circle, you see: if you didn’t belong to this association then you couldn’t practise.

She later described how she felt as a high school student growing up in the 1930s in Vancouver, and she expressed her frustrations as an adolescent living in “segregated” worlds:

We were not allowed to do just like Caucasians . . . No vote. We had no power. We were all scared. Oh, yeah. The British looked down on everybody. They would never socialize [with us]. No. It was impossible. Teachers treated us equally,58 but that was inside the class. But outside . . . we couldn’t. There is no point to it. You couldn’t go around socializing with anybody else. Maybe you could with your own group . . .

Over the years we were looked down all the time; we couldn’t do anything, so we were all

58 See Ashworth 1979: 91-132.
Lillian, another older Nisei, was born the same year as Ellen. She recollected her childhood living in the 1920s and 1930s, with her maternal grandparents and relatives living nearby:

My mother had her own parents living in Vancouver, Collingwood. They had a huge acre of farmland near Boundary Road and Kingsway. It’s up there. And there were Japanese, quite a few Japanese families there, sort of from the same part of Japan -- Shiojiri, Nagano-ken. My grandparents had a big farm, lots of vegetables and everything.

I used to go every weekend, a whole family, so all came together every weekend and we had a good marvellous time ... Across the street there was another cousin. We all shared a good time together, and my grandfather had an ofuro [Japanese bath], an outside ofuro, and that was quite a treat. So we enjoyed the Japanese traditions, too. We ate lots of Japanese food.

I remember every New Year, when they had different people visiting us. There was a spread, spread of Japanese food, all those good treats. And Christmas, only the family would get together around the turkey, you know. More like, a Christmas tree and toys, more like a family affair. New Year’s [celebration], relatives visiting, just like in Japan ... It was a very traditional up-bringing [that I had],59 I think so.

Lillian claimed to not experience any direct discrimination. Yet she remembered vividly how she sensed it as a child and a young adult in the city or on the street: “Just that ‘look’ -- yeah. I knew that we were not completely accepted.” She then continued to talk about how things had changed when she returned to Vancouver with her family in the early 1950s:

When we were children growing up, the Caucasians were, I would say the British people were the dominant race here. And I think, and I believe, they were quite racist. They looked down on the Chinese and the Japanese and maybe any other race ... But when the war ended and when we came back in the fifties, it was different ... Yeah, yeah. Their

59 Later in our conversation she indicated that she and her husband try not to interfere with their children’s lives: “Not too much, just like our parents ... They have their own lives.”
attitude was much more accepting, and even today, although there must have been some reason, their whole attitude towards the ethnic races is much more accepting. They haven't got that snobbish attitude. Yeah.

Well, new immigrants from England are much more open and not as traditional as they used to be in the past. The British Empire went down, you know. That must have been the reason. Then the world became more global, a whole [new] society. The world is getting more global, and we must accept our differences. I believe that, that we must in order to survive.

Ellen and Lillian both had feelings about racial discrimination and spoke of how they grew up in Vancouver “being scared.” However, Aya, several years younger than Ellen and Lillian, says that the social environment within which she grew up was nothing like that of her children’s. She told me how “insecure” she had felt growing up and indicated that the environment within which her children grew up was similar to that of the hakujin kids who had “all the advantages in the world.” Aya, who was born in 1930, was the second daughter of a New Westminster strawberry packer who believed his children were Canadians and did not insist on sending them to the Vancouver Japanese Language School.

A: I always felt, uh, insecure, because, why did I have to be born Japanese? Because, you see, hakujin kids had all the advantages, you know. Their parents came along, their parents

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60 Were they scared because they sensed something from their parents? Was it the same thing that made Hanako, an Issei Japanese language school teacher, fear for her students? Were the younger Nisei shielded from the reality of discrimination by their parents and older siblings? Aya, who lived away from the Nikkei community, did not really experience what Ellen and Lillian experienced. And she did not attend the Vancouver Japanese Language School on Alexander Street.

61 Sansei women, however, did not see their environment as their mothers saw it. Many of them had said that they did not feel part of mainstream Canada and they were still experiencing discrimination in the 1960s and early 1980s. This stands in contrast to Makabe’s (1998) insistence that Sansei were “truly Canadian.” I shall discuss this in the following section.

62 For information on the Fraser Valley strawberry industry as well as agricultural industries in general in the 1930s, see Nakayama 1921; Sumida 1935; and Ayukawa 1996 b:142-179.
all came. Of course my parents never showed up, things like that. I always felt that I was an outsider . . . They [her parents] came to a Christmas party, a Christmas concert, I remember, at night. Hall full of people, and things like that. We went together. I remember that. None of the Issei showed up.

Y: Because they were too busy and because of language?
A: Yeah, they wouldn’t be able to, uh, discuss [with teachers] how their kids were progressing, those kind of things, you know? There was no point in them [coming] . . . Felt some kind of uh, you know, I don’t know what to say, but you see, when all the other kids’ parents came and they [her classmates] were making all the fuss, you know. It would be kind of nice to show [my parents] . . . Something was missing.63

Midge, a contemporary of Aya’s, described how, in her early days, she participated in a parade as a ochigosan [a celestial child in a Buddhist procession] at the opening of a Buddhist temple: “I have a picture of me in the parade as Ochigo-san, a grand opening of Otera Buddhist temple.”

This temple was at the corner of Prince and Cordova Streets. She explained that the building no longer existed but that her father and his associates had built it. According to her, while it was being built her father used to stop his work and chat with her whenever he saw her walking to the Vancouver Japanese Language School. She was always eager to attend any school, even a Baptist kindergarten. She recalled her Bible class:

M: There was a family nearby, Japanese family, who became very interested in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and then they decided to have a bible class for the local kids, you know. So, an English woman from the Church had a bible school. We all went -- Italian, Ukranian, everybody. Every Saturday afternoon. And then one day I missed. She asked me, “Where were you?” so I replied, “I went to a movie.” This teacher said to me, “Don’t you know God cannot look after you in a building like that?” Just like that.

Y: How old were you?
M: Well, I don’t know. I must had been seven years old. This woman saying, “Don’t you know God cannot look after you at a place like that. You shouldn’t go.” Very strange, you know. But I still went.

Her Bible school teacher sometimes took the class to “this big church” somewhere in Vancouver

63 In our later conversations, she indicated how she tried to participate in her children’s school activities so that they would not feel “something missing” as she had when she was a child.
and let them recite the Lord’s Prayer in Japanese in front of a congregation who thought that “these little heathens [would be] saved by this.”

I think her name was Mrs. Barclay. Isn’t that funny? But, my father used to say, “It doesn’t matter what church you went to, because there is only one God.” Yeah. That’s why he allowed all this. “warukoto narawan karatte えらいこと習わんからって [you won’t learn anything really bad]. Later on, I took my kid brother to Otera no お寺の [Buddhist] Sunday school.

Midge’s father’s openness toward Christianity reminded me of Ellen’s comments about how the Japanese accepted the help of Christian missionaries because many of them spoke perfect Japanese learned during their sojourns in Japan. She remembered Methodist missionaries who worked on Powell Street helping the Japanese to integrate by teaching them English, cooking techniques, and other necessary skills to learn housekeeping at that time. Many young Japanese women went to live with Canadian families. Just like the Japanese in Japan at that time, who were eager to adopt Western cultures and technology, many immigrants were attracted to Christian churches, a channel to learn Western cultures, and often had no objections to being helped by them. Sumida writes of the steady Christianization of the Japanese (1935:159). Some Buddhist Issei were not only eager to integrate into the Canadian culture but also encouraged their own children to do so.64

At the same time, Nisei were compelled to attend Japanese language schools and retain and acquire their parents’ language and culture as Ellen and Lillian had described that they were “forced” to attend the Vancouver Japanese Language School after their regular school day ended.

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64 We can also observe a slight transformation in Buddhist services in Canada. Otera: (temple) became “Buddhist Church” and began to offer services that were similar to Christian services.
Yet they felt that they did not really learn Japanese. Midge, unlike her brothers, was not forced to attend the language school; nonetheless, she was very eager to do so. She was the only person in my study who said that she enjoyed studying Japanese as a child.

M: I loved Japanese School. I was yutoosei 優等生 [head of the class] every year.
Y: So your mother was very proud.
M: Yeah, because my other brothers were horrible in Japanese school. Oh yeah, they hated it . . . But I really liked it. In fact, you see, if you were born in June, you can't go to Japanese school till you are six, so I was almost seven by the time I started. By then I knew Book One and Book Two. I knew them all. I had my brothers' [old text books] and I liked studying them. I remember my mother and father having a "conference" with some friends: "What are you going to do with her? Are you going to put her in Grade 1, or Grade 2?" . . . I really liked Japanese. And of course it made my father and mother happy, so, I did study more. I did all the time, and I enjoyed doing it.

Thousands of miles away from the Pacific west coast, there were small Nikkei communities.

Fumiko was born and raised in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, the eldest child of a couple from Miyagi Prefecture. This is how she began her story:

All right, I'll start. My name is Fumiko and I was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan in 1929. My father originally came to Canada as a bachelor in 1919 from Miyagi-ken. Do you want me to say all those things?

She described her family life in a small Nikkei community in the Depression-era Prairies. She remembered that there were many gravestones with Japanese names (dating from 1914) in an abandoned city cemetery. Only recently did she connect those gravestones to her childhood memories of elderly single Japanese men living in banku hausu (bunk houses). Those men worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in its early days, and her father worked for a CPR Hotel.

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65 Both women were eager to improve their Japanese. Ellen obtained her BA degrees in Japanese and music at the University of British Columbia when she returned to school in the 1960s. Lillian is presently attending Tonari Gumi's Japanese conversation class so that she will be able to communicate with the Shin-Issei who attend her church.
There were a few Japanese families, only four, five families in Moose Jaw; in Regina forty miles away, maybe a dozen families. Once a year we’d meet half way and we’d have picnics, games, origami, watermelon, you know. That’s how we got together.

Fumiko noted that people spoke Japanese at these get-togethers and indicated that she herself spoke only Japanese until she began public school. She claimed that, even though she had lost her Japanese language skills, Japanese food still played an important role in her life. She described how the culture of Japanese food was maintained in Moose Jaw.

But the food, we had! Yes, the food we kept. We had cultural things like oshogatsu お正月 [the New Year’s celebration], hinamatsuri 雛祭 [the Doll’s Day/Girls Day]. Mother always set out the dolls. So they worked on quite a bit of culture. My mother would cook Japanese food . . . And she used to take us to a field to pick karashi がらし [wild mustard plants] or something with yellow flowers to make otsukemono お漬物 [Japanese pickles]. Always otsukemono お漬物. We always had that, and they got the food. They always got shipments of food from Vancouver, I think [from] Furuya, or something. I didn’t quite know [how my parents had done it]. Once a year a whole 100-pound sack of rice, barrel of miso, shooyu, takuwan, yeah. We were never short of Japanese food. Fascinating, isn’t it?

During oshogatsu お正月 [New Year’s], omochi: おもち [rice cakes], ozooni: お雑煮 [special dish for the New Year’s], drinking sake 酒, all those things. They would make the rounds. Then my father and friends make rounds visiting their friends’ houses.

She also told me that her mother experimented with Western food as well:

For Christmas, oh yeah, my mother had a whole thing. Cranberry sauce, stuffing, potatoes.

66 She referred to suika wari, a game involving the breaking of watermelon. This game is one of the main attractions at the Powell Street Festival. In Japan, however, this game is played on the beach rather than in a park.

67 The Girls’ Festival is celebrated on March 3. It is also a seasonal festival called momono-sekku featuring peach blossoms. The dolls, which represent members of the ancient imperial court, are displayed on tiers of shelves, covered with red cloth, in the home of the family that has a young girl.

68 See Suenaga’s Shigaken imin to Nikkei kinu shojo gaisha “shirukorainaa” no soogyo [Immigrants from Shiga Prefecture and the Operation of Japanese Canadian Silk Company: Silukorainaa] (1998). The Japanese Bazzaar (Oriental Importing Company) was established in 1926 in Calgary and, in the 1920s, operated eighteen stores in the Canadian midwest.
She [mother] picked up [how to prepare these dishes] in Moose Jaw because there were family friends who were already there. One of my mother’s friends had made hakujin friend and she passed on to my mother. She had made the tradition. Great lemon pie, great apple pie, canning.

**Impact of the War**

There was no curfew in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan but Fumiko pointed out that she had to register as an “enemy alien” when she turned sixteen. Her father lost his job at the hotel where he had worked for twenty years and had to begin to work as a cook. Nonetheless, the war did not have as heavy an impact on Fumiko as it did on most Nisei in British Columbia. The war affected Nisei women very differently according to their age. Generally, they experienced the same traumas as did Issei women: dislocation and relocation, loss of community, and family disintegration. The older Nisei experienced loss of educational opportunities and, thus, future careers. Nisei women endured the loss of their identity, their nationality, and their ethnicity (Kadota 1996). Depending on their age at the time of the war, each Nisei woman remembered different struggles. Ellen recalled:

[When the] war came, everything was topsy turvey, everything came upside-down. Yeah, I was only twenty when it happened. I was twenty-one when I got married . . . Everybody disappeared, so I went along with them. Well, there was no community left because of the war.

When the bombing of Pearl Harbor occurred all the Nisei women in my study were living in Vancouver. They did not have to move into the Pacific National Exhibition Park before their

**69** Her mother’s cooking tradition is alive and spreading all across Canada. From 1988 to the late 1990s Fumiko has regularly contributed “Japanese Canadian cuisine” recipes in the *JCCA Bulletin*. D. R. Nagata has now taken her place.

**70** “Hastings Park,” or the Pacific National Exhibition Park (PNE), was used as a temporary holding place for the Nikkei who lived along the Pacific coast of British Columbia.
departure to various relocation destinations. **Eiko**, whose family had close ties with her Steveston relatives remembered:

> Before we were relocated, we went back to Steveston because my dad was the youngest brother. So we packed everything in Vancouver and went to Steveston and joined up with my uncle, the oldest, and we moved together . . . So, as a result, they [her parents] didn’t have very much, but my uncle persuaded them to move to a self-supporting place . . . So my father went with his brother. So we all went together.

**Midge**’s family remained in Vancouver without her father while waiting for the relocation order. During that period she sensed her mother’s struggle to manage the family without her husband, who was sent to one of the road camps right after the attack on Pearl Harbor. After her father was sent off to the road camp her eldest brother, who was in Grade 12, quit school even though her mother tried to persuade him to complete his studies as he was only a few months away from graduation. Unlike her father, her mother could not “force him to go” to school. She told me that her eldest brother was *wagamama* (selfish) so “he quit” and never did finish high school:

> She [mother] is very stoic . . . There was a lot of stress. Because I remember when my father was gone, my oldest brother was acting up. I remember he and his friend one day were out past the curfew and a policeman brought them back. Boy, was she ever mad. She was so mad at my brother about that, “what are our neighbours going to say?” You know, it’s very Japanese.

Midge told how one day, after walking around for a long time, she ended up somewhere in downtown Vancouver where she sat and ate “a muffin or cupcake or something” for lunch. This was when her mother took her and her younger brother shopping. “We just sat there.” Her mother did not say a thing and Midge knew something was terribly wrong.

> I got mad at my brother [eldest]. I said to him, “It is all your fault.” I was only twelve, not quite twelve. “You’re the one causing all these problems.” He looked at me as though I were crazy, I remember. I was really mad. I could sense what the problem was. I said, “It is all your fault!” It was a very stressful [time].
She also remembered that, while her family was waiting for the relocation order, a couple of families lived together in a house. These families were without their fathers, who, due to the road camp program, were sent off as able-bodied “enemy alien” males. Not knowing when the family would be sent away or where they would go, her mother went to the Mass Evacuation Group to request that they all be sent together. The request was soon granted. They had twenty-four hours to pack up. Her brothers and mother did the packing with the help of her father’s boss’s son, who somehow knew that they were leaving. They were sent to Lemon Creek.

Under the self-support program three Nisei women spent the war years with their parents and relatives, two in Minto, British Columbia, and one in Montreal, Quebec. Lillian, whose father was “quite a successful business man” who owned a store on Granville Street near Hastings, moved with her family to Montreal, where she continued her studies.

L: Well, we were all going to school, a whole family was going to school, with the rest of the Japanese people. They gave us very limited time. So, my dad rented the house to another hakujin family, and we stored our diaries and jewellery, and cutlery in a special room. But it was all gone . . . [In Montreal] we continued to lead a quite normal life because we all continued our school.

Y: At McGill?

L: McGill is one university that refused us. I remember going, trying to register, and [being told] “no.” It was quite clear cut. Yeah, my brother-in-law was admitted only because they thought his name was a Ukrainian or European, and they let him go for one whole year. When they discovered he was Japanese, they made him leave; so he continued his course at the University of New Brunswick in the Maritimes.

Although they had more “freedom” than their friends in the government camps in the interior

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71 These included both native-born and naturalized Japanese Canadian citizens as well as Japanese nationals between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. Midge indicated that her father was called back to Vancouver to help build temporary camps in Hastings Park and then in Slocan. She remembered that, after hearing that the government needed carpenters, her mother went to the “office” (of either the Mass Evacuation Groups or the British Columbia Security Commission) to ask that her husband be allowed back as he was a carpenter and could be useful.
of British Columbia, there were many sad stories associated with their situation. Lillian witnessed how hard it was to get jobs in Montreal, especially for the Nisei who had been going to school at that time. For women there were very few decent jobs.

You know, girls get anything they can get a hold of, and I know of one very respectable woman in our community. She had to go housekeeping in Montreal. I don’t think I should mention her name because everybody knows her, a respectable person. So she was raped by the man of the house. She was found hanging in a bathroom because she felt so bad. So that is a part of the tragedy in the Vancouver Japanese community. People really didn’t know. Oh, sad. Jobs were so scarce they had to do housekeeping to survive.

Eiko, the youngest of the Nisei women of this study, remembered a sudden change in her life as a young child, when she left Vancouver in 1942. She described her life in a self-supporting camp in Minto.

I was in Grade 1 in Strathcona and in Grade 1 in Nihonjin gakko [Japanese language school], then I moved ... I know lots of things but I don’t really know what was going on. Even when I was in Minto I didn’t know what really was going on. We had a lot of fun, you know, yeah ... [Laughs] We were in the middle of the mountains, and every day we went hiking on the mountains, snow gliding.

My family, and all the Japanese families, made the whole place into a vegetable garden. Fences -- they built fences -- and everybody farmed to make food. Yeah. So, it looked like a Japanese village. My mother would wear a thing on her head and one of those aprons [Japanese style], you know. They were all in the garden, working all day, and talk, chattering with neighbours, because there was nothing to do.

She recounted how she and other children followed her “fun uncle,” who used to sing choina choina [チョイナ, チョイナ(Japanese folk melody)], and how every day they would listen to a short-wave radio at the hotel. Eiko told me how her uncle used to take notes so that he could inform his friends in town about Japanese news. She then told me how she enjoyed watching Japanese films.

I remember, Japanese films used to come, maybe they were old films circulated in different towns [relocation camps]. I remember going ... somebody in town would do shibai [Japanese play], you know, that kind of thing. Somebody would read it, yeah, the [silent] film would be on and he would [read the scripts]. I never heard somebody talking about these things ... The whole town had a hobby. I think because Minto was a self-
supporting place, there was more freedom there. The other places were like camps and everbody kind of lived together. We had our own home and we had our own garden.

Interestingly, Ellen’s memories of living in Minto as a young adult were very different from Eiko’s. She explained to me why she went to Minto and how she moved around the region to wherever she and her husband, a mechanic, could find a job.

Gosh, I don’t remember how many people were there, my father was looking around for a place to go to... They went to Minto because Austin Taylor [one of the British Columbia Security Commission officers involved in the mass evacuation program] said that there is an abandoned mine there, used to be a gold mine, you see. And there were houses there. And also, before you get to Minto, there is a place called Bridge River, and there were houses there because they had bunkhouses for the men who were building the dam there. So there were enough houses between Minto and Bridge River to have some Japanese there. So this is why we went up there, to be self-supporting.

Ellen’s family did not remain long in Minto. The war continued and their resources diminished. Her parents were not ready to retire as they had two school-aged sons. Their savings soon ran out, and they began to work at a sawmill near Devine. Ellen told how her younger brothers (just like Midge’s older brothers) had a difficult time continuing their studies because the government did not provide secondary education for them. People worked at sawmills if they could, and her husband had a job repairing logging trucks.

My husband is a mechanic, he fixes trucks. There were no mechanics in Bralorne. Nobody could get their car fixed, so we got a job in Bralorne. Then because there was a school in Bralorne my two brothers came up to go to high school because there was no high school where they were. I told them, “I don’t think this country school is any good; you’d better go to a better school.” My aunt was in Hamilton then, so she said, “you come to Hamilton.” They went there for a year. So, they’ve been all over the place.

Ellen and her husband “just went wherever there was work.” A young mother with three boys, she spent over a decade working in the Cariboo region. She happily recalled how, in 1949, she voted for the first time in her life. She was the only woman in my study who mentioned this historical event.

I remember being in Bralorne when we got the vote. Yeah. I went to vote for the time
when we were living in Bralorne. It was a really good feeling, yeah. It was forty-nine, long after the war was over . . . We were able to come back [to Vancouver] in 1949. We didn’t have any money; nobody had any money by then. So we had to work.

In order to make money to return to Vancouver, Ellen, like many Issei women in the prewar days, took a job as a cook in a sawmill. It was hard to “go into the bush” with three children. Her job was hard, but she figured that Issei women had survived much harder times than those she was experiencing.

I was in Bralorne for six years. This fellow Andy Devine said, “We’re going to start a sawmill. How about you going up there to start this cook house?” And, I said, “Well, I don’t know about that.” I had three kids by then, you know. It’s not easy to go into the bush to do things like that. I said “Oh, I guess we’d better do this because we’re not saving any money going back to town at all.” This is what I did . . .

Y: So you cooked for the camp people?
E: Oh, yeah. I hired a Chinese cook and I did a lot of work myself. But it was hard work . . . well, it was a camp full of houses, so there were lots of families living there, but these [fellows I cooked for] were just single men. There were about ten to fifteen people.

In 1958 Ellen’s parents returned to Vancouver to help her brother, who graduated from the University of British Columbia with a pharmacy degree, start up a drug store – a “real one” this time. Her oldest son had been living with her parents and attending high school in Vancouver. By 1960, Ellen felt it was time to return home.

Aya, whose family moved to Lethbridge, Alberta, remembered working there with her parents and her siblings on a sugar beet farm. She told me that, even now, just the thought of gardening reminds her of that time.

Sugar beet farm was hard, hard work, you know. They [my parents] had to have our help in order to fill the contract, you know. The contract was for I don’t know how many acres. After school, we worked. Oh, many times we didn’t get back to school until, uh, the beginning of November. September and October we stayed out because we had to finish the crop before winter came. Yeah, so it was a hard time.

After four years on a sugar beet farm, in 1946 her family moved into the city of Lethbridge, where
her father worked as a carpenter. There she met a Nisei man and married him. Her husband was a brother of a friend of hers from her British Columbia days. After a short stay in Lethbridge, Alberta the couple moved to Regina, Saskatchewan.

Mary also spent the war years on a sugar beet farm in Alberta, and she stayed there until her family was repatriated in 1946. Her experience, however, is quite different from Aya’s. Unlike Aya’s job, which consisted of helping her father on the farm, Mary’s job consisted of managing the house in place of her mother who was in Japan. A few years prior to the outbreak of the war her father had started a hotel business. In the spring of 1941 her parents and younger brother went to Japan to attend her elder sister’s wedding. Her father returned to Canada in November of that year, but her mother remained behind in Japan. At a relatively young age Mary was challenged with the daily chores that fell to the woman of the house. This is how she remembered her new life in Cornville, Alberta:

Suddenly you don’t go to school, suddenly you have to cook. I was very upset. I did not know how to do it. At the hotel, we had helpers; we had the cooks, a Japanese couple to cook. Suddenly I had to get up at five o’clock in the morning, then to make breakfast... I told myself “I’m not sticking around.” I was twelve years old... How to make bread, I did not know what to put in it. My brothers, they could work at the sugar beet farm. Two older brothers helped my father.

Eiko and her family moved to Manitoba after staying a couple years in Minto, a self-supporting camp in British Columbia. She told me how hard it was for her parents, who had never farmed before. They then moved to a small town outside of Winnipeg. Japanese Canadians were not allowed to live in the city of Winnipeg at that time. She told me about a dream that she had just before the end of the war. In it, we clearly see her identification with Japan.

The Japanese war ended while we were there. I remember that because as a child I had a memory of having a dream. In the sky where there was a flag coming out, you know, and the Japanese flag came out. And then for some reason, I can’t remember exactly what the dream was about. But I knew that we lost the war. We had lost the war, right? Yeah, because I mean, like, because Japanese people, we were very anxious, because if we lost
the war [then] what would happens to us? So, as a child I was really afraid. Yeah. Well, adults talked about it all the time, what’s going to happen next . . . back to Japan or go east of Rockies? You know, that kind of thing?

When she was eleven, Eiko’s daily chores on the farm included making stacks of sandwiches to deliver to her parents in the field. Resentfully she added, “My brothers were playing. I did everything.” Her younger sister was nine years her junior. Just like Mary, so with Eiko: the household became her sole responsibility. Years later, her father’s oldest brother, who lived with them during that period, recalled how good Eiko was at helping her family: “Eiko wa Eeko datta”

While her cohorts were on prairie farms, Midge spent the war years at Lemon Creek, British Columbia, until her family left for Hamilton, Ontario, in 1946. Her recollections of those war years were focused on her school activities. She indicated that, at the beginning, there was no school in Lemon Creek; however, once it was built she remembered having had very “good teachers.” She told me how lucky she was to be able to continue her schooling. She compared herself with her second oldest brother, who had just finished Grade 9 in Vancouver at the time of the relocation. It was hard for her brother to continue his studies since the government did not offer high school education for the children of internees. Midge remembered her brother asking her parents for money so that he could take private correspondence courses. Her comments reminded me of Ellen’s younger brothers, both of whom found it difficult to continue their studies because they were being “moved around” so much.

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72 See Frank Moritsugu and the Ghost-Town Teachers Historical Society (2001) for full accounts by students and teachers.
Showing me her albums, Midge was nostalgic about her days at Lemon Creek. She remembered how hard it was for everyone when the repatriation paper came around at the end of the war and their parents had to decide whether to go back to Japan or the east of the Rockies. Like the Issei women in the previous section, Nisei women also remembered how families were torn apart and how they never recovered from this event. According to Midge, many of her friends were still too young to be independent and reluctantly went along with their parents’ decision to repatriate to Japan (Kage 1998). “Oh, it was so sad,” she said. And she told me of many broken hearts and friendships. For those who remained in Canada, when postwar closures of government camps forced some families to move beyond the Rocky Mountains, they were separated from the friendships and communities that they had spent four years building.

While Nisei women in British Columbia were struggling with being separated from family and friends, Fumiko’s experience was quite different. She was the only person in the study who benefited from the effect of the war. She felt that meeting many Nikkei of her age “improved” her “social life.”

[In] each grade, there would be one Japanese, one Chinese maybe, and then, of course, my sisters. Oh, we were about the only Japanese. But, this is a dramatic point. In 1945, when the war was over, all these unleashed Japanese Canadians came to Moose Jaw. A large number. There is a big airforce camp, people from Angler, people from Tashme, all met in Moose Jaw whether to be shipped off to Japan or to go east, or wherever. They were mainly from Tashme.

Oh, it was fascinating ... I didn’t feel lonely anymore, you know. It was like meeting my own. Only, the thing was they spoke Japanese very well and they looked at me and said, “Oh, she can’t speak Japanese!” ... Some stayed, five, six families decided to stay in Moose Jaw. That improved social life, [especially for] the teen years ... oh, definitely. All my hakujin friends had gone off with boys ... that was a great disappointment. Yeah. And that was when you were separated. We all played together but as soon as we became

73 Since HomeComing’92 in 1992 there have been many Nikkei “reunions.” See also Ortner (1997).
teens in high school, we paired off. Suddenly, lots of Japanese. We had dances, tennis together; you know, all those normal things. Yeah, together.

The Postwar Years: Starting Over

Starting life anew and putting down my roots again. (Lillian)

In the early 1950s Lillian, with her young family, left Montreal and went to Vancouver to start a new life. Her parents remained in Montreal. In Vancouver her husband worked with her brother-in-law in her father’s ladies’ clothing business for a few years. Later, he returned to the University of British Columbia to take accounting courses. Upon completing them he began importing Noritake and Panasonic products. Lillian told me that “he was quite successful and used to go to Japan twice a year for business.” While her husband’s business prospered, Lillian was busy at home raising four children, just as her mother had done in the prewar days.

Mary, who was repatriated to Japan with her family in “the last repatriation boat” on “the Christmas Eve in 1946,” came back to the Vancouver in September 1950, with $200 in her pocket. She had earned this money by working as an interpreter/translator at the American military base in Japan. She told me she returned because she “did not want to be stranded in Japan.” At that time, there was a small Nikkei community in Vancouver. In the 1950s, Nisei, “about twenty to sixty people got together” for “socials,” often organized by a United Church group. The group got the Nisei church to offer services in English, but the Issei church continued to hold services in Japanese.

Mary was the first member of her family to return to Vancouver, and she slowly began to
bring back her other family members, starting with her older brother and his family. Finally, in 1958, her mother, father, and her youngest brother joined her. The whole family was together again in Canada. That same year her own family moved back to Vancouver, having left the company housing at the Great Northern Cannery in West Vancouver, where her husband worked as a mechanic. Her second child was six months old. For a while Mary’s family and her extended family lived together in a big house on Victoria Drive. She told me how her own young family managed to live in the diningroom area while they rented out the rest of the house.

Mary’s narratives of the early 1950s were centered around her search for work. She indicated that she often took several jobs simultaneously. Even though people no longer referred to her as a “Jap,” it was still difficult for her to find work in postwar Vancouver.

I learned shorthand, English composition, went to school seven to eight in the evenings . . . Made up a resume to apply for a job . . . I telephoned for a job. But as soon as I got the appointment they would say, “oh, its taken.” I got smarter. I phoned and asked them whether the position was available. “Oh, yes.” Because I was always looking for something better, as soon as I got experience I looked for another job — secretary, and other jobs, you know.

Eiko’s experience of moving to Winnipeg in the early 1950s was very similar to Fumiko’s experience in Moose Jaw: she met other Japanese Canadians of her age, and this made her feel at home.

I never knew anyone else my age . . . So when I moved to Winnipeg, [it was] Christmas in Winnipeg, I remember. Our family was invited by the Buddhist or the United Church, I think it was by Buddhist Church, . . . I think it was for, a JCCA [Japanese Canadian Citizens Association] picnic. And I went with my family. And I met, for the first time, other Japanese Canadian teen-age kids. It was a revelation for me. Because until then, I, I

74 This practice is called yobiyose. The Canadian government did not allow Japanese Canadians to return freely since they had been stripped of their Canadian citizenship and had to return as Japanese nationals. In order to do this, they had to be sponsored by someone.

75 Mary told me how surprised she was at being called a “Jap” in 1946 when she went to see her father’s hotel while waiting for their ship to take them to Japan. She wondered how people knew that they were Japanese rather than Chinese.
had no idea what they were like, you know. Because I only knew my parents. Yeah. So when I met them, I was meeting people like myself, and I really had a lot of fun with them. Yeah. And, so I . . . was very lucky, luckier than other people.

In fact, before I was married I was very much involved with the Japanese community. I went to the United Church. I went to that church after the war. My father was a Buddhist but there was no Buddhist church so my parents encouraged us to go to the United Church, you know. So in Winnipeg I continued to go to church.

In response to the demand from the growing Japanese Canadian community there, a Japanese consulate opened in Winnipeg on April 1957. Eiko told me that she went to many functions in her youth and pointed out that the Winnipeg Japanese Canadian community was small but well grounded and very supportive of its members. She went on to tell me how people organized big concerts, plays (geki), songs and shibai (Japanese plays). She also remembered that, whenever there were weddings, people in the Winnipeg Japanese Community were always prepared to perform and entertain their Japanese Canadian community members.

After the war Eiko’s family moved to Winnipeg. Finding a job was difficult for any Canadian, and it was even harder for Japanese Canadians. Eventually her mother got work at a textile factory and her father at a tannery. Many Nikkei women worked for textile factories in Winnipeg and the owners of such factories profited from their labour as they were very good seamstresses. Eventually her parents bought a house in “a slum district” of Winnipeg. Every weekend she dreaded having to clean the house for the boarders who were renting rooms there.

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76 Manitoba Japanese Canadian Citizen’s Association Newsletter, vol 7, 1954 shows that Eiko was one of the executives, the person responsible for keeping records (kiroku shoki 記録書記) during November 1954 to October 1955 (Sasaki 1998:211).


78 Kang’s study indicates, in the 1990s, 56 per cent of older Nisei women still worked for the garment industry in Winnipeg as they had during the immediate postwar period (1996:111).
Her assignment was to clean all the bathrooms. After school she also cooked her family’s supper and looked after her siblings. She told me that she was the second oldest in her family, even though she always behaved as though she was the oldest. Her elder sister, who was a few years her senior, was a Kika-Nisei, having been sent to Japan to live with her widowed grandmother when she was about eight. She returned to Canada a decade later, and Eiko looked forward to this homecoming.

I think she turned nineteen when she came to Canada. I was still going to school, but I went to Vancouver to meet her even though I had never travelled [alone] in my life. My mother packed a few things [for me for the trip]. Because my mother could not speak English [she couldn’t go herself]. My father was working. It was a few years after the war. I was fifteen or sixteen; I remember I was still going to high school.

So I remember going to Vancouver to meet her . . . A two-day trip. Yeah, it was quite . . . yeah, you know, I just sat in the coach. It was quite an adventure for me.

When her eldest sister finally joined the family, however, Eiko still remained responsible for her siblings as her elder sister lacked both the cultural and linguistic skills to take over her responsibilities as the eldest daughter. She needed time to adjust to her family after having been away for over ten years. Eiko remembered how different she and her elder sister were from each other. Her elder sister has been raised as an お嬢さん(a young lady) and was used to being waited upon, unlike Eiko, who had been “raised to do everything,” including making supper and helping her mother at home. Her sister tried very hard to fit into the family and her Canadian life. The two sisters were supportive of one another. Eiko told me that she was always too tired for school and her school work suffered. When she completed Grade 11 she decided to leave high school and started to work as a secretary. Her salary went toward paying off the mortgage.

Midge stayed at Lemon Creek until 1946, and then moved to a German prisoner-of-war camp before she moved to Hamilton. They chose to move to Hamilton because her second brother had
a connection with a friend who was already living there. She told me that Hamilton was
"welcoming Japanese more than Toronto at that time" but that it lacked housing. Her family had a
very difficult time finding accommodation. Her two older brothers had been sent ahead to search
for a suitable place for her family. Summer had gone and September was coming; it was a long
wait for the family in Lemon Creek. Midge remembered how anxious they were to hear good
news from her brothers:

M: A few days after school had started, Yoshi [her second eldest brother] finally found a
house, and I remember going with my father to the railroad station, wiring money to him
for a down payment.
Y: So your family had money to buy a house?
M: No, my father had a little bit of money, it was just for a down payment.

In Hamilton, Midge enrolled in Grade 12 while her younger brother went into Grade 5. She
was at a loss in the big city on the first day of school, trying to find a way to the high school by
bus according to her brother Yoshi's directions. Yoshi took the youngest brother with him to
register for school. Adjusting to life in the city after several years of living in a government camp
in British Columbia was not so easy. Yet Midge's main concern was for her school work.

Oh, I did, I had a hard time adjusting. My courses were all mixed up. After I registered I
wrote to my old math and science teacher, who was a conscientious objector during the
Second World War, in Lemon Creek . . . He wrote me back and said "You need your
algebra." This was because "Grade 11 Math was just a little bit of geometry and a little bit
of algebra. You don't have your algebra so you'd better take your algebra. But you have a
full schedule. What you have to do is go to the algebra teacher, and tell [him/her] you'll
study on your own and write a Christmas exam. But you'd better go to see the principal
first."

I went to see the principal. He was C. MacLean. And I went to see him and I said, "I
understand I need to take Grade 11 algebra but I can't work it into my schedule. Would
you let me study on my own and let me write an exam? He looked at me and he said "I
don't want another failure because of people like you." "Because of people like you" he
said . . . "Another failure." I mean, I mean I was so shy, but I just, I remember saying to
him, "Will you let me try? If you let me write a Christmas exam and an Easter exam, and
I've done badly, I wouldn't write the June exam." June exam is the one that is recorded.
So he said, "OK." And I got a first class in Christmas, and a first class at Easter, so I
knew I didn’t have to write the June exam and so didn’t bother studying.\textsuperscript{79}

Midge also had problems with her English. She realized that her English had deteriorated during her “ghost town” days, when she spoke a mixture of Japanese and English with her friends. She told me that for quite a while she was afraid to even open her mouth:

We were using a mixture of Japanese and English because everybody spoke it. Oh, we thought it was funny, these funny Japanese words, especially people from Mio Mura,\textsuperscript{80} they spoke funny Japanese. “aa, ikora, ikora”, “let’s go.” Ikora! Because that was what they said. Yeah, it is just an example. We used to use really horrible [Japanese], and then you know, English was very badly affected. Japanese words kept popping out.

Later in our conversations Midge told me how she and her husband discussed language usage and chose to speak only English to their children so that their children would not suffer what they had experienced. However, she somehow kept using a few Japanese words and phrases with her children. The most important phrases, such as “Abunai! 危ない [watch out]!” were spoken in Japanese. “Abunai! They knew exactly what I meant.”\textsuperscript{81}

Like Eiko’s parents, Midge’s father had a hard time reestablishing his life. It was very difficult for him to support the family, especially after her eldest brother (the family’s main breadwinner) married in 1949. Midge and her second brother were in college, while her youngest brother was in high school. Life in Hamilton was hard for everyone. Not having access to a Nikkei community where he could use his expertise in carpentry, her father, who was in his mid-fifties, tried various

\textsuperscript{79} At that time in Ontario schools, students who did well in the first two terms were exempted from the final exams.

\textsuperscript{80} The majority of Japanese Canadians in Steveston, British Columbia, came from this village in Wakayama prefecture before the Second World War.

\textsuperscript{81} Midge uses this phrase with her grandchildren. And she had often observed her children, Sansei, use it with their children, Yonsei. She indicated that her children find their action “funny” whenever they catch themselves doing it and talk about it.
jobs - washing dishes and working in a cannery. Eventually, under another Japanese, he began to work as a gardener during the muggy Ontario summers. When he first started looking for work, her father tried to do carpentry with a Nisei man, a contractor; but he quit because he refused to make shelves and cupboards from “raw green lumber.” Midge’s mother also had a hard time finding a job. Midge remembered taking her mother around the city job hunting. Eventually, through a Japanese neighbour (who had owned a dry cleaning business in Vancouver before the war), her mother found work doing alterations for a dry cleaner.

With regard to her educational opportunities, Midge often said how lucky she was compared to her brother, who finished high school while in Lemon Creek. At that time the closest university accessible to him was the University of Manitoba. She remembered his asking her parents to let him go to the University of Manitoba, but her parents thought Manitoba was too far away. So instead of going to university he went to work at a sawmill near Lemon Creek, British Columbia. Several years later in Hamilton, Ontario he was finally able to return to his studies.

I think he had the hardest time. When he went to Hamilton, he wanted his Grade 13. I just went into Grade 12, right? So he started to work all day in a foundry, it was International Harvest, it was hard and hot [work]. He worked all day. So did my other brother [the eldest]. Then he went to night school, where he took nine high school subjects. He worked so hard, then, in those days . . . the whole province wrote the same exam. He got sick and he did very badly in some. That was the time when the veterans were going back to university, so it was very hard to get in unless you were an exceptional student.

Despite all these adversities, her brother persevered and eventually became a successful meteorologist. Midge’s path was much smoother than her brother’s. It seems that this was at least partly due to her mother, who encouraged her to continue with her studies, while her father reluctantly allowed her, the only daughter, to go to university. He finally agreed to let her go to university after his former boss saw an article in a local community newspaper about Midge receiving a scholarship. He wrote her father a letter suggesting that he let her go to university.
Apparently news of her scholarship was known not only in the Hamilton Nikkei community but also in the Toronto Nikkei community. Midge quoted me parts of the letter: “sonnani yoku dekiru musume dattara daigaku ni ikasetara iidesho [if she is bright, why don’t you let her?]” So her father told her, “Yes.” “Ueno-san said ikasenasai. aa, ittemo ii” [Mr. Ueno said ‘Let her go’, so you may go]. She told me that not many “girls” went to university at that time, especially “girls” from the Hamilton Japanese community. Often her mother’s friends asked her why she was sending her daughter to university.

M: It was my mother who used to put ideas in my head, I think. Yes, it was.
Y: How was your father?
M: No, no, no. I think they expected jinan [the second son], Yoshi, to be the educated one just like in Japan. Choonan [the eldest son] takes over, jinan gets an education. Because he was a good student, I think [they expected] jinan to get an education, yeah.

M: So when I started to go to university, the Japanese community was saying to my mother, onna daigaku ni ikasete do surutsumori! [What are you thinking of sending your daughter to university]? My mother said “Well, shooganai. ikitatte yuukara shooganai” [I cannot help it. She wants to go].

Her mother’s dream to have a physician daughter, however, did not come true. Midge went to see a career counsellor in her undergraduate program at McMaster. When she told this person she intended to pursue her dream and become a obstetrician (which is what mother wanted her to be), he asked her: “Does your father, does your family, have money?” When she replied “No,” he simply told her that she could not become a doctor. Midge was not discouraged, however. She did graduate work in chemistry and upon receiving a masters degree in science in 1953, she became the first woman scientist at the National Research Council (NRC) in Ottawa,\(^{82}\) where she worked until a few months before she had her first daughter in 1956. She married a Nisei who

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\(^{82}\) She explained to me that they created a special category for women. “It was lower than for a BSc male, and I had MSc. They created a special category, which was lower, to hire females . . . that was the way it was in those days.”
was working in another department at the NRC. There were quite a few Japanese Canadians in Ottawa, and they used to socialize together, “bowling on Sundays” and going to “dinners at Chinese restaurants.” Midge added that they were careful not to be seen as a big group and always asked the restaurant to reserve a special room for them.83

**Fumiko** was another Nisei woman who yearned to pursue a career. Unlike Midge, however, she did not get any encouragement from her mother.84 Although she wanted to be an artist, no one encouraged her to pursue her dream. “There is no money in it. Don’t,” was the advice she received. Her mother told her to be more “practical” and to go to some commercial or technical school. After high school she worked at a Chinese grocery store to save money for school. In 1953 she left Moose Jaw to study art. However, her career was put aside when she met her future husband, an artist and writer, whom she met through a friend in Regina. She stated simply:

> By the time I met my husband, everything went down, artistically, you know. Artistically. Twenty-five, I got married. My life changed.

She described how her marriage to an artist, a non-Japanese man (he was of English, Scottish, and Irish heritage) sent her parents into “great shock” even though earlier her mother had confided to Fumiko that she was not going to force arranged marriages upon her daughters. Her mother was unhappy that she was left “with no choice but marry my father.” Yet her mother was very

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83 The behaviour of the Hamilton Nisei was a product of the wartime restrictions the government forced on Japanese Canadians. They did not want to be visible and watched by others, as they felt too self-conscious.

84 Although her mother did not encourage her to go into arts, it seems that she had some positive influence from her father. She described him as a very gentle and quiet man who “left most of the things” to her mother. He loved to read history, took his children canoeing, and he made “fantastic onigiri” (rice balls).
disappointed with her daughter’s marriage, to a non-Japanese Canadian. Fumiko explained that there were not many Japanese Canadians where she lived, and many of them thought her a “little strange” because she liked arts and classical music. She and her husband had “things in common,” however, and they were married in 1954. They worked in Regina for a couple of years and, in 1957, they left for England.

We wanted to travel. That time we felt the whole Canadian society a bit stifling. John [the first child] was born in England in 1959. Late 1950s, Canada was a very boring place. When we hit London, that was very exciting. The Beatles . . . people were being very creative.

Fumiko’s husband was a documentary film writer, but it was very hard to make a living in London. In 1962, when her husband found a job with the National Film Board in Montreal, she returned to Canada with her children. After a couple of years in Montreal they moved to Toronto, and in the late 1960s she finally arrived in Vancouver. Her husband got a job at the Vancouver Art Gallery, where one of his classmates from art school, Roy Kiyooka, was working. When I mistakenly used the word “return” instead of “come,” Fumiko corrected me right away and made it clear that she did not “return to Vancouver” as had many other Nisei but, rather, arrived in Vancouver for the first time.

Aya lived in Regina for twenty-four years before her move to Victoria in 1978. She began to describe Regina’s Japanese Canadian community by stating “how cold Regina was.”

Not so many [Japanese Canadians]. About sixteen families, you know. Older people are

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85 I had a similar experience with my mother when I told her of my decision to marry a non-Japanese. Fumiko’s marriage preceded mine by more than two decades, and her mother had been living in Canada for a long time; yet our mothers reacted similarly towards our choice of husbands. It is also interesting to note that my husband said that, had his mother been alive, she would have been very upset about his Japanese wife.
dying off. There have been a few immigrants. So it was a very close-knitted Japanese community in Regina. Yes, we had picnics, we had Christmas parties, New Year’s parties, then we had a bowling team, and things like that. So, if there were any kind of [functions], weddings and funerals, people would phone and I would go.

She added that people in Moose Jaw who arrived from “ghost towns” were often invited for picnics. Her children went to private Japanese classes initiated by “an immigrant lady” [a Shin-Issei] who wanted to teach Japanese to her son and invited other children to join in. When Aya and her husband moved to Victoria in the late 1970s they were accompanied by their two younger daughters, the youngest of whom was twelve years old and the other a high school student. The older children remained in Regina.

**Connecting with the Past**

Although she had not had much contact with Nikkei communities since her marriage, Fumiko slowly began to associate with the Nikkei community in Vancouver after her family moved to Vancouver in the late 1960s. Living in co-op housing in the Chinatown area also increased her contact with other Japanese Canadians and Shin-Issei in the area. She told me that “When the Centennial Project came up, I felt right. I thought it was a good idea”. She felt like talking with Shin-Issei, even though she could not fully understand the sociocultural differences between herself and them. However, she

felt a bit uncomfortable with Nisei. We [Nisei] are similar. Lots of similar kinds of food we eat, social civilities, enryo [reserve and modest], shikata ganai [cannot be helped]. But also [they are] very afraid, when they are doing things, that somebody is looking at them and disapproving. Do you know what I mean? If we do this, what would our neighbours think?... I was trying to get away from that.

In our earlier conversation, Fumiko told me how surprised she was to find a caption under her school year book picture that read: “Silence is Golden.” “Somebody else put it there because I did not say anything. Now I talk all the time.” She recounted how her mother “pushed” her to be
Canadian and how she herself tried to be Canadian. Yet she often felt uncomfortable. Then she
told me about her names: her English name is “Doreen” and her Japanese name is “Fumiko.”
She stopped using the former and began using the latter when she met her husband, who made her
“proud of her Japanese heritage.” She mentioned that her eldest son began to add his Japanese
name when he became involved with the Japanese Canadian community. The only people who
now refer to Fumiko as “Doreen” are friends and acquaintances from her past.

I started to use “Fumiko” when I met Todd [husband]. He told me, “You are not
Doreen.” I thought, that’s true. I was always uncomfortable with that name . . . We were
baptized in the Anglican Church. [There was an] English woman married to an Issei man.
She was pure English. She was very English. I was named Doreen after her. I was never
comfortable.

Father showed me how to write “Fumiko” in hiragana (the Japanese cursive syllabary)
[Yuko writes ふみこ “fumiko” in Japanese] . . . that’s right. He showed me that. Never
thought about using that. Doreen - - doren ドレン. Mrs. Kitagawa, Mrs. Kobayakawa’s
sister, we knew her in Moose Jaw. She calls me “Doren”, “ハロー、ドレン haro, doren!
[Hello, Doreen!]” “ハイ オバサン、ドウデスカ? hai obasan, dodesuka? [Hello to you,
too. How are you?]”

After ending her work as a cook for a sawmill camp in Cariboo, in the 1960s Ellen gradually
began to re-establish her life in Vancouver. When all her children were in university she decided
to return to school. She told me why:

Because I was bored. I wasn’t working anymore, you see. I said “Oh, I would be so glad
to get rid of the cook-house. I hated it, it’s so much work.” So I came down here and I
got bored. So I went . . . first of all, I thought, maybe I’d better take some more Japanese.
I can’t read anything. I still can’t read. But I took Japanese. And I took a lot of interesting
courses, Oriental Art, Buddhism . . . I thought I’d better study up on Buddhism because I
didn’t know anything about it.

86 Her eldest son began to participate in the Vancouver Japanese Canadian community
through his music. He was a member of Katari Taiko, and eventually formed a new Japanese
drum group. Fumiko told me how surprised she had been to see her son’s commitment to and
involvement in the Japanese Canadian community. Upon her retirement, he took over her job as
the English editor of the JCCA Bulletin.
In 1969, following a suggestion from one of her classmates, she took two of her younger sons to Japan by Japanese freighter. It was Ellen’s first visit to Japan.

It was a very interesting trip. It was nice. I liked it. But I was frustrated because I couldn’t read well enough. Speaking, speaking was fine, as long as you didn’t get into some complicated conversation it was OK. But I couldn’t read, you see. It’s very maddening because when you are looking at something, well, I couldn’t figure something out. The kids got so good at looking at train timetables; they could figure them out.

That was the time she saw her uncle, who had left Canada before the war, and met her cousins in Japan for the first time. Her two sons chose to remain in Japan for a while but she decided to fly back to Vancouver to escape the summer heat in Tokyo. After she “ran out of courses to take” she began studying music and learned to play shamisen (a Japanese lute with 3 strings) and koto (a Japanese harp with 13 strings), following a suggestion from one of the faculty members in the music department at the University of British Columbia. She eventually returned to her piano because she felt that studying Japanese instruments was rather limited. After obtaining two bachelors degrees, one in Japanese and one in music, she worked at the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) music library for over ten years until her retirement in the late 1980s.

Unlike Ellen, Eiko did not return to school out of boredom. She was the wife of a Scottish Canadian and the mother of two sons. The oldest son was twelve and the younger nine or ten when she returned to the University of Manitoba in her late thirties:

So you see, for me, going back to university was something I had to do for myself. Once you go back, there is no end. But I feel my early education was not very solid because we moved all over.

She described how she ended up taking a visual arts class and how, eventually, this led her to continue graduate studies in Asian art history at the University of British Columbia in the 1980s. She told me how happy her mother was when she returned to the University of Manitoba because
she was the only child who had gone to university.

Eiko thought that, in marrying a Scottish Canadian rather than a Japanese, she was attempting to break away from the model that her mother had created. She said that she “was somebody else,” that she “was not allowed to be herself.” For her mother, happiness consisted of “marry a rich man and play golf”- - an idea Eiko had rebelled against “all [her] life.” She told me that she “married a very nice, kind man.” Her husband (whom she later divorced) was an English teacher, and he was very supportive of her while she was studying for her university degree. Yet she always felt uncomfortable with her marriage, feeling that she was very “Japanese.” Although her mother believed in education, when Eiko left her family to continue her graduate studies in Vancouver, her mother was hesitant. After her master’s degree, she worked at various art galleries across Canada. Although her parents and two brothers have been living in Vancouver since the 1960s, her reason for coming to Vancouver in 1994 concerned not them but, rather, a job at the Burnaby Art Gallery.

Living in the suburbs of Ottawa since the mid-1950s and raising five children, Midge had never discussed, with either her Caucasian friends or her children, life on the west coast, her Japanese Canadian wartime experiences, or the fact that Japanese Canadians could not vote until 1949. This changed in 1970. Her eldest daughter complained about the injustice of the school zoning that was to separate her from her friends. Midge told me how she handed her daughter “a bundle of papers” that she had gathered over the years about the wartime incarceration. “Without a word,” just like her own mother had done, she gave it to her daughter.

When Nisei women talked about the redress settlement in 1988, their narratives reflected the happiness they felt. For some, this was the time to move beyond the ambivalence towards their heritage and to begin exploring the Japanese Canadian way of life with which they were so
familiar. Women indicated that, at that time, they began talking about their pre- and postwar experiences with their parents and children. Many expressed their regrets over missed opportunities as some of their parents, aunts and uncles had died. In some cases, these conversations were instigated by their Sansei children. They told me that, after the redress settlement, they finally felt like they were "whole" people. Several women were actively involved in the redress settlement movement. From the mid- to late 1980s, many of them played a major role in fundraising. One of the women, Mary, told me that her father's encouragement sustained her and kept her going. She said: "I did it for my father," who died before the settlement. When she began to participate in the redress movement, her father told her: "It's good that people are doing something." He said that the Canadian Government had no right to take away the property of Japanese Canadians. Lillian worked along with her husband, who was one of the major players in the redress fundraising effort in Vancouver. Some of her daughters had been community activists since the late 1970s. In Victoria, Aya participated in the redress movement along with her husband, who formed a redress movement group on Vancouver Island in the 1980s.

Ellen always believed that one has to know one's own history in order to gain a sense of one's self. For this reason, she had never hesitated to share with her sons her experiences of growing up in white British Columbia. Her eldest son became one of the core members of the redress movement in Vancouver. His sense of Japanese Canadian-ness was awakened by working with the members of the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project in the mid-1970s. Ellen told me that the third generation were the ones that broke the silence.

E: They don't have the inhibitions we have.
Y: Inhibitions?
E: Yeah, we were inhibited. You know, we felt this enryo. Yeah, the Japanese say enryo and we weren't allowed to do anything. This is why we held back all the time. I think so. Whereas, the third generation is different. The Caucasians, they don't care. They do whatever they feel like.

Y: Do you think that's good?

E: Oh, I think it's very good. We would have never gotten redress if it weren't for the third generation. Because they would stick up for our rights. We couldn't do it. We didn't have a vote for one thing. We had no power, so we couldn't do anything. Over the years, we were looked down at all the time. We couldn't do anything, so we were all scared.

Lillian echoed Ellen's comments, telling me how free her children are from Japanese cultural inhibitions, or enryo, that affected her own behaviour.

L: I am more outspoken than before. Maybe I was outspoken before too. That I don't know . . . More and more now, as I get older, I am not afraid of Caucasians, and I speak out with my perfect English to gain a little bit of respect. Or, if I am [waiting for] service, if they just ignore me, then I step up and say, "Look, I am here first." [laughs] I am more demanding, but in a friendly sort of way.

L: Before, we enryo, down all the time.

Y: Before means . . . ?

L: Before the war. But as we grow older, we are much more forward. Who am I afraid of? I am not afraid any more. They [her Sansei children] are very much more vocal than I am, which I am very grateful for.

Fumiko also told me how enryo comes out in her interpersonal relationships. Even with her family members, it is hard to express her emotions. She assured me that she was getting better at it since she had begun to focus on her "own" needs.

Aya said that, in the past, she had not had much confidence; with her younger daughters' encouragement, she was getting better.

Just a funny thing, but you know, I didn't have too much confidence in me, as I said. I

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Kitano (1976:124-5) states that, among the many Japanese norms, the "norm of enryo appears to be the most important." He gives the following examples, which pertain to Japanese American behaviour: "their hesitancy to speak out at the meeting; their refusal of any invitation, especially the first time; their refusal of a second helping; their acceptance of a less desired object when given a free choice; their refusal to ask questions."
have more confidence now, through the kids, my kids: "You are not that stupid." They encouraged me to do things I would never have done [without their help], I think.

When Aya’s children began high school, they realized that their mother did not have much self-esteem. Since then, they had been trying to help her by suggesting courses to take or books to read.

I took up driving in my later years. Ten years ago. No, I did not drive. In Regina, many people didn’t have the luxury of having two cars. So I volunteer now, one day a week, Thursdays. People, seniors and handicapped people, phone in and volunteers fill out the orders . . . I met a few people at driving school. Got close. We phone when we don’t have time to get together. We get together to go for lunch, like that, and I have some Nisei friends . . . It doesn’t mean that I spend an awful lot of time cooking, but Sunday kids come for dinner. Saturday I go shopping, drive by myself. Now I go when I feel like it.

Present Life Style and Hopes for the Future

Through the life narratives of Nisei women I have learned that they had adjusted their life styles according to their shifting life situations. They are now facing their old age and failing health, which restricts their mobility; they are dealing with the loss of loved ones and caring for their aging parents. They are also enjoying the company of their adult children and grandchildren, while expanding their circle of friends according to their interests and needs. At the time of my interview with Ellen, she and her husband were building a new house where they could gain better access to public transit and be close to their sons.

Lillian was recovering from a minor stroke that occurred several months prior to our interview. She described her situation as follows:

What I find is that we are now associating only with our own immediate family, letting the others go. Although we, Charlie and I, and the children are going to celebrate our fiftieth wedding anniversary next August. So we will be seeing many other [friends] for that.

I realized, however, that she was not quite “letting the others go.” In fact, she was still very much engaged in the community. She described to me her weekly activities: Japanese conversation class
on Mondays at Tonari Gumi, Japanese dance class on Tuesdays, bible class on Wednesdays, Tai Chi class in the morning and a bridge game in the evening on Thursdays and so on. She also tried to spend time with her husband by subscribing to operas and various concerts series. As a long-time United Church member, Lillian had witnessed the language gap between immigrants and Nisei at her church. Consequently, she suggested that I visit her church to mediate between the Japanese-speaking and English-speaking groups. She gave me a very difficult task: to think about a symbol, the symbol that might bring all Nikkei people -- Shin-Issei, Nisei, and others -- together to "have fun."

Fumiko had retired from the *JCCA Bulletin* editorship several years ago but was still active in the Japanese Canadian community, volunteering and contributing articles for the Bulletin at the time of our interview. Eiko was serving as a Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (JCCA) board member and otherwise getting involved in the community. At the time of our interview in her apartment, she was making a huge amount of chow mein for a JCCA volunteer appreciation gathering. Her husband having died, Mary had just moved into a new place with her daughter, who left her career in New York to be with her mother. Mary was quite busy yet did not forget to tell me that she was looking for a job. Since the 1988 redress settlement, Mary has been associated with a history preservation group that has become known as the Japanese Canadian National Museum.

Meanwhile, Aya described her life in Victoria:

I think, more [contact with Japanese people] than ever, ever since we are in Victoria. We started a Japanese course. I'm taking Japanese lessons. Dick [her husband] is in a committee for the Sister City Program, Morioka/ Nitobe Inazo. So all of a sudden, there are all these people from Japan, and he likes to invite them to our house. So there is more Japanese [contact] in my life now than in the rest of my life put together. And Aya continued to keep up the Japanese New Year's tradition.

Dick [her husband] likes to invite people, you know, for the New Year. My kids say, "You're crazy! Why are you doing all these kind of things?" He thinks he likes it. Yeah,
I do. But people do like it, and it is the New Year. Yeah, I’ll do it again . . . Tradition, for the New Year . . . Lots of work. I think it is a lot of work, but you know, that doesn’t mean that I don’t enjoy it...
Y: Do you think your daughters will be doing the same?
A: Oh, no, no. They are not crazy. They always say, “Why are you doing all this?” My youngest daughter makes sushi once in a while, you know. But the other, she does not like anything fishy. All three of them prefer to have meat.

At the time of our interview in 1996, Midge, who had just defended her Ph. D. dissertation in history, was enjoying her achievement with her family and friends, whom she felt she had neglected for a while. Although she had a few in-laws living in British Columbia, all her immediate family members were scattered across North America. She regularly visited them and her elderly mother in Ontario. Yet she has not forgotten her Japanese Canadian community, and maintains her health as an active practitioner of Tai Chi. She has been serving as a board member of the Japanese Canadian National Museum, and since 1997, she has commuted to board meetings held in the Vancouver area from her home in Victoria.

Postscript

Many things have changed Nisei women’s lives since the 1996 interviews. For some, the changes have not affected their life style drastically. Fumiko, however, had a major stroke in 1998. This had a major impact on her life style, as the massive stroke paralyzed her left side. Although she did not recover fully, she has regained her mobility. During her recovery, she shared her experiences in the JCCA Bulletin. In 2001, Fumiko and her husband moved to Nelson, British Columbia to be closer to her daughter and her family; they are enjoying their life there. Mary’s involvement in the Nikkei community is waning due to her failing health over the past several years. Lillian is still involved in community activities. Ellen and her husband just had a sixtieth wedding anniversary party in May 2002. She has slipped disks, and so she cannot move as much, but she continues to enjoy her garden and her friends. She plays piano with her friends and gets

C: Sansei Women

The six Sansei women in this study (Setsuko b. 1936; Naomi b. 1949; Mayumi b. 1952; Joan b. 1956; Patti b. 1965; Carolyn b. 1968) differ greatly in their ages. A thirty-two year gap separates the oldest and the youngest Sansei, who were born in 1936 and in 1968, respectively. The largest age difference between the Sansei women and their siblings was thirteen years. At the time of the interviews, the youngest was in her late twenties, and the oldest in her sixties. The oldest woman’s experiences were similar to those of the Nisei women. Two of the women were born outside of British Columbia and grew up in a predominantly White environment until they moved to this province in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was the time of the 1977 postcentennial celebration, and Japanese Canadians’ awareness of their history was gradually growing. Through community events, Japanese Canadian communities were networking and gaining strength throughout Canada.

The oldest Sansei woman, Setsuko, was born in Vancouver and lived there until 1942, when Japanese Canadians were moved to government camps in the British Columbia Interior. She then moved to Ontario and finally returned to her birthplace in 1963 with her young family. One woman, Naomi, was born in Lethbridge, Alberta, in the late 1940s and moved to Mission, British Columbia, when she was barely one year old. There her family joined her paternal grandparents who had resettled after the war and, eventually, her family moved to Aldergrove, where she made “her home” on a berry farm until she left for college in 1967. Another woman, Mayumi, was
born in Vancouver in the early 1950s and lived in Tashme until she was five years old, when her family moved to Steveston, British Columbia where there were schools she could attend and where her maternal grandparents and relatives were rebuilding their lives. Another woman, Joan, was born in Sherman, British Columbia, in the mid-1950s, where her father worked for the Great Northern Cannery. She and her family lived in company housing and then moved to Vancouver's "Little Italy" district, where her father and his brother purchased a house. She stayed there until she was in college when her parents moved to Richmond, British Columbia. Two women, Patti and Carolyne, moved to British Columbia with their families in their preteens and teens --- Patti was born and raised in Ottawa and then moved to Sooke in 1980 (when she was fifteen). Carolyne was born and raised in Regina; she moved to Victoria when she was ten.

At the time of the interviews, four of the Sansei women were living in Greater Vancouver, one was living in Victoria, and one was in transition (from Colorado to her new destination). One was divorced and had three grown up children and three grandchildren; one was married, one had a common-law husband; and three were single. The youngest Sansei woman was back at school pursuing her career after having supported her husband while he attained his; two were in career transition; two were working full time; and one had several part-time jobs that equalled one full-time job. A couple of women were very active in the Japanese Canadian community in the 1970s and 1980s, both during and after the Japanese Canadian Centennial years. They were involved with the Nikkei community events, the Powell Street Festival, and the forming of a Katari Taiko\textsuperscript{88} group in 1979. They continued to be active up until the 1988 Redress Agreement. Although some of them are no longer as involved as they once were, they continue to volunteer for

\textsuperscript{88} The first Japanese Canadian drum group organized in Canada. It, along with the Powell Street Festival, became one of the major Japanese Canadian institutions. See Katari Taiko Drum Group Association 1999. See also Shikuma 2000.
numerous community activities.

For me, I figure that, I mean, my life was with the community [Nikkei] before up until I got this new job. The reason I like my new job is that it separates my personal life from my other life. Up until the Tonari Gumi, Powell Street Festival, and Redress, my whole life was wrapped in one. Katari Taiko was a community. It was wonderful. I have to admit that, you know, probably that was the high point of my life for the longest time.

(Naomi)

According to Mayumi:

Y: So you are not so directly involved now?
M: Less and less. Became less and less because time has changed. When we got involved with things like the Powell Street Festival, or Tonari Gumi, Katari Taiko, it was all new. Now it has become established. These things are going for a long time. (1996)

In the Japanese Canadian Sansei, Tomoko Makabe (1998:164) claims that:

The Sansei are the generation that has become ‘native Canadian’ in the fullest sense, being born and raised in the Canadian community. They have gone through socialization in mainstream institutions of society outside the Japanese minority culture and the boundaries of the ethnic community.

Did the Sansei really become “native Canadian,” as Makabe’s research\(^89\) indicates? The age difference between her youngest and the oldest subject was twenty-seven years at the time of the research (1993). This means that her youngest subject was born in 1968, while the oldest experienced the war years as a young child, just like the younger generation of the Nisei group. Makabe does not seem to deal with how, and under what circumstances, Sansei became “native Canadian.” Her study lacks an understanding of the connections between the Sanseis’ experience of social history and their personality development (the individual life course, during which an individual’s sense of identity shifts and changes over time).

People’s experience reflects the impact of social events as mediated by their perception of their life situation and environment, which includes the immediate family and the extended family, the

\(^{89}\) It was based on interviews in 1992-93 with 64 Sansei (36 men and 28 women) across Canada. Her subjects “ranged from 25 to 52 years, the mean age of the sample group was 38.5” (Makabe 1998:11).
Japanese Canadian community, and the mainstream Canadian community. From the Nisei narratives we have seen how their experiences were affected by birth-order and gender as well as differences in personality. We saw how these factors affected the acquisition of English as well as the construction of a Nikkei identity and ethnicity. Clearly, people shift their priorities according to their life situations. According to Mei Nakano (1990:xvi), a Japanese American:

Sansei women recognize many positive Japanese cultural values that resonate in their thinking and actions. Not the least of these are the sense of the importance of family and a deeply infused sense of obligation and responsibility.

Does this hold true for Japanese Canadian Sansei women? If so, then how and in what situations do they express “positive Japanese cultural values”? How did they categorize these values? How and under what conditions did they acquire and/or discard these values? Through looking at the life narratives of six Sansei women, I hope to find some answers to these questions.

**Encounter**

Unlike my relationship with the Nisei women, with the Sansei women I had and continue to have a close association. Three of these women (Setsuko, Naomi and Mayumi) were friends. Through the interviews I learned that Naomi and Mayumi were cousins. Three (Joan, Patti and Carolyn) are the daughters of Nisei women I had interviewed. Because of their work schedules, all but one of the interviews were conducted at their workplace, my office, or my house.\(^90\) The length of the interviews ranged from two to several hours, and they took place over two sessions. The women said that talking about their lives was good since they rarely reflected on them.

Yes, yes, it was very interesting. It was a chance to reflect on my life, in a sense, how I changed, how I think, how my thinking had changed. (Naomi)

\(^90\) For this reason (unlike with the Nisei women) I could not observe their living environments.
It is good for an interviewee, it was a positive, interesting, and introspective process.
(Mayumi)

Actually, it was kind of nice to think about . . . my life, you know. My priorities and all that. Usually I don’t think about them. Too busy. I am trying to think of what I said and what we talked about.
(Setsuko)

The Early Days: Family and Community

“During my childhood, I really did not have a home.” This was how Setsuko began discussing her early days in prewar Vancouver as the oldest child of an Issei father (from Kumamoto) and a Nisei mother. She said that she does not remember much besides “Powell Ground” (the present Oppenheimer Park):

Not very much. My memory starts around the age of five, I think. I remember mostly the house on Alexander Street, Kanko Company, the Canadian Canning company.

She remembered how she took the ferry to visit her maternal grandparents in West Vancouver. Her clearer memories begin in 1942, the time of exile.

I don’t think I knew what was happening. But I do remember all of a sudden cousins from Haney, a whole family, they were at my house. It was unusual because we didn’t see them too often . . . We were seeing people suddenly, come and go. I remember blackouts. I remember my grandmother’s sons disappeared. See, my uncles were all young, in their twenties and teenagers.

I remember going down with my grandmother, walking down to the railroad track. There was an immigration building. They kept people in there. I remember all these people waving from the window. My grandmother was wondering where were her sons . . . There were four uncles.

Her youngest brother was born in June, 1942 and her family left for Lemon Creek that August. She remembers both her father’s absence and her grandfather’s presence during this period. Setsuko recalled that her life in Lemon Creek was wonderful because her grandparents were living close by. She then compared her relocation life with her present living arrangement. She told me how wonderful it is to share her house with her eldest daughter’s family and to be able to watch
her grandchildren grow up. When the war ended she was ten, and her family moved to an ex-
German prisoner-of-war camp in Ontario, where her father worked at a sawmill. Two years later
her family moved again, this time to southern Ontario, where her uncle was rebuilding his life.
Her parents decided to move there for the "children's sake"; that is, so that she and her two
younger brothers could get an education. Setsuko was twelve, and she began her new life in a
"completely Caucasian society where people never saw any Japanese Canadians before." They
searched for other Japanese Canadian families and found them in London, Ontario. She recalled
how they "had to find them, and that there were three or four families" in London, where her
mother still resides. She just had her ninety-second birthday in 2002.

While Setsuko's family was resettling in southern Ontario, Naomi's family was slowly moving
back to British Columbia's Fraser Valley, where, before the war, her paternal grandparents had a
farm. Naomi was born in Lethbridge, Alberta, in 1949, the third child of Nisei parents. When she
was less than a year old, her family joined her paternal grandparents in Mission, British Columbia,
in 1950 where, before the internment, her grandparents had owned and operated a large berry
farm. This was the place to which they chose to return right after the lifting of war time
restrictions. One year later, her younger brother was born in Mission and her family moved to
Aldergrove.

I guess having a young family, it was hard to live with my grandparents, so we moved to
Aldergrove. And, yeah, to our own farm. And we lived in Aldergrove my whole
childhood. So I used to wonder, growing up, every so often, "Why, why would we have
to move when I was so young?" And of course I didn’t know about the internment, that
they were forced to move to Alberta.

Like many in her generation, Naomi was not exposed to the history of Japanese Canadians as
neither her parents nor grandparents talked about the internment years. English was spoken at
home; however, when her eldest brother started Grade 1, he spoke only Japanese.

By the time I was two, he went to Grade 1, or Grade 2. Then I just remember that we
siblings always spoke to each other in English. Yeah. So to me, my first language is
English.

Her parents were fluent in Japanese and English, and always spoke English in front of their
children, unless they were saying something they didn’t want them to hear. Naomi said that when
her parents spoke Japanese “we always knew something was happening.”

It was hard for Naomi’s parents to raise four children in the 1950s. Her father worked for a
sawmill five to six days a week and also operated a berry farm. Only in her twenties did Naomi
begin to understand and appreciate what her father went through. Her whole family worked on the
farm. Her mother managed the farm with her children’s help, while her father was away at the
sawmill. Her older brother and sister helped during the summer holidays, the busiest time for
berry farmers. She told me how she loved growing up in the country even though it was
sometimes frustrating.

N: So raspberries, strawberries, rhubarbs, yeah.
Y: Did you help?
N: Oh, yeah. I mean that was an expectation. It was never a question. We just naturally
... we worked, all of us grew up working on the farm.
Y: How large was it?
N: Ah, started out about ten acres; then, in my early teens, my father bought the property
next door. So that was about another ten acres ... It was really hard working, you know.
When we grew up, summer holidays, everyone’s outside, maybe taking swimming
lessons. We never learned to swim, we never learned to do all those things because we
were helping. Yeah, yeah.

Naomi told me that her family never celebrated birthdays but that they did celebrate “things like
Oshogatsu [New Year]” with her grandparents. Her paternal grandparents, who lived in Mission,
visited them regularly. Her maternal grandparents lived in Steveston. However, “in those days,
[Steveston] was a long way. It took a long, long time.” Because it took over two hours for her

91 In her late teens her father was able to stop working at the sawmill because it burned
down. Naomi remembered how happy he was and that, from that time on, he worked full time on
the farm.
maternal grandparents to get to Aldergrove, she did not see them as often as she did her paternal grandparents. Until her elder brother and sister began their studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver was also a distant place. She told me how exciting it was to visit Vancouver once a year to attend the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) with her Steveston relatives. Yet it was at this time that she began to notice the difference between her family and others:

We used to come into Vancouver, once a year, for PNE. It really was a big deal . . . And I know, compared to our relatives in Steveston, even though it was a small town . . . But compared to them, we were really like country bumpkins. So we really grew up with the feeling that we were really feeling like inakamon [country bumpkins], you know, kind of. We were very, very poor. We were very scruffy-looking, we didn’t have the city ways...

So, to a certain extent, they were treating us like that. Although they were fairly generous. But you know, how I remember, it was a bit difficult . . . Coming from Steveston, somehow they thought, I don’t know, they were kind of, better off or whatever. And they were financially better off.

In Aldergrove there were virtually no Nikkei. At Naomi’s school there were several Japanese Canadians (her cousins and some of her friends), and a few Indo-Canadian children. But none of them were in her class. Most of the time she was the only Asian in a class of twenty-five to thirty. Naomi was “fairly outgoing” at school, until she was in Grade 5 or 6. One event at a Christmas concert had a big impact on her. It was at this time that she acutely sensed a clear boundary between her and her best friend, a Swedish Canadian with greenish-blue eyes and blond hair.

I remember somehow, almost like a flash, I remember being in a school play. And my friend was a princess! And I was tending her skirt -- you know, the kind of a role -- being a servant or a maid. And somehow, even physically, here she was standing in a beautiful dress, there I was bending at her knee, and you know, doing something with her skirt. And that, you know, it’s a very strong memory. Very strong. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I don’t know how we got into that role, but certainly it occurred to me that I could never be a princess. [She said this in a high pitched voice, mocking herself, and we both laughed]

She thinks this experience affected her personality, suddenly changing her from being an outgoing
and care-free child to being a reserved child. She thought that other things may have attributed to
this, but she could not pinpoint them. The Christmas episode had burned into her memory, and
she told me it was one of the turning points in her life.

At school Naomi had a little contact with other Japanese Canadian children. However, on
weekends at the Buddhist Sunday school in Aldergrove, she met many Japanese Canadian people
from Langley, Abbotsford, Clearbrook, and Aldergrove. She recalled that there were “maybe
fifty families or so,” and she told me how much fun it was at the Sunday School. The Buddhist
church (the Buddhist temple is often called Buddhist “Church” in North America) was a couple of
miles from her house, and there she saw her grandparents, relatives, and friends. She described to
me her Buddhist church or otera (temple).

N: There was a Sunday school, and the actual congregation was probably much smaller
than fifty families. But every Sunday we would have Sunday school for the kids; and
then, about once a month, our parents would get together. Then a minister from
Vancouver would come, because we shared the same minister. And then he would come
and give a talk to the older members.

Y: And there were lots of celebrations?

N: Yeah, Hanamatsuri: 花祭り (April 8, the birth of Buddha), Obon: お盆, Ohigan: お彼岸
(the week of the equinox), all those things.

Y: At Sunday school, what kinds of things did you do?

N: [We attended the school for an] hour and a half, and the funny thing was that, of course,
in Japan, there is no Sunday school. Sunday school is really North American (Christian
fashion) So, probably it’s lot like a Sunday school. So we would have, uh, we would
chant the Sutra. And that was the beginning. I guess it’s not very much Japanese, is it?
But anyway, we never understood, but we memorized it perfectly. So we do that. We
sing some songs to Him [Buddha] and sing hymns, in a Christian sense, but about
Buddha - - [she tried to sing]. I’m thinking of, uh, we sing songs about Buddha but like in
a Christian way. And then, someone would say, tell a story, all kinds of Buddhist stories.
Then some would read the story. Then people would be giving osenkoo: お線香
[incense], doing that kind of thing - - uh, kind of fun. It was kind of fun.

Y: So how old were you when you began to attend the church?

N: As far as I can remember . . . well, let’s see, that temple was built - - oh, yeah, I think
we had a forty-fifth anniversary just a couple of years ago. Fortieth or fiftieth, I don’t
remember it exactly. Must had been fortieth, because I am forty-seven now. Shortly after
that we had that shichigosan しちごさん [the seven-five-three festival for children], that celebration, and I think I must had been in it, for sure, since I was celebrating. I don’t remember which year it was ... Yeah, they built a temple. Very nice temple. It’s still there. Yeah, still in the same place so they fixed it up a bit. But now, the membership is mostly seniors, unfortunately.

She went on to tell me how she used to help with the fall bazaar when all the women of the Buddhist church got together to prepare for it. When she was in her teens a lot of immigrants from Okinawa moved to the Fraser Valley. 92 Some of them later joined the Buddhist church and became part of the community. The Sunday school was the place where she played with her Japanese Canadian friends and where her relatives gathered. They called her “Naomi,” just like at home.

When I went to school [Canadian] I was always Elaine. And at home I was Naomi. And at otera お寺 I was Naomi. So it was like, otera お寺 was almost like, yeah, like a Japanese community.

Yet I really felt I was divided. There was a distinction between, you know, the mainstream that was going to school, and going shopping, and doing regular things. And there I was going to otera お寺, which was totally different. I felt different when I went to otera お寺. I felt it was kind of like home.

Y: What kind of things made you feel at home?
N: You know, just kind of hearing Japanese; you know, watching the people and the way they related to each other ... oh, they were very Japanese. They would bow back and forth, and back and forth. We used to say “Oh, when will that bowing stop, [laughs].” But I think we naturally picked up on it. I think that my brother, when I think of my brother, he is always nodding his head. And so do I.

Mayumi, one of Naomi’s cousins, was born in 1952, the only child of a Kika-Nisei 93 father and Nisei mother who worked at a sawmill in Tashme. Her parents often visited her maternal

92 The United States returned Okinawa to Japan in 1972, and some Okinawans did not want to remain under Japanese rule. Naomi told me that there were about twenty Okinawan families in the Fraser Valley at that time.

93 He was born in Steveston and travelled to Japan with his mother and sister when his fisherman father drowned. He returned to Steveston in 1936, when he was sixteen.
grandparents, who returned to Steveston in 1950 from an Alberta sugar beet farm near Lethbridge. She told how British Columbian canneries were eager to have Japanese Canadians back and that Japanese Canadians were happy to return since these canneries provided them jobs and housing. Her father was the last one to join his relatives in Steveston in 1957, where they had returned for her schooling. She described her early days in Steveston:

M: I grew up in Steveston. So we have to go to Japanese School.
Y: You have to?
M: Of course. Everyone I knew, all my friends. Yeah, three times a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays after school and every Saturday morning I had to go to Japanese school. Steveston, I would think, when I was going to school, maybe 20 per cent of the kids were Japanese Canadians. There were two Japanese schools. It was hard, but on the other hand, other kids in your class [went as well]. [So] it was OK. After school we would go to so-and-so’s house and get a little oyatsu [snack], and we would all go to school together. That was the way it was. And Saturday mornings, we would meet at some street corner and we all walked to Japanese school.

In the late 1950s Japanese Canadians in Steveston were rebuilding their lives (Gamo 1962; Tsurumi 1962; Yamada 2000). Mayumi’s father was thirty-seven and her mother was thirty when they joined their relatives in Steveston.

Everybody was in the same boat. Nobody was in a better position than you. We were all poor together, and we all tried to help each other... Niseis were still struggling. They did not have money to give to their kids. People worked... everyone worked. All the kids worked. Either to pick strawberries, blueberries, yeah, pick cucumbers... pick anything till you were sixteen. Then boys went fishing with their fathers and girls went working at canneries... They used their money to buy school clothes, right? [They were] living in cannery housing. Lots of people did not have cars...

Fathers’ priorities were buying a fishing boat and paying off [debts], then, maybe [buying] a house. But lots of my friends did not have new houses. We moved out from the cannery housing when I was in high school. In those days, you have to start from zero. Struggling.

Mayumi was the Sansei who had the strongest ties to her grandparents. Everyday after school she visited them until the time her father picked her up after his work. Her mother worked at a grocery store that her uncle opened in 1957. Once in a while, when she was seven or eight,
Mayumi would help them by shelving stocks and opening up boxes.

She told me how strong her grandparents’ influence was when she grew up. For example, she claimed that she acquired her eating habits not from her parents but from her grandparents.

I spent a lot of time with them... So eating - food, when I was a child, I never liked yooshoku 洋食[Western food]. Oh yeah, I hated it. I ate everything that my grandparents ate.
So my oyatsu おやつ[snack] was the oyatsu that they grew up with. So oyatsu for me was, ano あの一つ[well], a handful of dashi iriko だしiriこ[dry small fish for soup stock]. You know, they would say, koretabero これ食べろ [eat this!]. Calcium. So I just sat there and ate that. Or dashi konbu だしこんぶ[dry sea weed for soup stock]. They would just break it and “kajin nasai かけない[Why don’t you chew it]! Or, because we were from from Kagoshima, we had lots of katsuo no kezuri かずおのけずり[dry bonito], a whole piece. Yeah, kataino-ne かたいのね[the hard one]. Nokotta korekureino o shaburuno ne 残ったこれくらいのしゃぶりのね[when the piece became small, like this size, then I used to suck and chew it]. Those were my oyatsu ... I always remember eating dashi iriko だしiriこ. Just sitting there and chewing it. I would take it to school as oyatsu おやつ. Or, I would take shirasu しらす[dried young sardines] with me to school as oyatsu おやつ. Until kids started laughing at me, “She eats things with heads and eyes!” Dashimaki konbu だし巻昆布[a dish with seaweed]. So those were my oyatsu ... Obaachan [grandmother] wouldn’t know about cookies and that kind of stuff.

Mayumi’s eating habits were the most traditional Japanese among the Sansei women in the study. She recalled how she tried to recreate her grandmother’s favorite dish and how happy she had felt when she finally succeeded in doing so. Her grandmother died a year prior to this interview. Mayumi continued to describe how her grandmother used to express her love and care for her grandchildren through providing delicious food.

Food is sharing. And you don’t need language. I think that was something Obaachan would do. So for Dennis (one of her cousins, Naomi’s elder brother) who does not speak much Japanese, [she would say] “Oh, Satoru, koikoi, sa tabenasai [Oh, Satoru, come, come and eat]! She would bring all these foods, and he would be sitting and saying, “Thank you Obaachan, thank you Obaachan,” and then he would eat. To her, it was her duty to him. He is loving every minute of it. So what more would you want? Conversation, right? So for her, it was just like that, she loved it.

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94 My breakfast was never that traditional. I grew up in Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan. Often my breakfast consisted of a glass of milk.
Mayumi was an only child, who grew up in a Nikkei community in Steveston in the 1960s.

A community is where you live close together. Chances are, many of the people work together, go to school together, you maybe go to the same church together, you share similar social functions together, right? Because in Steveston we all went to Sunday school, we always went to Japanese School, boys always went to Kendo or Judo, right? Y: What did girls do? M: Girls did nothing. They always helped mom. When you got to be sixteen, you worked at the cannery, for a summer job. We all worked at the cannery.

She explained to me how, in the 1950s, her uncle used to operate his grocery store on a credit system, just as in the prewar years, and how he offered many services, such as a community drop-in centre. People paid him whenever they had the money. Times have changed, however; over the past few decades people have become affluent and they no longer need the credit system. Also, her uncle’s store was not capable of competing with large supermarkets. Still, even though the spirit of community among Steveston Nikkei is fading, the Steveston Japanese Canadian community has not disappeared completely:

The whole concept of tasukeau [to help each other] and everything was there, right. This is an awful subject, but, for example, a funeral. My friend Diane’s mother just passed away. And her father died so she was alone. So, funeral arrangements are a major [event], but everybody kicks in... The whole community kicks in... and it gets done... There is the whole thing of, I think, a group of people comes together -- people who have survived adversity -- and they are there for each other.

Mayumi reflected on the good old days:

But that does not exist any more. I don’t think people’s lives are different. Not being busy. Everybody was busy then. This notion of “working mothers” -- heck. When I went to school, everybody’s mother worked. Everybody’s mother worked. No delinquency. Heck no. We all had to go home and cook and look after our younger brothers and sisters, or whatever, right? We didn’t have money. No one had any money. We worked all summer long, you know... Yeah. Oh, yeah, that was just the way it was. And we didn’t, yeah, there was no hanging around.

Early in her life Mayumi realized that she was more competent in English than were her parents (“who never really had any control over me”) and, thus, more able to cope with the world
beyond the Steveston Nikkei community. She shared one episode concerning the time when she
began elementary school and how eager her father was to help her spelling homework. She told
me why his eagerness did not last long:

Grade 1, you know, we had spelling tests. So you have to go home to study, right? And
you have to get your parents to read OK Spell Book. At some point I said to my dad,
“Dad, you can’t do this.” His hatsuon [pronunciation] was Japanese. See, Bukku [book],
“Ok. Mayu, spell!” He could say it but not in a way that I could understand. He was
Japanese. His hatsuon was Japanese. So he could no longer help my spelling [laughs].
Then my mom started helping me.

Mayumi told me how her parents’ education, like that of many Nisei, was interrupted during the
war; they never went beyond Grade 8. She told me that, as far as her education was concerned,
she was “completely” on her own except for some help from her parents on Japanese courses.
Later in her life, whenever she had questions concerning her future, she looked for someone who
could help her. Often they were her cousins, with whom she felt close, as though they were elder
sisters. She realized early in her life that she was a bicultural person who was capable of living in
two worlds, Japanese Canadian and mainstream Canadian, and that her parents had difficulty
living in the latter. She confided in me how badly she felt about the fact that she had thought that
she was better than her parents.

When I think about it, in a sense . . . it’s an awful thing to say, but I knew that I understood
things that happened in this world better than my parents did, right? I knew. Language
capabilities, this and that, for example, for going to university. I did all by myself. My
mom is not going to, did not know how to get the application form and other things . . .
My parents never really had any control over me. Really.

Yet her concept of herself as a competent bicultural person living in Canada was challenged in
her Grade 6 classroom.

See, what happened was that when I was in sixth grade we had a debate in social studies.
And . . . up until that point, I knew I was Japanese Canadian. Because I ate gohan:ご飯
[rice], went to Japanese language school, I went to Buddhist Sunday school every Sunday,
all these things . . . I don’t remember what we were talking about, immigration or
something, I don’t remember. One of the kids in my class, this is someone I knew since, you know, I was five. Some *hakujin* kid said to me: “Well, why don’t you go back where you came from?” In front of the class. I was dumbstruck. “What do you mean where I came from? What?” And I thought, “Oh, gee!” I guess what he meant was “Japan,” right? And this always stuck in my head. At that point, as a child, I thought “Maybe he is right.”

The following year, in 1965, at age thirteen, Mayumi visited Japan for the first time. Her sick and aging paternal grandmother was waiting for her father’s visit. They had not seen each other since her father left for Canada at the age of sixteen before the Second World War. Her grandmother wanted to see her son before she died in Kagoshima, the southern island in Japan. The cost of travelling was still very expensive at that time, and her parents decided to take a long vacation. They stayed for three months. Hearing a familiar language and eating familiar food, Mayumi remembered that she had a wonderful time there and told me that after that visit she began to play with the idea that maybe she could live in Japan. She consciously began to explore her cultural roots.

**Joan**, who is several years younger than Mayumi, was born in 1956, the second child of a Nisei father and a repatriated-Nisei mother. She was born in West Vancouver, where her father worked as a mechanic for a cannery and where they lived in the cannery housing. A few months after her birth, her family moved into a large house in an Italian neighbourhood in East Vancouver, which her father purchased with her uncle. She lived there until she was twenty-one and her family moved to Richmond. She spoke fondly of that big house:

> Oh, I remember every inch of the house. And when you are young, you remember everything, and uh, just, well... I lived there for twenty-one years. It was in East Vancouver, right on Victoria Drive, in between 1st and 2nd Avenue.

A part of the house — two suites — was rented out to single men, while her uncle lived in the
basement and her family of four lived on the main floor, using the dining room as a bed room. She remembered that her uncle, her father's younger brother, was "a major figure in the family" until he moved out to get married in 1962. She explained that the age difference between her father and uncle might had been five or six years but that her uncle was "better assimilated to the majority culture" than her father, that he went bowling, was in a country music band, went to the race track, and did "lots of things with other people." She said that "he wasn’t doing specifically Japanese things." She remembered that when he moved out of the house to get married, her family inherited many of his belongings and that they were incongruous with her parents’ lifestyle. Among his belongings were fly fishing equipment, a butterfly net, binoculars, and bowling equipment. They seemed to be frivolous things, and they stood in sharp contrast to her parents’ harsh lifestyle. She remembered how hard her mother worked. Her mother was the first one to return to Canada when the restrictions on Japanese Canadians were lifted, and she worked to help bring her brothers and sisters, one by one, to her chosen home. She remembered how her mother managed to hold a number of jobs simultaneously in order to keep their lives afloat, and she remembers her first encounter with her older cousins from Japan. Her maternal grandparents were the last of her relatives to join them in Canada, which they did in 1959.

Joan told me how her mother indulged her and her elder brother. Her house was full of toys, and children from the neighbourhood played with them all the time. Unlike Naomi’s family, that never celebrated birthdays, Joan’s mother put a great deal of effort into such occasions. Some of the best of her childhood memories are of her birthdays. She remembered her mother’s wonderful birthday cakes. And she told me that whenever she gets together with her childhood friends, they often talk about the birthday celebrations at her house.

J: Oh, my mother used to go to lots, a great deal, of effort to put on birthday parties every year. Because our [she and her elder brother’s] birthdays would be in the summertime, so we would have, sort of, an outdoor birthday party in the backyard. Then, all the
neighbourhood kids would come, and everybody would come and sit around the table. And she used to make a wonderful birthday cake. And you know how in those days, they used to decorate cakes, you know?

Y: Really?
J: Yes, and she would decorate it and it looked like a merry-go-round like thing.

J: Every slice [of the cake], uh, she would wrap a dime in Saran Wrap. And I didn’t even know that because I never got one. But all the kids who grew up with me later on said, “You know your mother always put a dime in your birthday cake!” They do remember. I kept lots of friends from my childhood, even now. I have a long-term friendship. I think, yeah, I don’t know why. But, I know not many people nowadays keep a long-term friendship.

In contrast to her fun memories of birthdays with her friends stands the trauma of starting school. All the neighbourhood children wanted to take her to “their school” to show her around. Yet she was so frightened at being away from her home she never said a word on the first day of school. Later on in our conversations she mentioned that she was a very sensitive child and that, for her, “every day was so painful.” Then she suggested that she might have picked up her parents’ insecurities.

Later on, I kind of thought that whatever insecurity your parents have, the children pick them up . . . I think. Maybe, I just never was taught to express myself or to express my opinion, you know. My parents never encouraged it.

She also thought her difficulties at school might be due to her personality, since her brother never had any problems. He played with children in the “Baby Band” at the United Church. This was a mothers’ support group organized by the United Church, where young Nisei mothers would take their children, share baby-sitting, and socialize. She remembered how she held on to her mother’s skirt and never left her mother’s side to play with other children.

Joan claimed that, in temperament, she is more like her father than her mother, who is a risk taker. Among her relatives she felt closest to her maternal grandmother. Upon their arrival in Canada in 1959, her family visited her grandparents who, at that time, lived with her eldest uncle.
There she met many of her cousins, and she continued her visits to her grandparents even after they moved into their own apartment. Many of her friends had very little time for family gatherings, but Joan told me how she “took time to visit them [grandparents] and attend all family gatherings” when she was in high school and university. She felt close to her grandmother even though she did not speak Japanese (until she learned it at university). By that time her grandmother was old and sick, and losing her hearing and memory. She never had a full conversation with her grandmother - - “I didn’t converse with her” - - yet she felt she could understand her and knew “why she did certain things”:

I remember that she was always loving and very generous. And I guess, in order to replace having a lack of communication, in order to replace that she used to always, you know, feed us food, good food. She showed how much she loved us with food. She cooked then.

I always remember her Chirashi zushi [type of sushi]. Yes, she did it very well. I never have tasted anyone else’s that was quite so delicious.

Y: Did you get the recipe?
J: [ Laughs] I didn’t. I didn’t.

Joan also remembered how her grandmother invited her friends on “New Year’s Day.”95 That was her party, every year on the second of January; that was when her grandmother did “her own big thing,” inviting all her friends and relatives. For Christmas, either her mother or her aunt would invite the grandparents and celebrate.

Growing up in Vancouver’s Italian neighbourhood, where she acquired a taste for spaghetti as her comfort food, Joan had “a very strong feeling of having a Japanese life” and “a school life.” She spoke of how she always felt that her life was divided:

J: Besides my relatives, I didn’t know any Japanese Canadians when I was growing up, you know . . . I felt schizophrenic, like that.

95Joan was the only Sansei who did not use the Japanese term oshogatsu for the New Year’s Day celebration.
Y: How old were you?
J: I might have been in my late elementary school days, you know. Our activities with our relatives were different from my activities at school.

Everything was in a box, pigeon-holed. And then I just decided, “Hey, that’s not the way I want to live.” Who wants to live in so many different ways? Because I used to take piano lessons, then I used to take Odori [Japanese dance] lessons. If it was tanko bushi [folk dance - miner’s song and dance], like a group dance, then I would have enjoyed it, but it was this classical Japanese dance. Many of the activities I was doing, I was doing alone. And I wanted to be in a group.

When I asked her whether she wanted to take piano lessons and classical dance lessons, she jokingly said, “No.” She laughed and then, after a long pause, she said:

I think my mother, well, I think my mother was trying to live her life . . . through me. So it was her dream to do piano and to do ballet. I lasted two days in ballet class. I just couldn’t take it. But those things she would have liked to do, so she put me there . . . if it was obon dance (folk dances for the Bon festival to welcome ancestral spirits), a circle, its for younger people, more people would join, . . . but in those days, Odori was cliquey, a very small group of people, you know. They were not my relatives, and they were not people I knew at school. I did odori for years.

When she was in her mid-teens, Joan decided to terminate all these lessons. She felt that she was missing a whole culture -- one of which her friends formed a part. She told me how angry she was when, due to her Odori and piano lessons, she was not able to watch the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show along with all of her friends. She felt the world was “into one thing” and that she was “doing something irrelevant.” Her mother did not interfere with her decision. Although her mother was “maintaining” her, and hoping that she would do certain things, she was not “monitoring” her life. Unlike many of today’s parents, she was not pushing her child to over-achieve. Besides, her mother was far too busy just living “everyday life and . . . getting by day to day working on many jobs” to make too much fuss over Joan’s decision to drop piano and dance.

Patti was born to Nisei parents in Ottawa in 1965, the third of five children. When she was
fifteen her family left Ottawa for British Columbia, where her parents were born and raised before the war. Her father's ill health forced him to take an early retirement in 1980. Half of her family moved to a small community about fifteen miles from Victoria, British Columbia and began a new life, while her elder sister and brother continued their studies in Ontario and Quebec. It was hard enough for Patti to move from a white-collar neighbourhood, where her friends' fathers worked for the government, to a small community of farmers and fishers. But on top of this she had to deal with the death of her father, with whom she was very close. In 1983 she moved to Vancouver, where she “fell in love” with studying at university.

There were very few Nikkei (besides her siblings) in her school in Ottawa. Yet she described her environment as “very multiracial, [as including] people from all over the country.” She told me that one of her childhood friends was black and that she became aware of their difference in skin colour when she was in Grade 8.96 English was spoken at home and whenever she visited her grandparents; she spoke to both paternal and maternal grandparents in English. These visits were infrequent, but being around her grandparents and hearing one of her cousins (whose mother was a Shin-Issei and who grew up close to her grandmother and spoke Japanese), Patti managed to learn a few Japanese words. These visits encouraged her to learn Japanese so that she could speak to her grandparents. When she was six, she took Japanese classes with her elder sister for two years. This class consisted of several Sansei, ranging in age from five to seventeen years. She remembered how her teacher drilled them, asking “What did you eat for breakfast?” in Japanese, and students responding, “We ate tamago [egg].” She thought the lessons were rather boring. Apparently her younger brother, who was two years her junior, was much more eager to

96 She said that she had not realized that her friend Beverly was “Black” until some of her other friends pointed it out. She told me how vividly she remembered the time when this actually happened, when she looked at her friend and realized for the first time that her friend’s skin was black.
learn the language than she. He took Japanese classes at the University of British Columbia and then he went to Japan to polish his Japanese. Her family nicknamed him “Nihongo (Japanese).” She remembered that when she was young her family celebrated the Japanese New Year, and once in a while she put on a kimono. She also told me how she wanted to learn Japanese dance.

Carolyn was born in Regina in 1968, the youngest of four children. She was about ten when her family moved to Victoria. Victoria was the place closest to her father’s birthplace on Vancouver Island and it was the city where her parents decided to live after their retirement. Just like Patti’s family, half of her family moved to British Columbia while half (her elder brother and sister) remained behind. She described to me the differences between Regina and Victoria:

[In Regina] we were living in a community that was predominantly white, and there weren’t very many ethnics in the community . . . So, it was an interesting change to go from there to Victoria where, you know, there were more Asian people, here.

Y: You sensed it right away?
C: Well, I mean there was a clear difference in school. My elementary school in Regina, there was one Greek girl, Greek Canadian girl, and one other ethnic kid in school . . . Then we moved to Victoria and, I mean, there were a number of Asian kids in my class, or part Asian kids. It was kind of an interesting transition.

In the late 1970s, it was the time when “things Japanese were becoming very trendy and very cool,” and it was a time when her parents began to get involved in the Nikkei community in Victoria. This involvement eventually led to their participating in the redress movement in the 1980s. She emphasized how different her childhood experiences were from her elder siblings, as, living in Victoria, she had “much stronger exposures and interests [to things] Japanese.”

C: I have different experiences from my older siblings . . . I mean, my older siblings have very limited knowledge about things Japanese, about Japanese culture and customs.
Y: They didn’t want to know?
C: I suspect that, in a lot of ways, they didn’t identify themselves as Asian? I think a lot of it has to do with the environment where they grew up, I mean, you didn’t want to be

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97 There is a thirteen-year difference between her eldest brother and a nine year difference between her and her second sister.
different. You wanted to be the same because to be different was a negative thing.

Carolyn pointed out how her parents’ attitudes had changed since leaving Regina. For example, she said that they did not eat much Japanese food in Regina but that now they were eating more of it. She also pointed out that her parents did not talk much about their experiences during the war years until the 1980s, when this became a common topic among Japanese Canadians. According to Carolyn:

If we had stayed in Regina, I would have been a different person. I certainly don’t think my horizon would be as broad as now. I wouldn’t have been exposed to lots of things, . . . I think I would be a much more narrow person; I don’t think I would have made the transition . . . to being comfortable with the fact that I am Japanese.

Carolyn grew up speaking English at home, but, like Naomi’s parents, Carolyn’s parents spoke Japanese whenever they were talking about something they did not want their children to know about. When she was growing up she had one paternal grandmother and one maternal grandfather. She felt more connected to her grandfather than to her grandmother because he spoke English. Even after Carolyn took Japanese courses, she and her grandmother could only carry on very simple conversations. She remembered that her grandmother made manju (Japanese sweets with red bean paste), and she often spoke of the time they spent together:

C: We did not have much conversation but she could show us how to do crafts; we would go for walks, things like that. So there was not a lot of, like, verbal communication going on, but, I mean, she had a lot of skills, you know. That was pretty much how we communicated. As she became older, we went for walks and stuff; and when I took Japanese, I could, we could talk in simple conversations.98

Y: Did your your grandmother enjoy it?
C: I think she kind of got a kick out of it. I think she found it more interesting when Andrew [her husband] could talk to her a little bit in Japanese. She found it a little bit more novel.

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98 One of Carolyn’s grandmother’s questions in English was: “Do you like housework?”
Youth and Young Adulthood: Incorporating Divided Worlds

images perceptions definitions

there will always be those
who read me by markings
I cannot change
my heritage
my sex
my size
my skin
my age

( Baco Ohama 1995 )

Growing up is hard for anyone. For the Sansei women in this study, their youth and young adulthood was the period when they began to question their visibility and ethnicity, which suddenly became very crucial factors in their daily lives. Not being able to identify with either English or French, the two official languages of their birth country, many began to search for their roots. This was when many began to assert their own identity apart from that of their parents, when they began to gain a sense of autonomy and ethnic history, which had been almost absent in their lives.99 It was a time when many of them began to see who they were and who they want to be.

Carolyn's parents were reluctant to let their youngest daughter go abroad, but, after one year at the University of Victoria, she left for England with a friend and travelled to Greece and France

99 In many cases, Nisei parents pushed their children towards assimilation, and it was so powerful that some Sansei often boasted of their cultural ignorance (e.g., not knowing how to use chopsticks). David Mura, an American Sansei poet born and raised in the Midwest, reflects on this attitude: "I certainly did not want to be thought of as a Japanese American. I was an American, pure and simple. I was proud I didn't know Japanese, that English was my sole tongue" (Kessler 1994:284).
while her friend travelled to Israel. She worked for eight months in London as a salesperson. She
discoved that, contrary to her imagined Anglo-Saxon London, the city was “non-white.” She had
a “strange” encounter with a person at work, who labelled her as a “Japanese” and expressed his
dislike of the Japanese due to his experiences of them in the war. She responded to this encounter
by being “confrontational with him.” She told him that, despite her appearance, she was a
“Canadian,” not a “Japanese,” and that she “wasn’t born at the time” of the Second World War.
She also informed him that her friends, who were Japanese Canadians, “did not get a good deal
from the war” either. Her frank response was not what he was expecting. He was not too friendly
afterwards. As it turned out, this same person bought her a drink when she left her job. It was
1987 and she was a young visible-minority woman in London. Carolyn said that her notion of
self did not come easily.

C: I went through a period when I was sort of confused . . . about how Japanese I was and
how Canadian I was.
Y: When?
C: I think it was in my pre-teens, and I think, maybe it was as a pre-teen growing up in
Victoria. . . . And I think . . . the interaction with some people we knew from Japan, that
helped me to clarify that. When I went to Japan, I was very clear about who I was and
how much was Japanese influence, how strong it was and at what level it was.

When I grew up no one else saw my way. And so, for me, there was a sense of not being
grounded, of not feeling comfortable. I could identify something with my family that was
definitely . . . Japanese. The things they do, the reasons for doing them.

Carolyn expressed her delight at how liberating it was to be invisible in Japan. She could just
blend into a crowd. This had never been the case in Regina. Wherever she went, people always
associated her with her family as her father and elder sibling were all active in the community.
Besides, there were only a handful of Asian families in Regina. Thus, she always felt she “had to
be on her best behaviour because people knew who I was. I stood out.” However, in Japan it
was her husband, a non-Japanese Canadian, who stood out, “who had to behave.”
It was also in Japan where she felt “a sense of connection with history,” where she felt “historically grounded.” She discovered that her parents were “not strange” at all when they did not praise her achievements as her Canadian friends’ parents praised theirs.

I recognized this after I went to Japan and after I heard parents say, “this is my idiot [son/daughter],” and knock their heads, you know. I mean in a culture where everyone does it to everyone else, it is not such a disadvantage.

Living in Japan was an eye-opening experience for Carolyn in that it enabled her to understand and clarify her own family dynamics. She told me how important it was to realize how much of her identity was connected to Japanese culture.

Patti was in her third year of university when she found a thread which led to her roots. After two years of struggling with her studies she began to take a Japanese literature course. She commented about her university days:

Yeah, lots happened! [laughs] I think it was my third year . . . first two years I wasn’t too sure about what to do . . . and I realized that I didn’t enjoy myself, and I felt lots of pressure . . . I realize it now, it’s really just an attitude. You just have to do all those things. I think that what I learned from my parents [is that] you just have to do this, [so just do it] and just be quiet about it.

For two years she tried very hard. Then, the third year, she found a field she liked - - speech therapy. This led to a Japanese literature course, in which she read Japanese classics and was exposed to Japanese art and poetry. She learned about the emotive aspect of Japanese culture, and with this she could identify. With this new knowledge, she began to see her parents in a different light and began to recognize that her parents were “not crazy,” just “Japanese.”

100 This is a typical phrase for introducing one’s wife by saying “meet my terrible wife: gusai desu.” There is no equivalent phrase for introducing one’s husband.

101 Carolyn attained this realization when she visited Japan.
I really didn’t know that but a lot of ... my parents’ personality was shaped by just being Japanese, really. Because they really are Japanese ... They are not crazy, they’re just Japanese [laughs]. Yeah, I really realized where I came from. That was my entry into Japanese studies.

At that time her younger brother was taking Japanese courses and was eager to go to Japan to polish his Japanese. She decided to go to Japan as well, and in October 1986 she went to Osaka to satisfy her “curiosity” about Japan. While teaching English she took *Ikebana* (flower arrangement) and *koto* (Japanese string instrument) lessons in Kyoto for a couple of months and tried to learn Japanese art and culture. The following summer she returned to Canada to continue her studies in speech therapy. In 1989 she returned to Japan to attend her cousin’s wedding and ended up staying there for three years. She told me that in Japan she learned she was “emotionally Japanese” — keeping face and not showing her feelings, letting them build up to the eventual blowup. She said that what she discovered in Japan helped her to understand conflicts in her family, to understand the “Japanese family value” of not saying “anything.”

Unlike their mothers, who were raised in prewar British Columbia where there was no room for questioning their identity, the Sansei saw being Canadian as their birthright. Many neither questioned nor doubted their Canadian identity, even though they sometimes sensed differences between their school friends’ families and their own. *Setsuko*, who spent her youth growing up in London, Ontario, remembered she was relatively happy with the new environment until she became a Nikkei teenager in a “white society” — a society that she really did not know. In her teens, she began to encounter some “name calling” incidents, and this was not pleasant. She told me how a dozen Japanese Canadian teenagers organized a social club that was to get together every weekend. She felt that “we really needed that.” She said that some of her girlfriends said that they did not want to be Japanese; they wanted to be “White.”
Naomi recalled how she felt growing up in Aldergrove, British Columbia in the 1960s, where she always felt that she didn’t fit in:

What was happening at home and what was happening in the Japanese community and what was happening at school were totally different worlds.

This feeling continued throughout her high school days and even on into her days at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Her feelings upon first arriving at UBC were very positive:

When I moved to UBC, I just loved Vancouver. I just loved the fact that, wahoo! I am in an international city! I lived in the dormitory where there were many international students.

Her first two years of campus life were exciting, but slowly Naomi began to see that there was a hierarchy (White British Columbia) both within the university and within her dormitory. She became very good friends with her roommate. She told me how odd she felt upon hearing her roommate talk about her experiences of growing up in Grand Forks, British Columbia, and being discriminated against because she was a Doukhobor. One day, after finding out Naomi’s Japanese name, her roommate told her that she liked her Japanese name and thought it suited her better than “Elaine,” her English name. She encouraged Naomi to use her Japanese name and, gradually, Naomi’s divided worlds began to harmonize.

Naomi’s Japanese Canadian consciousness took shape in her early twenties, after graduating after graduating from UBC with a degree in anthropology and taking two trips to Japan to discover her roots (a two-month surveying trip with her two friends and then a two-and-one-half-year stay in Kyoto to learn Japanese). Prior to her visits to Japan, she studied a year of Japanese at UBC without giving it any particular thought: “It was just an idea, probably, an easy course.” Naomi spoke of how various events affected her life:

So I got this job, short term - - I guess it was six months - - to study minority youth groups in 1972. Yeah. I checked out like, Chinese Canadian youth groups, a few Japanese Canadian youth groups. But I didn’t really, Vancouver not being my own city, I didn’t really know very many [Japanese Canadians]. To tell you the truth, I wasn’t really
interested in Japanese groups.

When she majored in Anthropology and studied First Nations peoples in British Columbia, Naomi had been more interested in the First Nations youth group than in the Japanese Canadian youth group. She befriended some First Nations youths and spent a lot of time with them in the skid row area, “hanging around and doing things with them.” She told me what finally triggered her interests in studying Japanese Canadian youths:

I can’t remember the guy’s name any more, but there was one guy I got to be fairly friendly with. I was just there at some event. And this guy, he looks at me and says, “what’s happening to your people?” It was like being hit over the head. “What? My people?” I knew exactly what he meant. Yet it was such a shock to me. And then, I thought, well, it’s true. What is happening to my people? What am I doing with Native youths? A typical bad anthropologist, kind of [laughs] gomen-ne ごめんな [I am sorry], you know what I mean! [we both laugh.]

After this episode, Naomi began contacting Japanese youth groups. This newly acquired social network led her to Ron Tanaka, an American draft dodger from southern California, who was teaching English literature at the University of British Columbia. In his classes he talked about the Asian movement in the United States and encouraged his students, especially his Chinese and Japanese Canadian students, to explore their roots and to join the movement. One encounter with him tranformed Naomi:

It was quite an encounter, I still remember. I can never forget. That was also an amazing experience . . . I didn’t even know who he was. I went into his apartment, his wife was there, a hākujin 白人 woman, and sat down and interviewed him. And two hours, three hours later I walked out and did not know what had hit me. It was like, I still remember very clearly, it was like my whole world had changed. I went in there and we were talking about, of course, him being a part of this Asian American movement.

She listened to him about what it meant to be an Asian Amerian in the United States, going back to his roots, finding out about his identity, and going back to his community. All the things he told her made sense, “perfect sense,” to her. What she remembered so well is that, after the interview,
she had a feeling of hatred towards a man simply because he was White:

I remember seeing a *hakujin* 白人 guy, walking in my direction. He would have been a guy that before I went into [Tanaka's] apartment, I would have thought “Oh, a kind of a nice-looking guy,” somebody I would have been interested in. I had completely turned around . . . and I looked at this guy and I hated him. [laughs] And I remembered thinking, “Wow, isn’t that amazing? What happened in those three hours?” Of course, according to my siblings, I mean, to them, I was totally brainwashed, right?

Naomi acknowledged her siblings’ comments, but she believed that if “a seed hadn’t been there” she would not have been so moved by that experience. She was in her early twenties. Her feeling towards White Canadians, a symbol of her hatred, remained for a few years.

There was an unspoken taboo in Naomi’s family. The White world was closed off from her and her siblings because her family was “very Japanese.” She never dated or even thought about doing so when she was in high school. This really did not bother her much as she had friends to “hang out” with. Two of these friends were Mennonite and one was a Sansei girl. All of them came from families whose values prohibited them from dating. Later, in her university days, this issue became more complex:

I have to admit, it was a double-edged sword. I mean, I can say, intellectually, philosophically, that, uh, I was more interested in Asian men. But, of course, it does not work that easily. It’s a whole psyche, its something in there [pointing to her head]. I think it is the dilemma that a lot of Sansei women and men who were involved in the Asian movement encountered. Because even though they understood that, in a way, that we have to go back to our own people, there was still that longing for and wanting a White figure, yeah, yeah, yeah.102

Naomi said that she had difficulties having an intimate relationship with Nikkei men since many of them were people with whom she had grown up with, friends of her family, relatives, and siblings. She thought of them as relatives for whom she cared deeply. But a romantic

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102 Japanese American women seem to acculturate faster and easier than Japanese American males. They often have better opportunities for social mobility through outmarriage, yet they also often encountered ambivalent love-hate feelings. See Masaoka 1971; and Ferguson 1993.
involvement with them was out of the question.

Visiting Japan has a big impact on the lives of many Sansei. Many told me how their visits to Japan strengthened their ties to Japanese culture. Their visits not only evoked their memories of the past and unearthed their buried Japanese Canadian identity but also made them realize their undeniable connection to Japan. Naomi’s visits to Japan were difficult, and this made her realize that she did not fit in there. However, she began to see her historical connection with Japan, its language, culture, and people when she went to see a Kabuki play with her Japanese friend.

[Before she left for Japan] I thought that I could fit in. No! But the fact was that I was Japanese Canadian, which made me feel very, very different from people in Japan. I realized the difference even more having lived in Japan. But when I went to the show [i.e., the Kabuki play], one thing struck me. I remember this so clearly because I looked at my friend and I thought, “We share history together, no matter what we say and how different we are.” That was the first time I really felt so strongly like that, and it never left me.

She told me how proud she had felt to be connected with Japanese cultural tradition. And living in Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan, was a wonderful experience because of its old Japanese history.

For Joan, getting connected to her roots did not involve a visit to Japan; rather, it involved her boyfriend introducing her to the Japanese Canadian community in Vancouver. After graduating from the University of British Columbia with an English degree, she took “three years off” from her career path working as a meat packer. After three years as a meat packer, she needed a change and decided that she would answer an ad for a job at a dentist’s office. There, her boss trained her to be a dental assistant. Although she realized the job was not what she wanted, she stayed in it for eight years because she was unable to say “no” to her boss. While working there, she decided to study to become a fashion designer, which she finally did in 1987, when she was thirty. She told me she owed this to her boyfriend, who taught her to appreciate her heritage:
In the mid-1970s, this whole interest in sushi - mid-1970s and 1980s this was just getting more and more popular. And all of a sudden, it was an advantage to be able to speak Japanese and knowledge about the culture. And then this French guy I was dating, he said to me, “You know, in our history, Japanese art and its artistic sense is so wonderful that it influenced all areas of our culture, this Japanese sense. You should be proud and know more about the culture.” And he said [to me], “you should do this and that.” Then I thought “Yeah, probably.”

Even though she never felt any discrimination growing up in East Vancouver, in the mid-1950s and 1960s she felt that there was no advantage in knowing a second language since people couldn’t speak their own language anyway: they were expected to speak English.

It was around the mid-1980s when she became really interested in her roots. This occurred when she went to the Powell Street Festival for the first time with her Canadian friends. As a child, she went to the Buddhist church’s annual summer festival and to concerts with grandparents (who were devout Buddhists), but she had never been to the Powell Street Festival (which began in 1977):

I think I went with a couple of my Canadian friends, you know, to share Japanese culture, I don’t know anything, but here it is! [laughs] . . . So then, my mother and I made a point of going and since that time . . . I guess, in the beginning it was information gathering. Just letting people know.\(^{103}\)

Around that time, the redress movement in Vancouver was getting stronger, and Joan’s mother was playing a key role in the process. Her father was not openly active but supported her mother “100 per cent.” Joan was not directly involved in the redress committee, but she sensed its importance and decided to join the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (JCCA), where she served on the board of directors from 1984 to 1986. Her grandfather was sickly but was very supportive of her mother’s commitment and was very happy that people were finally going to do something to correct the wrongs of the past. He died before the Redress Settlement. As a JCCA

\(^{103}\) Her comments reminded me of what Fumiko, a Nisei woman, told me: the Powell Street Festival is the place where “we can show off our culture.” See Miyata (1988: 272-96) on Nikkei folk culture.
board member, Joan volunteered for numerous events offered to the Japanese Canadian community; *Keiroo-kai* (a party for aged Japanese Canadians)\(^{104}\) and fundraising for the redress movement, among others. While being involved with the community as a volunteer, she was exposed to community politics and began to see the dynamics involved in the community. At this point, she decided to develop her own career.

Most people had a profession . . . So they had, they had a reason for being so prominent in the community. Then I felt, that’s OK. I have to work on my career, my product, or whatever. What’s the point of volunteering? I have nothing, you know what I’m saying. It serves two purposes: one, you want help and the other times you want to promote . . . I didn’t have anything to promote, I didn’t have a book to write, I didn’t have photographs to take, I didn’t have, I didn’t have, you know. Then I felt, I can do this in my old age. *I have to work on my career!* That’s what I felt.

Her parents were supportive at that time, although they had not been supportive earlier. She said that her mother encouraged her to get a “real job” not “an artistic job.” Her mother wished that Joan would go to university and get married.

J: But it never happened. I had to, I just couldn’t wait, and wait to get married. I needed a career [quickly] because, basically, I hadn’t chosen one earlier. So then I was thirty, then I said, “OK, I have to do something. I don’t want to get old [without having a career].” Recently they have been supportive, but twenty years ago they might not have been supportive.

Y: why?

J: Because they, they wanted me to work in a legal office or do something . . . realistic. Not a lawyer but a lawyer’s secretary, you know . . . So, you know, I mean, I would have expected to get married, but it never happened.

Y: Does your mother talk about that now?

J: Well, lately, she is saying, “Well, I hope you will get married someday.” I would say, “Mother, you know, don’t be too worried now. You should have been worried many years ago because I was not interested in boys at all.” I was dating people not for marriage but to expand my brain, you know.

In 1987 she left for New York to develop her career as a fashion designer – – a field to which she

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\(^{104}\) Respect-for-the-Aged Day began in the mid-1960s in Japan. In Japan it is celebrated on September 15, but in Vancouver it is celebrated in the middle of January for Nikkei seniors who are over seventy years old.
Setsuko thought she would pursue the prescribed women's career her parents expected her to adopt, but her life took a different turn. Upon graduating from high school in 1954, she continued to study basic sciences at a technical school in Toronto. She told me how her parents always encouraged her to leave home after school and hoped that she would do something practical rather than go to university. They knew that many of their friends' daughters -- university graduates -- were having a hard time getting a job.

S: So I went into the lab and trained to be a lab technician.
Y: In high school, did you like science, or biology?
S: When I started high school, I didn't know anything about science. No one in my family talked about it. I just assumed that I would learn how to type, home economics ... I liked design, art, but that was not encouraged ... I majored in science, small classes. When I finished high school, at Ryerson, they were teaching public health lab technology, a two-year course. So I tried. I went there, tried baby-sitting and housework and all that. It was really hard. I did one year. So in one year, I found a job. It was a government job, as a matter of fact.

In Toronto she had no connection with Nikkei other than those in her own age group with whom she socialized while working. However, there were not many Japanese Canadians at her workplace, and she felt the need to seek out Nikkei social groups. Many of her friends were not ready to assimilate. She told me that being Japanese was her security blanket and that she, like her friends, was not quite ready to assimilate. She needed contact with other Nikkei. In 1958 she married a Sansei, a graduate student who was studying in Chicago. In Chicago she continued to work as a lab technician. Three years of working and learning new techniques in a new field in biology provided her with a really "exciting time." Her career was shortened when she moved to Edmonton, where her husband found a teaching job. Although her husband was thriving and advancing in his profession, she was very unhappy with her life. When a job opportunity came up...
in Vancouver, she encouraged her husband to apply for it.

I had two children at that time. But I was so unhappy and, I think, he did it for me. He came here to get a job, and we moved to Vancouver. It was 1963. Vancouver . . . a full circle. I wanted to come back here and I came back. Faculty housing for two years, and we moved here. I have been here ever since.

However, her life situation did not improve very much. Her husband was suddenly becoming very prominent in his field, and he had very little time to spend with his family. She decided to get a divorce. Her eldest child was five and was beginning kindergarten; her second child was three; and the youngest was only one. She returned to work as a lab technician when her youngest daughter was ten. I asked her how she coped with being a single mother of three young children. She said it was not bad as she was very happy being able to center her energy on her children and enjoy her time with them. Furthermore, she had many supportive friends. Her ex-husband aided financially, but she was the main caregiver.

During her two-and-a-half-year stay in Japan, Mayumi enjoyed rekindling her ties with her relatives in Kagoshima, visiting them during her holidays, New Year’s celebration, and Obon. She lived in Kyoto, where one of her cousins introduced her to a Nikkei social network. Quite a few Japanese Americans and Canadians were there studying to be Buddhist ministers. A minister from the Steveston Buddhist Church was there. Her life in Kyoto was not so different from her life in Canada: she studied at a Japanese language school and taught English in exchange for her Koto and Ikebana lessons. She was well connected, having “quite a network” in Kyoto.

Mayumi returned to Canada in the summer of 1977, with nothing planned for the future:

Naomi [her cousin] came back in February and she started working at Tonari Gumi [Japanese Community Volunteers’ Association]. She was writing to me about what was happening in Vancouver and telling me she was very happy to be home. All these things were happening in the community . . . So I came home.
A couple of days later after her return, she visited Naomi at Tonari Gumi, where Naomi worked along with her younger brother, Ken. The first day she visited there, Mayumi was offered a job. She began to work there alongside her cousins one week after she returned to Canada. It was a very exciting time to get involved with the community, but she told me that she took the job to erase the "great sense of emptiness" she had felt upon returning to Canada. Working at Tonari Gumi provided her with what she had lost:

It was exciting. It was great. I spoke the language. I was from Steveston, ootoshiyori, [older people]. I know the language: "Ara ojisan, konnichiwa. Ogenkidesuka: [Oh, ojisan. How are you]" [Oh, ojisan. How are you]? You know, "Hi, ojisan gtenki haei, ojisan genki?" [Hi, ojisan. How are you doing]?... It was perfect working for Tonari Gumi. I stayed there for two years.

It was a month before the first Powell Street Festival, and everybody was involved. She worked along with her cousins Naomi and Ken and Rick who were coordinating the festival, helping them to find volunteers, phoning up everybody she knew. The following year she began to live with a Nisei photographer, a former member of the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project (J CCP), in a co-op housing development in the Strathcona district, where a group of Nikkei families, many of them Shin-Issei, lived. She talked fondly about gatherings and events that she shared with her neighbours. Her episodes sounded just like an extension of her experiences in Japan. Many of the earlier residents had moved away over the years, but she and her partner still lived at the same place, which Mayumi referred to as "her home." Her home is always open to her many friends.

After working at Tonari Gumi and participating in many community activities (i.e., Mayumi, along with Naomi, was one of the founding members of Katari Taiko), she worked for a Japanese Canadian business consultant. Her employer was a former member of the J CCP, and was also serving as the president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC). This was when the redress movement was just starting in Vancouver, and she was in the middle of it. Her work for the community and the NAJC became an extension of her life. Reflecting on her
experiences at that time, she commented on her connection with the Nikkei community and Japan:

M: Somewhere I feel very comfortable. . . yet it is not home. It is part of me.
Y: “Furusato”— how do you translate it?
M: No, you can’t! You can’t! . . . So it is in a sense, kind of more emotional. We are not
talking about your physical birth place, anything like that. We are talking, something . . .
you can trace . . . a philosophy perhaps — to a certain place.

The place Mayumi called her spiritual home is Ibusuki in Kagoshima Prefecture. It was a place
where she could almost feel like she was in another life, just like in her father’s memory. Then
she told me about her experiences in London, where she felt a familiarity with things English, even
though it was not quite like the familiarity she experienced in Japan. Having graduated as an
English major she recognized many names and places she had read about. She told me it was like
discovering part of her “intellectual home.”

So you really realize that all those things influence you. Up until then I was very clear — I
was Japanese Canadian, and most of the things in my life were Japanese. Only when I
went to London did a little button push in my head. You know, it was in 1983, or
somewhere around that time. I was, like thirty. Gee, I don’t know — Thirty, thirty-one.
Yeah, and so, I really, after all, am a North American.

Present Lifestyle and Future Hopes

Mayumi holds a few part time jobs, working for her friends doing bookkeeping and office work.

Her association with the Nikkei community has been decreasing since she ended participation in
Katari Taiko five years ago.

Last couple of years because I don’t do Taiko any more I don’t see my Taiko friends any
more. So the people I am spending my time with now are kind of changing. Tamio [her
common-law-husband] and I now have friends who are couples, and I was thinking that
up until then I didn’t care. But now we have friends who are couples. These are people
who have the same interests. One of them likes to garden, others like to bake, to shop — I
have my shopping friend.

Through her new friends, she is discovering yet another world with which she was not familiar
and is again realizing how insular her previous life had been. Some people do not see things the way she - - “a product of the sixties” - - does (i.e., a concern with social responsibility and accountability). She told me how some of her cohorts cannot understand her, and she wonders what is going to happen to the Japanese Canadian community. From observing what has been happening to her Steveston Nikkei community as a consequence of recent urbanization and commercialization, she thinks that maintaining the Japanese Canadian community as a physical entity is no longer viable. Yet she still believes that families and communities can play an important role in the future of the Nikkei community. She believes that one can be taught how to relate to different people and different situations, to become more perceptive and responsible.

Setsuko enjoys her work, which involves encountering many scientists from Japan. However, she is looking forward to retiring so that she can spend more time playing music with her friends, folk dancing, going to concerts, and so on. She makes regular visits to her family and relatives in Ontario, where her mother still lives. Setsuko observed that most of her mother’s friends now are hakujin and that she has become a very adventurous person.

She is much more broad-minded than when I was living with her. When I was living with her, she was trying to make a living, raise a family, and was so tied into Japanese society in London. It was a small but very tight group. And I don’t remember her having any hakujin friends at that time.

Naomi, who returned from Japan in 1977, worked for Tonari Gumi for two years and then took a job as a redress coordinator. Her entire career was centered around the Nikkei community until 1988, when she began to work as an agent for Japanese restaurants. She does not refer to this job as “a career.” It started as a part-time job; four years ago, it became full-time. Just over a year ago, she moved into a co-op condominium and stopped moving around. She jokingly mentioned that she had begun acquiring some furniture, adding to her futon bed, one of her few remaining early possessions:
For the next while, I need to be on my own. It is very easy for me to go along, you know, be a part of an organization. I can’t say “no” if they want me to do this and that. So I need to be removed.

However, Naomi is still very much involved in the community:

As far as the Japanese community goes, I feel like, like, it’s something I’m always a part of . . . So for me, its like I am going to be a part of a community within the city. I mean, of course I’ll belong to different organizations, I’ll have networks of different friends and whatever; but the Japanese community will be always the base.

Every year Naomi is a part of the Powell Street Festival and helps out with the Bulletin. Once a week she gives Taiko instruction to the members of Chibi Taiko (children’s Japanese drum group). She recognizes the problems that the present Nikkei community is facing due to conflicts of interests that arose right after the 1988 Redress Movement Settlement, and she very much hopes to redirect that energy towards the betterment of the community. She told me that there are so many people, with different talents and abilities, who still care so much and want to do something for their future community despite their differences in opinion.

Naomi pointed out that many of her non-Japanese friends do not value their family connections: “They can take or leave them.” She told me of the importance of her family connections, which she described as “a very Asian trait.” Being single and having no children, her family is of primary importance in her life. Once a week she visits her ninety-eight-year-old grandmother in the extended care hospital in Langley, which is close to her parents’ house.

I visit her once a week. I make a point of visiting her once a week. Actually, a lot. At least one full afternoon and evening. So what I do is, when I visit my parents, and then I go to visit obaachan おばあちゃん, bring a bit of food for her, and then I go back to my parents and then we cook together, and we have dinner together. That’s really nice.

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105 Many of the Nikkei community members, who participated and worked so hard for the redress movement and for the future of the community, not only feel their effort had not been fully recognized but also that their voices had not been heard by the Nikkei community leaders.
Naomi was once a member of the Vancouver Zen Centre located in Chinatown, and now that a centre has opened in her neighbourhood, she has started dropping in again. She is a devout Buddhist, having acquired Zen meditation practice when she was in Kyoto twenty years ago.

**Patti**'s life is in transition. When she came back from Japan she worked in various jobs in Vancouver, but she liked working at a flower shop best because there she could use her Ikebana (Japanese flower arrangement) training. Visiting her family graveyard with her relatives in Japan had had a profound effect on her; she hoped that other Sansei would follow her path. She believes that it is extremely important that Sansei be able to connect with their heritage, and she believes that visiting their family graveyards in Japan might enable them to make that connection. She hopes that more Sansei will go to Japan to "honour their ancestors" rather than just to be tourists:

I hope that more Sanseis would look into that and be proud of their heritage, learning more about it... I think learning about your customs is important. What is Japanese, what is habitual, you know? Find out more about Japanese personality, you know?

Like Patti, **Joan**'s life is also in transition. "My future is in limbo, I am feeling in limbo" was what she said to me when I asked her about her future plans. A few months ago she had returned to Canada from New York, where she worked as a fashion designer (after having graduated from Parson's School of Art) to join her widowed mother. She had lived in New York for ten years, and it was becoming her "home." Her parents and her aunt were planning to visit her there, and she was looking forward to showing them around "her" city. Then her father died suddenly of a heart attack in 1995, just before the trip. At the time of the interview she was searching for a job, possibly something in the fashion field. She told me, however, that she is resigned to the idea that she might have to develop yet another career in Vancouver. Leaving her career behind was a very difficult decision as she had worked so hard for it. Yet she told me that it
was her own decision to return to be with her mother.\textsuperscript{106} Her mother was so grateful for Joan’s decision. Joan did leave the career she developed in New York. She took several computer courses and, several years ago, began to work at Arts Umbrella, as one of the officers in the developmental office.

Just like other Sansei in this study, Carolyn is not as involved as she once was with the Japanese Canadian community. She has begun to study law and does not know where she will go after she finishes her studies.\textsuperscript{107} She does, however, hope that wherever she goes there will be a Japanese community. It is important to her to have a sense of a cohesive community, even though she seldom searches out friends who are of Japanese descent. She also hopes that her children will grow up in a community where they can learn their cultural heritage, where they do not have to rely on a stereotyped mass media version of what it is to be Japanese.

I would like to see -- I would like to see myself, you know, in a place where there is a Japanese Canadian community, and to be able to ... see us doing some of the Japanese things, not having to explain things ... I hope there would be a certain diversity. I would like to be in an area where my kids would have some positive connection to the Japanese Canadian community.

In summary, each Nikkei woman distilled her experiences into vivid narratives reflecting the sociocultural times and the struggles encountered as Japanese immigrant women and descendants

\textsuperscript{106} Before I was married I often thought about what I would do if I found myself in Joan’s situation. Luckily, this did not happen. However, in the back of my mind I always felt that if something happened to one of my parents, then I would drop everything and go home to Japan. I would do this because I was the youngest daughter and still single. I never openly talked about this issue with my parents, but I think they silently assumed that this is what I would do.

\textsuperscript{107} Carolyn completed her study in law and now (2002) works in Victoria for the provincial government.
of these women. Some of these hardships were common to many immigrants, namely the inevitable economic struggle, the absence of close kin and the distance created by language and customs. Other hardships were more specifically due to ethnicity. In the beginning they were burdened with the visibility of “race” and later the extra stigma of being “enemy aliens.”

The narratives of the four Issei women (born 1895 to 1906) reflected on their early days in “Amerika” and recounted their broken dreams, that inevitable gap between their expectations and the realities they encountered after arrival. To these broken dreams they gave the interpretation of onna no sadame (women’s fate). Acting as Japanese women would be expected to do, they persevered and built lives first in an unfamiliar land, then in an enforced wartime relocation and, finally, in Vancouver.

Having acquired Canadian citizenship in the early 1950s, they were determined to become part of the Canadian way of life, the dream that had been wrested away from them in December 1942. They hoped that racism, now that the war had ended, was in the past and that they no longer needed to feel shame for being Japanese. They began to emphasize the importance of English, the language of their adopted country, even though they were still struggling with it many years later. Although they had lived in Canada for over a half-century, the language and the culture that was familiar and comfortable continued to be Japanese. The realization of their growing Japanese Canadianness was a cause for discomfort and consequently they encouraged younger generations to rebuild the once vibrant Japanese community.

The life histories of the seven Nisei women (born between 1922 and 1935) also revealed the insularity of prewar Japanese communities. They depicted the invisible boundaries both within the communities themselves as well as between these communities and mainstream Canada, and in so doing drew a portrait of what it meant to be Japanese in the White Canada of the prewar years. In
the early 1950s their families tried to regain their lives in Canada. With a dispersed and
disempowered Japanese community, the Nisei were alone in caring for their culturally dislocated,
aging parents while at the same time they attempted to recreate their own circle of friends. As their
Issei mothers had done before them, they focussed on betterment along with encouraging their
children to foster what they understood as Canadianness.

The centennial of the arrival of Japanese in Canada celebrated in the late 1970s and the early
1980s allowed them to reconstruct their past with comfort and to reconnect to their roots without
the stress with which they have grown up in their earliest years. After years of repressing a painful
past, they finally began to share these unspeakable experiences with their children. They began to
concentrate on passing on to the next generation the traditions, language and food of Japan, as well
as of the memories of cultural celebrations and the sense of community that these instilled. These
customs are still observed.

The six Sansei women (born between 1936 and 1968) reflected on their difficulties growing
up in the 1960s to 1980s in a world where they were supposed to have “all the advantages like
Hakujin (Caucasian) kids.” They revealed divided worlds and continual self-questioning of how
“Canadian” and how “Japanese” they were. In living through this struggle, however, they became
more appreciative of their Nikkei identity, finding historical and emotional connections in visiting
Japan and in their continuing participation in the Japanese Canadian community.
CHAPTER FOUR

Ethnographic Sketches of Postwar Women and Their Descendants

A: Shin-Issei Women (Postwar Immigrant Women)

Japanese Canadians received the federal franchise in June 1948, and in British Columbia they were granted the provincial franchise in March 1949. The formation of the National Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (NJCCA) at a conference in Toronto in September 1947 indicated that the Nisei were finally confident enough to make a unified attack on remaining restrictions and inequalities. The NJCCA made tremendous efforts to lift the barriers that prevented Nisei and naturalized Canadian citizens “stranded” in Japan at the outbreak of the Second World War from returning to Canada.¹ Repatriated Japanese Canadians, along with Kika-Nisei, began to return to their birth country, being sponsored by family members and relatives who had remained in Canada during the war. During the postwar years, a large number of immigrants to Canada doubled the population of the nation; however, the gateway for Japanese immigrants was still narrow. Over the following two decades - - a period of recovery for, and reunion of, Japanese Canadian families - - the Nikkei population grew slowly as postwar immigrants arrived from Japan.² With the establishment of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration in 1950, and a

¹ As was discussed earlier, a large number of Nisei went to Japan under a wartime exchange agreement, and naturalized Issei who “voluntarily” went to Japan did so under the Federal Government’s 1946 “deportation” policy (Adachi 1976:349-351).

² Victor Ujimoto (1973) puts postwar immigrants into three categories: (1) yobiyose, or sponsored immigrants: their entry into Canada was the highest between 1952 and 1965 (p. 14); (2) kika nisei : returned second generation; and (3) gijutsu imin: technical immigrants (p. 12-13). In his study of job transferability and social participation he focused upon two groups: yobiyose and gijutsu imin. Yobiyose sometimes call themselves as repaatoo (i.e., those who were expatriated in 1946). The majority of expatriated Nisei were minors, only 18 per cent being over sixteen years old. According to Kage (1998), about half of the expatriated Japanese Canadians (approximately 2,000), both Issei and Nisei, returned to Canada.
further liberalization of regulations, the government altered the immigration law to allow the re-entry of deported Japanese Canadians. In the late 1950s to the early 1960s, Japanese immigrant women began to arrive in Canada. Many were the wives of expatriated and Kika-Nisei Japanese Canadian men.

Until 1965, most postwar Japanese immigrants to Canada were sponsored by relatives and were known as *yobiyose*. Japanese immigrants who came to Canada after 1965, however, secured their immigrant visas as independent immigrants (Ujimoto 1973:16). The elimination of racial discrimination was reflected in the Canadian Immigration Act, 1962, which abolished the White Canada immigration policy. In 1966 a new immigration policy introduced a point system, revising previous legislation and opening the door to non-European immigrants by removing racial and ethnic criteria. In establishing a Canadian visa office in Tokyo in 1966, the Canadian government launched a campaign to attract qualified technical and professional people from Japan. This was a shift in policy that, for the first time, opened Canada to visible minorities and allowed for the entry of new types of Japanese immigrants -- the so-called technical immigrants, or *gijyutsu-imin* 技術移民. In the peak year of 1973, approximately 1,100 Japanese immigrants

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3 As a precursor to the point system, the Immigration Act, 1957, allowed an increasing number of independent immigrants. It permitted individuals to apply without depending on associations or relatives. See Driedger (1996: 55-59).

4 In the 1970s, the selection for unsponsored immigrants was based on obtaining at least fifty points out of a possible 100 points. Twenty points were allocated for education and training, then 15 points for the occupational demand and personal assessment. Having relatives in Canada was not a great advantage since it could only give a person five points. Ten possible points each were given for age (if the person were between eighteen and thirty-five), occupational skill, arranged employment, and language (English or French).

5 Victor Ujimoto (1973:17) says that they “constituted both professional and technical people, were highly educated, had several years of experience in their own occupations, and were able to converse in English.”
entered Canada. During this period, the Japanese community in Vancouver expanded and diversified.

At the time of my initial research on Japanese women (mid-1970s), I placed the postwar immigrant women into three groups, according to their marital status and social network:

1. wives of Kika-Nisei and Nisei men who came to Canada during the 1950s and early 1960s;
2. wives of gijutsu imin or single technical immigrant women who were attracted by the idea of an independent immigrant policy; and,
3. wives of non-Japanese men who came to Canada in the early 1970s.

The first group of women were in their mid-forties, and the second and third group of women were in their late twenties to thirties. Many of them were mothers of two or three teenagers or one or two pre-school children. They were eager to related to Canadian people and to learn about Canadian culture. Like the Issei women their knowledge of the “outside world” was filtered through their husbands and children and they encountered difficulties due to language barriers. Not having “the tool” of communication, their self-expression was limited and, consequently, the Shin-Issei women were unable to familiarize themselves with mainstream society. Mothers were afraid of not being able to communicate with their children due to the language barrier. The conflict of values — “old” against “new” — existed for the Shin-Issei as it had for the Issei and their Nisei children. Like Nisei women, Shin-Nisei children often acted as interpreters for their

6 There were forty-five postwar Japanese women and fifteen prewar women in the study. As a subcategory, I included wives of Japanese business men. See Shibata 1980.

7 In some ways it can be said that Shin-Issei women had more difficulties than did the Issei women because, unlike the latter, they had no well established social network upon which to depend.
mothers. Many Shin-Issei mothers feared losing their authority over their children due to not having sufficient knowledge of Canadian culture and language. Many Shin-Issei mothers indicated their desire and need to learn English. In contrast to the Issei women, who loved to talk about their lives in Japan and their early days in Canada, many of the Shin-Issei women did not wish to relate their experiences. For many Shin-Issei women this was not the time to reflect on their experiences as they were constantly being challenged to adapt to their adopted country. Direct contact with mainstream Canadian society was highest for single immigrant women as they had contact with their colleagues at work. Many indicated, however, that the language barrier affected their lives more than they had expected, and they found themselves clinging to other Japanese and things Japanese whenever possible. They reflected that they were more “Japanese” than they had thought and that they had begun to seriously re-evaluate their situation and their identity.

Twenty years later, in 1996-97, I again interviewed four Shin-Issei women whom I had first

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8 However, due to a smaller family size and their parents’ English ability, they did not act as surrogate parents for their younger siblings, as had many Nisei during the prewar years.

9 I remembered how careful I had become in selecting my words when I interviewed some Shin-Issei women. I sensed that, even though they were curious and asked me questions about my private life, I was not allowed to ask them similar questions. In these circumstances I simply followed a questionnaire (Appendix B and C) that consisted of sixty-one semi-open questions in order to determine their socio-cultural conditions before and after their arrival in Canada. In some cases I skipped some questions and probed later in our interviews.

10 Many socialized with other Japanese immigrants and searched for distant acquaintances to whom they had been introduced before leaving Japan. However, there were some who completely immersed themselves in the host community and did not associate with their fellow countrymen and women.
interviewed in 1976. Three women,\textsuperscript{11} wives of Kika-Nisei, were in their sixties and had adult children in their twenties and thirties. One woman, the wife of a gijutsu imin, was just turning fifty and had teenaged children. As my previous study had shown, women who married Kika-Nisei had more exposure to Japanese Canadian community activities, yet their core social network remained with other postwar immigrants. They did not identify with the Japanese Canadian community even though they were aware of its activities. One Shin-Issei woman who was married to a gijutsu imin, lived in Richmond, and sent her children to a Japanese language school in Steveston. She did not find she had any need to know about the Nikkei community in Vancouver. All four women's life narratives reflected their shifting sense of “home” as they adapted to life in Canada. According to Hana:

\begin{quote}
When my children were young they did not care much about anything Japanese, even food. But now that they have a family of their own, they really want me to teach them things Japanese and share it with my grandchildren . . . . For a long time I felt Canada was not my home, but now, being with my grandchildren, I finally feel I am at home here.
\end{quote}

**Encounter**

Four Shin-Issei women (Asako b. 1932; Hana b. 1933; Taeko 1933; Yoko 1949), who had a daughter or daughters, were selected from a list of Shin-Issei women that I selected from my twenty-year-old research file. Two women resided at the same addresses as they had when I first interviewed them. When telephone contact was made, one woman flatly refused to participate, telling me she had no time and that she was no longer interested in what I was doing. One woman was willing to talk with me and participate but wondered about her ability to contribute to my research. She felt that she did not have much to tell me and indicated that she could not talk about

\textsuperscript{11} I found that one of these woman was raised in present-day North Korea. She had had experiences similar to those of Asako, as well as to those of my parents and two of my elder sisters.
herself for an hour. Similarly, another woman informed me that she wondered whether she should participate in the research because she had nothing important to tell me. Then she added, "if you are trying to count me as a part of your statistical data, then I cannot be helpful to you because I am an exception among us," indicating that she was not a "typical" Japanese from Japan. Eventually four Shin-Issei women agreed to participate. I had been in occasional contact with one of them over the last twenty years but not with others. Prior to their marriages they were all in the workforce. At the time of their marriage, three were working as "OLs": office ladies (Carter and Dilatush 1976) and one as a nurse.

Interviews were conducted at their homes in Greater Vancouver. On one occasion a woman introduced her husband to me, and he remained with us during the interview. After the first interview I asked her for another; several weeks later I interviewed her without her husband. The length of interviews ranged from three and one-half to over ten hours, the latter taking place in a couple of sessions. All the interviews, except one, were tape-recorded.

Unlike the interviews that were conducted in the mid-1970s, in these interviews (1996-97) the women talked more freely about their past experiences in Japan. They reflected upon their reasons for coming to Canada as well as upon their early days in this country. Was my inclusion in their

12 After the first session, which lasted over three hours, the woman told me to ask her "better" questions so that she could provide me better answers. I found her narratives to be very insightful.

13 One woman, who was one of the Shin-Issei women I had interviewed in 1976, was introduced to me by her daughter in 1996.

14 I was not quite sure whether the woman wanted to have her husband with her or not. When I requested the second interview I did not ask that her husband be excluded. The second session did not differ much from the first, expect that she expanded on certain aspects of her life. She was the only woman who said that she would have to consult her husband when, twenty years ago, I asked her for an interview.
life a sign of their openness? Was it due to their desire to share their cultural identity with me, a person whom they felt shared similar values? Were they influenced by their children, who encouraged them to speak out? Were class boundaries no longer a problem as I was no longer a young unmarried graduate student but a married middle-aged anthropologist? Catherine Riessman (1987) points out that feminist research must take status and ideology, as well as gender, into consideration. Did my status as a Shin-Issei with a Canadian daughter allow me to be a member of their group? I believe this to be the case as their responses indicated a willingness to consider me part of their group.

**Reasons for Coming to Canada**

I had my second interview with Asako a few days after the thirty-fifth anniversary of her arrival in Canada. She began:

朝起きたとき思ったのかな、いや、前の日に思ったのかなー。 「あー、28日が来る。まあ、もう３５年になるんだわ」と思ってその日は何か思いでになるような事をしようかなーと言ってるうちに忙しくなって忘れちゃって。「あら、28日ね。私来た日よ」って言ったら「あー、そんなになるかな。」それで終わり。だめな人なの。(97)

[I don’t remember if it was the morning of the twenty-eighth when I woke up, or the day before, and I thought: “The 28th of October is coming! It is now thirty-five years.” I thought I should do something special to make the day memorable, but I got too busy and forgot about it. When I told my husband, “Oh, today is October twenty-eighth, the day I arrived [in Canada],” he said, “Oh, is that so. It’s been a long time.” That’s all he said. He is no good, you know. [What a pity he does not say something special.]

She also told me that she made a poem for her Tanka (a Japanese poem of thirty-one syllables) club, choosing Lion’s Gate Bridge as a topic. In this poem she described how she anticipated her new life in Canada when the ship slipped under the bridge in 1961.

Asako was born in 1932, the first child of a banker in Japanese-occupied Korea: Chosen Sotokufu (established in 1910). After serving in the First World War, her father saw a great future in this land and decided to remain there.
I am a Nisei born in Korea. But I was born during the period of showa hitoketa: era (1926-36)\(^{15}\) which was no good. We remember hardships and miseries from the defeat of World War II. We were in the middle of the old and new Japan.

When the war ended in 1945, Asako was thirteen years old and had four younger siblings: two sisters and two brothers. Her family - - consisting of the five children (from two to thirteen years old), their parents, and their grandparents - - left Korea. It was very hard for a family of this size to move swiftly. Asako told me how lucky they were to have enough money to buy their way back home to Japan.\(^{16}\) She was old enough to remember everything, and she described how they walked all the way to cross the 1945 border established by the USSR and the United States - - a division that led to the Korean War in 1955.

Upon returning to Japan, Asako's family settled in Kyushu with distant family relatives of her father. Many of her close relatives also had lost everything in Occupied Korea. They were also hikiagesha 引き揚げ者 (returnees from overseas). Food was very scarce in postwar Japan, and among the staples, salt was highly valued. So her father and his friends started a new venture - - a salt refinery. In the middle of establishing this new business, however, her father died in an automobile accident. Her mother, a forty-year-old-widow with five children, was able to support her family largely due to the fact that she had a degree in English. Asako remembered that her mother's income was quite handsome - - much better than that of the average bread winner - - since proficiency in English was highly valued during the Occupation.\(^{17}\) Her mother earned her

\(^{15}\) The showa hitoketa generation is often discussed as being the "in-between" generation; that is, the generation caught between the old and the new Japanese values. See Shukan Asahi henshubu 1971:153-161.

\(^{16}\) Her narratives reminded me of my mother's stories about herself as a young mother with two little daughters leaving North Korea after the defeat of Japan.

\(^{17}\) It is ironic that English was called an enemy language and banned during the war. In postwar Japan, many repatriated Nisei and Kika-Nisei worked at American military bases.
living at an American military base, where she translated and gave English lessons.

As the oldest child, and being without a father, Asako tried to be a good daughter. Because she did not want to depend too much on her mother, either financially or emotionally, she decided to go to a technical training college and become a nurse. She worked for four years at a hospital and three years for the Ministry of Justice. During this time her younger sisters had married. When she was twenty-eight one of her acquaintances (a self-designated matchmaker) brought her a marriage proposal. The bridegroom-to-be, a Kika-Nisei, was planning to return to Canada, where he had been born. At that time she had a good job, status, and was enjoying her life:

If I had stayed on the job for a couple more years, I could have attained a quite prestigious position. But I do not regret what I had done. Somehow I felt it was time for me to leave that job. There are Nami [waves] in life. It was the time for me to leave and to start something new.

She felt she was ready and mature enough to get married. Obviously, it was her choice as to whether or not to accept this marriage proposal. The bridegroom was not as educated as was she -- a point upon which her sisters commented. Asako told me that, for her, her husband’s lack of education was not an obstacle. Through her work she had met many eriito koosu no hitotachi [elite people] -- professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and judges -- yet many of them were not happy with their lives. She had learned that a title was not a guarantee of happiness, and she thought that marriage might provide a nice change. She also sensed a free-spirited mind in her

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18 In Japan, women marry according to their birth order: this is considered to be “the proper way.” However, this practice has been changing. The percentage of married women between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine significantly decreased, from 80.3 per cent in 1975 to 57.5 per cent in 1990 (Seishonen Hakusho/ White Paper on Youth 1991:145). Many families do not care about order so long as their daughters do not remain single.

19 Women are often said to hope that their future husbands will be highly educated and have high social status. Contemporary Japanese women often look for someone who has “three highs”: high income, higher education, and physical height. See Kashima 1989:103.
bridegroom, something she had never before encountered. She figured that if she married him, then she would not have to strain her family’s financial resources by having an elaborate wedding ceremony. She had seen the elaborate weddings of her two sisters, which had to be appropriate to the bridegrooms’ social status, and knew the financial burden they had placed on her mother. She said: “See, I am the oldest in the family and do care a lot about my mother’s well being.” Besides, her mother, whom Asako described as someone very different [kawatte iru hito], encouraged her to marry this man. Her mother often told her children: “Don’t do anything ordinary.”

In 1960 she married Mr. Matsuyama and lived with her in-laws until the fall of 1961. She then left for Vancouver. Asako told me that her father-in-law, who had built and then lost his fortune in Canada, was against her husband’s decision to return to British Columbia. Her father-in-law knew that their life in Canada would be as difficult as was his during the prewar years. Besides, his business in Japan was doing well, and there was no need for his second son to leave Japan. However, the young couple were eager to go to Canada.

A few years prior to Asako’s arrival in Canada, the newlywed Hana arrived at Vancouver Airport on 6 June 1959 to join her husband, a Kika-Nisei. Following her was a freight container full of her belongings, which her parents had provided for her to enable her to set up in her new “temporary” home in Canada. Their son-in-law had told them that he and Hana would only stay overseas for five years.

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20 She said that she sekai ga hirokunatta kigashita 世界が広くなった気がした [felt that her world had expanded] after meeting her husband.

21 There is an old Japanese saying: If one has three daughters, then one will end up penniless trying to pay for their weddings. I remember my parents used to say that having three daughters would bankrupt them.
Hana, a second daughter, was born in Kyushu and grew up in Occupied Korea, where her two younger brothers were born. Her father worked as an accountant for a mining company until the defeat of Japan. She remembered her life in Keijyo (Seoul), the capital of South Korea, as very pleasant. She told me how the Japanese and Koreans were segregated, living in different parts of the city. She did not feel any difference between life in Japan and in Korea:

It was just like Japan; the city itself was just like a Japanese city. Mitsukoshi Department store was there, for example. My father often took us out for picnics. It was a very beautiful place. It was very peaceful, but, when I think about it now, I feel we did very terrible things to the Korean people, even though I didn’t feel it at that time, you know. We used to visit Korean people who used to work under my father to play and stay over, and we used to make Kimchi (spicey Korean pickles).

She remembered receiving occasional presents - - Japanese toys - - from her grandparents from Japan, and wondering why her family was living in Korea rather than in Japan. She also reported on how “modern”22 her father was at that time, cooking oatmeal and baking bread for the family.23

However, this pleasant life ended when her father was ordered to join the Japanese army and was sent to Heijo (Pyongyang), the present capital of North Korea. Not wanting to break the family unit, the rest of the family moved with him. However, within four months the war had ended, and her father was taken to Siberia. She was twelve years old, and her family struggled to survive while trying to get back to Japan. Hana remembered how her mother shaved her and her elder sister’s heads as soon as she heard the Russians were coming, disguising them as boys by

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22 The word *Modan* can be translated as “Westernized” or “liberal-minded.”

23 Her father was the son of a Buddhist priest. He was training to be priest when he married her mother, the youngest daughter of one of her grandfather’s parishioners.
dressing them in her father’s clothes. She remembered how she and her sister carried her baby brother on their backs while holding their other brother’s hand, endlessly walking to reach the South Korean border. Her mother was sickly, and she and her elder sister had to tend to her as well as manage their bundle of belongings during the journey. Her narratives were very similar to those of Asako.

A little over a year after the end of the Second World War, they finally arrived in Japan and joined Hana’s maternal aunt, who was living in Oita Prefecture in Kyushu. Her aunt was the contact person upon whom her parents had agreed before her father was sent to Siberia. About two years later her father returned to Japan. The day her father returned was the happiest day of her life (そのときいちばん嬉しかった sonotoki ichibaan ureshikatta). The family was finally reunited. Like Asako, Hana described the scarcity of jobs and food in postwar Japan. She helped in the vegetable garden in a small remote village in Oita Prefecture, where life was very different from what it was in the city of her childhood. There was a small close-knit social network, and it was hard for sotomono 外者 [outsiders] like her and her family to fit in. Her father managed to find a job, teaching English and calligraphy at a junior high school.24 After two years of teaching, however, her father decided to go to Tokyo.

In Tokyo he worked at a foundry. At first, Hana’s father held three jobs simultaneously, and Hana noted how hard everybody in her family worked. Her sister worked as a secretary while she herself worked at a watch company during the day and studied at a women’s college at night. Eventually her father bought a piece of land in Tokyo and built a small house, thus realizing the dream that he and his family had carried for all those years — to return to mainland Japan, or

24 There is a personal parallel here. Her father’s first job after the war was the same as my father’s (in Sapporo) upon my family’s return from Occupied Korea.
naichi 内地, and to live together. Their wish finally came true, and they began to once again lead the kind of life that they had lived in Korea before the war. Hana claimed that this was the happiest time of her life and that she did not wish to leave Japan. Yet leave she did, in 1959. Hana was then twenty-six and had received a marriage proposal. Her brother-in-law was a colleague of a relative of her future husband. He (her brother-in-law) was told about a Canadian cousin who was looking for a bride, and he inquired about Hana as a possible candidate. The cousin would be coming back to Japan in five years, after finishing his university studies. Hana thought:

あー、5年ぐらいだったらいいなって思ったの。そして母も「5年ぐらいだったら、アメリカ旅行できるんだからいいじゃない」って言ったから来たんです。ホ、ホ、ホ。

Well, five years is not too bad . . . And my mother also said, “If it is only for five years, why don’t you? You can travel and see Amerika.” [Laughs]

A marriage meeting [omiai お見合い] was set for November 1958, and her future husband came to Japan to meet her. She described their first encounter:

お見合いをした時ね、黒い背広に赤のチダネクタイしてたんですよ。日本人ってそんな事しないでしょ。良くしやべってね、日本人と違うなと思って。

At our first meeting, he came with a red bow-tie with a black suit that Japanese men usually didn’t wear at that time. He talked a lot and I thought he was different from most Japanese.

25 Japanese who were in Gaichi 外地 (overseas Japanese colonies) before the war used the term Naichi (inland), meaning Japan. The term is still used by Japanese who reside outside of Japan’s mainland (honshu 本州), even though it is considered to be old fashioned. It was the term I used for the mainland since I grew up in Hokkaido. This is similar to Hawaiians using the term “mainland” to mean the United States.

26 At this point, her husband corrected Hana’s statement by saying, “No, I said I wanted to return to Japan after five years, I did not say I would return after five years.”

27 In our second interview she pointed out that she was not the only woman her husband was meeting as his relatives arranged many omiai for him while he was in Japan. In our later conversation she informed me that her husband chose her over younger, more attractive candidates because of her physical strength, a good set of white teeth, and big hands. She added “he wanted to have Sambo” [who looks after him].
His talk ignited Hana’s imagination about America and gaikoku [foreign country]. In the late 1950s, Japan was still recovering from the defeat of the Second World War and “even in Shinjuku there were just stalls. It was nothing like it is today.” Elvis Presley was making movies, and she loved watching American movies. Every weekend she went to see movies with her friends and told me how she yearned and dreamed about Gaikoku. One of the movies she mentioned was “Roman Holiday” (1952).

After the omiai her husband visited her and her family quite often, bringing flowers and other things that were hard for ordinary Japanese to obtain (e.g., a chunk of ham, beef, chocolate, etc.) until she finally accepted his marriage proposal. She began to dream about their future life in Canada, and a couple of months later they were married.

As many Issei men had done in the prewar days, Hana’s husband returned to Canada after their wedding in February 1959. While waiting to join her husband she took Ikebana lessons so that she could teach Japanese flower arranging in Canada. Her father sent his daughter to Canada to “learn English,” fully expecting her to come home after five years. Four months after the wedding, which took place on 6 June 1959, she arrived at Vancouver Airport. The city was beautiful. However, life in Canada was not what she had imagined. Her husband was not a university student who was finishing his degree: he was a seasonal laborer, a gardener, living in a rooming-house in East Vancouver. Less than a month after her arrival in Canada she had to begin to work simply to make ends meet.

The third Shin-Issei woman was Taeko who came to Canada one year after Hana. In 1996 she was still residing at the same house where I first interviewed her in 1976, the mother of three daughters, aged twelve to fifteen, and her husband was an engineer working for BC Hydro. Twenty years later in 1996, she had three grandchildren and she and her husband (now retired)
were looking after her youngest daughter's son.

Taeko was born in Kyushu in 1933, the youngest of two children, and grew up in Osaka. Her brother was twelve years her senior. She lost her father when she was eight and her mother when she was twenty-two. Growing up without her father, she had a very close bond with her elder brother. She began working as an OL (office lady) after graduating from high school. She continued to work until she left for Canada in 1960. She received a marriage proposal when she was twenty-six. The bridegroom-to-be was a Canadian Nisei whom she had met two years earlier when he visited his mother in Japan. Taeko did not elaborate on her encounter with her future husband. Canada was not a well-known place at that time. However, she told me that “gaikoku wa dokodemo onajidatta” (any foreign country was the same) since she wanted to leave Japan, where she felt too confined. She did say, however, that if her mother were alive she would never have dreamed of leaving Japan.

Taeko noted her dislike of Japanese conformity (sekentei 世間体): however, despite her lack of interest, she had had to take Japanese Tea ceremony (chanoyu) lessons in order to improve her marriage prospects. She also took driving lessons when it was rare for women to do so. She thought that, living outside of Japan, she “could do anything she wanted without being laughed at.” She explained that she had been discriminated against because she was raised in a single-mother family and that she had had a hard time when she was job hunting. So she had many reasons for wanting to leave Japan, but it was still a very difficult decision for her to make because, even though he did not say so directly, she knew that her brother did not want her to leave. After his retirement in 1972, her brother visited her in Canada twice before he died (five years ago).

Yoko, who was over ten years younger than other Shin-Issei women whom I interviewed, was newly wedded to an independent postwar immigrant and trying to adjust to her life in Canada
when we met in 1976. Twenty years later, she was a mother of three children aged twelve to nineteen. Her husband now co-owns a machine shop that boasts twenty-five employees. She jokingly observed that, even though she did not look it, she was the wife of the vice-president of a company.

Yoko was born in 1947 in Gunma prefecture, the eldest of four daughters. Upon graduating from college in Tokyo, she worked as an OL for four years and then returned to her hometown to help in the family business. She told me that she left her job because her father, who believed that she was beyond the so-called marriageable age (kekkon tekireiki), wanted her back home so that she could be married. She worked for the family business for a couple of years and took cooking lessons to prepare her for marriage. It was during this period that she met her future husband, with a friend acting as a go-between. She was in her late twenties and her future husband was one year her senior. He had been living in Canada, having emigrated in 1970. In the mid-1970s he was settled in his new environment, working at a machine shop,\(^{28}\) and was looking for a bride in Japan.

After their initial meeting, Yoko corresponded with her future husband and decided to visit Canada with her younger sister for a couple of weeks. He showed them around Vancouver, introduced them to his friends, and took them to see the Rockies. It was after this trip that her future husband returned to Japan to ask her father’s permission to marry her. They were married in December 1975.

Yoko told me that her first Christmas in Canada was a “very quiet” one. Her husband sent her to a bank to withdraw some money since everything would be closed during the holiday season. She had her first turkey dinner with her husband’s friends. Christmas in Canada was different.

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\(^{28}\) Yoko mentioned to me that her husband worked as a gardener for a year right after his arrival in Canada as he was unable to find any other kind of work.
from what she had imagined it would be. It was quieter than the Japanese Christmas, where there are songs and bells everywhere during the festive season. Yoko, who immigrated to Canada much later than did the other Shin-Issei women in the study, was more realistic about her future life in Canada. For her, there was not such a gap between expectations and reality.

**The Early Days: Family and Community**

Yoko was grateful for her children because “without them [she would] be isolated from Canadian culture and society.” Yet she was not completely isolated before her first child was born in the fall of 1977. On her arrival in Vancouver she had decided to take English classes, that were being offered to immigrants. Her decision was triggered by a clerk at the Motor Vehicles Branch, who suggested that she should improve her English before learning to drive a car. She realized that her English was insufficient even to enable her to ask for an application form.

Getting a Canadian driver’s license gave her more freedom and more choices. She drove her husband to work and went to her English classes, where she made friends. Many of them were much younger than she; they were in their late teens and early twenties, and had immigrated from India and China. They were able to teach her some Japanese history that she had never heard from other Japanese. For example, her Chinese classmates told her that, before they met her, they had hated the Japanese because of what the Japanese army had done to their grandparents and parents

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29 In Japan, Christmas is commercialized and has little religious meaning. It is very much like the New Year’s Eve celebrations in Canada, with much noise and many parties.

30 She was raised in postwar Japan and, by the mid-1970s, the country had recovered from the war, was beginning to gain a respectable position in the world economy, and was sending more people overseas.

31 She already had her Japanese driver’s license. Currently, the Motor Vehicles Branch offers the standard road test in nine languages other than English and French.
before and during the war. Even though she was one of them, after getting to know her as a person, many of her classmates told her that they liked her.

Chinese students came with their parents. At school they would say that Japan did terrible things to China and the Chinese people (during the war). Because they were all young they were very direct. ... Also, when I was in Japan I didn’t learn that Japan had started the war. Usually, our study of history ended before we reached the twentieth century, right? Coming to this country I thought, for the first time in my life, that war, history, is always happening.

Yoko told me she began to feel at home in Canada when she gave birth to her eldest daughter. Being unable to speak or understand English well, she had great difficulty taking on the role of motherhood. She had very little time to enjoy her newborn baby. The few friends she had at that time were in a similar situation, trying to cope with a new life and a new family. They could not give her much advice and moral support with regard to childrearing since they themselves were experiencing it for the first time. The only source of information was books, and on these she relied heavily. Her husband took a leave of absence from work, and they tried to cope with their newborn baby. In retrospect, she thinks that she did not provide good care for, or give enough affection to, her eldest child: *ima omou to kawai soo datta naa to omou, yutori ganakatta, kimochi nimo* (when I think about it now, I feel sorry for my eldest daughter. There was so much pressure and I was not really capable of enjoying her). With her second and third child, however, everything went smoothly.

Her first childbirth experiences evoked memories of nurses and other staff at the hospital. They had been very kind to her. She shared a room with other women and made friends. Yoko could never forget a Canadian nurse who helped her, telling her that “Japanese women persevere a lot and have very good childbirths, so you be strong and endure.” She told me that the nurse’s
comment gave her strength. She remembered telling herself during her painful labour that she would try her best to have a good childbirth like other Japanese women. In 1979 she had a second daughter, and in 1984 she had a son.

When Yoko had her son her mother came from Japan to help her. During this period her mother objected to Yoko asking her husband to pick up the crying baby. Her mother thought this was not the way her daughter should treat her husband. She also felt that her daughter was becoming lazy and was cutting corners with regard to housekeeping. This was not how Yoko had raised her. Her mother felt ashamed of her daughter, who “was ordering her husband around.” She complained about this behaviour to Yoko’s younger sisters. Yoko found out how her mother had felt from her sister when she visited Japan. She found her mother’s reaction curious as it had never occurred to her that she was ordering her husband around. In fact, she thought that she had changed little since she left Japan. At that time she was trying her best to raise three children without getting much help from her husband.\textsuperscript{32} For example, her husband’s work required precision and concentration, and he needed a good night’s rest. Thus she tried hard not to let the children cry at night and disturb his sleep.

Twice a week Yoko sent all her children to the Japanese language school in Steveston. Two daughters continued until they were in Grade 7, but her son only went for two years. Her son hated the school so much that he often cried in protest. In the beginning of his primary school days he was having problems learning, and Yoko decided that her son should forget about Japanese lessons and concentrate on learning English. Japanese was spoken at home when her children were young, and a mixture of English and Japanese was spoken as her children became older. Her eldest daughter spoke Japanese with her the most.

\textsuperscript{32} Yoko informed me that her husband thought he had done “a lot” of child care when their children were young.
When her eldest daughter was around thirteen, Yoko noticed that the girl was unable to express her opinions in Japanese. She had felt that it was now time for her to learn and master English so that she could communicate with her children. Her lack of fluency in English was not problematic when her children were young. When other children could not understand her “unfamiliar accent,” they simply asked her to repeat what she had said. And she did not mind repeating herself. However, as her children became older she began to worry: she did not want to embarrass her children with her poor English.

Learning the English language did, indeed, present a problem. Yoko thought her eldest daughter was well-adjusted in the bilingual world and had no problems expressing herself in English. However, she recently discovered that she had had problems when she started Grade 1. Not able to understand what her teachers were saying, she was forced to ask her classmates. Hearing about her daughter’s difficulties with English made Yoko realize how she had been handicapped by not being fluent in English. She then related an episode concerning the subtleties of English pronunciation. When her eldest daughter was in kindergarten she asked Yoko the meaning of the word “poke”:

One day my daughter asked me, “what does ‘poke’ mean?” So I said, “It is pork, the meat.” Then my daughter started to poke her eyes while saying “Poking eyes.” See, because when I heard the word “poke,” the first thing that came to mind was meat, right? So I said, “No, no, it is this one, [i.e., to poke, not pork.]” Then she said, “Mommy, the pronunciation is so different. Oh, poor me.” The words “pork” and “poke” -- so subtle in difference, I cannot differentiate the two.

Yoko gave me another example of her battles with English. When her daughter was in about Grade 5, she asked her to correct a letter she had drafted for the Ministry of Environment as a part
of a school project. Yoko could manage speaking and reading English, but correcting her daughter’s grammar was far beyond her capacity. In reading her daughter’s drafted letter, she realized that her young daughter had already surpassed her as far as English was concerned.

Not having any relatives in Canada, Yoko took her children to Japan as often as possible (i.e., once every two years or so). Her children’s questions and comments during their Japan trips forced her to re-examine her own understanding of Japanese culture as well as that of Canadian culture. These trips made her reflect upon the differences between her and her children. For her, Japan was still home; but for her children, Japan was a foreign country. They pointed at Japanese bus drivers and asked, “Why are they always mad?” It was then that Yoko realized that Japanese bus drivers rarely say anything. Unlike Canadian bus drivers, they rarely smiled and sometimes they were very rude.  

Her children’s behaviour, and people’s reaction to it, made her realize that, despite their Japanese appearance, they were “Canadian” rather than “Japanese.” They were gaikoku no ko (children born and raised in foreign countries). She mentioned that her children were never good at taking an ofuro (Japanese bath). Whenever her relatives took them to the hot springs, which was considered both a treat and a gesture of welcome, her children could never manage to relax and enjoy it.

Yoko mentioned a shift in her children’s choice of close friends over the years. When they were young, their friends were of mixed racial and cultural backgrounds, but as they grew older they began to have more Asian friends. She thought this might have something to do with a sharing of temperament and values. She indicated that her daughters were relatively otonashii (quiet) and wondered whether that was the reason why they were close to Asian Canadians. Her

33 My experiences with bus drivers in (Sapporo) differ from Yoko’s. I found them to be quite friendly. (Japanese passengers enter buses from the back and exit from the front, paying their fares as they leave.)
own friendship pattern had changed as well. Most of her close friends were Japanese, Shin-Issei, and business people. She told me she used to have Canadian friends, mothers’ of her children’s classmates. However, once friendship with non-Japanese friends reached a certain degree, she felt that there was “a wall” between them. She could not get beyond this wall, which seemed to consist of a difference in sensitivities - - a difference that she could not quite comprehend. She noted a couple of episodes at PTA conferences in which Caucasian mothers argued with teachers far beyond their allocated time. One argued about why her daughter could not bring an expensive doll to school; another asked the teacher not to give her child too much homework because it caused her stress; another insisted that her only child should get more attention and care since she paid the same amount of tax as did mothers with many children.

Taeko arrived in Canada a decade and a half earlier than did Yoko, and she lived with a Canadian family for a month in 1960, her first year in Canada. At this time she often wore a kimono. Before her first child was born she took a semester of evening English classes, and there she made friends with a few Shin-Issei women. She had three daughters, the eldest of whom was born in 1961 and the youngest in 1964. At the time of our first encounter she was living in the Knight Road area, where several other Nikkei families also lived. Her three daughters attended a nearby Japanese language school. I remember a telephone call to her house during our first interview in 1976. The call was answered by one of her daughters, who relayed a message, in very good Japanese, to her mother, informing her that one of their neighbours wanted them to pick up some omanju (Japanese sweets) later. When I praised her daughter’s Japanese, Taeko told me that her children were taking private Japanese lessons from Mrs. Sato ( one of the Issei women in the study) who lived in the vicinity. Twenty years later, in 1996, she informed me that there were more East Indians and Chinese in the area and that whenever new houses were built, Chinese
people tended to move into them.

During our 1976 encounter, Taeko indicated that, by not having close friends, she had escaped the peer pressure that so many other Japanese Canadian women had experienced and that had resulted in their going out to work in order to keep up the Nikkei women's "tradition" (i.e., working in a cannery during the season and doing domestic work). Taeko did not need to work and was happy at home, although she made it clear that she would do anything if her family needed money, including working as a domestic helper. In 1965 she acquired Canadian citizenship, and the following year she returned to Japan, with her three daughters (aged five, four, and two), for the first time since she had left it in 1959. Japanese people were unkind to her when she was travelling with her three young children, sometimes scolding her for taking them around in a crowded bus. In her experience, compared to Canadians, Japanese were publicly unkind.

Taeko's husband spoke English, and she spoke both English and Japanese when talking to her daughters. School policy had changed drastically even during the few years that her children were in school. When her youngest daughter was in Grade 1, a teacher encouraged Taeko to speak Japanese at home. However, a few years earlier, when her eldest daughter was in Grade 1, a teacher told her not to speak Japanese at home as it adversely affected the girl's ability to learn English. Taeko felt that her English was "deteriorating" due to her association with Japanese Canadians. Although she occasionally associated with her husband's Canadian friends during social functions, the people whom she befriended consisted mostly of Shin-Issei, with whom she could share experiences. In 1976, when she found herself cheering Japanese athletes while watching the Montreal Olympics on TV, she realized that she was still a Japanese living in Canada. Her daughters had protested.

Hana, who, as the reader will recall, came to Canada thinking that she had married a man who
was about to obtain a pharmacy degree only to find that she had married a man who was a seasonal labourer, had no time to waste. Within a month of her arrival in Vancouver in 1959 she found a job by reading a Nikkei community newspaper. This job consisted of doing alterations at a dry cleaning shop on West Broadway in Kitsilano. The shop was operated by a Japanese Canadian couple, and the job came with accommodations. She told me that these accommodations were much better than what her husband offered; namely, a room in a boarding-house with a little sink and a shared kitchen and bathroom. She was in shock when she saw a naked light bulb hanging from the ceiling in the room that was to be her "home sweet home" in Canada. She had no basis for comparison, but her husband told her that all immigrants had to start this way.\(^{34}\) In any case, she and her husband left his place and lived behind the dry cleaning shop for a year before their first child was born. The shop owners were well known Nisei in the Japanese Canadian community, and they introduced Hana to many of their friends.

Because Mr. and Mrs. Tasaka were well known in the community, many Japanese came to visit them. So, I was not really lonesome and, in fact, met many different interesting people.

The Nisei couple took her under their wing. They went to the United Church together, where Hana joined the Baby Band. She learned how to bake cookies and other necessary skills for her new life in Canada. Hana’s husband, being a gardener, could not work during the winter. Her employer, Mrs. Tasaka, suggested that he find a job at Canada Post. This he did, and soon he began to work as a mail-sorter. Hana was relieved that he had begun to receive a regular paycheck. Meanwhile, she sold everything she brought from Japan, including her fine china and other household things.

\(^{34}\) She gave me these detailed accounts in 1996-97; she had withheld them earlier.
She sent all her kimonos back to her parents as her lifestyle did not require them.

Hana wrote regularly to her father, "telling him everything"; that is, that there was no future in Canada and that she wanted to go home. She told me that she wrote in this manner only to her father, not wanting to worry her mother. She waited for her father's letter but it never came; instead, she got word of his death. He had died suddenly of lung cancer, even as he was looking for a job for his son-in-law. She described how desperate she felt. It was around that time she gave birth to her first child. She told me that she decided that, if she could not go home, then she would have children so that she would not have to feel so alone. She longed for home, and whenever she went for a walk at the beach she would look over the ocean and think about how the waves lapped on the shores of Japan. Her hope of returning to Japan was gone, and she accepted her fate. It was only in 1995, after her mother's death, that she finally told her siblings what her real experiences in Canada had been like. She told me that she had not told them earlier because she was ashamed and did not want to compromise herself.

When she moved away from the Tasakas, Hana stopped going to church. She was busy with her newborn baby and, as she did not have a car, it was difficult to move around. She carried an English dictionary everywhere. She did not take English classes because her husband told her that she could learn English by just talking to people, that English classes were not necessary. The Canadian people she encountered were kind to her. She told me how sincerely they tried to understand her broken English; however, she added that times have changed and that people are no longer kind to new immigrants. Getting tired of receiving complaints about their children, aged four and two, from other tenants, her husband decided to buy a house at Granville and Seventh Avenue. His salary was not enough to cover the mortgage, however, so Hana went to work for three hours every morning. While her husband, who worked at night, looked after their two young children, she did housework for elderly women, most of them widowed and living in the
South Granville area. When asked, she also helped at their various church functions.

Y: 「ハウスワーク」ってどんなことしました？
H: あの、アパートメント (apartment) で みんなおばあさん達定年になってペンションで、そこでお掃除してあげて、買い物に行ってあげたりして。そしてちゃんに10時になたらね、「Kay, tea time よーって」コーヒーとお紅茶とピスケットくれるんですよ。そして12時になるでしょう、したら「ランチ食べて帰んなさい」って。ほんとに、親切にしてくれた。そして、クック、私たちに知らないでしょ、ですからターキーの作り方教えてくれたり、随分助かりました。皆んな良い人だった。スイート。

Y: “Housework.” What kind of work does that entail?
H: Well, many older women lived in apartment houses, and they were retired and lived on a pension. I used to do house cleaning and go shopping for them. When ten o’clock came they called me: “Kay, it is tea time.” And they used to serve me coffee or tea with biscuits. And when twelve o’clock came, they would say, “Why don’t you have lunch before you go home.” They really were kind to me. And, cooking. See, we didn’t know anything, so they taught me how to roast a turkey and they really helped me a lot. They were all nice people. Those women were “sweet.”

She told me how they appreciated her even though she could not speak good English (言葉がわからないのに、通じ合ってね 喜んでくれました).35

They sold their first house when the area was rezoned as an industrial area, and they moved around Vancouver until they settled in the Little Mountain area, where their children grew up. They always purchased a big house - - revenuu hausu (revenue house) - - and rented out part of it. When her first child began elementary school in the mid-1960s, they lived in the Kitsilano area and her eldest son was the only Asian in the school. She remembered him asking her why, when she gave him birth, she did not give him a Caucasian face just like those of his friends. He was in Grade 4.

H: キツラノであの人だけが東洋人だったんですよ。はい。白人がしっかりでしょ、まわりが、違うって言われたんじゃないんですか。チンクとかなんか。
Y: なんておこさん：<
H: だから、黒人もいるし、白人もいるし、そしてここにたまたま来て（住んでいる）、なにも変わってないよ。（ここには）いろんなひとがいるんだから。そうしたら友だちを連れてくるようになりました。

35 In our later conversation she indicated that their kindness came from the sympathy they had felt toward a young mother of two who was working in order to survive in a foreign land. She also added that they often patronized her, a poor immigrant woman from Japan.
H: He was the only Asian in Kitsilano. Yes, there were all white people around us. Probably somebody called him “Chink” at school.
Y: What did you tell him?
M: So I told him that there are Black people and White people here. Then, he began to bring his friends home.

Unlike her second son, who was outgoing and did not have problems at school, her eldest son was a quiet child and had a very difficult time. His teacher noticed that her son was having socialization problems due to his lack of English, and introduced Hana to a social worker. The social worker helped him to adjust to his problems and did the same for his family members. Hana remembered this person for her kindness. Realizing they did not have any relatives in Canada, this woman invited Hana’s family to her home for Christmas. That was their first invitation from a Canadian, and their first experience of a “real Canadian Christmas.” This relationship grew into a close friendship (although they lost contact over the years). Hana mentioned that her eldest son, who is now in his late thirties, has been disadvantaged by being Japanese in Canada. Because she raised her children to be “modest,” and not to make fools of themselves and thus to shame their family, she felt that they did not really have a chance to maximize their potential by acting like “Canadian people.”

In addition to her two sons, Hana had a daughter in 1966 and a third son in 1973. She was happy when she had her youngest child. She thought she could devote all her time to her youngest son and enjoy taking care of him, giving him the attention that she had not been able to give her other children when they were growing up. Her life in Canada was now running smoothly, and she took him everywhere she went. When he started kindergarten she discovered that he had problems relating to other children. He was diagnosed as being mentally challenged, a condition that, at that time, was not well understood. Those years were the hardest time in her life. She would drop him off at a special school in the morning and pick him up at two o’clock. While her
son was at school she worked as a domestic worker in the Point Grey area. This routine continued for ten years. Hana tried everything, taking him twice to Japan to see specialists and seeking treatment. Despite her efforts, however, nothing improved her son’s autistic condition. When he was thirteen years old, Hana decided to send him to a special residential school, where she volunteered and could observe what was going on. She felt comfortable enough to let her dear son live there five days a week.

Upon her arrival in Vancouver in 1961, Asako lived for a couple of months with a Nikkei family, a close prewar friend of her husband’s family, who was her husband’s employer. Living there, she felt under a lot of pressure and so began to look for a live-in job. They suggested to her husband that, just like many Issei women in the past, she should live with a Canadian family as a domestic helper and so learn the Canadian way of life. Becoming a domestic servant was the last thing Asako had imagined doing in Canada. Her mother, on receiving this information, thought she should return to Japan. As a newcomer in Canada, however, Asako followed their advice and became a live-in maid for a well-do-to Jewish family in Shaughnessy. The house was “huge” and had five bathrooms. She ate roast beef for dinner and toast for breakfast, all the while longing for Japanese food.

During my earlier encounters with Asako, she had not mentioned these experiences; nor had she commented on how she was treated by Issei or on how she had felt during her early days in Vancouver. Twenty years later, however, she was ready to talk about these things. Many

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36 She said it was more of a demand than a suggestion. That was how some Issei people treated Shin-Issei women. Asako told me how she was, or often treated like “山から来たお猿” (a mountain monkey that does not know the fine things in life) and was “sneered” at by Japanese Canadians.
Japanese Canadians were very unkind to Shin-Issei women and men in the 1960s, and she wondered why they were so spiteful. She told me that Nikkei people were very closed-minded, that they were much more traditional and old fashioned than were the Japanese in Japan. “We Japanese lost the war, but our minds were free at least,” she said, whereas Japanese Canadians had suppressed their feelings for so long. Many Issei felt that their Nisei children, who were born in Canada and knew “Canadian ways,” did not have to go through the unpleasantness experienced by their mothers. Issei thought that Shin-Issei women were postwar immigrant women “who knew nothing of Canadian ways,” and, as such, that they should travel the same road towards “becoming Canadian” as had many Issei women.

Living with a so-called Canadian family for a month and a half did not help Asako learn about the Canadian way of life as the Canadian family for whom she worked had a different lifestyle than that of most Canadians. Also, because she did not converse much with family members, she did not improve her English. She left her job before her term was up, mainly because of a car accident. She told me how delighted she was to be free of the job, despite her broken leg. At the hospital she met a Nisei nurse with whom she became, and has remained, friends.

For the first year or two Asako regretted her decision to come to Canada and she missed things Japanese. Her friends and relatives sent her magazines from Japan, and she read them over and over again. Vancouver’s winter rain and the long dark days depressed her. It was hard to get used to life in Canada. Gradually, she began to make friends with other Japanese mothers who were
undergoing similar experiences. She also visited both the United Church and the Roman Catholic Church, but services were given in English. In 1962 she had her first child, a son, and two years later another son. Four years after her arrival in Canada she found a cheap boat fare back to Japan, so she took her sons, aged one and three, to meet their grandparents. For the first time she really felt that she no longer belonged there and that her “home” was in Canada, even though people in Japan were kind to her.

“I want to go home, I really want to go back,” I kept saying. In my fourth year in Canada I took my two sons to Japan. And then all my dreams of Japan collapsed. Yes, the images of Japan that I had carried with me since I left home . . . Every one of my relatives had her/his life, and we were being invasive. My mother tried her best to welcome us whenever she was free. So, I finally realized that I had to find my own happiness by myself, and where I live.37

In 1966 she had her third child, a girl. For the following ten years she devoted her time to the children while her husband worked as a ship chandler. When her eldest son had problems in kindergarten, she decided that she had better learn English herself and began to take English lessons at the YMCA. She continued doing this for three years. For her second and third child the transition from home to school went smoothly. In our 1976 interview she said that she had doubts about discipline and wondered whether she should impose “her values” (i.e., Japanese values) on her children and send them to Japanese language school. Several years later, however, she was quite happy to inform me that encouraging her children to learn Japanese had been a good idea. She had sent all her children to the Vancouver Japanese Language School on Alexander Street

37 Aya (Nisei) told me of her mother’s experience, that was similar to Asako’s, when her mother returned to Japan with her children (Aya’s elder siblings) for the first time.
twice a week. Both sons were taking Japanese at university and enjoying it, and her daughter, who had had a difficult time with her identity, was gaining confidence by helping ESL students from Japan.

After hearing a talk on the Canadian educational system, Asako decided to move closer to a “better high school” when her eldest son began secondary education. She thought that living in East Vancouver, close to Burnaby, her children would never get to university. However, moving to the west side of Vancouver was beyond their means, and her husband emphasized this point. Yet, caring so much about her children’s future, she decided she had to find a way of moving their residence. So, utilizing her husband’s knowledge of the retail business, she decided to purchase a grocery store and supplement his salary so that they could buy a new house. In the mid-1970s the family moved to a house located in Arbutus Ridge, with a high school and elementary school close by. Asako worked at a corner grocery store on East Hastings while her husband continued his work as a ship’s chandler for a Nikkei-owned company. Her new plan, however, hit an obstacle when her husband became ill with a stomach ulcer. Asako sometimes worked more than twelve hours at the store, and she wondered how she managed during that period of her life. “I managed it because I was in my forties and had enough energy within me.” Her sons, especially the eldest, and her daughter helped her as well. Eventually her husband, recovered from his illness, began to help too. Asako’s side business turned into a family business and, like many prewar Issei, she established a corner grocery store. In the early 1980s she began to enjoy her life again. She had regained control over her own life, even though the business demanded much of her attention. As she expressed it: “ようやく生活も軌道にのり、相手のことを労る余裕でできた” (now my life is on course and I can afford to give more attention to others).

Asako often talked about “going back home” (kaeru) with her husband. Her husband’s family’s business in Japan was flourishing and expanding. Japan was no longer a country
recovering from defeat in the war; rather, it was a place for doing business. Their Japanese relatives had been asking them to come back and join their business. When the entire family went back to attend her father-in-law’s memorial service, however, they soon realized that this was not a realistic idea. Her teenaged children could never cope with the competitive and rigid Japanese educational system. Being away from Japan for such a long time, she had trouble dealing with the intricate and delicate system of interpersonal relationships not only with her relatives but also with their friends. She had to re-learn everything. Besides, her husband preferred to work on his own, even though their business was very small compared to his elder brother’s. Observing the growing popularity of Japanese food in Vancouver, especially the demand for sushi after Expo’86, her husband decided that they should launch a new business. They sold the grocery shop in 1987 and founded a company that supplies fish to the increasing number of Japanese restaurants in Vancouver.

**Present Lifestyles and Future Hopes**

Asako worked four days a week at her company, filling in whenever help was needed. The family business was a great success, supplying restaurants not only in Vancouver but also in Montreal and Toronto. She had over twenty employees from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds:

Right now there are Vietnamese, Chinese . . . two kinds: Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking. And Japanese, of course. We don’t have any Koreans yet but, as you see, it is very international. And I see birds of a feather flock together . . . Japanese with other Japanese workers, Chinese with other Chinese. I think it is due to a common language. People come together so that they can communicate freely, especially when one wants to ask a favour from someone.
Not only was her workplace becoming international but so was her family. Her eldest son, who was married to a Japanese woman several years ago, lived in Japan. At the time of our interview in the fall 1996, she was ready to go to Japan to aid her daughter-in-law during her childbirth. Her second son was married to a Brazilian-Japanese and lived in Greater Vancouver. Even though he and his wife had worked in the family business in the past, they did not remain with the company. Asako indicated that, not having anyone else to take over the business, her husband had been encouraging their daughter to join the company. For her husband, who grew up in a merchant family, doing business was in his bones and he would never retire. Yet they could no longer ignore the company’s future. She could not ask her two sons to abandon their careers and take over the business.

With grown children and a successful family business, Asako was exploring her own interests. Her husband’s hobby was his work, but she had to have a hobby that took her away from the company. At the time of our last interview in 1996, she was a member of Kosumosu, one of the three Tanka clubs in Vancouver. With her mother she began making Tanka ten years ago, and she indicated that she had learned many things while trying to express her thoughts in thirty-one syllables in Japanese. Making Tanka forced her to understand more about Japanese grammar, to acquire the names of wild flowers and plants, to understand history and culture, and to be aware of her surroundings. Her Tanka club had fifteen members, ranging from people in their thirties to people in their eighties. The younger members were her sons’ generation, and their sensibilities were very different from hers. Their ideas fascinated her, and she found them refreshing as they allowed her to think differently about her life.\(^{38}\) Because of having to work at her company, she could not totally immerse herself in Tanka or fully develop her ideas for poems. However, she

\(^{38}\) By blending topics and ideas that Asako had never thought possible to create a Tanka (a 31 syllable Japanese verse) that reflects her thoughts and cross-cultural experiences.
told me that she was beginning to insist upon having her own time:

「ご飯」と言われたら、「お釜の中に入っていますよ。私も働いてきたのよ！」なんていちゃたりして。

When my husband asks me for rice, I would say, "It is in the rice cooker. I am also working, you know," I would say something like that to my husband, you know.

Looking after her mother for two years until her death in 1995, Asako often thought about death and aging. Her mother, after crossing the Pacific Ocean many times over ten years to visit her divided families, finally decided, when she was seventy-nine years old, to immigrate and join her eldest daughter and eldest son. Caring for her mother, Asako observed how Canadian doctors treated terminally ill patients. Her mother was well cared for medically, yet Asako questioned whether her mother was receiving what she wanted. She felt sad that her mother was not being treated in Japan:

When my mother was dying, she was told about her death directly. Even though my mother understood English ... I wondered how she would have felt if she had been told in Japanese the way her Canadian doctor had told her in English ... And I had felt that if he were a Japanese doctor, he would not have said it in the way he did. For a long time I wondered if we had made a mistake, and thought it unfortunate that my mother had to end her life here ... I don’t know how to describe how I felt. I was unhappy with the doctor’s choice of words, yes. He could have communicated with more care and more consideration. We felt he was cold. So, after mother’s death, we were talking for awhile about going back to Japan when our time comes to die.

While Asako’s life was focused on her work, her hobby, and her aging mother, Hana’s life was structured around her youngest son’s weekend visits from residential school. Whenever he came home he always asked for Japanese food, saying, “Gohan” (rice). She said that he asked for
rice “three meals a day never touching bread”; then told me how he missed Japanese food. She tried to make him happy by serving him his favorite Japanese dishes. She took aerobics classes in order to remain fit so that she could look after him. Yet she wondered how long she could keep up with him.

Her son’s weekend visits often conflicted with her own interests (e.g., getting together with her friends or trying to work away from home). Over the years many of her friends stopped phoning because she could rarely accept their invitations. The only friendship she kept was the one with her quilting classmates. After her husband’s retirement several years ago she tried to travel a little, but it did not work as her husband complained about being away from home. Her husband seemed to be happy just staying at home, but she was not. Wanting to work outside the home to improve her English, she took flower arrangement classes at night (Western bouquet making) for two years. However, making bouquets for special occasions conflicted with her valuable time with her youngest child. Not being able to realize her dream, she started making decorations for Christmas and gave them away to her friends. A daughter-in-law suggested she start a business either making bouquets or catering so that she could work from home. So far she has not followed this suggestion, even though she still wants to do the things she had envisioned doing before she left Japan: “I might be searching for my broken dreams in vain, but I don’t want to end my life like this.”

Hana told me how her grown children began to appreciate things Japanese, things they had rejected when they were young. These things included not only food but also the Japanese aesthetic “wabi” and “sabi.” However, her eldest son continued to feel disadvantaged because

39 Here Hana used these words for muted, subtle colour. Sabi and wabi means “richness in poverty and beauty in simplicity.” They express the spirit of Chanoyu stressed by the great tea masters, Takeno Joo (1502-1555) and Sen-no-Rikyu (1522-1591). Elegant/quiet simplicity. This refers to a simple, austere type of beauty and is key to the appreciation of the tea ceremony and
of his cultural background. He often complained about his socialization, about his mother saying: "Be modest. Don’t do anything shameful in public." He felt that he could not act as openly as his Canadian friends. Hana pointed out that part of the problem could be his disposition and the fact that, as the eldest child, he was always asked to look after his siblings. Her other children were quite different from him, even though they still had Japanese sensitivities.

Two of her sons were married, and her daughter lived with a partner, a hakujin. Hana hoped her children would marry someone who could speak Japanese so that she could communicate with him or her. Her second son married a non-Japanese Canadian and her eldest son married a Sansei woman:

上の子は日本人、だけど三世だからあまり日本語しゃべらないんですよ。だけど言っている事は耳で日本語を聞いてもあるくらいですかね。そして考えても、やっぱり遠慮するって、そういうところあるみたいなですね。

My eldest son married a Japanese, but she is Sansei who does not speak much Japanese. But she understands what she hears, hearing Japanese at home. And the way she thinks, I think she does have a sense of enryo, of being modest.

Adding to Hana’s comments, her husband described his daughter-in-law as more “Japanese” than his own daughter with regard to respecting the elderly and paying regular memorial visits to family graves. Hana thought her Sansei daughter-in-law was “Japanese” in the way that she valued the family and treated visitors (even very distant relatives) from Japan, taking them around the city then giving an omiyage (souvenir) upon their departure. This was what her Nisei parents had done in the past.

Hana’s second son married his high school sweetheart, a non-Japanese Canadian. They had various forms of Japanese traditional poetry.

40 “恥ずかしい事しちゃいけない”ってよく言ったからでしょう” “Don’t do anything shameful” I often told them.
two children and often visited Hana, staying with her even though the daughter-in-law’s parents lived nearby. Hana loved looking after her grandchildren, and whenever her daughter-in-law wished, she drove down to Seattle to do so. However, Hana pointed out that her daughter-in-law, although a very nice person, never asked her to babysit as “a favour,” nor did she ever really thank her. She always said that she wanted “to let” her mother-in-law look after the children, “to give her a chance” to do so. This she found a little odd and frustrating.

Hana had been living in Canada for almost four decades, yet Canada still did not feel quite like home to her. Nor, for that matter, did Japan:

Y: はい。家にかえったら同じ顔でしょ。もっとします。そして、言葉も「あの単語はなんだろう」、こういったら発音が違うんじゃないかっていうの考えてますでしょ。ここじゃいつも考えている。...いつまでも何かとその家にいるって感じ。えー。だから「日本に遊びに行く」っていうんじゃなくて「日本に帰る」って感じ。だけど日本に帰ったらまた違っているでしょう。だからまた直ぐこっちに帰って来たいんです。だから浮草みたいな感じです。孫たちができてきたならやっぱりカナダに落ち着くかなんて感じてきた。はい。

H: いつもここにいると気はほっているって感じですよね。
Y: あります？
H: はい。家にかえったら同じ顔でしょ。もっとします。そして、言葉も「あの単語はなんだろう」、こういったら発音が違うんじゃないかっていうの考えてますでしょ。ここじゃいつも考えている。...いつまでも何かとその家にいるって感じ。えー。だから「日本に遊びに行く」っていうんじゃなくて「日本に帰る」って感じ。だけど日本に帰ったらまた違っているでしょう。だからまた直ぐこっちに帰って来たいんです。だから浮草みたいな感じです。孫たちができてきたならやっぱカナダに落ち着くかなんて感じてきた。はい。

H: I feel I’m on guard all the time.
Y: Do you?
M: Yes, once I’m home, I see the same faces and I feel at home and can relax. And as for the language, I always wonder about English vocabulary and worry about my pronunciation. Here in this country, I am always conscious, always thinking... I feel like I’m in somebody else’s house. So for me, it’s not “I go to Japan to visit” but “I return to Japan.” Yet when I am in Japan, it’s different from what I thought it would be and and I want to return to Canada. Yes, I feel like a floating weed. When I became a grandmother, finally I began to think, “Am I going to settle in Canada?” Yes, I now think that is possible.

Hana still felt she “had to do” something “worthwhile” so that her life in Canada would not be wasted. The recent death of her mother did not result in her focusing on death and aging; instead, she wondered often why she had hidden the reality of her Canadian experience from her mother. Was it to protect her mother or to avoid humiliation? She told me that her simple pride could not allow her to admit to and face the reality of her life, especially after envious girlfriends sent her off telling her “how lucky” she was to go to America and after her boss had warned her to be careful
when deciding on her marriage partner since she was going to a faraway place and did not know much about her future husband. She asked me whether there were any Shin-Issei success stories. At our last encounter in March 1997, news about the cloned sheep Dolly came up in our conversation. She thought having a double of herself was a good idea. She told me that if she had a clone, then she could tell it "everything" — all her troubles, sufferings, and pains — and not trouble anybody else. Her daughter, with whom she had been sharing her burden recently, had apparently told her not to confide in her too much because she herself had enough to worry about.

When I asked Taeko about her present situation, she told me about her daughters. The eldest daughter was married to a German Canadian, had two children (twelve and ten years old), and was living in Calgary, Alberta. Her younger daughters lived in Greater Vancouver and were also married. One was working as a coordinator for marketing services, and the other was an engineer. All three daughters were actively pursuing their careers. Taeko told me how she used to encourage them to pursue their careers, saying otoko ni makeruna "男に負けるなと言ったからでしょう" (Don’t be beaten by guys). She herself had wanted to become a doctor but, due to her circumstances, could not pursue that dream. She was very proud of her daughters’ achievements.

At the time of the 1996 interview, Taeko’s life was structured around looking after her youngest daughter’s baby. When she was asked by her daughter to help care for her grandson — a temporary arrangement — she was happy to comply until her grandson was old enough to go to daycare. Yet this temporary arrangement had become semi-permanent. Taeko had been telling her daughter that early contact was very important and that she should look after her own son early on. Yet her daughter preferred to keep working since her parents were doing a “fantastic job” looking after her son. Taeko was able to offer her grandson the “proper care” that she could not offer to her own daughters. She told me how she was trying “her best” to care for her grandson.
However, occasionally Taeko feels conflicted about whether to continue looking after her grandson until he is three\textsuperscript{41} or to get back to her life.\textsuperscript{42} Over the past several years she had been enjoying her quilting classes and other volunteer work. But she had had to stop these activities in order to baby-sit her grandson. Caring for her grandson for another couple of years would mean that she had to put all her own interests on hold. Her husband told her that they should continue so long as they could offer the care. She told me that they were still “Japanese” and that they could never say “no” to their daughter’s request. Her association with Canadian elders who were looking after their grandchildren began to increase. Simple greetings became friendlier, and they now often exchanged ideas for caring for the young. She also pointed out that the numbers of people who were looking after their grandchildren were increasing recently as the number of their daughters in the workforce increased.

Taeko spoke Japanese to her grandson, and he began to utter some Japanese words when he was fourteen months old. One day a bank teller asked her what language she was speaking to her grandson and told her that she was doing “a good thing” for him. Unlike in the mid-1970s, in the mid-1990s Canadians believed that retaining one’s heritage language was a positive thing. In the early 1960s she used to hesitate to speak Japanese in public places; she never dreamed of the recent boom in “sushi and Japanese.”

A decade and a half younger than the other Shin-Issei women of the study, Yoko’s life was still centered around her three teenage children.

\textsuperscript{41} She quoted an old Japanese saying, \textit{mitsugo no tamashii hyakumade} 三つ子の魂百まで (the first three years of one’s life are important because they influence the rest of it).

\textsuperscript{42} In the 1976 interview, her dream when her children grew up, was selling the house and moving into an apartment so that she and her husband could travel to Europe and enjoy their lives.
Recently our children stopped doing things with us, so my husband would go fishing with his friends. My eldest daughter goes out with her friends and my second daughter also occasionally goes out with hers. So me and my son remain at home. But my son has quite a number of friends, and I have to drive him around. He cannot always visit a friend’s place so sometimes his friends come here. Then I have to make lunch for them. I have a mission I take my housewife job seriously... I think my weekends are usually taken up by my children.

With her children getting older and becoming more independent, Yoko and her husband decided to cultivate a hobby so that they could enjoy their time together. They chose dance lessons since both of them loved to dance. But it lasted for only three months. She joked that their chosen hobby became a cause of trouble since they often argued and accused each other of mistakes, simple things such as stepping on each others’ toes or not leading the right way. A fun hobby became so unpleasant that they decided to go back to their own routine. Being a devoted recreational fisherman, her husband returned to his fishing and Yoko went back to playing tennis with her friends.

She took up tennis several years ago when she felt isolated from her friends. Many of her close friends had returned to work while she remained at home being a “professional” housewife, or a sengyo shufu. She made this choice when her son started Grade 1. She preferred to stay at home doing housekeeping and felt that she was lucky because she did not have to work. She had never found housekeeping either boring or trivial, as did some of her friends. Not able to be with her friends, she decided to take up handicraft classes and tried to create a new circle of friends. This lasted for a couple of years, until her new hobby became too hard on her eyes. She decided that she needed to try something that was less hard on her eyes, and took up tennis. She plays three times a week, one group lesson and two free plays. Amazingly enough, she points out her
enthusiasm has not decreased.

Living in Richmond, which is more than “40 percent Chinese,” Yoko noted that it is more important to know Chinese than, say French. Several Japanese families live in the same neighbourhood, and she is able to carry on conversations in Japanese. She answered my phone call in Japanese: moshi moshi (hello). A majority of her friends were Japanese -- postwar immigrants and some overseas Japanese business people. Her husband has a Canadian friend from his previous company with whom he is very close, and whom they visit. Although she knew friends who had relatives who were Japanese Canadians or who had married Japanese Canadians, and although she heard of their hardships, her direct association with Nikkei was minimal. She had heard that there was a Nikkei family in her neighbourhood, but so far she had not tried to meet them.

Yoko was the only Shin-Issei who divided postwar immigrants into two groups: those who left Japan at the beginning of Japan’s economic growth in the 1970s and those who left Japan after its decline in the mid- to late 1980s.

People who came more than ten years later than us are different ... They say everything is “Cheap, cheap.” Some say that they might go back to Japan because they left some business behind. Or some would say that they came here because of their children’s English, an important language for their future ... For them, one dollar is less than 100 yen. We knew when one dollar was 300 Yen, and Osaka Expo [1970], right? A decade ago, yes.

She commented on visitors from Japan. She found many of them quite immature in their behaviour, even though they were not young. According to Yoko (and her friends), they often “left their common sense at Narita Airport.” Because Vancouver is such a beautiful city, she and many of her friends received numerous visitors from Japan during the summer. Yoko told me
that every September they would sit over their coffee and exchange stories about their exhausting experiences with their unappreciative guests. On rare occasions they received nice guests who reminded them of the “good old days” in Japan when people were modest and considerate.

When her children were young, Yoko had dreams for their future, but as they got older her dreams became more realistic. She wished they could make a decent average living (hitonami) and hoped they would not have to depend upon welfare. For her two daughters she wished the following:

娘たちはカナダだから一生ずくてできる仕事をみつけてって言ってるんだけど、子供はママみたいに何もしない人になるとか言うちゃうの、ウーン、どうなんだろう。

My daughters are Canadians so I tell them to find some work that they could continue throughout their lives. But they say, “We want to be just like you, mom, a person who doesn’t do anything.” Well, I really don’t know.

During the interview she often mentioned how she loved to be at home and enjoyed cooking for her family, that she was a “professional” housewife. Her cooking reminded me of our first interview twenty years earlier, when she served me a delicious Japanese dish. When I mentioned this, she replied with a big bright smile, saying that her cooking repertoire had expanded as her children liked Western dishes. She always tried to be home when her children returned from school so that she could prepare snacks for them.

Just before three o’clock, Yoko excused herself to unlock the front door for her children: “When I am at home I always keep the door unlocked for them.” When her second daughter came in, Yoko made a cheerful cry: Okaerinasai! (welcome home). She introduced me to her daughter, and then asked her whether she would like a snack. For a moment I felt as though I was in Japan.

43 She used the term hansei kai (a meeting whose purpose is to review past activities).
B: Shin-Nisei Women (Children of Postwar Immigrant Women)

Of the four Shin-Nisei women (Martha b. 1962; Catherine b. 1963; Nancy b. 1966; Haruko b. 1966) whom I interviewed, I included a woman who came to Canada with her family in 1969 when she was seven. Her parents were Shin-Issei and she had a four-year-old sister. The other three women were born in Vancouver in the early to mid-1960s, daughters of Kika-Nisei fathers who returned to their birthplace (Canada) in the early 1950s (and then returned to Japan in the late 1950s to find wives, a very similar pattern to that of prewar Issei men) and Japanese mothers who came to Canada in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. This group was the most cohesive in terms of age, the largest age differences being only four years. At the time of the interviews in 1996 and 1997, one was married and was expecting her first child; one was divorced; and the other two were living with their partners. All of them were in the workforce.

As we have seen with the Nisei and the Sansei women, adolescence is difficult for each generation; yet for the Shin-Nisei it was particularly difficult. Three of the women told me of the problems they had encountered growing up in Vancouver in the late 1970s to mid-1980s. Just like the Nisei women, two Shin-Nisei women were sent to the Vancouver Japanese Language School on Alexander Street; one continued until she was in Grade 10, but the other quit when she was in elementary school (although once she was in high school she returned on her own volition). One woman had a couple of years of Japanese lessons from a Japanese teacher who lived in her neighbourhood.

What surprised me the most was the racism, direct and indirect, that these women experienced. Shin-Nisei women told me that they had just recently realized its impact as they reflected upon their past. What they sensed was that, all their lives, they had been categorized and stereotyped according to race. One woman told me that Main Street, which divides Vancouver into east and west, was not the city's only dividing line. She told me that in the minds of many Vancouverites
there were two Vancouvers: Eastside and Westside, which are divided by Cambie Street and are often stereotyped according to class and race (the former being lower-class and non-White, the latter being middle class to upper class and White).44 The women’s experiences of racism during their adolescence were diverse and often included name calling. They all said that this had now changed due to the fact that the composition of Vancouver had shifted over the past decade and now both sides of Vancouver are home to many Asian immigrants.

**Encounter**

One of the Shin-Nisei women was an acquaintance of mine from the Japanese Canadian community, and she introduced me to the other Shin-Nisei women. Her friends graciously accepted my request to interview them.45 At the beginning of our interview one woman described how she felt about people conducting research in the Nikkei community, and she told me how relieved she was that “somebody of Japanese descent” was doing the research.

> Usually, other people, *Hakujin* (White) people, come to the community and grill people and they don’t have a real connection to it. That makes lots of people uneasy... You feel as though you are a specimen, yeah. They don’t understand certain Japanese things. It’s very complex, you know.

*(Martha)*

This woman was a very cooperative and rather active interviewee. Unlike many Shin-Issei women - - who often began their narratives with statements such as, “You will be asking me the questions, right?” or “If I get side-tracked, please tell me” - - she took the floor right away. The other women were daughters of Shin-Issei women who had been the subjects of my mid-1970s

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44 Her comment reminded me of a Sansei woman who told me that moving into Richmond had freed her from the restriction of class: “See, everybody is new here.”

45 Later, I found out that one woman who introduced me to her mother, was the daughter of a Shin-Issei woman whom I had interviewed in my previous study.
research. One was introduced by her mother upon my request and eventually agreed to participate after reading a partial life history of her mother (which I had written earlier) and talking to me in person. Another was introduced through a Shin-Nisei friend independently.

The Early Days: Family and Community

Martha, the daughter of postwar independent immigrant (gijutsu imin) parents, settled in the Marpole area at the south end of Granville Street. She was the eldest and had two younger siblings: a sister who came to Canada when she was four and a brother born in Canada. There were not many Nikkei living in the neighbourhood, but she did remember that there was one other Nikkei family living nearby. She told me there were a few other Japanese Canadian children in her elementary school. She vividly recalled being a first grader right after her arrival in Canada in 1969.

There was no ESL [English as a Second Language]. It's like you go to class, you have to learn to say “I have to go to bathroom,” or you end up peeing in your pants. It was that brutal, you know. And you just have to stick out the class. You just kind of sat there not knowing what was going on . . . Really weird. It was like being in a dream because I did not understand what people were saying, you know.

She did not forget to add that she was put one year behind due to her lack of English, even though she was seven, the age for Grade 2, and this resulted in her being older than the rest of her classmates. Being immersed in English, however, she learned the language quickly. Within six months she acquired enough English to comfortably communicate, and by the time she advanced to Grade 2, she was able to speak and understand English with little trouble. She told me that, in retrospect, even though it was difficult in the beginning she thought that not being in an ESL class forced her to learn English quickly and so worked to her advantage. She also pointed out that many children she meets now are suffering because there are too many students in their ESL
classes who speak their native language and so they are having a hard time learning English.

Nonetheless, sitting in the classroom for eight hours a day without really knowing what was happening would be very exhausting and stressful for anyone, never mind a seven-year-old child. Martha remembered that she often told her mother that Canada was “not her home.” She would say, “I have to go home,” but of course this never happened. The decision to immigrate to Canada was her father’s. She told me that, ever since, for health reasons, he had had to give up his hard-earned scholarship to study engineering in the United States, he had wanted to come to America. And so her family “ended up in Canada” even though her mother did not speak English and would have much preferred to stay in Japan. As soon as she began to speak English, her mother asked her to attend the Vancouver Japanese Language School (VJLS) on Alexander Street:

> It’s funny . . . yeah, I started speaking English, then my mother said, “Do you want to go to the Japanese Language School?” [laughs] I was too tired and overwhelmed. Eight hours hard work and where am I, you know. It’s quite shocking. I said, “No, I really don’t want to go,” and she said, “That’s fine.” So I did not go to Vanvcouver Japanese Language School. I kind of regret it now, but at that time it was too much.

Martha remembered that her early life in Canada was very stressful because, besides having to learn English, her father, who was trained as a civil engineer, could not always find work. He often worked on short-term jobs, as did many of his contemporaries (Ujimoto 1973). For several years he worked in Edmonton while his family remained in Vancouver. She mentioned that at one point her father thought about moving to Toronto, where there were more job opportunities. However, this time his family objected and the family remained in Vancouver. In our later

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46 Her younger brother, who was born in Canada, went to the VJLS for five years.

47 In the mid-1970s Toronto was flourishing, and it had the largest Japanese Canadian population in Canada. There was a well established infrastructure in Ontario because, during the postwar years, the Issei and Nisei worked so hard to establish it. Nipponia Home, a Japanese senior citizens’ residence, was built by Yasutaro Yamaga in 1958 in Beamsville, Ontario near St. Catherines. And the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre was built in 1963 in North York, Ontario.
conversations, Martha indicated that her mother's experience in Canada was quite similar to that of prewar Issei women. And Martha, the eldest child, quickly became the family interpreter when her father was away.

My Dad did everything. Then, as soon as I learned English, I have to do it all. Almost, not quite but . . . "Oh, Mom, I'm sick." But dad wasn't there to write a letter, so I wrote it. "Dear Mrs. Stewart . . ." [laughs] Just little things, like that . . . yeah. That's why I got really tired and burnt out . . . trying to do things for people.

In the late 1960s there were no social service organizations to help the Shin-Issei, and they were left to cope with their new life in Canada. They turned to the Nisei, who responded to their needs, functioned as interpreters, and eased their hardships. Martha did not know how her father met the Nisei who were so kind to her family, but she especially remembered the kindness of one older man. She had no idea where or how her father met him. She also remembered that, when they arrived in Vancouver, her parents put her and her younger sister in a baton twirling class, offered by the Vancouver Buddhist Church. It was through this church that her family became acquainted with many Japanese people in Vancouver. Martha still remembers marching in the Pacific National Exhibition parade with her classmates.

Catherine was born in Vancouver in 1963, the eldest child of a Kika-Nisei father and Japanese mother. They lived near the Vancouver Japanese Language School on Alexander Street. This is how she began her narrative:

My mother is from Japan. She immigrated to Canada in 1960, and my father was born in

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48 In the early 1970s, there were some social service organizations that assisted Japanese immigrants. Tonari Gumi: Japanese Community Volunteers' Association was founded in 1973 and Language Aid in 1972. However, many people did not know of their existence since, generally, Japanese Canadians felt that receiving government funding was shameful. It did not seem to matter that these were non-profit organizations offering social services for the community. At the beginning, the clients of these organizations were mostly widows and widowers, or unmarried older Issei men who lived in the area.
Vancouver in 1932. However, he was sent back to Japan in 1936 or 1937 and did not return to Canada until 1950. To return to this birthplace he had to be sponsored by his father, who was in Canada during the war . . . Then, subsequently, he sponsored his brother and sister to return to Canada, one by one.

She went on to tell me how her father, after bringing his siblings back to Canada (except for the eldest brother, who remained in Japan), went back to Japan in 1958 to find a bride. His matchmaker introduced him to a number of potential brides. Catherine’s parents, who were from Tottori Prefecture, met and married a year later:

I guess both sides agreed to meet, and they met in 1959. They went out three times, then they were married and came to Canada in 1960.

After living in various rental accommodations, in 1967 the family moved into a house they had purchased near the Pacific National Exhibition Park. By that time she had a brother and sister.

That is essentially the neighbourhood I grew up in, although we moved from that house in 1978. We moved to another house, four blocks away. Just yesterday I was at the Eaton Street house because my mother and father still own it . . . Most of my childhood memories, all of my childhood memories, are of friends in that area.

The neighbourhood was very multi-ethnic, and she told me that she had friends from various ethnic backgrounds: “one Chinese Irish friend, one Canadian with some Native blood in her, a Ukrainian Canadian, and quite a few Italian Canadians.” Although they were not in contact as much as they used to be, Catherine still kept in touch with her childhood friends from kindergarten and elementary school days, describing them as “a bunch of interesting friends.”

For whatever reason, they are the group that I continue to keep in contact with. We’ve all gone our separate ways, of course. We haven’t lost complete contact . . . There is a little tie that makes us, it really does not make sense, but it’s emotional ties.

Catherine’s neighbourhood was blue-collar, and there were no professionals living near them. Her father recently retired from a sawmill owned by an Indo-Canadian family, where he had worked alongside Indo-Canadian workers for twenty-five years. Her mother has been a seasonal worker
at a cannery for many years. Catherine thought that her mother intended to keep working there until her retirement since she enjoyed her time away from home and having money of her own.

At home Catherine spoke Japanese to her mother and English to her father. Just like the Nisei women I interviewed earlier, she was sent to the Vancouver Japanese Language School from the time she went to kindergarten.

C: We were instructed to go, so there was no choice. Did I feel strongly that I want to leave? I don't know. I don't think any of us strongly rebelled against going. It was fun . . . There wasn't much instruction going on. The instruction was quite poor, if you think what language instruction should be. But I thought it was fun. I didn't find her [mother] absolutely demanding, no. We had three other kids who went; we rode the same bus together.

Y: How old were you?
C: Five or six. I remember they [her parents] taught me how to take a bus. Taking a bus at six years old; I don't think parents would do that anymore. Different times. We took the bus on our own and would get a ride in the winter time.

Catherine told me how she enjoyed the social part of the language school and how she still keeps in touch with her classmates. Since her mother was involved with the Vancouver Japanese United Church and most of her friends were Shin-Issei, she had very little contact with prewar Nikkei when she grew up. She also mentioned that her family did not have much contact with her relatives in Canada.

Nancy, the youngest of three siblings, was born in Vancouver in 1966 to a Kika-Nisei father and Japanese mother who immigrated to Canada in 1961. Until she was in Grade 4, the family lived in East Vancouver, between Boundary Road and Cassiar Street, close to Pacific National Exhibition Park. In the mid-1970s her family moved to the west side of Vancouver, the Arbutus Ridge area, where there was “a good high school.” They made this move because her mother was concerned about her children’s future and “really wanted” them to go to university. Nancy spoke of how this move affected her:
N: That was a very difficult move. Yeah, it was . . . I think because it was, uh, East Vancouver and West Vancouver. The West side was really different, in terms of class, anyway.

Y: So how was it different?

N: I was in Grade 4. I remember, just feeling . . . a natural kind of transition among children who go through, but I remember . . . for the first time I was having a lot of anxiety about my race. Because when I was in the East side, it tended to be more multicultural . . . That may have changed by now, but at that time, in 1973, or maybe even later in 1975 . . . So I found that it really was kind of shocking, and that was something I started to struggle with.

Before the move, she was not aware of “race.” At least she did not have to think about it since her best friend was a South Asian boy and many of her friends were Asians from a mix of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. There were lots of First Nations children as well. In contrast, her new environment on the West side was very White. She said that her elder brothers also had suffered from the transition but that each of them adjusted to it differently. They seemed to have as much problem as Nancy. There were not many Asians in her elementary school, although there was one Japanese girl. In the 1970s “there were not many Asians in the area.” She told me that her cousin’s experiences would be quite different from hers since the Vancouver population had now shifted and contained a large number of Asians.

The language used in Nancy’s home was always Japanese. She told me that sometimes her knowledge of English became “a power thing.” She realized that, when she was in her mid-twenties, she used her knowledge of English against her mother. She now felt guilty about this.

Yeah, at home I spoke Japanese to my parents until I would get into a really big fight. Then a lot of times I would start speaking English. This was a power thing; I felt more powerful speaking English . . . There were a lot of times that I used it against my parents, especially to my mother. Because when we had struggles, I used English as a way to get at her. I would. Yeah, sometimes it would be really awful. It would be like, she would make fun of something I say in Japanese and I would say what she said in English. It was really awful . . . I discouraged her from speaking English because I teased her a lot.

When I asked her when this behaviour started, she replied.

I think it started pretty early. I think it did, because I probably got a lot better speaking English than my mom pretty early. Yeah. Because I learned it every day at school. I can
see it with children of immigrant parents all the time. They are little, little, this little, and making fun of their parents' English. When I see them I think, "Oh boy, I was doing the same thing at that age." Sure, I remember. Because my mom would always say to her friends, "Nancy always makes fun of my English." You know . . . And I did. I would make fun of her English, and I think that was also, sometimes a reflection of people who made fun of my English too. Because my English was . . . there were just all these different levels. Who is the best in English? I wasn't at the top, but I knew I was better than my mother, so . . . it happens to me too, yeah.

Language was not the only cause of conflict with her mother. Although Nancy was close to her mother she was very rebellious. She felt that her mother was harder on her than her brothers, and she sometimes felt that her mother was sexist because she treated her differently than she treated the boys.

Say, for example, my mom would say, "Get this for your Dad." Then I would ask her, "Why don't you ask my brother? He is right there." Then my mom would say, "That's what girls do." And I would say, "No!" Then we would fight about it. Then, she would say, "That's Canadian." And I would say, "That's not Canadian, that's just not fair." You know . . . I think it was really difficult for her because she was treated that way, and you know, she had to abide by those rules. And suddenly I am not accepting them. So I'm sure, it was very frustrating for her. She was so law-abiding with her mother. She followed her mother's rules quite well. Yeah, she was the oldest daughter.

Haruko was born in Vancouver in 1966 and grew up in the Little Mountain area, near Main Street and 26th Avenue. Her father was a Kika-Nisei and her mother was a Japanese who immigrated to Canada in 1959. She did not remember which prefecture her parents were from, but she told me that her father was born in Alberta, in a place called Mayoto, where her paternal grandfather had a farm. He returned to Japan as a five-year-old child when the family went there prior to the Second World War. She told me how difficult it was for her father to return to Canada in the early 1950s. Her father wanted to return to Canada because he felt that he did not belong in Japan. She said that he did not think like a "typical Japanese." When I asked her how a "typical Japanese" thinks, she laughingly replied: "You know what I mean! He doesn't. He is very
Haruko spoke to me of her early days:

I have two older brothers and one younger brother... I went to elementary school, uh, near King Edward and Main Street, so it was a working-class neighbourhood. There were lots of ESL kids, old Chinese immigrants, Germans, Italians, Portuguese, very, very mosaic. Maybe, there was one other, or two other, Japanese Canadian kids in my school... It wasn’t sealed white, you know. Very, very mosaic.

Yet, her multiracial schoolmates did not allow her to feel comfortable eating her favourite Japanese lunch, which her mother had lovingly made for her.

When I was in elementary school, my mom made *Onigiri* [rice balls] for me with *furikake* [seasoned powder] and everything. I loved them. I always loved them. She would put it in my lunch, but I was so embarrassed. Now, sushi is so trendy, but in 1972, it was something else, right? People would say “What are you eating? That’s ugh!” right? So I come home and told my Mom that no one likes me having *Onigiri* in my lunch. So I got peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Yeah, I wanted to be just like everyone else.

Looking back at her childhood experiences, she thought how very “stupid” it was that her social environment made her feel so insecure that she could not eat her favourite lunch. She then told me about her mother, who is a very good cook (she not only cooks wonderful Japanese food but also many other ethnic foods). Throughout our conversation she insisted that her mother’s experiences were far more interesting than hers and that I should interview her mother rather than her.50

Coming over to a foreign country not speaking any of the languages and raising a family, and everyday things, like paying bills. That’s pretty amazing, for someone to do that. Because -- Canada was so far away in 1959. I’m very impressed. She came all the way... Coming to a foreign country, not a single soul, you don’t know anyone except your husband.

Haruko mentioned how her mother often told her that a woman should not be separated from her

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49 Just like many Kika-Nisei, he returned to Japan to look for a bride in the late 1950s and met her mother through a match-maker, and returned to Canada in 1959.

50 Many Nisei women expressed the same feeling that their lives were not as interesting as their mothers.
family. Her mother had no family to depend on in Canada, and she struggled to survive. She repeatedly told me how impressed she was that her mother was able to learn to read and speak English on her own. Her mother would often tell Haruko that she would never let her go so far away. She was delighted when she first met her relatives in Japan. Here in Canada she had only her mother, father, and brothers; but in Japan she had grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins.

Haruko was young when she heard her mother’s stories about the difficulties she had experienced in her life. Indeed, Haruko was her mother’s confidante:

H: Because I am the only daughter, she talked to me a lot, ever since I was a little kid. She would tell me all her problems. Everything! Whether I wanted to hear or not.
Y: In your teens?
H: Ever since I was young, elementary school to now, you know. Yeah. I don’t know it’s mezurashii (uncommon)? Do you talk to your daughter everything?
Y: Not everything.
H: You talk to your husband, probably.

Then she added that her mother began to talk even more after her younger brother, who was several years her junior, was diagnosed as being mentally challenged. Recognizing her mother’s difficulties, she became a self-disciplined child. Two different languages were spoken at home. Haruko spoke Japanese to her mother until she began elementary school, then switched to English while her mother continued to speak to her in Japanese. This is how they communicate to this day. She mentioned that her parents tried very hard to send her older brothers to the Vancouver Japanese Language School, but failed. With a laugh, she said, “Girls are easier to control.” She herself had taken a few years of Japanese lessons from a Japanese woman who lived close by. She was interested in knowing which language I speak to my daughter and my husband.51

51 Haruko asked me more about myself and my family than did any other interviewee.
Youth and Adulthood

Haruko chose to go to a different high school than the one attended by her brothers. She decided that she wanted to attend Eric Hamber Secondary. At that time many of her friends were Chinese and Korean, and they were encouraged by their parents to attend schools with good academic reputations. She told me that there were many very wealthy students at her school:

H: There were lots of Asian kids there. I think it was one-third Asian, one-third Jewish, one-third just everything else.
Y: Jewish?
H: Yeah, it was a big Jewish neighbourhood, or whatever that area was.

When Haruko was young she felt insecure about everything, and in her teens she felt self-conscious about “being different.” She then added that times had really changed because now being different is emphasized and even encouraged. When she was in high school in the late 1970s to the mid-1980s that was not the case.

I think in high school, you have to look like everybody else, right? And you have to assimilate as much as possible. You don’t want to be more Japanese, or more Chinese, or more East Indian, or whatever, than anybody else. You just want to assimilate. So, I think for a while there was a sense of, “Oh, I am not really Japanese,” you know, that kind of terrible attitude when you are ashamed of who you are. You don’t like your parents, and every kid would do it. You just want to be like everyone else.

In 1984 she graduated from high school and continued her studies at a junior college. Working as a clerk in an office upon graduation from college, Haruko felt that her life was running quite smoothly. Then, when she was twenty-one years old, her boyfriend was killed in a skiing accident. She told me how hard it was for someone who had never thought about mortality to suddenly face the death of a loved one. For the first time, she began to examine her life. She decided to go back to school and to immerse herself in work. For three years she studied graphic design at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. It was a very hard and demanding three years, but it was very gratifying to complete the program. This was another “milestone” in her
life. Since then she has been freelancing while looking for employment at a suitable company. It has been five years since she formed her own company (in our recent telephone conversation in 2002, Haruko was still freelancing). Even though she still searches for a job as a graphic designer, her “unique” thinking father has been telling her that “the only security in the world is to work on your own” and has been encouraging her to be independent.

After three years of hard work, she went to Japan for a month with her mother. It was her third visit to Japan, and she described it as follows:

H: Very fascinating place but I don’t know if I can live there.
Y: Do you find you are a part of it?
H: No, no, I don’t think so. I don’t know, but they look at me and they realize that I’m not from Japan. I look like a *gaijin* [foreigner], or feel like a *gaijin*? [laughs] You know? She [her mother] feels the same way. She lived here so long that she does not fit there. You know, a typical Japanese lady would be made-up very neatly, hair and everything. Everything is so proper and neat, you know . . . Everyone is very clean and proper looking. So, she doesn’t look like one of them, I think so, yeah.

She then asked me whether I feel “the pressure to conform” when I go back to Japan and asked me how long I have been living in Canada. When I told her that I have lived more than half of my life away from Japan, she posed yet more question: she asked me why I left, whether it was just to “get out of Japan” or “for schooling.” I replied it was both, and shared my reasons for leaving.

High school days are hard for everyone, but for Nancy they were the hardest days of her life. She tried hard to fit in but was unable to do so. She speculated that one of the reasons why she craved Japanese things is that she might well be trying to regain what she had rejected during that period in her life.

N: Even to this day, I really don’t have that many fond memories of high school. My high school years were the, I should say, hardest . . . I really felt very isolated. I felt a lot, I really felt lot of racism at that time . . . I did.
Y: From your friends?
N: Just from people in my grade, you know, those social groups you form . . . you have
those classes - - lots of them were based on who had money, but it was based a lot, a lot on race. A lot of my friends, I would say 90 per cent of my friends, were Asians in a school where it was only 5 per cent Asian. We were not considered to be, you know, the top of the social circle, yeah. In terms of, like dating, social things, I really felt I had a hard time.

Y: You mentioned racism. Was it open?
N: It was open, there was name calling . . . No one used “Jap” because there weren’t enough of us. That I realized. I was called “Chink.”52 You know it came to a point where it hurts me just as much. “Jap” doesn’t even hurt me because no one used it against me because it was not enough of us around. But “Chink” was used.

She told me how often she was mistaken for her Chinese girlfriend, even though they looked very different. Her Asian face made her both visible and invisible. She told me her high school teachers used to call out her friend’s name and point at her rather than at her friend. She told me how this made her feel:

I just remember that was kind of outrageous that people would always think we look the same, yeah, yeah. All Asians looked alike, a very common stereotype . . . There weren’t many of us so it wasn’t hard to tell us apart, really. Yeah, it did happen and . . . I felt really invisible.

It was not like my teachers didn’t like me, I think. Lots of times I was favoured by teachers because I was quiet, I did my homework, and things like that. But it was like, I was invisible, you know. I did my homework and I was quiet, and they called me some other name, things like that. That I found very difficult.

Many of Nancy’s Asian friends had very similar experiences. Asians all “looked the same” and White people often got “confused,” could (or would) not tell them apart. There were so many class photos in which she looked unhappy. Those pictures showed how different she looked from her classmates.

I wished I weren’t Asian. I remember feeling that a lot, yeah. I didn’t like the colour of my hair, the colour of my skin, and the shape of my body.

52 The term “Chink” reminded me of the time when I saw the graffiti “Chink” on a bench in Jericho Park many years ago. I felt it was completely out of place. After hearing what Nancy told me, however, I understood what it represented.
Even though Nancy did not like her appearance, she never fooled herself into thinking she was White, and she felt she was better off than one of her Chinese Canadian friends who lived “her whole life as if she was a White person” and who has only recently accepted herself as Chinese. Nancy struggled with her ethnicity, but at least she knew she was Japanese. She had her mother and her Asian friends to talk to. Her mother was her role model, yet, given all the media images with which she was being bombarded, this was not enough. She told me that going to Japan helped her to fill in what was missing in her Canadian environment.

My parents sent me to Japan in the summer. That really helped me. I think it made me feel whole. It did. So I came back and it took me a really long time to get used to this culture again. For a long time, I felt like I wanted to live in Japan. Because it would just be so easy that way. I just felt normal, you know. That way, it was so, so easy... so I went to Japan and actually saw role models, and then I met other Japanese Canadian women. Because I didn’t know very many in my high school.

She continued to return to Japan every summer, staying with her relatives. She wanted to learn more Japanese and decided to go back to the Japanese language school she attended when she was in elementary school. 53

Nancy’s summer visits to Japan triggered her interest in things Japanese, and she began to read Japanese magazines, to see Japanese videos, and began to volunteer teaching ESL students at her high school. There were a lot of Japanese students in the program and she had felt “normal” and comfortable being with them. She continued to volunteer until she graduated from high school.

53 She went twice a week and told me she enjoyed the school, that she was so comfortable there she felt free to misbehave.

N: I actually enjoyed it and I was... I was talking with my mom just recently... In English school [public school] my behaviour was always good. And I was quiet. I was really, really well behaved. And in the Japanese school, I was bad. I studied but I was always talking when I should not be talking, and knocking over the chairs, I was always badly behaved. I find it very interesting. That’s where I really felt comfortable and I let loose... Yeah, that I was holding myself in public school. I was more myself in Japanese language school, for sure. Maybe to the extreme because I was holding in so much in public school.

Y: Probably without knowing?

N: Yeah, but I was bad actually... I was. So in a way that’s where I really felt comfortable... yeah, yeah. Went twice a week.
She developed friendships with students from Japan and continued such friendships in her university days. Nancy went to the University of British Columbia as her two brothers had done, and found the university very different from high school. Although she was a good student in high school, she found university very difficult. She told me that she did not know "how to think" and remembered having "a lot of insecurity about English" in her first year.

I improved a lot in the past ten years . . . But I felt that my experience of growing up with immigrant parents who did not speak English [made it difficult for me at university]. So my experience with English language was very different from that of someone who grew up in an environment where English was spoken . . . I really noticed that during my first year in the university. I noticed my lack of ability in English. Really, I did. And I think I associated that with being Japanese and also feeling that I wasn't taught how to think. I struggled quite a bit in my first year.

Although her parents, especially her mother, hoped that she would finish her university studies in four years like her two brothers, Nancy took time off to explore her identity and career path. After her second year she decided to travel around Asia with her friends, touring Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, China, and Hong Kong. She travelled for six months on the savings she had earned during Expo'86 in Vancouver. She was nineteen years old.

One of the turning points in Nancy's life came when she participated in a workshop called "unlearning racism." This workshop was put on by the Women of Colour Group to which she belonged in the late 1980s. Before she found the group she went to the Women's Centre at the University of British Columbia, searching for some answers to questions with which she had been struggling. Nancy could not find her answers there since the women at the centre were speaking a language that was "very academic and very White." Meanwhile she read somewhere about a group for women of colour. She hoped such a group existed so that she could talk with people about what she had been "carrying around" with her since Grade 4.

At the workshop she learned that racism is learned and that, therefore, it can be unlearned.
She began to read more on the issue and began to reflect on her past. This was when she realized that she was using English as a tool to dominate her parents. In 1991 she applied for a job at Press Gang (a feminist publishing collective) and worked there for three years. In the collective there were six women, the eldest being about forty and Nancy being the youngest and the only woman of colour. She indicated that her parents could not really understand why she was working for the collective instead of finishing university and going into a profession. Her mother and grandmother visited her workplace, observed what she was doing, and were very impressed.

While she was in university Nancy changed her majors many times. Eventually she graduated with a degree in Japanese. She told me that a Japanese degree was “the only thing” that made it “worth” her returning to university. She also felt it was the only subject to which she could “commit” a whole year to study. At that time Press Gang was in financial difficulties and had to be closed. When Nancy returned to university she began to work part-time at her parents’ company. Both Nancy and her mother were very happy when she graduated. Upon graduation she continued to work at her parents’ company while taking computer courses. For several years she enjoyed working for a publishing company as a translator in Osaka but just recently (2002) returned to help at her parents’ company.

Catherine did not mention the topic of racism in our conversation until she began to talk about her experiences in China, where she observed how her African student friends were treated. Unlike other Shin-Nisei women who had experienced racism, both actual and imagined, it seems that Catherine grew up in a non-racist, multicultural environment in Vancouver. She did not talk

54 Her parents had a corner grocery store on East Hastings, but in 1986 they started a seafood wholesale company. The company has since flourished. According to Nancy, “My dad got lucky.”
much about her high school experiences. When she graduated from Simon Fraser University (SFU) with a degree in communication and economics, she began to work for an exporting company.

C: I took that job knowing it was a kind of a job that I would leave in two years. And after two years I left. Before two years, I started to prepare to leave. So I started opening my eyes . . . meantime I took other undergraduate courses to keep myself interested in things.

Y: What kind of things?

C: Well, I took courses mostly on Canadian history. And Canadian ethnic groups and their history. And I also took more courses. [I was interested in] some aspect of Asia relating primarily Chinese history - - not Chinese history in the classical sense, but during the time of transition from pre-communist to communist times. Modern history.

I started to take courses, so that’s how I kept my mind occupied while working . . . I took three courses per term. It wasn’t easy but I did this in my spare time [laughs] . . . Slowly the two years approached because I was still taking all these courses at SFU, kept reading up different things . . . I looked at two options, one was Capilano College, a sort of post-bachelor program on the Pacific Rim. I looked at that and thought, “Oh, sounds OK,” but I didn’t know that what I really wanted to do. Then I thought about going back to school, full-time. That was another option.

She did not go back to school, however; instead, she decided to join a group of students who were going to China. She described how this happened:

Then, on the cover of the SFU newspaper I saw that there was a group that they were going to take to China . . . [they were going to] go to China and to live there at the university dormitory and study, take classes, take that approach. I thought it would be interesting to live in China. I had a very idealistic vision of what China was like, I mean, the great leap forward to a whole transition to a more market-oriented economy, socialist country, I thought this would be very good.

So she joined the group of about twenty, which consisted of Chinese Canadian and (mostly) mainstream Canadian students. In 1988 she studied and lived at a university in northern China for three months. It was “a real eye opener” for her to realize that there was a difference between what she had read and what she was now experiencing. She was “shocked” at the gap between theory and praxis. People lived in poverty and there were few opportunities available to them. The position of women was still considered to be lower than that of men. People did not excel
because they gained no personal benefit from doing so. Although there was "recognition of what people did as a whole," there was no recognition of what they did as individuals. She encountered many unhappy students and was not surprised when the events of Tiananmen Square occurred one year later. What was most unexpected was that it was in China that Catherine found a connection with her cultural roots. Sometime it was imposed and other times she found it on her own.

It was in Northern China and Manchukuo [Manchuria]... That was very interesting... I think it was a turning point in my life. There I realized a strong Japanese presence. I was in Manchukuo, because, trains, and all the buildings, they were magnificent, huge structures, as well as the smaller structures that weren't Chinese but Japanese... that was eye-opening. I didn't know about it at all. I knew Japan and the war. But it is very different from understanding what I had heard and read about China and Japan... When I went there, one of the first places they took us was the museum, a memorial museum that had many photographs and artifacts of the Japanese occupation and how they treated the Chinese.

While Catherine was at the museum, there was a person ("this trumpet") who followed her around asking how she had felt about the terrible things the Japanese had done to the Chinese.

So I said, I think what happened was a terrible thing, inexcusable... However, that is not the country I am familiar with and I can't excuse Japan, the government of that time, for what it did, I think it's wrong. But to say that to me, I think it is not fair because... I was born in Canada.

This was a time when her visibility interfered with her Canadian identity. Chinese people strongly associated her with Japan, an experience she had never encountered in Canada and the possibility of which had never entered her mind. She was in her mid-twenties.

I kept running into this sort of thing constantly, having things thrown in my face. Before, I was Canadian no matter what; now I was Japanese. It was a completely different way of looking. What I had studied all this time was sort of outside looking in. Now I could not get away. Whenever people would ask, "Where are you from?" I would say, "Canada." [laughs] And they would all look at me and say, "You look like Chinese," and I would say, "No, I'm from Canada." Once in a while I would say "Japanese," and from time to time someone would sneer [laughs].

One of Catherine's discoveries was associated with the Japanese language. A surprising number of people she met (i.e., her professors and older people) spoke Japanese, and she sometimes found
her knowledge of Japanese came in very handy as her low-budget group could not afford professional interpreters. Chinese people did not speak English, and the members of her group did not speak Mandarin (even though they studied a little while they were there).

The other [thing] was that I could speak to elderly people. They all spoke Japanese, although very uncomfortably . . . However, they were interested in our group, and since we did not always have a translator available, with my limited Japanese we could still communicate.

She told me how frustrated she had felt in Beijing waiting for a cab with African students and receiving mixed treatment from taxi drivers. Nobody stopped for them because they were with Black students. These students were from African socialist countries and had been sponsored to come to China to learn Chinese. All of them learned how to read and write the language within a year or two during their university programs. Yet Chinese people mistreated them because they were black.

After three months of study, Catherine travelled around Southeast Asia for a while. She returned to Vancouver to attend the wedding of a childhood friend in August 1988. When she was playing with the idea of going back to school and writing to different universities, the Redress Agreement was signed and the Nikkei community began to look for people who would work for a newly formed Redress Foundation. Catherine recognized that it was an important time for the community, and she began to work as an office assistant for the Redress Foundation. Although she has changed jobs since then, Catherine has continued to work for the Japanese Canadian community ever since that time.

For several months Catherine worked along with fieldworkers, going to various parts of British Columbia, organizing meetings for Japanese Canadians to inform them about the redress settlement and to find out whether they were qualified for individual compensation. It was at this time that she firmly grasped the impact of the Second World War on Japanese Canadians. This
brought back memories of a Political Science 100 class in which a French Canadian teacher asked her opinion on the issue. How vividly she remembered telling the class that perhaps the Canadian government had a good reason for doing what it did. She now felt very emotional about having taken such a position without having had enough information to adequately analyze it. Along with the fieldworkers, both Sansei and Kika-Nisei, she listened to stories of Japanese Canadian internment at the meetings that she helped to organize.

Whatever the circumstances were, it became very, very clear to me what happened. So I learned my history not so much through books . . . Through talking to people I got a much better sense of not only who I was, but also who these people were and what had happened. [I got a good idea of this] through looking at their security cards,55 boxes of papers and photos, just the little items they carried. I think that was probably the best learning experience that I had, not only for myself . . .

Y: How long did it last?
C: About six, seven months? Yeah, probably. I really enjoyed it and never forgot it.

Catherine used to read the *JCCA Bulletin*56 to which her parents subscribed, and she knew of various community events. She attended the Powell Street Festival from time to time but never really “thought about it one way or the other.” However, when her friend mentioned that Powell Street Festival Society needed a co-ordinator, she decided to offer the expertise she had acquired as a university student working at the Parks Board organizing multiple events. She also felt that, with her newly acquired sense of what it means to be Japanese Canadian, she could help the community. She worked as a Powell Street Festival coordinator for two years, in 1989 and 1990. She worked for Tonari Gumi for two years as an administrator, then began to work for the Nikkei Heritage Centre (a multi-purpose centre for Japanese Canadians) in the fall of 1993.

55 A registration card that all “enemy aliens” (i.e., people who were racially Japanese and over sixteen years old) had to carry.

While Catherine was getting involved with the Nikkei community she met an Irish Canadian, and they were married a year later in 1989. She was twenty-six years old. The decision was hers, and she remembered her mother asking her, “Are you sure you want to get married?” While working with Japanese Canadians she began to reflect on her own marriage. She began to think that “Japanese themselves are interesting” and wanted to know more about them. She had neither the opportunity to meet and to get to know them nor the desire to do so until the early 1990s. Until that time she had thought “Japanese were not desirable.” She also told me that she had “a biological urge to have a family,” but that her husband did not want children. They had talked about it often but they never could agree. Her husband wanted no children or adopted children as opposed to her giving birth. In 1993 she met a Sansei through her work. After consulting with her parents she decided to terminate her four-year marriage.

Like Nancy, Martha remembered that her adolescent days were very difficult since it was so hard to articulate what she was feeling and why she was feeling it. She mentioned an article she had read on immigrant children, which reported that they do not want other people to know about their problems because it is so hard to talk about racism. Martha identified with them. She told me that, being the oldest child, she had tried to act as though everything was all right so as not to worry her parents. She told me how hard it was for her. She was teased by her school friends who were “economic snobs,” and she spoke of how children could be very cruel to each other. Her early childhood days were much better than her high school days as she was very young and the only important thing was whether or not she got invited to her friends’ birthday parties.

M: For me, I had to deal with racism. Not much in elementary school. It wasn’t bad until I got to high school. Really, really different ... I think, Vancouver people are class conscious, especially if you are brought up in the West side?
Y: Really!!?
M: Oh, yeah.
Her friends from East Vancouver confirmed her opinion, saying West side students always looked down on them. West side kids did not associate with anybody from the East side, and they were very "cliquish" and class conscious.

Depends on where you lived. West side of Cambie [Street] was West, and East of Cambie [Street] was East and they would say "Oh, you are from East Van. You guys are a bunch of thieves and gangs!" These are the stereotypes those kids had in high school.

Seeing her two Jewish friends, Martha realized that wealth did not matter if one was not "a certain race" as other Shin-Nisei women had commented. One of her classmates, a daughter of a Philippine ambassador, used to tell Martha that Canadian people were the most racist and narrow-minded people she had ever encountered. Her friend's comment reminded her of the time when her father had told her that Canada was not such a nice place for Asian people once immigrants came out from their "honeymoon period." Martha pointed out how Vancouver has changed drastically in the past decade, now being a much nicer place than it had been in the past. However, even with the city's large Asian population, Vancouver's Caucasians tend to see most Asians as Chinese, not realizing that, in doing so, they are rendering many other ethnicities invisible.

Martha visited Japan only once - - in 1987 when she was in her mid twenties. This was her first visit to Japan since she had left "her home" when she was seven. Meanwhile, her aunts and cousins came to visit Vancouver, and her mother frequently visited Japan. She went to Japan with her mother and visited her grandparents in a small place near Sendai, where her parents came from. She told me how relaxing it was. Even though she had been busy there she was comfortable. She indicated that this had something to do with her identity. In Canada she was always figuring out how to fit into Canadian society, wondering "how Japanese" she was. Martha told me how nice it was to be in Japan, how she felt she belonged there. She wanted to stay longer but, because of her work, she "came back to reality" after having stayed for only a few weeks.
I touched base and came back. It was nice for me. It was funny because I felt that I belonged [there], but I also was watching? I was an outsider but not an outsider who is hiding? You know.

After the trip Martha began to deal with her life-long concerns over racism and ethnicity in Canada, and she began to explore the influence of the media. In her youth she looked for a role model among the many images on TV. This led her into media studies, a field that she found both interesting and influential. She told me of a Nikkei student who was so delighted when Martha told a children's theatre workshop that she was Japanese Canadian. After this workshop, which was given at Gladstone Elementary School, the student ran after Martha, calling, “Are you really Japanese Canadian? Oh, that's so cool!” She was so pleased to find someone of “her kind,” and she told Martha how distressed she was that there were so few Japanese Canadians in her school.

Martha consciously began to “watch” for Japanese Canadian people after her trip to Japan. She began to volunteer and to seek out her roots in Vancouver's Nikkei community. When I asked her how she reached out to the Nikkei community, she told me that she started with the Powell Street Festival and then attempted to build a social network. For her, the Nisei were too old, but then she met a number of Sansei. Soon she began to appreciate the complexity in the Japanese Canadian community. She met many different generations of Nikkei - - Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Shin-Issei - - and she met people from Steveston (who were much friendlier than were the people from Vancouver). She encountered some harsh treatment from Nisei and some old Sansei, who told her she had nothing to do with their community. As soon as they found out that she was a postwar immigrant, they said: “You don’t know nothing. Get out!” Sometimes it was communicated in a subtle manner, but sometimes it was not. She was “shocked” when she first encountered this treatment. However, she told me that not all people excluded her because she was a postwar immigrant:
People who migrated before the war had a certain stereotype of Japanese. I think that is the biggest struggle. And they say that we had an easier time... but very similar. I think my mother went through things that their mothers or grandmothers went through, you know.

Present Lifestyles and Future Hopes

Martha hoped that different generations of Japanese Canadians would have more connections with one another. She found that Tonari Gumi was helpful in this respect. It is a place where a good mix of different generations get together and socialize. It is also where her mother sometimes socializes with other Japanese Canadians. Considering that there is no Nikkei centre and young generations are marrying out rather than marrying in, she wondered about the future of the community.

Through participating in the community Martha was able to observe its complexity, and she saw the power struggles that took place between “personal agendas” and people with “too much ego.” She told me many Japanese Canadians “do not listen” to others because they think that the prewar and postwar groups do not have anything in common. She disagreed with this but acknowledged that it was very difficult to get people to see what they have in common. She described the situation as being like “watching a bad movie,” but she did say that she thought it would get better in ten years and that she hoped “to see young people come back to the community.”

Martha was married to a Canadian of German-Scottish heritage for eight years, in the spring of 1997, and was expecting a baby. At the time of the interview in the winter of 1996 the couple was house hunting. She told me that her husband had already decided to send the baby to a Japanese language school. She thought it would be good for her mother if the baby learned to speak

57 Now, of course, there is the Nikkei Heritage Centre in Burnaby where the National Japanese Canadian Museum and many other community organizations reside.
Japanese, and she added that her mother would take good care of the child.

Catherine had been one of the staff members of the National Nikkei Heritage Centre. She had been working with volunteers who consisted of a mix of prewar and postwar generations. Before doing this she had had very little to do with Nikkei who were not postwar immigrants. This was because many of her parents’ friends were immigrants from Japan and she mostly associated with their children. She indicated that she only knew one Nisei family before she had begun to work for the community (other than Nisei who, like her father, were married to Japanese women). She said that Japanese Canadians she had met differed little from “immigrants” who conversed in Japanese.

How did she feel going into the community and how did she find Japanese Canadians?

C: Niseis spoke Japanese yet they spoke English. They sort of mixed languages completely. That was something that I hadn’t known because I didn’t know anything. They spoke Japanese more or less, or English. That was different. The other part was that they had strong feelings about their own ethnicity and their history and life in Canada from the point of view of a visible minority. That was unique . . . Because any kids that we knew, actually, I know a few kids who were Sansei but they didn’t consider themselves to be ‘ethnic.’ They didn’t say “Sansei.” They were Japanese, Japanese Canadians, but they didn’t use that terminology. Sansei, no.

Y: The term Sansei was new to you?
C: I understood right away, but people using it, and identifying themselves as Sanseis. So that was kind of, that was new too.

There were some Sansei in her neighbourhood, but Catherine remembered that they had nothing to do with other Japanese Canadians. Sometimes they “stuck together,” but they did not call themselves Sansei. They even formed a baseball team called “Baka Boys” (baka= stupid in Japanese) and “joked a bit about it.” They ate sushi but they had nothing to do with Japanese Canadians. Just recently Catherine thought about them and remembered playing softball and getting together on weekends when she was in college.
The following are Catherine’s thoughts on the different groups of Japanese Canadians with whom she interacted and worked as a Shin-Nisei. She found postwar immigrants to be very different from prewar immigrants (mostly Nisei) in terms of culture, language, profession, level of education, and family environment. She told me that sometimes she was not sensitive enough to interact according to their customary Japanese cultural patterns. She tended to interact with them according to the English-speaking cultural pattern, which meant that she went too quickly. She found that they were easier to work with if they did not expect her to be one of them. Whenever she felt that she had violated their cultural code, or whenever she could not understand what they were trying to say, she asked for clarification and apologized for not understanding them.

However, with Nisei it was more complex.

With Niseis, they have their own culture. In fact, whenever we meet as a group, if there are Niseis, they tend to speak about the past quite a bit . . . They tend to talk more. It takes a little while to get to 1996 . . . Even at the meeting last night [a Nisei said,] “I haven’t talked to him fifty years, since 1945, but I think I can call him up.” My goodness, you call someone after forty-five years . . . But that’s their way. It’s very interesting. So when they go through, or deal with, personal interactions . . with Nisei, it tends to be quite [difficult] . . . they . . . have their own way.

She found Sansei more difficult to understand than Nisei. While working with a Sansei group Catherine listened with interest to how they talked about cultural appropriation, about how the Japanese Canadian voice had being silenced, and about how strongly many of them felt about the issue. She had been hearing more and more about this and thought it was a new phenomenon among the Sansei. They form a specific group among Japanese Canadians, many of them biracial and bicultural Japanese with a strong sense of their Japanese ethnicity.

C: I guess in my case I am who I am. I can’t change, and I don’t have any other culture to deal with but my own. So I listen with interest. And Sanseis are different because the Niseis brought them up differently. They are Japanese yet not Japanese . . . So I meet Sansei, they are very [fond of things Japanese], even the older ones who are in their fifties. They all have affectionate feeling for Japanese things -- food, art, history. Then, some take it to the next level. We talk about parents, families, and/or the memories they are
quite fond of. Most of them are married to non-Japanese, but I find that they still talk with Japanese words, you know, much more frequently than I do [laughs].

Y: What kind of words?
C: Oishii [delicious], or whatever with food... or *henjin* [strange person]? So they are older words. Japanese words come in and they like to use them. I always watch with interest, and also we talk quite a bit about the food they grew up with -- the Sansei kids, I mean.

Catherine pointed out that the Sansei who were involved in the centennial project in the 1970s were quite different from other Sansei in the community. The former grew up in the consciousness of the 1960s and had strong opinions and clear objectives to regain their past for their community. The latter came of age in the 1990s and tended to be preoccupied with issues related to the cultural appropriation of Japanese Canadians history and cultures by non-Japanese Canadians.

Catherine was not always preoccupied with issues relating to the Japanese Canadian community. She was also concerned with making sure her parents were well connected with the reality of living in Canada. Besides her weekly visit (she shopped with her mother on the weekends), she phoned them occasionally to update them on what was happening in the world (e.g., letting them know about daylight saving time and other Canadian news). Recently, Catherine noticed her father had begun to speak more Japanese, and she thought that this was due to satellite TV: he watched a lot of Japanese TV, Japanese news, social programs -- anything Japanese. She feared he was being heavily influenced by this. She also added that her father had recently acquired a computer and was already on the Internet, coming into yet more contact with things Japanese, reading magazines and newspapers. Suddenly a whole world had opened up before him.58 The mass media were affecting her parents’ lifestyle, but the influences were coming

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58 In the beginning of the interview, Catherine indicated that her parents do not read or write English, her father being Kika-Nisei whose formal education in Japan was interrupted early and her mother having only a high school education. Yet she told me that at home she spoke English to her father and Japanese to her mother. And both parents worked in the English speaking world.
from Japan rather than Canada.  

Since her father's retirement her parents had joined various social clubs (bowling and dance) and had recently started shigin (chanting, or reciting, a Chinese poem) and karaoke (singing with karaoke, literally "empty orchestra" accompaniment) clubs. Her father was in his mid-sixties and her mother was in her late fifties.

With several years of involvement in the Japanese Canadian community behind her, Catherine identified with it yet still found it foreign. There were so many different people and generations who all thought and reacted differently to any given problem. The more she found out about her community, the more complex it seemed to her. Knowing the complex nature of the community and its culture, she no longer generalizes about it; but believes that things are "completely unpredictable." Yet this made her job more interesting. She said that her job was to create a place allowing people to come together to relate to one another. "What they get out of it depends on them."

At the time of the interview in 1997, Nancy, who was interested in the publishing business, had been taking computer courses while working for her parents' company. Her parents' fish retail business was flourishing but they were reaching retirement age. Two of her older brothers were married and were pursuing their own careers, one in Japan and the other in Canada. Recently, her

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59 This reminded me of a Sansei friend who recently told me that her parents were becoming more "Japanese day by day because of Japanese television."

60 Catherine told me recently (2002) that her father, who was trained as a tatami (Japanese mat) maker, has been offering a workshop for Nikkei children and youth at Nikkei Heritage Centre on how to make waraji (straw sandals).

61 Catherine actualized her mission in September 2000 when the Nikkei National Heritage Center was completed. Recently, in 2002, she was appointed as a chief executive officer of the NNHC.
father had been encouraging her to take over the company. Since she began working at her parents' company, where there were many Japanese-speaking people from Japan, she had felt much more comfortable speaking Japanese. Yet she still found Japanese to be a source of pain because she could not "really speak the language well," even though she "really wanted to speak it." She indicated that for postwar immigrants English is "a source of pain." She was not as heavily involved in the Nikkei community as were the other Shin-Nisei women in the study. Her parents were not involved in the community, and she wondered whether this was due to the fact that their social network consisted of postwar immigrants who spoke Japanese.

She often caught herself behaving just like her mother.

I do a lot. I usually do, in comparison to other people. Like, maybe I deal with the situation differently . . . or react to the situation differently . . . I find that I'm explaining what my Mom explained to me not long ago. Yeah, things like that . . . Values that somewhere along the way, you know, just become a part of me, yeah.

I'm less verbal, especially in a group situation. Yeah. We [Japanese Canadians] tend to listen, and how I deal with a group seems to be different. . . . I would be kind of following [others], just assimilating, you know . . . just kind of fitting in whatever situation . . . I think that is something about being "Japanese," yeah, yeah. I don't want to rock the boat too much, yeah.

Nancy pointed out that the annual Powell Street Festival reflects the nature of the Nikkei community. For one of her friends who had experienced the internment years, the festival was so important that she immersed herself in it every year. Nancy herself did not feel the same way since she "did not experience that kind of oppression." With regard to her Japanese friends from Japan, Nancy felt that their experiences were very different from hers. They were confident about who they were - - being Japanese - - whereas she would just "hold on to it [the Japanese identity]." She told me that her mother is Japanese - - "no doubt about it" - - but that she was not

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62 Her parents are indirectly involved with the Nikkei community as they always support community events and organizations by donations.
quite sure about herself. She was not sure whether she was bicultural or multicultural. As for the Sansei, Nancy felt they were "always trying to prove" how Japanese they were, and she asked me whether my daughter felt secure about her background.

Haruko, a graphic designer, described her typical week day working at home on projects for her clients, which sometimes involved going to meetings. She told me that she had worked on the Powell Street Festival posters and for the English section of the *JCCA Bulletin*. She had been living in a basement suite of her parents' house for a year and a half with her partner of five years, whom she met at school twelve years ago. When she mentioned about her living arrangements, she told me the situation was "pretty mezurashii [rare]" since she was not married. She added that she did not think she was a "typical Japanese Canadian girl." She indicated her partner "got along well" with her parents and described him: "White, hakujin. . . He is a very, very sensitive guy. He is kind of Japanese in his way, you know what I mean, enryosuru. Very considerate of others." She talked about a Nisei woman, a mutual friend of ours, who married a non-Japanese Canadian in the 1950s when there were not many Japanese/Canadian intermarriages. We discussed her friends with inter-racial backgrounds. She told me that over 98 per cent of Japanese Canadians intermarry because there were too few Nikkei from which to choose.

You know, I think there is a sense that, some people are saying that there is a sense of loss of identity after the war, there is a certain feeling of shame to marry other Japanese Canadians. You want to assimilate as much as possible . . . There is that feeling going on. But there are no Japanese Canadian people left.

One of her older brothers was married to a "Japanese" Sansei, and the other was married to a "Canadian White [meaning White Canadian].” Her family got together regularly because her

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63 Haruko was the Shin-Nisei who embedded Japanese words the most, and she was the only woman who used the word *enryosuru* (to hold back, be reserved). Many Nisei used this word quite often.
second brother, who lived in a Seattle suburb, visited her parents quite often with his two children. Haruko would like to have children in the near future as her “time is ticking away.” And her mother had been saying that she [her mother] is “getting old” and would soon not be able to pick up children anymore, indirectly urging her to have a family. Haruko’s parents enjoy their grandchildren. Haruko’s niece, who is only one year old and loves to eat *umeboshi* (salted plum), which not many people like. She told me that her mother passed “some cooking things” on to her:

> What had my mother passed on to me . . . I think I picked up her love of cooking, being imaginative in the kitchen . . . all kinds of values, I suppose. Just, uh - making sure your house is right, I guess, metaphorically, you know.

Haruko often found herself quitting work to start cooking dinner whenever her partner came home, she worked at home from nine a.m. to five or sometimes six p.m. Laughing, she told me that her behaviour was a “very traditional thing.” She sometimes questioned why she did it, and she often reasoned it was a “woman’s thing”:

> But you know, women are always thinking and making lists in their head: what are we going to have for breakfast, for lunch, planning, planning, planning. That’s a women’s thing. It’s our culture, you know. I think men don’t think what they are going to have for dinner. They don’t think that far . . . You know, you are planning, planning . . . and I want to turn it off. But I can’t because I have to eat. I don’t want to eat cereal for dinner. So you are thinking . . . Yeah, that’s one thing that my mother definitely instilled in me, [whether] I like it or not. 64

She continued:

> I think there is a kind of unspoken Japanese thing that my mother instilled in me. Yeah, but it’s so hard to explain. It’s hard to explain! But the way that you keep harmony in your house, that kind of thing. Make sure everything is in order, you know . . . The other thing is [that] there are certain things you just don’t bother people with: you don’t talk about personal problems with anybody, you just keep that kind of thing inside of you. . . You talk about other things. You keep that kind of dirty laundry in your house, you know, you don’t bring it outside.

64 Haruko remembered her brothers used to say “What, you made this again?” And told me that she would never allow her children to behave in such a way.
Haruko said that her mother had instilled in her an admiration for just “doing things” and she admired what her mother had done in Canada. Yet her mother did not think she had accomplished much in her adopted country. Haruko compared her mother to the “picture brides” of the prewar years:

H: I mean, coming over to a foreign country marrying someone you don’t know very well.
Y: Was it a match marriage? Does she talk about how she met your father?
H: Yeah, yeah. Not picture book. I think there is a common thread in picture brides thing. You came over here and do what you have to, that kind of thing, and you don’t air your dirty laundry. You make the best of your situation, that *gambare* [persevere], yeah, *gambare* spirit? That’s totally, I think, what my mother did, you know. So I can admire her for that. I can *admire* somebody like yourself.
Y: Thank you!
H: Personally, I don’t know whether I can do it. I guess if you came across that situation, you would do it. [laughs]

Haruko’s mother survived the hardships she had encountered. Not having friends or family, she was miserable and homesick. She wanted to go back, yet she remained in Canada and persevered.

You make a decision, you make your bed, then you have to lie in it. Yeah, that’s definitely a trait that my mother has still, you know. “Deal with it. You can’t run away.” . . . Many people try to run away, but you have to deal with your problem. “Deal with it and go on with your life. Don’t whine about it.”

When I mentioned to Haruko that I would like to talk to her mother, she told me that her mother had had “a very interesting life” not only in Canada but also in Korea, where she was raised until she was twelve. Haruko had been telling her mother that she should write a book but her mother would always say, “Oh, my life is not interesting.” Her mother’s experiences in Korea before the war were very much like the stories I heard from my mother when I was young. We exchanged stories of our parents in North Korea and imagined how our parents probably walked on the same road trying to escape from the Russians after the defeat of Japan.

The postwar Shin-Issei (born 1932 to 1949), like the Issei of the previous generation, chose to
come to Canada. While they had many of the concerns of their elders, particularly in being separated from the traditions in which they had been raised and being subjected to bias in the new land, they chose to direct their efforts to familiar and secure activities. They concentrated on an identity about which they had intimate knowledge, namely that of their roles as women, specifically as mothers. Even caring for their children was fraught with ambivalence in that they were faced with their children's growing independence and increasing commitments to Canadian ways. The children's easy access to Canadian language and culture widened the gap. Meanwhile, the attention given to the changing role of women in Canada was not without its effect on the Japanese Canadians. Thus, after gaining some independence from child rearing, Shin-Issei women were steered away from the concerns of being a "professional housewife" and devoted mother to focus instead upon the self and to incorporate some of the world known to their children. This usually implied working towards language fluency.

The four Shin-Nisei women (born between 1962 and 1966) were the most cohesive among the groups in the study. They sketched lives which were reminiscent of those of the Nisei of the prewar period. They referred to their closeness to their mothers, and they, like the Nisei before them, served as interpreters for their mothers and often the Shin-Nisei also served as confidants. Their narratives continued to reveal, however, the same race-connected experiences as those of their elders. They referred to being stereotyped and categorized according to their racial visibility. They noted, however, an awareness of changes in the Canadian context in that the composition of Vancouver's population had shifted over the past decade and there was a growing level of racial integration in the community.
Making History Together: Cultural Sharing

Nikkei Women’s Narrative Themes

The ethnographic sketches I have provided of Nikkei women reflect the cultural and social history of the times in which these women lived (Befu 1993). Their life narratives illustrate the nature of Japanese community in relation to mainstream Canadian society. They demonstrate how visibility (racialized identity), together with language and cultural competency (both in Japanese and English), affected the Nikkei sense of self. Each Nikkei woman was involved in a complex process: her actions and cultural incorporation strategies involved a continuous shift between, and combination of, Japanese and Canadian values and customs. The life narratives present us with a picture of the dynamic interaction between the constraints of social structure and the strength of individual will. They offer us a glimpse into each Nikkei woman’s choices concerning what she claims to be -- as a woman, an immigrant woman, a descendant of immigrant women, and an individual Japanese Canadian woman.¹

Despite differences in age (the oldest woman was born in 1895, the youngest born in 1968), generation, and sociocultural background, several themes surfaced and reverberated throughout these life narratives. They were intricately interrelated and constantly overlapped. These themes are: (1) gender, (2) exclusion, (3) generation (age), and (4) being Japanese Canadian. I now address them in order.

¹ Donald Keene finds more universalities in Japanese women’s literature, *jyosei bungaku*, which began in Heian Period (794-1192) and focused on daily court life, as opposed to Japanese men’s literature, *dansei bungaku*, which flourished in the Edo period (1702-1867) and focused on political power (Shiba and Keene 1972:172).
Gender

"How nice to be wanted at your young age!" was the response my mother gave me when I told her that one of our family friends' sons asked me to get engaged. She was delighted to hear the news, and she did not pay much attention to the fact that I had rejected the proposal. My father was also happy since the man was his good friend's son. My parents could not understand why I did not accept the proposal. I explained to them that I could not get engaged because I wanted to explore my life. If he really "loved" me he would have let me explore my life instead of putting me in "a cage" (i.e., an engagement). This is how I explained to my friend why I could not possibly accept his proposal. Due to my refusal of him, the relationship between our two families was abruptly broken off and has never been mended.

My father, who rarely said anything to his daughters, asked me whether I could try to "learn to love the man." I told him, "No." My parents never expected this reaction from me, their quiet, "well behaved" youngest daughter. I did not quite know what I really wanted from my life, but I knew that I did not want to get engaged. I was never asked what I wanted. I was sixteen and was in my second year of high school. That was when I began to think about the issue of marriage and to question my destiny as a woman. How I envied my classmates who did not have to think about marriage and could be care-free, enjoying their high school life. Being the youngest daughter I simply thought I would follow the path of my two older sisters. I was supposed to go to a women's private college as my sisters had done.

I did not follow their path. Instead I left for the United States to study English, a dream that I had had since I was very young.

(Yuko Shibata)

Every woman faces the issues of womanhood, marriage, and motherhood. Gender mattered greatly for both Issei and Shin-Issei women who chose to leave home for "Amerika." Issei women were raised in prewar Japan to be modest, unselfish, and subordinate, and the family was considered to be all-important. Given that the family was considered to be primary, the individual tended to disappear and self-expression was not honoured in Japanese society. Marriage was considered to be the business not so much of those who actually married as of the families concerned. Marriage was not looked upon as a romantic union; rather, it involved a woman leaving her family and entering that of her husband in order to become a good wife and wise mother. However, in this study I found that Issei women left Japan not because of family pressure but of their own volition. They were influenced by the values of the Taisho era (1912-
1926), during which people campaigned to have a constitutional government replace the existing bureaucratic and militaristic government.\(^2\)

All four Issei women had unfortunate family circumstances, such as a decline in the family wealth due to a father’s death or bankruptcy of the family business. Not only the Issei women but also the Shin-Issei women, who immigrated to Canada between the late 1950s and the 1970s, chose to “come to a new life” in search for their dream of “Amerika.” Sometimes they were escaping from their societal roles, sometimes they were simply searching for something different. In any case, they freely chose to marry their future husbands who lived in Canada. Their “dreams” about a gaikoku 外国 (foreign country), their adoration of eigo (English), their desire for something foreign and new sparked their imaginations and contributed to their decisions to leave Japan (Morokvasik 1984).\(^3\) They were not reluctant emigrants, patiently following their husbands.

For Issei women marriage was onna no sadame 女の定め (a destiny for women). However, they could rebel against the social demands and pressures of Japan by marrying someone in America.

I saw my mother suffer so much from the marriage that I did not want to get married. I wanted to remain at home but I couldn’t. It was onna no sadame 女の定め. There was no way around it. I was in Taipei with my sister’s family, escaping from another marriage proposal, before I came to Canada. See, I told my parents if I have to get married then I am going to marry someone in “Amerika アメリカ.” What a mistake. I thought in Amerika people were so rich that women throw away silk handkerchiefs. (Kinori)

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\(^2\) The depression consequent upon the First World War encouraged the Japanese to demand the equality that the Meiji government had promised fifty years earlier. This short era is often referred to as Taisho demokrashii (democracy). It culminated in 1920, the year of the first May Day demonstration in Tokyo. It was also the period when the Japanese began to heavily import and adopt Western culture.

What awaited Issei women in Canada were Japanese communities well established immigrant communities structured so as to ensure Japanese survival in White Canada. They did not have the opportunity to explore what they had anticipated experiencing in America learning English and getting to know another people and culture. Although they were free from the traditional rites of passage associated with young Japanese brides and their mothers-in-law, their lives in Canada were nowhere near what they had dreamt they would be. Being dutiful daughters, many of them kept their hardships to themselves and persevered. They blamed no one but themselves for their predicament since coming to Canada had been their decision. It was their responsibility to accept the reality of the situation and to live up to their parents' and relatives' expectations. Many accepted their lives as their fate, and they struggled and endured. They tried to mend the gap between their dreams and their Canadian realities. However, with the Second World War, the gap became even wider.

The post-Second World War constitution provided Japanese women with substantial rights and equality, yet marriage remained a socially valued female career in which it was expected that a woman would find self-fulfillment. Like the Issei women, Shin-Issei women who married Kikai-Nisei men were brought up by parents with prewar values (i.e., respect for the household and a belief that women were subordinate to men). To be a "good wife and wise mother" was still their ideal. After Japan's defeat these women were in their preteens, and America offered them dreams and hope. As is indicated in the life narratives of older Shin-Issei women, when they met their future husbands they sensed an air of openness and freedom. Just like the Issei women, Shin-

4 Quite a few Issei women indicated that they were spoiled in Japan and that they did not know what real life was all about. They learned how they were dependent upon those around them. They had thought that a couple of years of hard work in Canada would be the worst that they could expect to face. See Kikumura (1979, 1981) for her mother's accounts of life in California.
Issei women spurned other alternatives to live in Canada, to escape from Japan’s societal constraints, to embrace a foreign country, and to attempt to realize their dreams. And, like the Issei women who arrived in Canada several decades earlier, the Shin-Issei women who were married to Kika-Nisei men found themselves in a quite different world from the one they had anticipated. From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, a social network of Japanese Canadians was being established in Vancouver by people who returned to Vancouver in the early 1950s in an attempt to maximize their resources through finding wives and returning to Canada. The Shin-Issei women who married these men came to Canada with very little English and with no family members or friends. They found themselves in a position where they were forced to follow the lead of their husbands and Nikkei elders.

Takie Lebra’s (1984) research has shown that, compared to American women’s “goal-oriented” behaviour, Japanese women’s actions were often based on social rule. Sumiko Iwao (1993) also points out that Japanese women behave in a “role-directed” rather than in a “goal-directed” fashion. Were the Issei and Shin-Issei women in my study “goal-directed” when they left Japan only to find out that, upon arriving in Canada, their life circumstances forced them to revert to being “role-directed”? It seems to me that they cannot be put into either category as their priorities shifted over the course of their lives. Their life narratives show common gender role transitions: from girlhood, to womanhood, to marriage, to motherhood, to widowhood. Throughout their lives they expanded and strengthened their social bonds, mutually supporting each other while struggling to survive in Canada. They searched for *ikigai* (satisfaction) — a “life worth living for” (Mathews 1996) — and they found it through motherhood (McMahon 1995)

5 They were of the generation that went through two educational systems: the prewar and the postwar. For this reason, they were not very adept at English when they came to Canada. In Japan, English is taught as a second language in Grade 7 (in public schools), the first year of Japanese middle school (chugakko).
and through becoming a part of the Nikkei community.

Mayumi (born in 1952), a Sansei, said that her grandmother became more lively and interesting once her dominant grandfather had died. In her old age, having been freed from her role as a wife, the grandmother had a chance to explore her own interests and dreams. In other words, she shifted her priorities. Midge (born in 1930), a Nisei who pursued a second career after her husband’s death, told me that if her husband were alive she would never have thought of going back to school. Besides, her husband “would not have let her.” She added: “I would have enjoyed our grandchildren with Carl. He would have been a good grandfather and would have enjoyed that. And I would have wanted him to enjoy his old age.”

For the most part, Nisei, Sansei, and Shin-Nisei women’s narratives did not highlight problems with gender; rather, their focus was on exclusion, on not being a part of the country in which they were born. Once in a while, however, when discussing how they were trying to unlearn what their mothers had taught them, they touched on gender roles. For example, by remembering her childhood as involving “a very traditional [Japanese] up-bringing” and indicating how her mother was “very dedicated,” Lillian (born in 1922), a Nisei, differentiated herself from her mother by saying that she is more of a feminist. Yet she often found herself giving in to traditional expectations through sheer force of habit. Since her husband had retired and stayed at home, she tried to create her own life while not neglecting house chores. Haruko (born in 1966), a Shin-Nisei whose biological clock was “ticking away,” made a point similar to Lillian’s. She often caught herself doing a “very traditional thing”: she would stop working whenever her partner came home and start cooking dinner. Although she questioned her own behaviour, she simply reasoned that it was a “woman’s thing” and that she had learned from her mother, who constantly attended to household harmony.
Another Shin-Nisei woman, Nancy (born in 1966), who has a very similar background to Haruko, did not accept the idea that doing housework and making dinner was a “woman’s thing.” Whenever her mother asked her to fetch something for her father, she questioned why she and not her brother should do so. Her mother’s answer, “That’s what girls do,” was never sufficient. Not surprisingly, gender issues often blended with cultural issues: a “Canadian thing” versus a “Japanese thing.” And this, in turn, often expressed itself as a generational issue focused on language. To paraphrase Nancy: “The Japanese language is a source of pain for immigrant children, and the English language is a source of pain for their parents.”

Exclusion

I took my three-months-old daughter to France for half a year due to my husband’s work. My French was less than rudimentary and consisted almost entirely of “s’il vous plait,” “merci,” and “bonjour,” and whatever I could piece together out of a Berlitz French phrase book. My six-month stay in France was an eye-opening experience. This was when I began to think about the Japanese immigrant women I had interviewed and encountered during my fieldwork. Not able to function with the language, I was no longer a mother who could protect her baby from the outside world. I was no longer independent. I had no choice but to depend upon others to survive. I could not make a doctor’s appointment when I needed to. And even when I did manage to get an appointment, someone, my husband or one of our friends, had to come along with me to be an interpreter. Our living quarters were international, and English was the common language. Yet outside of that environment I could not function fully.

That was when I realized how much my second language, English, had become a part of me. That was when I began to observe people around me more carefully in order to compensate for my lack of language skills (just as I had done during my first year in the United States). And that was when I began to see my fieldwork experience in a different light. The data I had collected now had an added dimension — empathy.

(Yuko Shibata)

For Issei women, English was not essential since, during the prewar years, they rarely associated with English-speaking Canadians. Canada was their temporary home. They sent their children to Japanese language schools or back to Japan. Even though they did not need to speak
English they knew its power, its importance, however. They often said to me: "If you know the language in this country, there is nothing to fear. How lucky you are!" And they cited me a Japanese proverb: oni ni kanabo 鬼に金棒 (an invincible demon with a golden stick). In the postwar years English became a necessity. Kumi (born in 1895) missed her dear friend’s funeral because she could not tell the bus driver where she wanted to disembark and she could not read the street signs. At age eighty she asked me to make her some English flash cards so that she would never make the same mistakes again. Another Issei, Hanako (born in 1901), told me of her regret that she had not learned English well enough to contribute more to her community.

For Shin-Issei women, English was essential. When they arrived in Canada there was no Japanese community base as there had been before the Second World War. Some attended English classes, where they met other Japanese immigrants whose situation was similar to theirs, and there they developed many cherished friendships. Disillusioned by their life circumstances, Shin-Issei women searched for comfort and security in motherhood. During this process their cultural and ethnic selves were constantly questioned and challenged not only by themselves but also by their children, who saw the world differently.

Just like many other immigrant families in Canada, the families of Shin-Issei women contained at least two cultural and linguistic subgroups that were segregated along generational lines. These lines grew more marked as their children began school and became even more proficient in English and mainstream Canadian culture. These divisions only intensified when they reached adolescence. There are significant historical differences between Issei mothers and Nisei children (1920s and 1940s), between Nisei mothers and Sansei children (late 1950s - 1970s), and between Shin-Issei mothers and Shin-Nisei children (1970s and 1980s). Some of their experiences, however, were strikingly similar. For example, they all experienced and perceived a sense of alienation, of being excluded from mainstream Canadian society. Indeed, their racial
visibility was a determining factor in who they were.

Immigrant parents did not have much room to explore and question their Japaneseness; however, their children and grandchildren did. The following poem by a Japanese American Nisei describes his exclusion from the country of his birth. He clearly articulates what it is to be “American,” and what he has to say is also relevant to Nikkei and other ethnic minorities.

You call me “Jap,”
And boast, saying you yourself are American.
My hair is black,
My nose, you say, is flat.
You insult and torment;
You say you are my superior
Because you are
American.

American,
If such a thing be true,
By what rights do you designate yourself
American.

In your blue eyes, I see the Swede,
You have the red hair of the Irish,
Your mother’s mother was of Spain,
Your father is from Britain’s soil.

Trace your ancestry;
Were they Indians of America?
By what rights then,
American,
Are you American?  
Because you were born in this land  
Are you American?

I, too, claim this land as my birthplace.  
As much American as you,

I, too,  
Am American.

(Kay Yasui, cited in Kessler 1994:147)

The above poem was written in 1931 by a seventeen-year-old Nisei living in Hood River Valley, Oregon. More than seventy years later, it reverberates in the feelings of Sansei and Shin-Nisei who felt excluded from mainstream Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. Visibility matters. The Nisei who grew up in a segregated world found it difficult to accept that this was the case, yet they were forced to live with it. Nisei parents believed that their Sansei children had "all the advantages" and should be able to become fully Canadian. However, the life narratives of Sansei women show that things were not as easy as their parents had believed. It was very difficult for them, living, as they did, with one foot in both worlds. Their experiences of exclusion were not as blatant as were those of their Nisei parents, but because such exclusion was not "supposed to exist" or be "talked about," it was that much harder for them to bear. Nisei parents often gave their children ambivalent messages, telling them "be proud of your family." Not willing to share their own past they indirectly transmitted to Sansei a sense of insecurity and shame about their cultural heritage. The experiences of the Shin-Nisei children differ from those of the Sansei children because they did not have the same difficulty talking to their parents. They were able to discuss matters of race and exclusion with their Shin-Issei mothers. Shin-Nisei who were married to non-Japanese
Canadians all wanted their mothers to teach their children the Japanese language and about things Japanese. Given the current high intermarriage rate among Sansei and Shin-Nisei, will our visibility remain a problem?

Generational Issues

The principle of “third-generation interest” proposed by Hansen (1938) did not come easily for Sansei due to their parents’ and grandparents’ socialization and wartime experiences. As Satsuko (born in 1906) said, overnight everything the Issei had worked for “disappeared just like bubbles.” On top of their prewar experiences as early settlers, Issei had to deal with being relocated during the war and then being dispersed in 1945-46. This had a devastating effect on Nikkei families. The older Nisei were loyal to their Issei parents and helped them cope with the new environment outside the Japanese community. They themselves tried to establish their own lives. Indeed, the Nisei were preoccupied with rebuilding their niche within a new environment and attempting to be a part of Canadian cultural fabric. They encouraged their Sansei children to be Canadians.

The Sansei’s interest in searching for their cultural/ethnic roots developed slowly. They began searching for answers as to why they felt different, why they felt apart from their Canadian friends, why they sensed both internal and external boundaries separating them from their parents and their friends. Often these feelings were triggered by childhood and adolescent experiences. As various researchers have shown, especially for visible minority adolescents, ethnic identity is a crucial factor (Phinney 1989; Phinney and Chavira 1992). Nikkei adolescents were no exception. They

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6 In giving advice to a Japanese statesman regarding the problem of intermarriage of foreigners and Japanese in 1892, Herbert Spencer writes: “It should be positively forbidden. It is not at root a question of social philosophy. It is at root a question of biology . . . the result is inevitably a bad one in the long run.” He then compared intermarriage with animal cross-breeding and illustrated how the Eurasians in India and indicated the half-breed in America were terrible mistakes. (Hearn 1924 [1904]:529-31).
began to reach out for things Japanese - - things that they at one time rejected or ignored. A few women changed their English names to Japanese names. Bernal and Knight’s (1993) work reveals how the development of ethnic identity in children and adolescents is affected by their parents’ knowledge of native culture and language, and how all this is connected with notions of group identity.

Many Sansei, not being able to gain a positive ethnic or acceptable role model from their Nisei parents and relatives, searched for answers outside of their homes. They learned Japanese and met new immigrants. Some visited Japan, where they continued to search for an identity through meeting relatives and attempting to understand heretofore incomprehensible Japanese family dynamics. They realized that their Nisei parents were indeed “Japanese,” and they found a link that connected them to their ancestral home.

Raised by Shin-Issei women, Shin-Nisei were not socialized in as traditional a fashion as were many of the Sansei women. They did, however, attend Japanese language schools and participate in the Powell Street Festival. Unlike the Nisei and the Sansei, and like the Shin-Issei and Issei, the Shin-Nisei women did not talk about their memories of *oshogatsu* (New Year’s celebrations). Their proficiency in Japanese was important for them as it seemed to affect their sense of themselves as Japanese Canadians. In this they were similar to Sansei women.7 Not having close relatives in Canada, Shin-Nisei women did not associate with their grandparents and relatives as frequently as did Sansei women. Many of them, however, managed to visit Japan often enough to find the role models that they lacked in Canada, thus feeling that they were able to become

7 Their attachment to Japan and Japanese tradition is reflected in their ability to speak Japanese. Mark Mathews (2000:175) argues that, for Japanese, speaking the Japanese language "embodies Japaneseess and Japanese identity." This is because "the Japanese language makes Japanese roots: a Japanese person can choose how to speak- - how politely to speak; how many foreign terms to use."
“whole” persons.

Through gaining their sense of ethnic self, Sansei and Shin-Nisei expanded their contacts not only with mainstream Canadian culture but also with the Nikkei community. This also enabled their parents to explore their cultural roots. Sansei and Shin-Nisei children have observed, however, that their parents were becoming “more Japanese day by day” due to their economic position and their access to technology, both of which were allowing them to gain knowledge from Japan.

Nisei and Shin-Issei mothers compromised and tried not to impose their preferences, ideals, and expectations on their children. They did not want to behave towards the children the way their parents had towards them. Nonetheless, Sansei and Shin-Nisei children were encouraged to pursue higher education, to respect their elders, to work hard, to practise moderation, and to have an eye to propriety.

**Being Japanese Canadian**

What are the factors that bring different generations of Japanese Canadians together? The Issei women in this study came from different regions in Japan. Their cultural knowledge and customs varied according to their place of origin and the social class into which they were born. Women who married men from different prefectures, non-*kunimono*, adapted to their husbands’ dialects and accommodated their customs and traditions (not to mention their idiosyncrasies). Japanese people were attached to their respective parochial tongues rather than to standard Japanese. Many Japanese organizations and churches were set up along local rather than along national ethnic lines. Not surprisingly, patterns of chain migration and settlement proceeded along parochial lines. Nahirny and Fishman (1965:315) point out that immigrants possessed “many different ethnic pasts rather than one national past” and that their attachments to places, songs associated with
specific memories and historic events, and so on attributed to the maintenance and continuity of their personal identities.

Many different Japanese cultures coexisted in the prewar Japanese Canadian community. However, these diverse cultures were standardized during the relocation years. Once the living conditions in government camps in the interior of British Columbia improved, people organized activities, classes, and clubs specializing in Japanese cooking, music, art, and poetry. This was the beginning of a Nikkei tradition — a tradition that we now share with other generations, newcomers, and Canadians. Shimpo (1975), for example, talks about Nikkei cooking and dishes that we often encounter during present day Nikkei festivals. However, immediately after the war not many Japanese Canadians openly shared their tradition with others; rather, they kept it within families and small circles of friends. Japanese Canadianness was hidden for a long time; there was a void, a long period of silence during which Issei and Nisei did not share their past with their children and grandchildren. And Sansei were not encouraged to question or explore their past until the 1970s, when people began to gather materials for the 1977 centennial celebration of the arrival of Japanese in Canada.

An increasing number of new immigrants, along with long-term visitors from Japan (due to Japan’s economic expansion), changed the outlook and composition of Vancouver’s Nikkei community. Postwar immigrants were attracted to, and depended upon, the Japanese Canadian community for their survival in this new country. Some were drawn to the elders, the Issei, who displayed a sense of caring, generosity, and warmth that immigrants had thought the Japanese had

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8 The Japanese Canadian National Museum’s “Community Celebration Dinner,” 15 September 2001, offered us a main course dish along with “heritage dinner” dishes: teriyaki chicken, salmon satsuma age (fish cake), okara (tofu refuse with vegetables), shoyu weiners, osekihan (festive red rice with red beans), fuki no tsukudani (butterbur sprout preserve with soy), nori no tsukudani (nori preserve with soy), nimame (cooked beans with sugar), kazunoko kombu (herring eggs with kelp), and other dishes.
lost a long time ago. Shin-Issei found comfort in helping and listening to the Issei elders’ stories, allowing the old people to compensate for not having been able to share with their own children and grandchildren. Scholarly works on Issei women often portrayed them as stoic, reserved, and silent; on the contrary, I found them very animated and more than willing to share.

A small number of Issei men and women who returned to Vancouver after the war were attracted to the familiar landscape, the Buddhist Church, the Vancouver Japanese Language School, and “Powell Ground” (Oppenheimer Park), where the Asahi baseball team had played and practised. They lived in the vicinity of the old Japantown area because they wanted to recreate a sense of the community they had once known and of which they had once been a part. They chose to live closer to their friends, to speak Japanese, and to share their feelings and past memories with one another. They had little contact with their children or grandchildren because the latter were living in predominantly White English-speaking communities (Shibata 1979). To live with their children would have meant living in a neighbourhood that was alien to them. It would have meant giving up their independence. Like Barbara Myerhoff’s (1978) Jewish elders, Issei men and women were on their own. Many of them were widows/ers and men who, for whatever reasons, had never married.

Young people from Japan were eager to associate with the Issei, and the latter were happy to share their memories with them. The Issei needed curious and sympathetic listeners; they needed to acknowledge their existence by telling their stories. There were not many Issei left in the 1970s, but those who were left were no longer prepared to gloss over the difficulty of their lives in Canada with silence (Kogawa 1981; von Hassel 1987 and 1993). They were very eager to pass on their stories to the younger generation from Japan. And they were the major force behind the success

9 It was the period when Japan, having become a world economic power, was searching for a national identity.
of the Japanese Canadian centennial project exhibition. They were generous, and their circle of friends began to expand. Along with Shin-Issei, they were now being joined by Sansei and Nisei. It was the sound of Japanese and our respect for the Issei that bound the different generations of Japanese Canadians. It was their “Japaneseness,” in all its variations, that resonated with us and that enabled them to address their past. One Nisei woman described how she felt at home when, in the late 1960s, she came to Vancouver and was able to talk with Issei. Eventually she began to associate with them on a regular basis:

   It was just like in old days. I was talking with my mother’s generation. It was a mix of Japanese and English, and some nodding, you know. All these years I did not know that I had this in me and it surprised me. (Fumiko 1996)

The above narrative clearly indicates the comfort zone that Issei women were able to offer other Japanese Canadians. According to another Nisei:

   It was the sounds of our language. Our unique time capsule of the language of the Meiji era; the language of the pioneer immigrant Issei - - our parents, grandparents, the language which breathed all the values of family and a community, and of the self that we know as ourself today, neh . . . (Jesse Nishihata, 1992, Nikkei Voice, Feb. 2001)

It was not only the sound of the language but also the mode of behaviour, the patterns of interpersonal relations associated with the language, that was part of our culture and tradition. It was something we had been familiar with since we were young (Goodman 1958). Our comfort zone was created by a sense of inclusion, a sense that we belonged to each other. This comfort zone, this “imagined community” (Anderson 1983), was a product of sharing familiar sounds and actions.

   Without exception, the Nisei, Sansei, and Shin-Nisei women’s narratives addressed the 1977 centennial celebration, the 1988 signing of the Redress Agreement, and HomeComing’92: (a Vancouver conference dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese Canadian relocation). These historical events bound the Nikkei community together. Their visibility had once resulted in
their exclusion from mainstream Canada; now it was resulting in their official inclusion.

**Power of Narrative**

Values that somewhere along the way, you know, just become a part of me, yeah.

(Nancy 1997)

During the process of sharing our personal histories and narratives we learn to internalize our culture — socialization, acculturation, accommodation, and assimilation are all part of this process. Sharing life narratives enables one to objectify one’s experiences and, thus, to allow others to enter one’s life. It is also an act of democratization, of autobiography. Everybody wants to be heard and be acknowledged by others.

Nikkei women’s narratives have shown us how Japanese immigrants and their children and grandchildren experienced the loss of their original culture, and how this compelled them to maintain what they could of it through their experiences with their families and friends. The narratives show how, being a visible minority and then being categorized as “enemy aliens,” Japanese Canadians were excluded from mainstream Canadian society. And they tell of their struggles. During their adolescence, many Nikkei women searched for role models and a cultural sensibility that differed from that advocated by their parents. They questioned how “Japanese” they were, how “Canadian.” Sometimes they felt the need to cling to the old; sometimes they were desperate to seek the new.

For a couple of decades there was a historical disconnection between the Issei, Nisei, and Sansei. It was only in the 1970s that the Issei and Nisei began to speak of and share their past with one another and with the Sansei. This opened a channel among the different groups and generations of Japanese Canadians. Sharing narratives enabled Nikkei women to bring together different generations and groups (Freeman 1997:174). It also enabled them to make sense of the
past in terms of the present.

Sharing narratives offered Nikkei women an opportunity to create a common space. It enabled them to learn to trust others by understanding differences and by establishing interpersonal relations and social networks based on a notion of moral order/respect. The Issei depended upon this deep-rooted concept of old Japanese ethics when they struggled to adapt to Canada, and Nikkei depended upon it when opening up to one another. As we have observed from the narratives, we learned from each other and need to be acknowledged by each other in order to be who we are. The women’s narratives show how, to varying degrees, On (moral indebtedness) and Giri (mutual obligation) still form a fundamental part of their interpersonal relationships. Sometimes it functioned to restrict their actions; sometimes it functioned to provide comfort and stability (Thurnwald 1932).

Sharing narratives enables Nikkei to understand how and why they have arrived at certain positions, how and why they might wish to maintain them, and how and why they might wish to modify them. This type of understanding must extend beyond the Nikkei community to those whose lives have affected and overlapped ours. Our visibility is a double-edged sword: it allows us to come together, but it also sets us apart. We must learn to appreciate both sameness and diversity and, in so doing, create a space in which Nikkei and non-Nikkei can work together to the benefit of both.

In presenting these ethnographic sketches of Nikkei women, I have attempted to make a complex world more coherent. My lived experiences have overlapped with those of different generations of Nikkei women. Writing this dissertation has been a very personal experience. And it has been my life’s project for more than a few decades. I often catch myself thinking about the Nikkei women I have encountered during my life, their voice, laughter, facial expressions, comments, advice, and, above all, their generosity. I shall conclude by sharing with the reader my
thoughts on Oshogatsu -- New Year's celebrations. It was written a few years ago, when I had begun to think about my aging parents in Japan (a topic often discussed among Issei and Shin-Issei women).

Oshogatsu

I worked so hard for this oshogatsu. Funny how I felt like cooking all those things... it might have been that I tried to convince myself that my mother had resigned from her life. Snowy winters in Sapporo are hard for elders. She began to live with my eldest sister this winter. Mother can no longer “take care” of my father, and he is living in a special care facility. No more oshogatsu visits with my parents. What a sad tale.

Probably I had felt that there was no home in Sapporo to return to and had decided that it was time to start my own. It was also my daughter’s first return home from college. I might have felt that I wanted to do all this for her, to show my affection with food, just like many Issei women had done with their children and grandchildren. And, of course, whenever I returned home my mother used to ask me: naniga tabetai 何が食べたい？[What dishes shall I make for you, Yuko?]

I don’t know how much time I spent shopping for the special ingredients. Is this a tradition I wanted to continue? Memories of the oshogatsu in we spent in Sapporo with my parents flashed back and forth while I was cooking. Yes, those memories are really the past, they will no longer take place in real life. With my mother’s retirement, she is no longer “mother” or ”grandmother” to us -- who waited on us whenever we visited Sapporo. Only in our memories will we ever experience this again. It is truly sad to think about it.

I now have to take over the torch. I must accept responsibility for knowing about Japanese traditional food for the New Year, and I must keep this fire going until my daughter takes over. But I never know whether my daughter wants to continue this. Is this something that every woman goes through, or is it just me? I remembered that one Nisei woman told me that her daughters were not crazy enough to want to continue the tradition of oshogatsu because it is so much work. Is this something that I am pushed to do by my cultural heritage? Or is this a product of my own
desire to eat something from my childhood, something that brings back my past and some sentimental notion of my "self"? Or am I getting old and beginning to spend an inordinate amount of time reminiscing about my childhood? Or am I simply missing the food?

This year, for the first time, on New Year's Eve I replaced the Christmas wreath with the New Year's wreath: three tangerines, pine, and bamboo. I wanted something different from the Christmas red and green. What was in my mind when I was decorating? The voice of Mayu, a Sansei woman, was echoing in my head: "Odd number for the happy occasion." I added one more tangerine. I did not realize until I began to arrange the wreath that the number was important. Two looked odd and uneven. I remembered Mayu telling me how she always unconsciously chooses odd-numbered ingredients whenever she cooks. I can still hear her saying, "You know, the even numbers are for funerals -- bad omen, you know." My mother never mentioned this. I finished up the New Year's wreath by adding another tangerine. After all, there are three in the family.

Is my behaviour particularly Japanese, trying to welcome the New Year? Did I do this in order to kejime (set things right)? Or was I just trying to continue a tradition? Why did I do this? Even my husband mentioned that I spent a lot of time in the kitchen, the longest he had ever known. Was I taking the torch from my mother? Did I want to show my daughter something about "home" by offering her special food for the New year, oshogatsu? I wonder. Then I remembered how Nisei and Sansei women often mentioned their memories of Oshogatsu while Issei, Shin-Issei, and Shin-Nisei did not. Was it that I wanted to bring my memories of oshogatsu at my parents' to my daughter so that she could remember as well?

Being away from home. Japan. Probably I wanted to recreate that environment. At Christmas time we hear Christmas songs, see decorations, and smell food everywhere we go. But for the New Year, I have to create the ambience of Japanese New Year -- at least the food, a minimum requirement for the occasion. Yet I knew it was not the only reason why I spent so much time for this year's oshogatsu. It had to do with the poignant realization of my mother's "resignation" and of how she so quickly lost her autonomy. A lively, independent woman had become a docile, dependent woman. This is the reality that I have to accept. From now on our roles are reversed.
My mother is no longer an independent woman, either mentally and physically. Is her physical limitation affecting her way of thinking, her sense of self? Not able to do what she used to do, she no longer asserts herself. It is both sad and alarming to see someone change so drastically.

Even her photos reflect her lack of self. She is dependent upon my eldest sister, an official caretaker. Mother cries on the phone, feeling pity for herself. Her husband’s memory is slipping away, and she can no longer depend on him to make decisions for them. Old age is creeping into their lives and ours. An intriguing family dynamic is evolving within a three-daughter family. The oldest one reluctantly moves back to the town where her parents live. She begins to take over my parents’ affairs without talking to her younger siblings.

Putting out the dishes for the New Year’s meal, I suddenly realized why Japanese china sets come in fives rather than fours. Four is shi – death. And even numbers are not auspicious.
Glossary (Japanese and Nikkei words that appear only once in the text, where they are defined, are omitted from the glossary)

Booshin: boss  
Enryo: reserve; v. enryo-suru: be reserved, hold back  
Gaman: endurance; patience; perseverance  
Ganbari: term of endurance  
Hakujin: literally "white person" meaning Caucasian person/s  
Gaijin: Literally "outsider" meaning a foreigner. Politer term is Gaikokujin "person from foreign country"  
Ijusha: immigrants  
Imin: immigrants  
Issei: first-generation from Japan  
Kika-Nisei: second generation with formal education in Japan  
Kenjinkai: prefectural association  
Nihongo gakko: Japanese language school  
Nikkei: person of Japanese origin  
Nisei: second generation  
Obasan: aunt/aunts or generic term for women  
Obaachan: grandmother or elderly woman/women  
Obon: the Bon festival of the Dead, August 13 to 16  
Ochigosan: a child in a festival procession  
Ojis: uncle/uncles or generic term for men  
Ojiichan: grandfather or elderly man/men  
Ohaka: grave  
Ohaka maeri: visiting family grave to pay respect to one’s deceased relatives  
Oshogatsu: a celebration of the first three days or the first week of January  
Otera: Buddhist temple or Buddhist church  
Sansei: grandchildren of Issei  
Shichigo: the festival for boys and girls of three, boys of five, and girls of seven  
Shikataganai: it cannot be helped  
Shin-Issei: postwar immigrant/s. Sometimes called ijuuusha.  
Shin-Nisei: children of Shin-Issei
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Appendix A:

Five Groups of Japanese Canadian Women

**Issei women** (Prewar immigrant women: pioneer women)

Most of Japanese women who immigrated prior to World War II came to Canada in the 1910s to late 1920s at the developmental stage of the Japanese community in British Columbia. Some came as "picture brides" through Prefectural Association (Kenjin-kai) matchmakers and some with their mothers and siblings to join their immigrant fathers.

A number of my sample population (15) had higher education, jogakko (equivalent of present day junior college), at a time when not many women had a university education in Japan and their education exceeded that of their husbands. An age difference of ten to fifteen years was not uncommon. Because of this, quite a number of them were widows in the 1970s-1980s.

They had lived in Canada for over half a century, but in the mid 1980s the language and the cultural knowledge they knew best were Japanese and "Japanese culture." Although many had tried to learn English and acquired Canadian citizenship in the early 1950s they identified more closely with Japan and Japanese culture. Unfortunately a majority of Issei did not witness the result of the Redress movement that began in the early 1980s and culminated successfully in September 1988.

**Nisei women** (Canadian-born second generation)

These women are the Canadian-born children of the Issei; they were born between the late 1910s to the mid 1930s and were socialized in southwestern British Columbia (i.e. Steveston, Vancouver and other coastal towns of B. C.). They were citizens without the franchise until 1949. At the time of the internment in 1942, many of them were children and teenagers, and the older Nisei were in their early 20s. The majority of older Nisei women married Japanese Canadians. They are old enough to have fully experienced the Japanese Canadian history of dispersal, internment and the postwar resettlement in their own country.

Members of this generation are known as "the survivors" who lived through the dispossession of the 1940s. They are, by definition, those who were eligible to receive the individual compensation of $21,000 under the Redress Agreement of 1988. They were the participants in the celebrations; the 1977 centennial of Japanese Canadians, the 1988 Redress Agreement and the 1992 Home'Coming conference which was held in Vancouver, fifty years after their dispersal from the Pacific Coast. This group is rapidly aging and their experiences should be documented further.

**Sansei Women** (Third generation of Japanese Canadians)

They were born during the mid 1930s to the late 1960s. They experienced greater freedom and educational opportunities which were not available to their mothers. The older Sansei who were born before and during the relocation period (before March 1949) were also eligible to receive individual compensation under the Redress Agreement of 1988.
The intermarriage rate among Sansei is over 90 percent (Kobayashi 1989). Due to their parents’ and grandparents’ silence about the past, many did not know about their ethnic history or cultural heritage until the time of the 1977 Japanese Canadian centennial celebration. Working with Issei and Shin-Issei, they were the major force that rebuilt “Japantown” in the late 1970s in Vancouver and began the redress movement in the early 1980s.

**Shin-Issei Women** (Postwar immigrant Japanese women)

They were born in the early 1930s to 1950s in pre- and postwar Japan and socialized before and after the war. At the time of Japan’s defeat in W W II in 1945, the older Shin-Issei women were in their preteens. Sometimes they are also called *Ijusha* (*iju*=migration, and *sha*=person) instead of *Imin* (immigrants), a term used for prewar immigrants which has a somewhat negative connotation. Shin-Issei women came to Canada during the late 1950s and the 1970s as wives of Kika-Nisei (Canadian-born Japanese sent back to Japan for educational purposes), or repatriated Japanese Canadians who came in the late 1950s to the early 1960s, and as independent technical immigrants who emigrated in the late 1960s to the late 1970s.

The older Shin-Issei women who married Kika-Nisei men maintain, however, the values and norms of their home, Japan. The younger Shin-Issei women who came in the 1970s participated in reviving the Nikkei community “Japantown” in the 1970s along with Issei and Sansei in Vancouver’s Japanese Canadian community. The postwar immigrant population now makes up one fourth of the present Japanese Canadian population in Canada (Census Canada 1986). Kobayashi’s demographic study indicates that the postwar population makes up 25.9 per cent of Japanese Canadians in the Greater Vancouver area (1989:54).

**Shin-Nisei women** (Children of Shin-Issei)

They are the children born during the 1960s and 1970s of postwar Japanese immigrant women and Kika-Nisei (Canadian-born second generation who were sent to Japan for formal education), repatriated Nisei (who were repatriated after the war to Japan), and technical immigrant (*gijutsu imin*) fathers. For my study I included a woman who came to Canada as a young girl with her parents. The majority of these women are in their late teens and 30s.
Appendix B

Original Questionnaire (Japanese) 1976
The Study of Japanese Women in Greater Vancouver

No. ________

バーモンデ市の日本女性に関する研究

回答者 ①名前  
②住所  
③出生地  
④年令  ⑤経歴  
⑥職業  
⑦在日期間  
⑧在日種類及び国籍

調査期間

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>日付</th>
<th>時間</th>
<th>合計</th>
<th>場所</th>
<th>その他</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

調査員

コメント

________________________
________________________
________________________
________________________
バーナー市内に於ける日本女性の研究

1. 年令
2. 出生地
3. 性の種類及び国籍
4. 結婚
  ①未婚
  ②既婚
  ③別居
  ④離婚
  ⑤死別
⑥その他

5. 同居の人々（同じ台所設備を使っている人々）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>石 前</th>
<th>年令性</th>
<th>本人との関係</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. 職業

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>日 本</th>
<th>カナダ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>本人</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>配偶者</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

他 - ①カナダでの生活はこちらに来てから見つかったか。
②何さんがサポートで。
③無職で仕事したー希望の場面、何が希望と付けていられるか。
④子供
⑤主人が嫌がるから
⑥不条
⑦仕事がみつからない。
7. 学歴（例：旧中卒、旧高卒、新高卒及び公私の公務）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>本人</th>
<th>配偶名</th>
<th>子供</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. 兄弟姉妹は何人いらっしゃいますか。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>年令</th>
<th>性</th>
<th>学歴</th>
<th>統柄</th>
<th>職業及</th>
<th>現住所</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. カリフには何年住んでいますか。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>きな年</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

※一世代に何人は
①戦前 住んでいた所

②戦争中

③戦後

※ 一生代むしろ二代か

①はい

②いいえ

その他理由
10. カナダには ①直接 Dedicated
②アメリカを通てきに
③その他 (詳しく)

11. カナダにはとあるか親類の方がいますか。
①はい
②いいえ
都市の名前

12. 何度日本に帰りましたか。

13. 入国の目的は①バケーション
②家庭の事情
③その他

既婚者に対する質問

14. カナダには独身できましたか。
①はい
②いいえ
理由: 仕事, 学業, 健康, 呼び寄せ

15. 結婚生活何年ですか。

16. どのようにして御主人とお会いになりましたか。
①お見合い
②家族
③友人
④学校
⑤仕事
⑥現結婚
⑦その他
17. カナダに来る事について配偶者と話し合いましたか。
①全然
②少し
③たくさん

18. あなたの方の立場は。
①大赞成
②赞成
③中立
④反対
理由

未婚者に対する観点

19. どのような動機でカナダにきましたか。
①仕事
②学問
③旅行
④他
理由

20. 彼両親と話し合いましたか。
①全然
②少し
③たくさん

21. 彼両親の方の立場は。
①大赞成
②赞成
③中立
④反対
理由

22. 現在、どんな相談相手になってくれるような友人かいますか。
①はい
理由
友人、学校、職場、その他
②いいえ
理由
自分にですか。
白人がですか。
カナダ人がですか。

②いいえ
23. 女居、離婚又は死別してとられ、引き続きますか。

24. どちらかが現在つき合っている方かいますか。
   ①はい  ②いいえ

25. どのような問題に直面しましたか。

26. 誰が家計簿の予算を決めますか。

27. 予算が特に決まっている場合、誰がどの場で予算を決めますか。
   ①本人  ②配偶者  ③両方

28. （日本で結婚した方）上の質問26、27に関し日本ではどうでしたか。
   ①同じ  ②変えた  ③どうにか変わったか
   理由———
29. 小切手帳を持っていますか。
   ①聡人  ②配偶者と同じ  ③持っていない
   ④必要なし  ⑤その他

30. 福金通帳を持っていますか。
   ①聡人  ②配偶者と同じ  ③持ってない  ④その他

31. 自分の家を持っていませんか。
   ①はい  —— 法律上の持ち主は誰ですか？
   ②いいえ

32. 何か不動産をお持ちではありませんか。
   ①はい  —— 法律上の持ち主は誰ですか？
   ②いいえ

33. 現在住んでいる家の状態。
   ①大きさ  —— 部屋の数
   家のまわりの土地の配分
   ②コンディション

   ②電気家電用品：炊飯器、洗濯機、トースター、冷蔵庫、
   よく使っているその他

【日本の習慣】

34. 週に何度ほど日本食を食べますか。
   ①朝食1/3  ②昼食1/2  ③夕食1/3

35. 病気の時、何か食べやすいか。
   ①日本薬  ②カジュアルなもの  ③同様

36. どんな日本薬をよく使われますか。
37. 家の中でも靴を脱ぎますか。
①はい  ②いいえ

38. お客様がきた時、靴を脱いでもらうしますか。
①はい  ②いいえ  ③お客様が自分で

39. 年に何度ほど「きもの」を着ますか。
①2〜3  ②4〜7  ③7〜10  ④10以上
どのような会合に

40. 洋服はどちらよりよく使用しますか。
①日本製  ②カフテ製  ③両方

41. お化粧品はどちらよりよく使用しますか。
①日本製  ②カフテ製  ③両方

42. つきのような場合、英語でどの程度つかいますか。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>100%</th>
<th>75%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>25%</th>
<th>0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>昼の物</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>仕事</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>近所の人と</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>家の中</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>随所(新聞,雑誌)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>友人と</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他者</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
43. どんな新聞及び雑誌をお読みですか。

44. ラジオ日本語放送はお聞きになりますか。
   ①はい  ②いいえ
   理由

45. カナダにくる前、英語を何年勉強しましたか。

46. カナダにきてから、現在英語学校ならではのクラスに入ることかありませんか。
   ① はい  ②いいえ
   理由
   ①現在生活で英語が必要だな
   ②子供におすすめ時間がない
   ③その他

47. 各地英語に関わる問題。
社会的活動

48. どのよう介会及ぶクラブに属していますか。

49. このよう介に会員になりましたか。
   ① 自分で会えで
   ② 子供を通じて
   ③ 配偶者を通じて
   ④ 友人
   ⑤ その他

50. この程度会社で時間をすししますか。にとえば 映画、会合、スポーツ、コンサートなど。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>活動</th>
<th>誰と一緒</th>
<th>月に何度ほど</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>スポーツ (スキー、ボーリング、ゴルフ、その他)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ごらく (映画、劇、その他)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>その他 (クラブ会合、スポーツクラス、お酒まち)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51. (小人子供のいる才)週に何度ペーブニッカードをお使いますか。
   ① 0-1  ② 2-3  ③ 4回以上
   ④ その他

52. 月に何度ほど友人とも夕食に
   回お茶に

53. 友人は主に
   ① 日本人
   ② カタカナ人及び他人扱
   ④ その他
夫婦及心親子間係

54. 家庭に関係仕事も伴う人間としているが。
   ①はい  ②いいえ

55. ①の場合、どのような面で
   ①食事作り  ②おそうじ  ③おやわん洗い
   ④おせんたく  ⑤食料品購入  ⑥その他

56. 週に多少のくらい共同でしますか。仕事も10とすると。
   ①はい  ②いいえ  ③なし  ④少なかった理由

57. 子供のためを中心に共同ででしょう。
   ①はい  ②いいえ

58. カタログに出てくる、余る人の家庭に関係仕事の参加か。
   変わりましたか。
   ①多くはった  ②同じ  ③少なくなったり
   理由

59. 子供達の学習をみてある程度が。
   ①はい  ②いいえ  ③理由

60. 子供達の元気と相談したりしますか。
   ①はい  ②いいえ

61. 定年後の計画は
   ①老人ホーム  ②子供達と同居
   ③子供達と同居を望む  ④④と⑤のコミュニケーション
   理由
Appendix C

Questionnaire 1976
The Study of Japanese Women in Greater Vancouver

No. _____
Respondent Name: ________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

Birth Place: __________________________________________________________________

Age: _____ Marital Status: ______

Occupation: ________________________________

No. of Years living in Canada: ____________________________________

Type of Visa, Citizenship: ________________________________

Research Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of Hours</th>
<th>Total hours</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Interviewer: ________________________________

Comments: __________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
Respondent No________

1. Age________

2. Birth Place__________________________

3. Type of Visa and Citizenship__________________________

   e) Widow  f) Other

5. Family members/Cohabitants (people who share kitchen facilities)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Relation (to respondent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JAPAN</th>
<th>CANADA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent</td>
<td>a) full-time/part-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) job description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other a) Did you find your job after coming to Canada?  
   b) How?  
   c) Respondent who do not hold down a job but wish to obtain one:  
   What are the factors which prevent you from working outside?
1) Children 2) My husband does not want me to work 3) Language barrier 4) Cannot find a job

7. Educational background
   Respondent:
   Spouse:
   Children:

8. How may siblings do you have?
   Age/ Sex/Educational background/ Relation/ Occupation and Current Address
   1) 
   2) 
   3) 
   4) 

9. How long have you been living in Canada?
   Year of Arrival ________________ Season ________________
   Total ________________

   *For Issei women:
   1. Where did you live before the war:
   2. During the war:
   3. After the war:

9’. Do you plan to live in Canada permanently?
   1. Yes 2. No (if No, please explain why)

10. Did you come to Canada 1) Directly; 2) via USA; 3) From other place (give details)

11. Do you have relatives in Canada? 1) Yes (where and relationship) 2) No

12. How many times did you return to Japan since your arrival in Canada?

13. Purpose of the trips?
   1) Vacation 2) Family Affairs 3) Other

Questions for Married women
14. Did you come to Canada as a single woman?
   1) Yes  Reason: work, schooling, travelling,
“Yobiyose” (relative sponsored), other

2) No

15. How long have you been married?

16. How did you meet your husband?
   1) Through “Omiai” (matchmaker) 2) Through Family 3) Through Friends
   4) At School 5) At work 6) “Shashin-kon” (picture exchange) 7) Other

17. Did you discuss about emigrating to Canada with your husband?
   1) None 2) Little 3) A lot

18. What was your position about the matter?
   1) Fully agree 2) Agree 3) Neutral 4) Opposed 5) Very opposed
   *if #5, state reasons.

**Questions for Single Women**

19. What was your motivation to come to Canada?
   1) Job 2) Academic reasons 3) Travelling 4) Yobiyose 5) Other

20. Did you talk with your parents about it?
   1) None 2) A little 3) A lot

21. What was their position?
   1) Fully agree 2) Agree 3) Neutral 4) Opposed 5) Very opposed
   *if #5, state reason

22. Do you have close friends with whom you can talk about your troubles?
   1) Yes How did you meet her/him/them?
      Through friends, at school, at work, other.

   2) No

**Questions for women who are separated, divorced or widowed**

23. How long have you been since you were separated, divorced or widowed?

23′ What kind of problems did you encounter at the time?

24. Are you dating someone now?
   1) Yes 2) No
Questions for all women

25. Income (monthly)

$ 250/ 400/ 550/ 700/ 850/ 1000/ 1150/ 1500/ 2000

Respondent
Spouse
Children
Other

Total: 

26. Who decides your family budget?

Food / Clothes/Living/Medical/ Education/Savings/Leisure

Respondent
Spouse
Both

27. If there is no fixed budget, who decides?
1) Consent   2) Respondent   3) Spouse

28. For women who were married in Japan,
in Questions #26 and 27, is there any difference in practice?
1) Same   2) Changed
* If changed, how did it change and what were the reasons for the change?

29. Do you own a cheque book?
1) Individual   2) Joint account   3) Do not have one
4) Not necessary   5) Other

30. Do you have access to a bank account?
1) Individual   2) Joint account   3) Do not have one
4) Other

31. Do you own a house?
1) Yes   Who is the legal owner?
2) No

32. Do you own property?
1) Yes   Who is the legal owner?
2) No

33. Description of the house
1) Size No. of rooms/ allocation of land
2) Condition
3) Household appliances: dishwasher, washer and dryer, deep freezer, other
Japanese Customs
34. How often do you have Japanese meals per week?
   1) Breakfast (0-1 time, 2-3 times, 4 times or more)
   2) Lunch (0-1 time, 2-3 times, 4 times or more)
   3) Dinner (0-1 time, 2-3 times, 4 times or more)

35. When you get sick, eg. light cold, what kinds of medicine do you take?
   1) Japanese medicine  2) Canadian medicine  3) Both

36. What kind of Japanese medicine do you often use?

37. Do you take off your shoes in the house?  1) Yes  2) No

38. Do you request your guests to do the same?  1) Yes  2) No  3) Guests take off by themselves

39. How often do you put on kimono, per year?  0-1 time, 2-3 times, 4 times or more *if so, on what kinds of occasion?

40. For your clothes, which brand of clothes do you wear more often?
   1) Japanese brand  2) Canadian brand  3) Both

41. As for your cosmetics, which brand do you use the most?
   1) Japanese brand  2) Canadian brand  3) Both

Language
42. In the following circumstances, how much English do you use?
   100%  75%  50%  25%  0%
   1) Shopping
   2) Work place
   3) Neighbour
   4) At home
   5) Reading (Newspaper and magazines)
   6) Friends
   7) Other

43. Which newspaper or magazines do you read?

44. Do you listen to Japanese radio?  1) Yes  2) No
   Reason(s)________________________

45. How many years did you study English before coming to Canada?
46. Did you take ESL classes or attend other English schools in Canada?
   1) Yes  At where and for how long?

   2) No  Reason  a) There is no need to learn English
         b) No time due to children
         c) Other

47. Do you have any other problems with English?


Social activities
48. What kind of clubs do you belong to?
   1)  
   2)  
   3)  

49. How did you become a member?
   1) Own initiative  2) Through children  3) Through spouse
   4) Through friends  5) Other

50. How much time do you spend going out, watching a movie,
    attending meetings, playing sports, going to concerts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>With whom</th>
<th>How often, per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Sports</td>
<td>(skiing, bowling, golfing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Amusement</td>
<td>(concert, movie, plays)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Other</td>
<td>(Club meeting, English Class Hobby classes onaraimono)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
51. (Women with small children) How often do you hire a babysitter per week? 1) 0-1 time 2) 2-3 times 3) more than 4 times
   Reason(s):

52. How often do you have people over for dinner/tea?

53. Are your friends 1) Japanese only 2) Canadian and other ethnic groups 3) Both

54. Do you divide your house chores with your husband? 1) Yes 2) No

55. If Yes, in what areas?
   1) Cooking  2) Cleaning  3) Washing dishes  4) Laundry  5) Grocery shopping  6) Other

56. How often do you house chores together per week?
   10 = ___(respondent) + ___(spouse) + ___(children)

57. Do you look after your children together? 1) Yes 2) No

58. Do you think your husband's housework participation has changed since your arrival in Canada? 1) Increased 2) Same 3) Decreased
   Reason:

59. Do you check your children's homework? 1) Yes 2) No
   Reason(s):

60. Do you consult with your children's teachers? 1) Yes 2) No

61. Plans for your retirement/old age 1) Old age home 2) Live with your children 3) Wish to live with your children 4) Combination of 1, 2, and 3
   Reasons:
Appendix D

1996-97 Interview Guidelines

The main aim of life narrative collection is to gain an understanding, to trace a gradual shift in Japanese Canadian women’s interpretation of Nikkei culture and ethnicity. For each interview, I plan to ask Nikkei women to describe their life up to the present and to cover the following aspects of their life. The ordering will vary from woman to woman, and these guidelines will constantly be modified according to the individual narrator, and as new aspects and categories of their life themes emerge and others become less central. With the consent of each woman the interview will be recorded.

I shall begin with a question “Can you tell me about your life; who you are; where you were born…” After getting a general idea of the woman’s current life status (where does she live now; where did she live as a child, a young woman; how long has she been living in the area; if working, where and what kind of work does she do), I will then ask the woman to describe a typical week-day and week-end and try to gain a sense of how long things have been going on this way. Once a clear enough picture emerges to elicit major/recurring themes, I will attempt to find out:

• Why the woman focused on these themes;
• The degree of satisfaction/conflict/anxiety she had experienced from the process;
• How much things have changed; when and under what circumstances (at what age) did it occur;
• What important “marker events/turning point” signified changes;
• Does she expect some more changes in the future?

1. Sense of Self in Society/History

• To what extent is the woman aware of her ethnicity? How positive or negative is she towards her ethnicity? How did it change and what does the change mean to the woman?

• When and under what situations did she feel she was a Japanese/Japanese Canadian/Canadian? Was it positive or negative?

• To what extent does the woman think she is different from her parents/mother/grandmother in having the above views?
• What is the most important event and who is the most important person in her life?

• What does she know about and how does she describe other Japanese Canadian women: Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Shin-Issei, and Shin-Nisei?

• Cultural knowledge regarding Canada/Japan

• Political awareness regarding Canada/Japan

2. Sense of Self in Family

• Relationship with spouse (present/past or projected);

• Relationship with mother/father; grandmother/ grandfather; grandchildren; relatives; what language spoken;

• What kinds of disciplines/values did she receive from her parents and relatives; What aspects has she rejected; If changed, how and when did they change? What aspects had she retained and transmitted to or intends to transmit to her children?

• What were/are her concerns, worries, dreams, expectations of her children/daughters in particular;

• What kind of people are the woman’s parents? Is there financial interdependency?

• Gender and age of siblings; Who is/are the closest sibling(s) and why?

• Family episodes.

3. Relationships with Friends and Extra-familial Involvement

• Special person/friends in the woman’s life: past and present? Were/are they Japanese/Japanese Canadian/Canadian?

• Extent of peer friendships;

• Work - Is it a “career”? Or just a “job”? How does she describe “career/job”?

• Memberships in groups and organizations;

• Hobbies, leisure activities, and daydreams.