

**From Harbour to Harvest:  
The Diverse Paths of Japanese-Canadians to Landownership,  
Farming, and the Making of Community in the Fraser Valley,  
1904-1942**

by

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## ABSTRACT

From 1904 and 1942, over 2000 Japanese-Canadians settled in the farming communities of Mission and Maple Ridge in British Columbia, Canada. Most first generation Japanese-Canadians, or *issei*, came to farming after working an average of ten years as labourers, mainly in the resource industries. Drawing on a database of 135 farmers, this study looks at the occupational paths of *issei* men and women to landownership, farming, and the making of community. It argues that the occupational choices reflect, first, their resistance to the oppressive and discriminatory policies and attitudes of the dominant white society and, second, their assertion of control over their own lives and over the shaping of their rural transnational communities.

The first chapter reviews the historiography and background to Japanese-Canadian settlement of the Fraser Valley with an emphasis on the social, cultural, and ethnic contexts. This gradual movement reflected the response of the *issei* to their experience of work and life in Canada prior to becoming landowning farmers.

The second chapter focuses on the occupational paths of *issei* men and their reasons for gravitating to landownership and farming. It draws on their experience and choices as individuals who were part of a marginalized and racialized visible minority.

The third chapter examines the diverse and difficult occupational paths of *issei* women who shared fully in the establishment and maintenance of the family farm. It also discusses ways in which *issei* women contributed to the development of Fraser Valley communities and participated in the translation and negotiation of culture within rural society.

The final chapter looks at the making of community in the Fraser Valley as an outgrowth of occupational paths and an ongoing dynamic process that was subject to the guidance of *issei* leaders who spoke English and understood Canadian culture. Occupational paths continued to change and expand to meet the needs of both family and community. Further, the economic interdependence that developed between *issei* and white farmers, mainly through marketing cooperatives, promoted ongoing interaction, cultural overlap, and cooperation.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Historiography and Background

While much has been written about the expulsion and internment of Japanese-Canadians in British Columbia during the Second World War, a great deal less has been written about their involvement in Canadian life during the early decades of the twentieth century. Most scholarly historical accounts look at the experience of coastal families involved in fishing, urban-based businesses, and unskilled labour. They also tend to concentrate on the tragic disruption of these communities and the victimization associated with the removal of Japanese-Canadians from the west coast in 1942.<sup>1</sup> None of the previous scholarship focuses on the paths and choices of a wide range of individual Japanese-Canadians from their arrival in Canada to the establishment of their own farms and rural transnational communities in the Fraser Valley.<sup>2</sup> This study addresses questions of the movement of first

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<sup>1</sup> See Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978), W. Peter Ward, *The Japanese in Canada*, Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1982, and Patricia Roy, et.al., *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese During the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Using the work of William Alonso, "Citizenship, Nationality, and Other Identities," *Journal of International Affairs* 48:2 (Winter 1995) 595, I define transnational communities as "solidaristic communities within a host country" which maintain bonds with their country of origin, particularly regarding ethnic traditions and values, while adopting some aspects of the host culture in my article, "Transnational Communities: Japanese Canadians of the Fraser Valley, 1904-1942," *BC Studies* 134 (Summer 2002) 35-70. In the case of Japanese-Canadian farmers, permanent settlement as well as the rural aspect of their communities set them apart from many Japanese immigrants engaged in migratory work in the resources industries. See also Peter Kivisto, "Theorizing Transnational Immigration: A Critical Review of Current Efforts," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24:4 (July 2001) 549-77. Regarding Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese-Peruvian transnational communities, see Takeyuki (Gaku) Tsuda, "When Identities Become Modern: Japanese Emigration to Brazil and the Global Contextualization of Identity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24:3 (May 2001) 412-432 and Ayumi Takenaka, "Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences: The Return Migration



generation Japanese-Canadians, or *issei*, to farming, landownership, and the making of community in the Fraser Valley prior to the Second World War. It argues that the occupational choices made by Japanese-Canadian farmers reflect, first, their resistance to oppressive and discriminatory policies and attitudes of the dominant white society and, second, their assertion of control over their own lives and over the shaping of their rural transnational communities.<sup>3</sup> Thus, even within the limitations imposed upon them as a marginalized, visible minority, they exercised choice and agency both in their individual pursuits and later in their efforts to build community. The history of Japanese-Canadian settlement in the Fraser Valley is unique to Canadian migration, labour, and social history.

The gaps in this history need to be filled for a number of reasons. Firstly, Japanese-Canadian migration and settlement patterns, particularly in rural agricultural areas, were significantly different from other Asian and European groups. For example, in contrast to Chinese and Indian immigrants, Japanese immigrants found it easier to bring wives or “picture brides” to Canada and to establish families and family farms early in the

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and the Transformation of Ethnicity of Japanese Peruvians,” *America Behavioral Scientist* 42:9 (June/July 1999) 1459-75. For a look at Japanese-Brazilian and to a lesser extent Japanese-Peruvian ethnicity and community structure, see Christopher A. Reichl, “Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988,” *Ethnohistory* 42:1 (Winter 1995) 31-62.

<sup>3</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2004, two meanings of oppression explain the use of the term in this thesis. The first is “the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, harsh, or wrongful manner,” as can be seen in the policies and actions of, for example, governments and employers against Japanese immigrants. Second, oppression is also the experience of “being oppressed or weighed down.” It is a kind of “bodily or mental uneasiness or distress” resulting from discriminatory policies, practices, and attitudes. Job restrictions and low wage rates, for example, were forms of discrimination that contributed to the Japanese-Canadian experience of oppression.

twentieth century. Diplomatic relations and alliances between Japan and Great Britain established the same degree of cooperation between Japan and Canada.<sup>4</sup> Thus, bills or acts establishing measures such as the “head tax” or entry tax imposed upon Chinese immigrants from 1885 onward were never imposed on Japanese immigrants.<sup>5</sup> Nor did the 1908 amendment to the Immigration Act that allowed immigration agents to refuse entry to immigrants who did not arrive by way of continuous passage from their home country affect the Japanese. Together with a subsequent order requiring immigrants from India to possess a minimum of \$200 upon arrival in Canada, the regulation brought Indian immigration to a virtual standstill, but had no effect on the Japanese other than halting their migration via Hawaii.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the immigration quotas agreed upon by Canada and Japan between 1908 and 1928 did not include the wives and children of Japanese immigrants already residing in Canada. Thus wives and picture brides arrived in greater numbers than Japanese men between those years.<sup>7</sup> All of these factors combined to make the establishment of the Japanese-Canadian family and the family farm less costly and less difficult to arrange than that of Chinese-Canadians and Indo-Canadians.<sup>8</sup> As a result, Japanese immigration looked very different from other groups and must be examined more closely and independently.

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<sup>4</sup> See Ward, *White Canada*, 59 and 65 and Adachi, 44 and 67.

<sup>5</sup> Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 42, 61.

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989) 4, 138, and Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 76.

<sup>7</sup> Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 109. See also Charles H. Young and Helen Reid, *The Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1939), 16-17.

<sup>8</sup> See Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 171 for a table that shows the population breakdown of British Columbia by racial origins, 1901-1941.

Secondly, examining the work choices of Japanese-Canadian farmers will help explain why they ultimately chose farming and why they abandoned other types of employment. Because less than three per cent of British Columbia is arable land, the experience and diversity of farmers and their role in the settlement and growth of the province are frequently overshadowed by those involved in larger industries. Tracing the paths to farming will highlight the attractions of farming while shedding light on the shortcomings of other occupations. Also, it can help explain how and why many different paths led to similar occupations in agriculture.

Thirdly, studying the migration and settlement patterns of Japanese-Canadian farmers will provide a better understanding and a more complete picture of rural community formation. Too often minority groups, particularly visible minorities, are ignored or marginalized in the histories of small, rural communities in Canada. In British Columbia, these histories often focus on the first white, Anglo-Protestant pioneers and their descendants as though no other groups were present.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to this, Japanese-Canadian transnational communities thrived within larger, white farming communities where they were neither isolated nor insular. Japanese-Canadian numbers ranged from 19-23 per cent of the total population in the Maple Ridge and Mission areas from the early 1920s until 1942.<sup>10</sup> *Issei* homes and farmlands

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<sup>9</sup> Examples include: *In the Shadow of Mount Cheam*, compiled by Heritage Preservers of Rosedale and District (Winnipeg: Inter Collegiate Press, 1988) focusing on the Chilliwack Area and Daphne Sleigh, ed. *One Foot on the Border* (Deroche, BC: Sumas Prairie and Area Historical Society, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this study, the Fraser Valley communities under consideration are Mission and Maple Ridge, which includes the smaller communities of Haney, Hammond, Whonnock, Ruskin, and Albion. The total combined population of Mission and Maple Ridge

were initially scattered within the larger community, only gradually becoming more clustered as overall settlement increased. It was not uncommon for Japanese-Canadians to have white, or *hakujiin* next-door-neighbours at every stage of community development. Although the *issei* generally worked in isolation from the *hakujiin* community and avoided drawing attention to themselves, their interaction with the larger community in local festivals, school-sponsored activities, and a complex network of farmers' cooperatives continually expanded. Exploring how Japanese-Canadian farming communities came to be casts light on how they developed and how they fit into the broader Fraser Valley community. It also situates them within the history of the settlement and ethnic diversity of British Columbia.

Finally, the occupational history of Japanese-Canadians is integral to their broader social and ethnic history. It reflects the challenges they faced and the choices they made in their everyday lives. As Marx noted, "Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past."<sup>11</sup> This was certainly true of Japanese immigrants who found themselves in a host country where the customs, policies, and attitudes of the resident population were well-

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in 1931 was 8,525 and in 1941, it was 11,151. (Seventh Census of Canada, 1931 and Eighth Census of Canada, 1941.) The Japanese-Canadian population within these totals was, in 1933, approximately 1,588 and in 1941, approximately 2,109. In both instances, the Japanese-Canadian population grew in proportion to the total population, maintaining 19 percent of the total. See Reginda Sumida, "The Japanese in British Columbia" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1935) 296-7 and Read, 40. More specific to the Maple Ridge, in 1922, the local newspaper set the local Japanese population at 23 per cent of the total. See *Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Gazette*, March 23, 1922, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: WW Norton, 1978) 595.

established. And yet, as E. P. Thompson and other social historians have shown, individuals shape and define their own lives and cultural identity even in the midst of powerful political and economic forces that may restrict and oppress them.<sup>12</sup> Further, as sociologist Richard Gruneau points out, often those who appear powerless, including visible minorities like Japanese-Canadians, “have many more resources in society than is commonly realized.”<sup>13</sup> The cultural practices and ethnic traditions of Japanese-Canadians shaped and were shaped by their work and settlement experiences in Canada. Hence, they not only influenced their own history and culture but also that of their wider community. More than sixty years after the expulsion of Japanese-Canadians from the West Coast, Fraser Valley communities continue to reflect the pre-Second World War influence of Japanese-Canadians and the effects of their abrupt removal.

The first wave of Japanese immigration to Canada began in earnest in the 1890s and tapered off by 1901.<sup>14</sup> As historian Hugh Johnston explains, early immigrants who came to British Columbia from both Asia and continental Europe encountered a province of expanding economic activity coupled with severe labour shortages.<sup>15</sup> Because the white population held or aspired to positions of management and skilled labour, most were unwilling

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<sup>12</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> Richard S. Gruneau, “Modernization or Hegemony: Two Views on Sport and Social Development,” in Jean Harvey and Hart Cantelon, eds., *Not Just A Game: Essays in Canadian Sport Sociology* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988) 9-32.

<sup>14</sup> Ward, *The Japanese in Canada*, 3-4, claims the first wave did not begin until the mid-1890s and the second occurred from 1906-7. Adachi, 13 and Young and Reid, 8-9 date the first wave from 1885 and claim the second wave peaked around 1907.

<sup>15</sup> Hugh Johnston, “Native People, Settlers and Sojourners, 1871-1916,” in *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*, ed. Hugh J. M. Johnston (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996) 190.

to work for low wages or to endure the often transient and rustic lifestyle of unskilled labourers. Hence, workers from a variety of ethnic groups were recruited to fill those jobs. For example, many immigrants from China, Japan, and Italy were initially content to join the labour force in British Columbia because the wages were much higher than what they could make in their country of origin. As newcomers who could not speak English, they were relegated to jobs in the resource industries where the work was strenuous, dangerous, seasonal, unpredictable and offered few of the comforts of home and companionship. More to the point, these jobs promoted social exclusion and isolation. While historian Robert McDonald points out that “the deeply entrenched ethnocentrism then pervading White society forced Asians to the margins of Vancouver’s economy,” the same was true of the British Columbia economy in general.<sup>16</sup>

Although it was not until 1904 that Japanese-Canadians began to establish farms in the Fraser Valley, the number of landowning farmers steadily increased until the early 1940s.<sup>17</sup> This supports a pattern reported by historian Allen Seager who states that “agriculture did not emerge as a vibrant industry in British Columbia until after 1900, but it ranked second only

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<sup>16</sup> Robert A. J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996) 103.

<sup>17</sup> Although it is generally agreed that Mankichi Iyemoto moved to Pitt Meadows in the Fraser Valley in 1903, evidence suggests Kumekichi Fujino of Mission became the first landowning farmer in 1904. See John Mark Read, “The Pre-War Japanese Canadians of Maple Ridge: Landownership and the Ken-Tie” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1975) 42-3. See also Michiko Midge Ayukawa, “Creating and Recreating Community: Hiroshima and Canada, 1891-1941 (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 1996), 144, who cites 1904 as the earliest “recorded” date of a Japanese immigrant farming in the Fraser Valley. For the purposes of this study, 1904 is designated as the starting point for farm ownership.

to forestry in measured output by the early 1920s.”<sup>18</sup> Seager’s observation that fruit farming proved to have the greatest commercial potential in the Okanagan Valley is also true of the Fraser Valley where Japanese-Canadian farmers played a major role in the development of the soft fruit industry.

Prior to the First World War, few Japanese immigrants arrived with the goal of owning their own farm. They originally came as *dekaseginin*, or sojourners, also known as birds of passage or *watari-dori*, engaging in *kaigai dekasegi*, the practice of leaving home temporarily to work abroad. Many shared the dreams of *ikkaku senkin* and *kin’i kikyō*, that is, to strike it rich overnight and to return home wealthy.<sup>19</sup> They typically tried their hand at other occupations before hearing about farming opportunities or before giving them serious consideration. Most were unable to afford the price of land upon arrival in Canada. Rather, they worked at a series of jobs in a variety of locations, often for many years before accumulating enough cash for a down payment. Temporary and transitional jobs included railroad construction, logging, sawmills, domestic work, canneries, farm labour, and fishing. In many cases, men did not begin farming their own land until they had wives and sometimes young children. Several sources discuss some of the work and community experiences of Japanese immigrants and other settlers who moved toward farming after working in other industries.

An important article by Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson explores the early involvement of Japanese-Canadians in the sawmill industry that

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<sup>18</sup> Allen Seager, “Resource Economy, 1871-1921,” in *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*, ed. Hugh J. M. Johnston (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996) 228.

<sup>19</sup> Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei* (New York: Macmillan, 1988) 3-4.

employed a great many Fraser Valley farmers before they established themselves in full time farming.<sup>20</sup> The authors look at the concept of racialization as “the social construction of race” and natural difference that were used to impose limitations and restrictions on Japanese-Canadians. Further, as McDonald points out, “the language of race was applied to non-British Whites as well as to non-Whites.”<sup>21</sup> Factors such as poverty, ethnicity, and family status often played as much a role in the designation of groups as socially undesirable outsiders as did race.<sup>22</sup> Regarding Japanese immigrants, the racialized attitudes of whites often incorporated several of those factors. That racialization occurred throughout the resource industries and other sectors of the British Columbia economy, was instrumental in moving the *issei* toward farm ownership. Similarly, Gillian Creese discusses class, ethnicity, and conflict as it related to Japanese-Canadian workers and their movement toward ethnic community formation not unlike that in the Fraser Valley.<sup>23</sup> In her dissertation on rural settlement in British Columbia, Ruth Sandwell discusses how rural settlers “constructed and gave meaning to their own rural experience.”<sup>24</sup> Valerie Matsumoto, Linda Tamura, and the team of Timothy Lukes and Gary Okihiro have provided important studies of Japanese

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<sup>20</sup> Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson, “Japanese Canadians and the Racialization of Labour in the British Columbia Sawmill Industry,” *BC Studies* 103 (Fall 1994) 33-58. See also McDonald, 210, who states that in 1901, 25 per cent of the workforce in British Columbia’s principle lumber mills was made up of Japanese immigrants.

<sup>21</sup> McDonald, 212.

<sup>22</sup> McDonald, 212 suggests that “sojourning men without women,” a category that included most early Japanese immigrants, was seen as tied to ethnicity and foreign in nature.

<sup>23</sup> Gillian Creese, “Class, Ethnicity, and Conflict: The Case of Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1880-1923,” in Rennie Warburton and David Coburn, eds., *Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 55-85.

<sup>24</sup> Ruth Wells Sandwell, “Reading the Land: Rural Discourse and the Practice of Settlement, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, 1859-1891” (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 1997), 3.



American farming communities.<sup>25</sup> A recent study by historian Lon Kurashige traces the ongoing process of identity formation in the Japanese-American community of Los Angeles, with some reference to the important role farmers played in supporting the commercial district of Little Tokyo and cultural festivals.<sup>26</sup>

Using the annual *Nisei* Week celebration from 1934 onward as “a window to understanding the inner history of a subordinated racial minority group,”<sup>27</sup> Kurashige addresses the ongoing debate between ethnic “assimilationists” and “retentionists,” and concludes that ethnicity is actually more “complex, fluid, ambiguous, and contingent upon historical experience” than the theories of either of those groups allow. In addition, hidden assumptions related to the hierarchies of class, race, and gender influence attitudes both inside and outside the racial or ethnic community.<sup>28</sup> Kurashige explores the concept of racial rearticulation to explain how Japanese Americans responded to racism not by either staunchly preserving or carelessly abandoning their traditions. Rather, Kurashige claims they fought back by “rewiring racism to serve their own collective needs and interests.”<sup>29</sup> This stimulated an ongoing translation and negotiation of a culture that was

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<sup>25</sup> Valerie J. Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), Linda Tamura, *The Hood River Issei* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), and Timothy J. Lukes and Gary Y. Okihiro *Japanese Legacy: Farming and Community Life in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Cupertino, CA: California History Center, 1985).

<sup>26</sup> The *nisei* are second generation Japanese Canadians. Born in Canada, they are the sons and daughters of the *issei*.

<sup>27</sup> Lon Kurashige, preface, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) xvi.

<sup>28</sup> Kurashige, 3-4.

<sup>29</sup> Kurashige, 5-6.

neither fully Japanese nor fully American. Kurashige sees this process as “turning the dominant language of race against itself,” by challenging *hakujin* society on its own terms and by its own rules, thus transcending the traditional models of the dominant society.<sup>30</sup>

In Canada, this meant Japanese-Canadians upheld highly valued principles like British “fair play” and good sportsmanship to an even greater extent than *hakujin* Canadians.<sup>31</sup> In regards to community service and charitable fundraising, they consistently contributed more than requested or proportionately more than the broader community. Thus they repeatedly surpassed the dominant community’s own standards. These practices also helped disguise and conceal from the broader community any disagreement and tension within the Japanese-Canadian community itself. According to Kurashige, Japanese-Americans reflected “a fictive sense of group solidarity.”<sup>32</sup> Despite outward appearances, there was always a degree of conflict between the community’s leaders and “others” characterized by different generations, classes, and types of skills. Those who were skilled in speaking English and understanding American culture, for example, tended to rise to positions of leadership and prestige in both the ethnic community and the community at large; the same was true for Japanese-Canadians. Thus, similar to the way Kurashige uses *Nisei* Week to study Japanese-Americans, I will use the movement to farming and the creation of rural communities as

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<sup>30</sup> Kurashige, 5-6.

<sup>31</sup> See Anne Doré, “Japanese-Canadian Sport History in the Fraser Valley: Judo and Baseball in the Interwar Years,” *Journal of Sport History* 29:3 (Fall 2002) 440 and 452.

<sup>32</sup> Kurashige, 6.

my “window to understanding” the inner history of this subordinated, marginalized ethnic group.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha offers many concepts that are useful in examining how Japanese-Canadians and their culture changed over time. Bhabha’s concept of mimicry represents the effort of the oppressed to mimic the oppressor’s cultural habits, appearance, institutions, and values resulting in a kind of camouflage or a blurred representation bordering on mockery.<sup>33</sup> This blurred representation is subtler than the observation that a visible minority such as the Japanese in Canada could not fully blend in to the predominantly white or *hakujin* society. For instance, in his study of the fishing village of Steveston, British Columbia, Mitsuo Yesaki finds that although Japanese immigrants made an effort to acquire Western suits, shirts, pants, and shoes prior to immigration, they often combined the articles of clothing in incongruous ways.<sup>34</sup> Such blurred representation not only symbolizes ambivalence on the part of the oppressed but may also stimulate “a crack” in the oppressors’ certainty of ongoing dominance because it disturbs what the oppressor sees as normal.<sup>35</sup> The idea of this destabilization of dominance is useful to this study because *issei* farmers not only arrived in the Fraser Valley after white farmers but they also engaged in a kind of mimicry of them that led to *issei* dominance in several areas of

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<sup>33</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 85-91 and Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000) 139-40.

<sup>34</sup> Mitsuo Yesaki, *Sutebusuton: A Japanese Village on the British Columbia Coast* (Vancouver: Peninsula Publishing, 2003) 30.

<sup>35</sup> Ashcroft, et al., 139.

agricultural production. Further, *issei* mimicry of the industriousness, frugality, and cooperation required for successful strawberry production was seen by some *hakujin* farmers as so extreme that it revealed weakness in their own approach and a threat to their dominant position in the berry market.

Another concept developed by Bhabha, the Third Space of cultural enunciation, is premised on the idea that the term multiculturalism is too delineated and fixed to truly represent the dynamic and hybrid nature of cultures.<sup>36</sup> This is congruent with Kurashige's view of culture as complex, fluid, and ambiguous. The Third Space is a conceptualization of the area where cultures intersect or overlap and are translated and negotiated. The Third Space offers a site for opening the way to the idea of "an *intemational* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*."<sup>37</sup> Cultural hybridity, not unlike plant hybridity, occurs when two cultures make contact and cross-pollinate, so to speak, yielding a new, evolving "transcultural form."<sup>38</sup> In my own work, I have tried to demonstrate how the dynamic Japanese-Canadian transnational communities of the Fraser Valley were "neither fully Japanese nor fully Canadian," but something new and dynamic.<sup>39</sup> Bhabha optimistically suggests that it is within this Third Space of contact and hybridization that "we may elude the politics of polarity and

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<sup>36</sup> In this thesis, I reject the commonplace arguments supporting the concepts of multiculturalism and assimilation because they oversimplify the ongoing interaction between cultures and they deny that all overlapping cultures are transformed, not just that of the immigrant group.

<sup>37</sup> Bhabha, 38. Emphasis in original text.

<sup>38</sup> Ashcroft, et al., 118. See also Bhabha, 37-8 and 127.

<sup>39</sup> Doré, "Transnational Communities," 38.

emerge as the others of ourselves.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, the translation and negotiation of culture within the Third Space transforms the individual and reflects the idea that every culture and its members articulate hybridity from the moment of contact with another culture. This and other post-colonial concepts will assist in the search for social and historical meaning in the Japanese-Canadian experience both within the ethnic enclave and across the broader community.

It can be argued that because a colonial relationship did not exist between Japanese immigrants and their chosen countries in the Americas, postcolonial concepts do not apply. After all, Japan was never a formal colony like India or Vietnam and it voluntarily modernized and westernized during the Meiji period.<sup>41</sup> W. G. Beasley, however, argues that a “semi-colonial status,” not unlike that of China, was imposed on Meiji Japan and was based on American and British commercial ambitions. This status, also known as “informal empire,” was supported by the treaty port system and other diplomatic demands made upon Japan by the West.<sup>42</sup> In addition to supporting a goal of maximizing economic profitability, the Western intention to “civilize” Japan was also colonialist in nature. It arose from of a condescending Orientalist attitude, identified and elaborated by Edward Said.<sup>43</sup> More specifically, historian Peter Duus describes an American

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<sup>40</sup> Bhabha, 39.

<sup>41</sup> For comprehensive studies of Meiji Japan (1868-1911) see Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) and Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992).

<sup>42</sup> W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 21-5.

<sup>43</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

attitude of cultural and moral superiority, ethnocentrism, and a belief in its own Manifest Destiny as fueling a desire to conquer the “minds and spirit” of the people of Japan.<sup>44</sup> This quest was intended to promote American commercial and naval power in the Pacific while incidentally reinforcing the cultural dualism of humankind implicit in Orientalist thinking.

Similarly, Canadian attitudes toward the Japanese were frequently characterized by an Orientalist cultural lumping of them with their Chinese neighbours and their more distant neighbours in India. When differentiation of these three immigrant groups appeared in the Canadian popular press, it most often highlighted the perceived negative rather than positive traits of each, essentially suggesting that although all Asian immigrants were undesirable, some were more so than others.<sup>45</sup> The sanctioning of Japanese immigration to Canada arose from British commercial ambitions and British Columbia’s desire for cheap, unskilled, and temporary labour. Once present in Canada, Japanese immigrants faced blatant discrimination and exclusion from many aspects of Canadian life. These factors demonstrate a Western attitude of superiority, the active enforcement of a perceived irreducible opposition between Orient and Occident, the systematic subordination of people seen as “others” or outsiders, and their exploitation for the economic benefit of the dominant society. In short, even Japan’s Herculean effort to

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Duus, *The Japanese Discovery of America* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997) 9-11.

<sup>45</sup> See Agnes C. Laut, *Am I My Brother’s Keeper?* (Vancouver: Subway Books, 2003) 63-4, reprinted from *Saturday Night*, 1912, with introduction by Mark Leier, 2003. For examples in newspapers, see *BC Federationist*, 8 August 1913, 2, and *The Morning Star*, 4 February 1927, 1.

remain a step ahead of the colonialization of Asia did not protect either the country's resident population or its emigrants from the attitudes and repercussions of nineteenth and twentieth century colonialism.

Bhabha's rethinking of identity, agency, and nationalism in the aftermath of colonialism is also particularly useful for studying marginal groups within the colonial timeframe. For example, early twentieth century Canada, as a former colony with a close diplomatic relationship to Britain, acquired certain rights and responsibilities in regard to Japan and Japanese immigrants.<sup>46</sup> Within both this diplomatic relationship and the quagmire of Canadian attitudes and aspirations, Japanese immigrants had to negotiate numerous political, economic, and social barriers as they built their new lives in Canada.

Primary sources on Japanese-Canadians demonstrate flexibility within their identity, agency, and nationality. The sources not only reveal the choices and paths of many Japanese-Canadian farmers, but they also cast light on their reasons and motivations. For this primary documentation, I have turned to the wealth of resources in the archives of the Fraser Valley communities of Mission and Maple Ridge, the National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre in Burnaby, and Special Collections at the University of British Columbia. These documents include memoirs, family histories, community histories, minutes of agricultural association meetings and village council meetings, personal correspondence, and other personal papers. I

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<sup>46</sup> The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was in effect from 1902-1921. See W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987) 77, 167.

have utilized a wide range of early twentieth century mainstream, ethnic, and labour newspapers.

Thus, the complex experience of Japanese-Canadian farmers recorded in a wealth of primary documents can be reconstructed and illuminated within a framework of ideas and concepts derived from both the traditions of social history established by Marx and Thompson and also from the recent scholarship of Kurashige and the post-colonial concepts of Bhabha. Within the milieu of occupational and cultural expression, Japanese-Canadian pioneers resisted the oppression of the dominant *hakujiin* society and asserted control over their own lives and the making of community. Many would find success and satisfaction in farming. Others would move on to different occupations or locations and some would die in the struggle.

In Chapter Two, I focus on the occupational paths of men who became landowning farmers in the Fraser Valley and their reasons for gravitating to farming. Because the wives of farmers also followed diverse occupational paths to farming and they shared fully in the work and maintenance of the family farm, their experience is the focus of Chapter Three. Chapter Four offers a discussion of the social and cultural dynamics involved in the making of transnational farming communities as a gradual and purposeful outgrowth of Japanese-Canadian settlement in the Fraser Valley.



## CHAPTER TWO

### *Issei* Pioneers: The Movement to Farming

Japanese immigrant men faced diverse and difficult occupational paths from the moment of their arrival in Canada. Most of those who gravitated to farm ownership in the Fraser Valley made that choice in response to their early experience of work and life in the host country. Within the limitations of their status as a marginalized, visible minority, they resisted the discriminatory and oppressive policies and attitudes of the dominant white, or *hakujin*, society through their job choices and settlement patterns. This chapter explores the occupational paths of *issei* men who established farms in Mission and Maple Ridge in the first four decades of the twentieth century. It also looks at their reasons for pursuing landownership and farming.

Unlike some European immigrants who arrived in family or community groups and formed cohesive rural communities, most Japanese immigrants set out as individuals. They did not immigrate *en masse* like the Doukhobors and the Mennonites who came with the intention of establishing close-knit farming communities.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, the movement of Japanese immigrants to farming began as a trickle in the first decade of the twentieth century, gradually increased over the second decade, and reached a peak in the 1920s. In my database of 112 male farmers of Mission and Maple Ridge, the year of the purchase of farmland is known for 104 of them. Table 2.1 lists

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<sup>1</sup> See Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996) 143-5.

the number of farmers who purchased land during specific years from 1904 to 1938.<sup>2</sup> Although their numbers grew most rapidly in the decade following the First World War and some new arrivals had familial ties to established Japanese Canadian farmers, they continued to arrive as individuals rather than homogeneous groups based on area of origin or religious connection. Thus, although each of them followed a unique occupational path and developed a unique network of acquaintances within their own time frame, those experiences influenced them to choose the same occupation: landownership and farming in the Fraser Valley.

Within the full group of 112 male farmers in my database, all but two are known to have had wives residing in Canada during all or most of their married life. Farming was a family affair. Of the 110 known wives, the first name and often the maiden name are available as well as one or two vital statistics such as date of birth, immigration, or death. Larger segments of life stories are known for only a small number of the farming wives and they will be discussed in Chapter Three. In all but three families, the number of children is known and in most families, the ratio of boys to girls is also available. In all but one case, the farmer's prefecture of origin in Japan is known.<sup>3</sup> Some of these factors will be referred to in other parts of this study. Zeroing in on occupational paths, however, requires further narrowing of the population. In a few instances, memoirs and family histories offer detailed

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<sup>2</sup> All tables in this thesis are based on a compilation of a wide range of documents that are summarized in the "Sources" list for each table. I have referred to collections and archives where these various sources can be found. For greater detail, see Bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> A prefecture, or *ken*, is a region in Japan similar to a North American county or district but it is also characterized by distinctiveness in culture and dialect.

Table 2.1  
Year of Land Purchase and Number of Japanese-Canadian Farmers  
Purchasing Land Each Year

Year of Land Purchase	Number of Farmers
1904	1
1906	1
1908	1
1909	1
1910	4
1911	3
1912	3
1913	5
1914	2
1915	3
1916	1
1917	8
1918	9
1919	9
1920	15
1921	4
1922	1
1924	4
1926	1
1927	1
1928	3
1929	4
1930	3
1932	8
1934	4
1935	2
1936	1
1938	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>

Sources: William T. Hashizume *Japanese Community in Mission* (Toronto: Musson Copy Centres, 2003); Michiko Midge Ayukawa, BA Thesis, MA Thesis, PhD Dissertation; *MRPM Gazette*; *Fraser Valley Record*; Japanese Canadian Exhibit Collection and Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives; Japanese Canadian Files, Maple Ridge Museum; Japanese Canadian National Museum archives; Japanese Canadian Collection, Special Collections, UBC.

chronologies of occupational paths. One such story is that of Toyoki Moriyama as recorded in the memoirs of his wife, Haru.

Moriyama left Japan at sixteen years of age, immediately after graduation from high school. The reason for his emigration is not stated but there are a number of possibilities based on the economic and political climate of Meiji Japan.<sup>4</sup> Rural poverty, land shortage, and heavy taxation may have led him to leave Japan as sojourner seeking his fortune in what were seen as the wealthier and more developed countries of North America. However, Mrs. Moriyama does not discuss any plan or desire of hers or her husband's to return to Japan so there is no direct evidence to support a theory of sojourning. As the third son in his family, Moriyama had no hope of receiving an inheritance from his father and so that may have turned his sights to other countries for better economic prospects. Although universal conscription was enacted in Japan in 1873 for all males reaching the age of twenty, Moriyama emigrated several years prior to having to fulfill that particular requirement so it is questionable whether that was a significant factor.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that Moriyama, like many other immigrants, simply had a strong desire for adventure or independence. Whatever the case, he worked in seven occupational categories and at least eleven occupational positions in British Columbia over the course of twenty years before buying land in Mission.

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<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the Meiji Period (1868-1911) see Ann Waswo, *Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Hane, 96-7.

According to Mrs. Moriyama, “Times were tough, but Toyoki was resourceful and managed to find work at all times. He was never unemployed.”<sup>6</sup> After working in a sugar factory on the Hawaiian island of Kauai for two years, Moriyama arrived in Vancouver in the summer of 1907. This was a difficult period for Asian immigrants not only because of the competitive job market but also because of heightened racial tensions that would erupt on 7 September in the Vancouver Riot of members of the *hakujin* community against Chinese and Japanese immigrant enclaves. When Moriyama and the other passengers disembarked in Vancouver, they were weary and malnourished because the ship had run out of rations between Hawaii and Vancouver. Mrs. Moriyama claims that when bread was given to her husband and the other new immigrants, they wolfed it down like starving people. Recalling how her husband later retold the story, she adds that, “Toyoki often got emotional talking about how the media people came to take ‘human interest’ pictures of the ‘primitive’ Japanese immigrants.”<sup>7</sup> This initial experience clearly made a lasting impression.

Despite this experience of prejudice and discrimination that was followed by others, Moriyama made Canada his home. His first job was at a sawmill in New Westminster and later he worked in a brick factory. After Mrs. Moriyama arrived as a picture bride in 1913, Moriyama worked as a “horseman” or teamster at the Izumi Shingle Camp in Gibson’s Landing,

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<sup>6</sup> “Rambling Reminiscences of Haru Moriyama,” a memoir recorded and expanded by her daughter, Fumi Tamagi in Lethbridge, Alberta, 27. Japanese Canadian Exhibit Collection (JCEC), Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC and archives of the National *Nikkei* Museum and Heritage Centre, Burnaby, BC.

<sup>7</sup> “Rambling Reminiscences,” 6.

followed by a season of salmon fishing on the Skeena River with the Shimada Camp for the Balmoral Cannery. The licenses for both of these camps were held by other Japanese-Canadians. The next move was to Paisley Island for a two-year stint as a gardener and groundskeeper for a holiday resort. This was followed by work as a foreman at a West Vancouver shingle camp and a move to Port Moody to load lumber for the Peter Bain Lumber Company. Next the Moriyamas opened a confectionery store in Vancouver's "Japanese town" on Powell Street.<sup>8</sup> When they sold the store, they moved to the Maple Ridge area where Moriyama worked for the Peter Bain Company again, but this time as a lumberjack. The next two moves brought them to Mission, first to Cedar Valley near the edge of Mission and then to a rented house within Mission. Logging camp jobs precipitated both of these moves. Finally, in 1927, the Moriyamas had saved enough money to achieve their goal of settling down permanently in farming. They purchased a six-acre farm in Mission, where the family lived and the children attended school until the expulsion of Japanese-Canadians from the west coast in 1942.<sup>9</sup>

The Moriyama record is more complete than most and this is important because it demonstrates the likelihood that most *issei* came to farming along a more varied and complex occupational path than can be fully documented at present. However, an incomplete list is neither insignificant nor invalid. While Mrs. Moriyama's memoir detailed eleven of the jobs her husband held before becoming a landholding farmer, other sources reveal and confirm four

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<sup>8</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 12.

<sup>9</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 15, 18-19.

of them.<sup>10</sup> Although the *issei* farmers in this study averaged closer to half as many years in the general work pool as Moriyama, and their job counts generally appear to be lower, their occupational paths are undoubtedly more complex and varied than currently available sources reveal.

The small cluster of other families for whom substantial memoirs are presently available include the Imadas and Yamagas of Haney and the Nakashimas and Hisaokas of Mission. Mrs. Imada's lengthy memoir reveals that her husband, Kaichi Imada, held at least 22 different jobs in Canada before buying farmland in 1922.<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Nakashima's oral history, recorded by Tomoko Makabe, suggests her husband held at least four jobs before taking up farming.<sup>12</sup> Hashizume's biographical sketch of Mr. Nakashima adds an additional job to the list.<sup>13</sup> In the case of Ichirohei Hisaoka, a family history written through the combined effort of several of his descendants plus a biographical sketch by Hashizume suggests a minimum of 5 jobs in his occupational path.<sup>14</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga, who left an extensive collection of papers, is the only farmer in this study who managed to buy farmland within one year of arriving in Canada and yet he worked in both the lumber and railway industries in that short time. Biographical information, including

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<sup>10</sup> Sources include: William T. Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission: A Brief History, 1904-1942*, (Toronto: Musson Copy Centres, 2003) 49, and Family History Surveys #5 and #12, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>11</sup> Michiko Midge Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Mrs. Imada Ito: A Japanese Pioneer Woman." (BA honours thesis, University of Victoria, March 1988). Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Ayukawa, most of Mrs. Imada's memoirs have been translated into English.

<sup>12</sup> Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) 132.

<sup>13</sup> Hashizume, 52.

<sup>14</sup> Marjene Turnbull, ed., *Hisaoka Family Memoirs* (Edmonton: Scholastic Duplicators, 1991), 4-5 and Hashizume, 37.

Yamaga's references to other farmers, suggests that for most, the road to farming involved a long, arduous path of strenuous and dangerous physical labour, rustic living conditions, and a migratory lifestyle.<sup>15</sup>

Where family histories are not available, other details can provide a window into the *issei* experience. For example, knowing the year of both immigration and land purchase provides a timeframe for the occupational paths of 87 farmers. For this group, the range of time between landing in Canada and buying farmland in the Fraser Valley was from 1 to 24 years. For the group as a whole, 10 years was the average time spent in pre-landownership jobs.<sup>16</sup> What did these men do and where did they go during that time?

Because the *issei* laboured in a wide variety of jobs before buying farmland, it is useful to organize those jobs into occupational categories.<sup>17</sup> Table 2.2 lists the categories in descending order based on how many of the 87 men are known to have worked in each category at some time before purchasing land. Although at 74 per cent the lumber industry was clearly the most widely shared work category, the total number of categories indicates that on average, most men worked in at least two occupational categories.

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<sup>15</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga, "My Footsteps on British Columbia," 1958, 1-2. Yasutaro Yamaga Papers, Special Collections, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.

<sup>16</sup> For three of the 87 farmers, the precise year of immigration could not be determined. Because only a range of years was available representing their pre-landownership phase, I used the smaller number of each range in my calculations.

<sup>17</sup> For an overview of the resource economy of British Columbia, see Allen Seager, "Resource Economy, 1871-1921," in *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*, ed. Hugh J. M. Johnston (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996) 205-252. For occupational opportunities and pay ranges, see Hugh Johnston, "Native People, Settlers and Sojourners," in *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*, ed. Hugh J. M. Johnston (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996) 179-183.



Table 2.2  
 Number of Men Who Worked in Each Occupational Category  
 Prior to Landownership  
 Based on 87 Men

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	NUMBER/ CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE
Lumber	64	74%
Farming	31	36%
Railway	17	20%
Business	13	15%
Fishing	12	14%
Mining	9	10%
Domestic/Janitorial	8	9%
Skilled Trades	7	8%
Hospitality	7	8%
Construction	4	5%
Food Processing	4	5%
Gardening	2	2%
Manufacturing	2	2%
Whaling	1	1%
Clerical	1	1%
Professional	1	1%
TOTAL	183	

Sources: William T. Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission* (Toronto: Musson Copy Centres, 2003); Michiko Midge Ayukawa, BA Thesis, MA Thesis, PhD Dissertation; MRPM Gazette; Fraser Valley Record; Japanese Canadian Exhibit Collection and Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives; Japanese Canadian Files, Maple Ridge Museum; Japanese Canadian National Museum archives; Japanese Canadian Collection, Special Collections, UBC.

Over a third of the men worked in farming which not only informed them of the nature of the work and life style but no doubt also taught them valuable skills. It is important to note that within each occupational category, such as farming and lumber, there was a wide range of jobs, locations, and employers (See Table 2.3). For example, in the lumber industry Shingo Kunimoto of Mission worked as both a logger and a shingle bolt cutter.<sup>18</sup> Kyusuke Oike of Maple Ridge was a labourer in at least two different saw mills.<sup>19</sup> Logging camps and mills dotted the province and were subject to cycles of closure and movement depending on factors such as the season, the demands of the market, the supply of resources, and the profit margin. The same was true to some extent in most of the other occupational categories. Thus, even if some men worked in only one category, over time they likely would have held more than one job in that category and they would have worked in more than one location. Because the list of jobs for these farmers was compiled from a variety of incomplete sources such as biographical sketches in farming publications and family history surveys, it is not possible to know if the lists are either complete or chronological. In most cases, it is likely they are neither and that complete lists would be considerably longer and more varied. However, they offer a glimpse at both the choices and limitations facing the *issei* in the workplace.

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<sup>18</sup> Hashizume, 46 and Suzuki, 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows News*, January 10, 1993, 13. This newspaper article is based on an interview with Oike's son, Doug, who was born and raised in Haney and returned to settle there after the Second World War.

For example, most of the occupational positions (Table 2.3) were low status, labour intensive jobs. Among the few with higher status were those in the skilled trades, such as the teamster and the millwright, one professional bookkeeper, and those few English-speaking *issei* labourers who were able to work their way up to work-gang foreman. Resource industry and farm labourers faced considerable risks to their health and safety and were often powerless to reduce those risks. Those in the domestic, hospitality, and gardening categories were little more than servants. Jobs such as head bellman and small business owner serving the Japanese-Canadian community were among the highest positions to which the *issei* could aspire. There is little wonder that they saw farm ownership as an attractive alternative to the narrow range of possible employment. The farmer was seen as being his own boss, in charge of his own success.

Exceptions to the dominant trend toward numerous, migrant jobs were the *yobiyose*, or men who were called over from Japan by a friend or relative to provide a period of contract labour. For those who went to the Fraser Valley, their passage, accommodations, and a small allowance were provided in exchange for up to three years of their labour on the farm.<sup>20</sup> Similar to what historian Cecilia Danysk found among prairie farm labourers, the *yobiyose's* contract provided an apprenticeship in farming methods specific to their place

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<sup>20</sup> Hashizume outlines the process of applying for a *yobiyose* including a list of required documents, a copy of a completed application from 1918, and an explanation of the rights and responsibilities of a *yobiyose*, 101-5.

TABLE 2.3

## Occupational Positions by Occupational Category Prior to Landownership

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES	OCCUPATIONAL POSITIONS
Lumber	sawmill labourer, logger, lumberjack, logging camp worker or operator, shingle bolt cutter, pulp/paper mill worker, shingle plant worker, work gang foreman
Farming	farm hand, strawberry picker, dairy farm hand, sheep farm hand, cattle ranch hand, orchard worker, clearing farm land
Railway	construction gang worker, maintenance worker, roundhouse worker, foreman and interpreter
Business	mushroom supplier, real estate speculator, business owner/operator: confectionary store, grocery store, delivery service, restaurant, catering service, fish store, boarding house
Fishing	fisherman, salmon fisherman, herring fisherman
Mining	workers for companies mining gold, coal, or copper; positions unspecified
Domestic/Janitorial	houseboy, cook, camp cook, bus boy, janitor
Skilled Trades	tailor, horse handler, teamster, blacksmith, barber, carpenter, ship carpenter, millwright
Hospitality	hotel worker, bellboy, elevator operator, head bellman, boarding house worker, server, restaurant cook
Construction	labourer in road building, power plant construction, dike construction
Food Processing	worker in jam factory, fish cannery, ice cream plant
Gardening	gardener, groundskeeper
Whaling	whaling vessel hand
Manufacturing	brick factory worker
Clerical	office clerk
Professional	bookkeeper

Sources: William T. Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission* (Toronto: Musson Copy Centres, 2003); Michiko Midge Ayukawa, BA Thesis, MA Thesis, PhD Dissertation; MRPM Gazette; Fraser Valley Record; Japanese Canadian Exhibit Collection and Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives; Japanese Canadian Files, Maple Ridge Museum; Japanese Canadian National Museum archives; Japanese Canadian Collection, Special Collections, UBC.

of settlement.<sup>21</sup> For the twelve *yobiyose* included in this study, farming was their first job in Canada. They constitute nearly eleven per cent of the large group of 112 farmers and nearly fourteen per cent of the core group of 87 farmers. All of them became landowning farmers from two to sixteen years after arriving in Canada. Masanobu Inaba became a landowner through marriage and Kamekichi Sugimura through the death of his older brother who had sponsored his move to Canada.<sup>22</sup> For the ten other *yobiyose*, the average length of time between their arrival in Canada and their purchase of farmland was three and a half years less than those farmers who had not been *yobiyose*. After fulfilling their contracts, two of the ten continued in farm labour and the rest engaged in a number of jobs in the lumber, railway, and domestic work sectors until all of them eventually bought their own farms.<sup>23</sup>

Although it is not known why most of these *yobiyose* were able to buy farms sooner than the others in the core group, there are a number of possible reasons. Because they each came to Canada as a relative or friend of their benefactor, and usually from the same prefecture, there may have been more social, financial, and emotional support for them than for the average new migrant worker. The people they met while in the relatively stable position of *yobiyose* may have helped them build a network of job contacts for the post-*yobiyose* period. In addition, the ties they established with their sponsoring family and the surrounding community seemed to have

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<sup>21</sup> Cecilia Danysk, *Hired Hands: Labour and the Development of Prairie Agriculture, 1880-1930* (Toronto: McClellan and Stewart, 1995) 60-1.

<sup>22</sup> See Hashizume for biographical profiles of Masanobu Inaba, 66-7 and Kamekichi Sugimura, 67-8.

<sup>23</sup> Hashizume, 28-68, *passim*.

been of lasting significance since they all ended up buying land in the communities where they served as *yobiyose*, even those who left to find work in other parts of British Columbia and Canada before buying land. While the lure of the familiar cannot be ignored, it must be noted that the experience gained by the majority of *yobiyose* in jobs outside of agriculture undoubtedly supported their decision to purchase farmland. They faced the same discriminatory and oppressive atmosphere their sponsors had experienced before them and they responded to it with the same choices.

Numerous studies have proposed a variety of reasons for the gravitation of early Japanese immigrants to farming in British Columbia. Most authors agree that prejudice and racial discrimination played a fundamental and major role in nudging labourers toward landownership and the prospect of being one's own boss. Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson demonstrate how racialization in British Columbia's sawmills placed Japanese-Canadians at a disadvantage for obtaining fair wages, safe working conditions, and job security. Most of the occupations open to Japanese-Canadians were characterized by similar shortcomings.<sup>24</sup>

As Ken Adachi explains, the denial of the franchise to Japanese-Canadians was fundamental to limiting the choice of jobs available to them as

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<sup>24</sup> Foundational studies on how racism and anti-Asian sentiment influenced the political and economic climate in BC are provided in the work of Peter C. Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002) and Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politics and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989). See also Thomas R. Berger, "The Banished Canadians: Mackenzie King and the Japanese Canadians," in *Fragile Freedoms: Human Rights and Dissent in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin, 1982) 93-126. Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson, "Japanese Canadians and the Racialization of Labour in the British Columbia Sawmill Industry," *BC Studies* 103 (Fall 1994) 33-58.

well as virtually eliminating their political power to influence legal change.<sup>25</sup> The range of employment denied those banned from the voters' list included licensed hand logging, public contracts, pharmacy, law, and all civil service work associated with government, such as the postal service, the public school system, and police departments. Even in those occupations legally open to the *issei*, competition with other workers, lower pay to Asians for equal work, and labour unrest added stress and uncertainty to an already challenging workplace.<sup>26</sup> Because most Japanese immigrants hailed from rural and peasant backgrounds and arrived in Canada with limited experience of a resource-based economy like British Columbia's, they had to be willing to learn new skills and to draw on their personal resources in new ways, particularly as they decided to turn to farming.

Many scholars of Canadian history refer briefly to Japanese-Canadian farming communities of the Fraser Valley. For those who have studied these communities in greater depth, a common lens through which they are viewed is that of prefectural affiliation.<sup>27</sup> John Mark Read's unpublished study looks closely at the geographical ties between one Fraser Valley community and Japan, while Midge Ayukawa profiles a selection of Fraser Valley farmers originally from Hiroshima prefecture in Japan.<sup>28</sup> If prefectural or *ken* affiliation

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<sup>25</sup> Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991) 52.

<sup>26</sup> Adachi, 46-50, 57-61, and 63.

<sup>27</sup> Members of a prefecture or *ken* share a regional identity, distinct cultural practices and a common dialect of Japanese. All of these factors provided ties between members whether in Japan or overseas.

<sup>28</sup> See John Mark Read, "The Pre-War Japanese Canadians of Maple Ridge: Landownership and the *Ken-Tie*" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1975), which examines patterns of ethnic clustering based on the pre-immigration prefectural affiliations of the settlers in one

influenced some to turn to farming, it was only one of many reasons. In regards to Maple Ridge, Read argues “that *ken* origin and *ken* ties of Japanese immigrants had an observable effect on the Maple Ridge landscape,” not that they were a pivotal factor in attracting *issei* to farming or community building.<sup>29</sup> Regarding the Mission community, which was loosely divided into neighbourhood groups or *tonari-gumi*, there was a tendency toward prefectural clustering among some immigrants from the eight main prefectures represented in Mission. However, there was also an intermixing of immigrants from an additional eight prefectures.<sup>30</sup> Under the larger umbrella of the *Nokai*,<sup>31</sup> or Japanese agricultural association, neighbourhoods were loosely organized for support purposes and for small group socializing. Also in Mission, there were two cases of family clan clustering in which prefectural ties were naturally consistent although they were not the primary reason for the cluster.<sup>32</sup> This may have artificially enhanced the appearance of prefectural segregation not only in Mission but also in other communities. Mrs. Moriyama discusses the four *tonari-gumi* of Mission, each of which shared news and looked after its own members. For the West Mission *tonari-gumi*, in which the Moriyamas lived, she lists 27 families from eight different

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Fraser Valley community. See also Michiko Midge Ayukawa, “Creating and Recreating Community: Hiroshima and Canada” (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 1996).

<sup>29</sup> Read, 81.

<sup>30</sup> Hashizume, 106, claims the eight main prefectures were Shiga, Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Fukushima, Kagoshima, Kanagawa, and Tottori.

<sup>31</sup> Anne Doré, “Transnational Communities: Japanese Canadians of the Fraser Valley, 1904-1942,” 134 (Summer 2002) 48-49. Japanese Canadian farming communities formed a *Nokai* – a complex social and economic association which supported agricultural endeavours as well as cultural integrity. All families were expected to hold membership and to pay a set percentage of their income. The term also refers to the community hall used for *Nokai* and community activities.

<sup>32</sup> Hashizume, 111-12.



prefectures.<sup>33</sup> Overall, there were more than nine prefectures represented among the farmers in Maple Ridge and at least sixteen in Mission. Although the instances of non-exclusive clustering in the Fraser Valley may seem to confirm an ongoing habit of sustaining prefectural ties, the widespread intermixing of farmers from numerous prefectures suggests a weakening of the overall importance of these ties as a major motivator in the movement toward farm ownership.

Both Adachi and Gordon Nakayama attribute the initial movement to the Fraser Valley to the effort of Jiro Inouye, who bought farmland in Haney in 1906.<sup>34</sup> Inouye's advertisements and articles on the positive aspects of farming were widely circulated via Japanese language newspapers in Vancouver, such as the *Bankuba Shuho*,<sup>35</sup> and in Japan. Adachi does not see the movement as significant, however, until during and after the First World War when farming became "the last recourse for Japanese who were being pushed out of other industries."<sup>36</sup> A prime example of this occupational squeeze can be seen in drastic cuts in the number of fishing licenses issued to Japanese-Canadians in the 1920s.<sup>37</sup> Another significant factor in this

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<sup>33</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 22.

<sup>34</sup> Adachi, 50 and Gordon Nakayama, *Issei: Stories of Japanese Canadian Pioneers* (Toronto: NC Press, 1984) 50, 52. There is no indication in either source that Inouye was selling land. Rather, he was merely attempting to inform and help other Japanese immigrants. See also, Yamaga, "Footsteps," 1.

<sup>35</sup> The *Bakuba Shuho* was published in Vancouver weekly from 1897 to 1903, and then daily until 1920. The *Tairiku Nippo*, also published in Vancouver, was a daily that appeared in 1907 and abruptly disappeared following the bombing of Pearl Harbor; the last issue was dated December 6, 1941.

<sup>36</sup> Adachi, 50.

<sup>37</sup> Mitsuo Yesaki, *Sutebusuton: A Japanese Village on the British Columbia Coast* (Vancouver: Peninsula Publishing, 2003) 79-81 and Ward, *White Canada*, 119-23. See also, *Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Gazette*, April 24, 1925, 2.

movement, as Yasutaro Yamaga explains, was the lack of funds for land purchase.

In the 1920s, the cost of farmland in Mission ranged from \$50 to \$100 per acre for uncleared land and \$250 to \$400 for cleared land.<sup>38</sup> The typical wage for white labourers in British Columbia was 40 cents an hour while that of Japanese workers was only 25 cents an hour for the same work.<sup>39</sup> In other cases, the most menial jobs at the lowest rates of pay were the only jobs offered. It is not surprising that it took years to save enough money to buy land. As an alternative, many, such as the Sansukes and the Kawamotos of Hammond,<sup>40</sup> tried leasing farmland by agreeing to clear the land within a specific number of years or return it and pay a penalty. Because of the difficulty of clearing trees and large stumps, most leaseholders were not able to meet the time limit and lost the land in the end. Thus, as Yamaga points out, "The settlers soon found out that it was better to work outside and save enough money for the down payment on the land and start off as land owners."<sup>41</sup> For most, this required several years working at low-paid, seasonal, labour-intense jobs.

Taking a broader look at labour and ethnicity in British Columbia, Gillian Creese suggests "the historical processes of colonialism, capitalist development, and immigration policies in Canada combined to organize Asian

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<sup>38</sup> Suzuki, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Adachi, 146.

<sup>40</sup> Kawamoto Family Memoir, Japanese Canadian Files, Maple Ridge Museum, Maple Ridge, BC, published as, Mrs. Koto Kawamoto, "The Way of Endurance: A Berry Farmer's Memoir," *The New Canadian* (December 24, 1958).

<sup>41</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga, "The History of Japanese Farming in British Columbia, 1906-1941," 2, Yasutaro Yamaga Papers, Special Collections, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.

immigrants into the lowest sectors of the working class.”<sup>42</sup> She further suggests that their sojourner status and lack of political voice “fostered ethnic community organization as a means of coping with and mediating conditions in the province.”<sup>43</sup> For Japanese-Canadians, this can be seen not only in early unions such as the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers’ Union formed in 1919 and the Japanese Fishermen’s Benevolent Society originally organized in 1897, but also in the formation of farming associations, co-operatives, and transnational communities in the Fraser Valley, all of which grew out of the pursuit of the family farm.<sup>44</sup> Farming was one of the few choices that could lift the *issei* from the lowest sectors of the working class and move them beyond the domination of *hakujin* bosses, and occasionally *issei* bosses, as well as discriminatory wage rates. Although the move to farming was a form of *issei* resistance that initially did little to eradicate *hakujin* prejudice, it put the *issei* in a position of greater autonomy and stability. Through hard work, productivity, courtesy, and cooperation, they challenged negative attitudes in the broader community. These challenges occurred as quietly and steadily as their settlement of the Fraser Valley.

While John Mark Read suggests that *issei* sojourner status and lack of political voice drew them together in both the workplace and the community, he cites their difficulty with the English language as one of the most significant

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<sup>42</sup> Gillian Creese, “Class, Ethnicity, and Conflict: The Case of Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1880-1923,” in Rennie Warburton and David Coburn, eds., *Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988) 55.

<sup>43</sup> Creese, 80.

<sup>44</sup> See Kobayashi and Jackson, 54, and Yesaki, 17, re: labour organizations.

factors in the decision to farm.<sup>45</sup> While it is clear that most non-English speaking Japanese immigrants functioned well in work gangs and fishing crews under English-speaking Japanese immigrant bosses, their advancement was hindered by a lack of English. Because seasonal labour offered little hope of a rise in status, responsibility, and pay for those who did not speak English and it offered limited advancement for those who did, landownership and farming held considerable appeal. Some men, like Ichirohei Hisaoka, “realized the necessity to learn English for his future mobility” and did so years before deciding to become a landowning farmer.<sup>46</sup> In farming, as in other industries, those *issei* who spoke English assumed positions of leadership and influence in their rural communities.

Reginda Sumida suggests farming offered the choice to return to what Japanese immigrants had been familiar with in their home country since nearly half the farmers in his 1935 study had come from farming communities.<sup>47</sup> This may be true for farmers such as Kumekichi Fujino, whose family had farmed for many generations in Shiga prefecture and who came to Canada hoping to farm. Nevertheless, Fujino worked for six years, mainly in sawmills, before saving enough money to buy land and to bring his wife and children from Japan to Mission.<sup>48</sup> Eiichi Dohzen, also of Mission,

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<sup>45</sup> Read, 6-7.

<sup>46</sup> Turnbull, *Hisaoka Family Memoir*, 5.

<sup>47</sup> Reginda Sumida “The Japanese in British Columbia,” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1935) 139-40.

<sup>48</sup> Juzo Suzuki, ed., “Farming by Japanese in Mission Area,” in *Kanada Nohgyo Hatten Go: Development of Farming in Canada Issue*, Canada Nichinichi Shinbun (November 1929) W. T. Hashizume, trans., 25. Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

immigrated in 1907 “to learn western farming methods and jam making.”<sup>49</sup> Others, such as Tashiro Hashizume, had no intention of farming when they arrived in Canada. Originally heading for Los Angeles to work in commerce, Hashizume was sidetracked in British Columbia and Alberta by a series of unexpected choices and decisions that eventually led him to buy farmland in Mission.<sup>50</sup> Hashizume became one of Mission’s most successful farmers even though, or perhaps because, he had come from a family of businessmen. He represents the other half of Sumida’s farming subjects whose families had engaged in fishing, labour, and commerce in Japan. Thus, having a farming background in Japan was not necessarily a motivating factor in turning to farming in Canada.

Although all of these historians have made important contributions to the history of Japanese-Canadian farmers, there is a need to supplement their work with the personal and individual reasons for moving to farming. These reasons were expressed in the agency and voice of the *issei* as they moved within the work force and later settled into farming. For a closer look at what Japanese-Canadian farmers have to say about farming and what their actions and choices suggest, it is necessary to turn to personal, primary sources. Biographies, memoirs, personal papers, and publications left by the *issei* and the family histories recorded by their descendants provide a range

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<sup>49</sup> Hashizume, 29. Dohzen was also one of the few farmers to sell his land in the 1920s and return to Japan.

<sup>50</sup> Hashizume, 33 and Suzuki, 27. Between arriving in Canada in 1903 and buying land in Mission in 1910, Hashizume worked in salmon fishing, road construction, farm labour, importing, and logging. None of these jobs, however, proved lucrative enough to provide the down payment for a farm. It was Hashizume’s investment in a small piece of Vancouver real estate that unexpectedly tripled in value which finally allowed him to buy a farm.

of basic information on the occupational and cultural experiences of 112 male landholding farmers in the Mission and Maple Ridge communities. All but four of them had settled in the Fraser Valley by 1934, when the Japanese Consulate reported a total of 328 farming families in the Mission and Maple Ridge areas.<sup>51</sup> Hence, this sampling represents approximately one-third of those families.

Because the neighbouring communities of Mission and Maple Ridge shared the same geography, climate, agricultural economy, and co-operative network, and because both communities had Japanese-Canadian populations of the same proportion to the general population, much of their history coincides and overlaps. Of the 112 male farmers in this study, however, 103 of them settled in Mission and only 9 of them settled in Maple Ridge. Although Maple Ridge was the larger of the two Japanese-Canadian communities, there is a smaller pool of detailed information on individuals and families than there is about their neighbours in Mission.<sup>52</sup> However, there is a wide range of social and cultural history recorded in Maple Ridge in newspapers, local histories, and in the personal papers of community leader Yasutaro Yamaga.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, both a broader and a more detailed view of

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<sup>51</sup> Sumida, 296.

<sup>52</sup> The larger collection of materials in Mission is explained by the 1992 Japanese Canadian Exhibit (JCEC) organized by Valerie Billesberger and a committee of volunteers at the Mission Community Archives. A vast collection of information on the pre-World War II Japanese-Canadian farmers of Mission was gathered, displayed and subsequently stored in the archives.

<sup>53</sup> Although vital statistics, immigration dates, and family histories are not as plentiful for the Maple Ridge community, numerous accounts of everyday community life and newsworthy milestones have been preserved in the archival records, newspapers, and local histories. The papers of Yasutaro Yamaga at Special Collections, University of British Columbia are an invaluable source of information, including political and economic history. Because Yamaga

the *issei* movement to farming in the Fraser Valley is possible by studying the two neighbouring communities together. From the time of their arrival in Canada, both groups faced similar experiences and developed similar reasons for gravitating to farming in the Fraser Valley.

Frequent, seasonal migration around the province to logging camps, sawmills, mines, and fishing grounds, tempered by the occasional respite in Vancouver and contact with job contractors and employment agencies in “Little Tokyo” along Powell Street, comprised the lifestyle and occupational paths of most early Japanese immigrants. As Robin Anderson explains, “Japanese labour contractors cooperated through commercial networks to divide the profits of migrant Japanese labour,” rather than engage in bitter competition as white employment agencies frequently did.<sup>54</sup> Their competition lay in labour market conditions outside the immigrant community rather than within it. News of work opportunities, including farming, was also passed between Japanese-Canadian co-workers, traveling companions, and acquaintances, as well as individuals with ties to the same prefecture in Japan.

Newspapers and other publications also spread the word about farming. In 1929, a Japanese language publication in Vancouver, *Kanada Nohgyo Hatten Go*, produced a special issue on the development of farming in Canada including a lengthy article on Japanese-Canadian farmers in

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was a prominent leader, his community involvement often extended to Mission and other Fraser Valley communities.

<sup>54</sup> Robin John Anderson, “The Vancouver Employment Business, 1900-1915: Sharks and White Slavers?” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1991) 43. For a list of the “Oriental Labour Suppliers,” or Asian employment agencies, from 1894-1924, see 110-11.

Mission, British Columbia.<sup>55</sup> Interviews were conducted with 35 landholding farmers who discussed their reasons for choosing farming as a permanent occupation.<sup>56</sup> The occupational paths they took to farming, including the jobs they chose and those they left or avoided acquire meaning beyond their economic importance in light of their personal reasons for turning to farming.

The reasons offered by individual farmers for their pursuit of landownership and farming imply a wide range of personal and familial goals including self-sufficiency, autonomy, prosperity, stability, security, honour, and dignity. The overlap and converging of these goals suggests an overall concern for the continuity of family and community for those intending to settle permanently in Canada. Tomosuke Shimomura of Mission related his choice of farming, in 1921, to family concerns:

When I first came to this country, I engaged in various types of labour jobs. I found it very inconvenient to move my family around from job to job. I began to be concerned about my children's future education every time I moved. As I thought it necessary to settle down, I decided to do so by starting to farm. As you are farming on your own land, you feel more secure, although there are bad years sometimes.<sup>57</sup>

Genzaburo Ohsawa of Mission also focused on the welfare of his children as motivation for turning to farming in 1920:

As the number of children are increasing, if I worked at a sawmill, it would be inconvenient in many ways. I thought that by farming, I would be able to raise them. At present, two of my children go to

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<sup>55</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>56</sup> Fortunately, William Hashizume had the foresight to translate Suzuki's 31 page article in 1998 and to donate a copy of it to Mission Community Archives for the benefit of researchers who lack a working knowledge of the Japanese language. Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>57</sup> Suzuki, 12.



white elementary school. They go to Japanese language school as well. I do not worry as there is no danger in their commuting to school.<sup>58</sup>

While farming has always been a dangerous occupation, wilderness living associated with the resource industries also posed particular dangers for family members. Moreover, frequent moves and jobs changes necessitated frequent reassessment of the risks to health and safety. In one work camp, Mrs. Moriyama wrote about the risk of forest fires and in another, she described her first-hand experience of a flash flood that destroyed a neighbour's home and washed away many of the Moriyama's clothes and other belongings. Although no one was killed or seriously injured, one young boy was found trapped under some planks of wood.<sup>59</sup> Wildlife in the wilderness setting also posed a potential threat, especially to children. Shigo Kunimoto shot a cougar near the family's living quarters in Capilano Canyon where he logged cedar shingle bolts several years before buying a farm in Mission.<sup>60</sup> His oldest son, Chikao, was a toddler at the time. His youngest son, Roy, later wrote that the incident and the fear of wild animals prompted his parents to send Chikao to Japan to be raised by his maternal grandparents. Incidents such as these increased the attractiveness of farming. While the myth of rural serenity and well-being may have been instrumental in the movement to farming, the Fraser Valley farm nonetheless

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<sup>58</sup> Suzuki, 5.

<sup>59</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 11-12.

<sup>60</sup> "Roy S. Kunimoto: Life Story," 1-2, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

offered greater possibilities for permanency, security, community support, and access to services such as medical care.

Although labourers in remote areas faced a high risk of injury in logging, sawmill, and mining accidents, doctors and medical facilities were virtually absent in the bush. Toyoki Moriyama experienced two serious injuries in logging. In 1913, while hauling shingle bolts he fractured his leg. A few years later, a spar fell on him and although his injuries were not specified, they were serious enough for him to be hospitalized.<sup>61</sup> In both instances, lengthy boat trips were necessary for him to reach medical care. In 1926, a co-worker of Moriyama's died in a conveyor belt accident in a sawmill.<sup>62</sup> Stories of similar work-related fatalities and serious injuries were common in Fraser Valley newspapers.

Other farmers, such as Shingo Kunimoto, echoed the inconvenience of working in the resource industries:

I logged for about 12 years and during this time, my children were growing up. If I still logged, it would have been inconvenient to send them to school. That is why I decided to settle down and start farming.<sup>63</sup>

As families grew, the inconvenience and hardships of both wilderness living and seasonal migration became increasingly taxing but these difficulties were not limited to the resource industries. Even the hospitality industry was subject to seasonal fluctuations, requiring many *issei* workers to change jobs and relocate. Because of this, men like Sataro Kuwahara, who farmed in

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<sup>61</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 9 and 14.

<sup>62</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 14.

<sup>63</sup> Suzuki, 11.

Mission in the 1920s, saw no future for his family or himself if he had continued to work as a head bellhop in luxury hotels across western Canada.<sup>64</sup> Tashiro Hashizume, who worked in fishing, mining, business, and logging before buying a farm in Mission, claimed, “By labouring for others, the only income is wages. In commerce, you have to deal with clients. By farming, you can expand according to your own efforts.”<sup>65</sup> Both Danysk and historian Daniel Vickers found their subjects also looked to farming for independence, autonomy, and permanent settlement for their families.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, for future farmers like Kuwahara and Hashizume, settling down in agriculture became increasingly appealing with each move and change of jobs.

Further, the migrant lifestyle not only delayed marriage for some, but for those who were already married, it inflicted a strain on family life and frequently delayed the education of the children. Education was very important to Japanese-Canadian parents, not only because they had experienced a system of compulsory schooling in Japan,<sup>67</sup> but also because they believed education would aid their children in achieving success and acceptance in Canadian society. Thus, many farmers, including Kumekichi

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<sup>64</sup> Tom Kuwahara, “The Biography of Sataro Kuwahara: Retail Merchant,” in *Nikkei Images: Japanese Canadian National Museum Newsletter* 6:3 (Autumn 2001) 2-4 and Hashizume, biographical notes on Sataro Kuwabara (Kuwahara), 46.

<sup>65</sup> Suzuki, 28.

<sup>66</sup> Danysk, 36-8, and Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and Fisherman: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994) 14-16, 28-9.

<sup>67</sup> Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) 101-5.

Fujino, Teizo Nakashima, and Toyoki Moriyama, referred to their children's education as a prime motivator for buying land and farming.<sup>68</sup>

Although settling down, educating their children, and spending more time with their families were common goals of many *issei*, some, like Senjiro Tonomura, expressed a personal preference for rural life, "to farm so the children will grow up freely in the country instead of the city."<sup>69</sup> Comments about the low cost of land, the affordability of farming and the potential of farming to provide independence, debt reduction and even profit, suggested that the family farm was seen as an economically viable option for many families.<sup>70</sup> Each of these factors related in some way to planning and sustaining a family.

For some *issei* men, family links to farming were established when a relative such as a father or a brother called them over as a *yobiyose*, entered into landowning partnerships with them, or when a family member died and left the farm in their hands. Yosokichi Kitagawa and Chozaburo Nakamura each became established as landholding farmers as a result of the death of a close relative.<sup>71</sup> Taking on responsibility for widows and young children was often part of the heir's role.

Many farmers who had no relatives in Canada looked to the example of friends or acquaintances in farming. Sanjiro Kodama of Mission said,

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<sup>68</sup> Suzuki, 24, Hashizume, 31, and "Rambling Reminiscences," 16.

<sup>69</sup> Family History Survey #3, Senjiro Tonomura, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>70</sup> Family History Surveys # 4, Tanekichi Araki, and # 53, Giichiro Tashiro, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC. See also, Suzuki, 12 and Kawamoto, 1-2.

<sup>71</sup> See Hashizume 42-3 and 51.

“Farming is good if you’re not thinking of returning to Japan as soon as you make money. I saw my friend farming and decided to settle down and go into farming with the future of my children in mind.”<sup>72</sup> Tanekichi Araki had this to say about the influence of other *issei* on his decision:

At first, as I dearly missed Japan, I strived repeatedly to return home, but things didn’t work out to my liking. After listening to several distinguished people from Japan, farming seems to be the best way for Japanese to settle down.<sup>73</sup>

These “distinguished people from Japan” included the earliest farmers who spread the word about farming opportunities and benefits. But it was the *issei* labourer’s experience in the work place that compelled him to search for something better for himself and his family. The move to farming not only demonstrates resistance to an oppressive and discriminatory *hakujin*-dominated economy but also the embracing of a positive alternative. On a personal level, *issei* men saw farming as the “best way to settle down” not only because it gave them greater control over their own lives but also because it could provide greater security, stability, and educational opportunities for their children. Further, the farms of the early pioneers represented an alternative for those who arrived later in search of permanent settlement for their families. In addition to addressing family needs and concerns, the move to farming offered the prospect of developing friendships and building community. Bunjiro Sakon offers a summary of the transformation from sojourner to settler and farmer:

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<sup>72</sup> Suzuki, 7.

<sup>73</sup> Suzuki, 19.

To farm, one must begin with a determination to settle down permanently. One can not definitely farm if he's thinking of returning home after making money. While you are enduring hard times, there will be occasions where you will come across good years.<sup>74</sup>

Although there was no shortage of hard times in farming, very few of the *issei* farmers of the Fraser Valley returned to Japan to live.<sup>75</sup> Those who were not already married by the time they purchased farmland arranged for marriage soon after, usually through the picture bride system. A few of the remarkable and hard working women who chose or agreed to the life of both a farmer's wife and a farmer in Canada left written accounts of their experience. Some of these were written in their own hand, others with the assistance of family members. But each of them offers a unique and invaluable window into their lives, families, and communities. Chapter Three will piece together their stories and the roles they played in the movement of their families to landownership, farming, and community making in the Fraser Valley.

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<sup>74</sup> Suzuki, 19.

<sup>75</sup> Only 6 of the large group of 109 male farmers made a permanent move back to Japan prior to the expulsion of 1942.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Wives and Mothers: Enabling the Family Farm and Making Community**

Japanese-Canadian women often faced occupational paths as diverse and difficult as that of their husbands. Because all occupations, including farming, reflected the patriarchal structure of both Canadian society and Japanese tradition, female farmers were regarded by both their home and host countries as followers, rather than leaders and pioneers.<sup>1</sup> Thus their contributions to the farm and the community have often been overlooked or under-emphasized, in both primary and secondary sources.<sup>2</sup> A closer examination in this chapter, however, demonstrates that *issei* women, usually working beside *issei* men but occasionally without them, enabled the establishment and maintenance of the family farm. They also played a significant role in the development of Fraser Valley communities and to the translation and negotiation of culture within rural society.

This chapter draws on the experiences of twenty-five *issei* women farmers. (see Table 3.1) Significantly detailed memoirs, biographies, and

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<sup>1</sup> For an examination of patriarchy in Canada as arising from Protestant tradition and its effect on family relations and roles see Cynthia R. Comacchio, *The Infinite Bonds of Family: Domesticity in Canada, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 5, 42-3, 153. For “the interwoven relations of patriarchy and capitalism,” see Cynthia R. Comacchio, “The History of Us’: Social Science, History, and the Relations of Family in Canada,” *Labour/le Travail* 46 (Fall 2000) 167-220. For the patriarchal structuring of both the family and the labour force and the shift from familial patriarchy to social patriarchy in Canada see Jane Ursel, *Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 years of State Intervention in the Family* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Juzo Suzuki, for example, focuses almost entirely on male farmers in his 1929 publication, “Farming by Japanese in Mission Area,” in *Kanada Nohgyo Hatten Go: Development of Farming in Canada Issue*, Canadian Nichinichi Shinbun (November 1929). More recent works such as Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991) do the same.

TABLE 3-1

Selected *Issei* Female Farmers of the Fraser Valley

No.	Name	Picture Bride	Farm Ownership Upon Immigration	Community
1	Tori Tsuyuki	Yes	Yes	Albion/Maple Ridge
2	Etsu Hashizume	No	Yes	Mission
3	Tsutayo Nakashima	Yes	Yes	Mission
4	Haru Moriyama	Yes	No	Mission
5	Tsuchiye Kunimoto	Yes	No	Mission
6	Koto Kawamoto	Yes	No	Maple Ridge
7	Ito Imada	Yes	No	Haney/Maple Ridge
8	Sada Oike	No	No	Haney/Maple Ridge
9	Sumako Fujino	No	No	Mission
10	Kin Hisaoka	Yes	Yes	Mission
11	Kane Inouye	No	Yes	Haney/Maple Ridge
12	Mitsu Oikawa	Yes	No	Mission
13	Shizu Sasaki	Unknown	Unknown	Haney/Maple Ridge
14	(Mrs.) Yoshihara	Unknown	Unknown	Webster's Corners/Maple Ridge
15	Kimiyo Ohno	Yes	Yes	Mission
16	Ritsuko Uyeda	Yes	Yes	Mission
17	Hatsune Kudo	No	Yes	Mission
18	Seiji Yano	Unknown	Unknown	Haney/Maple Ridge
19	Eda Shikaze	Yes	No	Mission
20	Ise Shirakawa	Unknown	Unknown	Haney/Maple Ridge
21	Chikae Kudodera	Unknown	Unknown	Haney/Maple Ridge
22	Etsu Yoshino	Unknown	Unknown	Haney/Maple Ridge
23	Fuki Sakiyama	Unknown	Unknown	Haney/Maple Ridge
24	(Mrs.) Hatori	Unknown	Unknown	Silverhill/Mission
25	Tsuka Sakon	Yes	Yes	Mission

Sources: William T. Hashizume *Japanese Community in Mission* (Toronto: Musson Copy Centres, 2003); Michiko Midge Ayukawa, BA Thesis, MA Thesis, PhD Dissertation; *MRPM Gazette*; *Fraser Valley Record*; Japanese Canadian Exhibit Collection and Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives; Japanese Canadian Files, Maple Ridge Museum; National Nikkei Heritage Centre Archives; Japanese Canadian Collection, Special Collections, UBC.



family histories are available for only six of them.<sup>3</sup> For the others, a variety of brief biographical sketches, family history surveys, and reminiscences cast light on their experience. In some cases, these sources are limited to narrow but important aspects of individual women's lives. When gathered together, these sources help fill some of the gaps in the *issei* women's experience of migration, farming, and the making of rural community. Eleven of the women settled in the Maple Ridge area and the remaining twelve lived in Mission. Eleven women arrived in Canada as picture brides. Four are known to have married while their husbands were in Japan.<sup>4</sup> The marriage arrangements of the other nine are unknown but based on demographics, there is a strong possibility they were picture brides.<sup>5</sup>

The incidence and significance of the picture bride phenomenon within the long-standing Japanese tradition of arranged marriages has been well documented in the scholarly works of Midge Ayukawa, Tomoko Makabe, Audrey Kobayashi, and Evelyn Nakano Glenn.<sup>6</sup> As explained in chapter one

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<sup>3</sup> These include Haru Moriyama, Ito Imada, Tsutayo Nakashima, Kin Hisaoka, Etsu Hashizume, and Koto Kawamoto. For the purposes of this thesis, each woman will be introduced by her first and last name and thereafter referred to by last name with the title of Mrs. This is not only to convey respect but also to differentiate from men who will be referred to by their last name alone after their initial introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC, and Michiko Midge Ayukawa, "Creating and Recreating Community: Hiroshima and Canada, 1891-1941 (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 1996), 165. Etsu Hashizume and Hatsune Kudo both married in Japan during brief return visits by their respective husbands to Japan from Canada.

<sup>5</sup> Audrey Kobayashi, "For the Sake of the Children: Japanese/Canadian Workers/Mothers," in *Women, Work, and Place*, Audrey Kobayashi, ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994) 58, indicates that in 1922, there were 6,657 Japanese Canadian women in Canada and Reginda Sumida "The Japanese in British Columbia," (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1935) 74, claims that in 1924, 6,249 of all the Japanese Canadian women in Canada had been picture brides.

<sup>6</sup> As explained by Michiko Midge Ayukawa, "Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in Early Twentieth Century British Columbia," *BC Studies* 105 & 106 (Spring/Summer 1995) 103-118), picture brides were an overseas extension of a long standing tradition of arranged marriages in Japan. The exchange of pictures between the

of this study, the influx of picture brides between 1908 and 1928 facilitated Japanese Canadian families and communities. In the Fraser Valley, women assumed essential roles in establishing and maintaining the family farm. The transitions and adjustments they faced, however, were far from easy.

From the moment of their arrival in Canada, all Japanese brides were confronted with unfamiliar and challenging situations. At the immigration centre in Victoria, Mrs. Ito Imada recalled the oddity of learning how to use flush toilets with the tank high on the wall. She was also confounded by the modern window blinds. These strange modern conveniences were not to be a part of her everyday experience, however. Upon leaving Victoria with her husband, they gave way to the harsh rustic conditions of daily life in British Columbia's fledgling resource-based communities and raw wilderness.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps even more difficult was having to deal with these challenges in social isolation. The picture bride found herself living among strangers, including her own husband. Norm Tsuyuki states of his mother, "Tori Hara left everything she had ever known behind and came to this strange place to marry a man she knew nearly nothing about."<sup>8</sup> Kobayashi claims that "picture marriages occurred almost entirely on pragmatic grounds. The women were seldom willing partners."<sup>9</sup> This may be true to the extent that all Japanese

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couple substituted for the brief meeting that might otherwise occur if both were present in Japan. See also Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), Kobayashi, "For the Sake of the Children," 45-72 and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> Michiko Midge Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito: A Japanese Pioneer Woman." (BA Honours thesis, University of Victoria, March 1988, 20, quotes Mrs. Imada regarding her first experience with these modern Canadian conveniences.

<sup>8</sup> Norm Tsuyuki, "Tokutaro Tsuyuki," family history, Maple Ridge Museum, Maple Ridge, BC.

<sup>9</sup> Kobayashi, "For the Sake of the Children," 55.

women were expected to marry whether they remained in Japan or emigrated. However, the reasons women offer for accepting and sometimes seeking the picture bride form of marriage are numerous and varied.

Some picture brides felt their physical appearance such as their facial features or type of hair limited their prospects of marriage in Japan.<sup>10</sup> For others, having reached the age of twenty or older placed them at a disadvantage for marrying in Japan because younger brides were more desirable. Still others wished to avoid the position of wife to an eldest son in Japan because it would have required them to live under the rule of both a mother-in-law and possibly several sisters-in-law.<sup>11</sup> Marriage to a subsequent son in Japan had its own disadvantages. Due to the long-standing tradition of primogeniture, younger sons lacked the prospect of inheritance. Regardless of birth position, the strained economic state of rural Meiji Japan offered few opportunities for occupational and financial advancement.<sup>12</sup>

For some *issei* brides, migrating to Canada represented not only opportunity but also adventure. Although Etsu Hashizume was not a picture bride, since she was married during her husband's brief return visit to Japan in 1912, she saw immigration to Canada as a chance to live a "modern" life "like in America."<sup>13</sup> Ayukawa suggests the idea of "marrying Amerika (sic)"<sup>14</sup> was strong among the "spirited, adventurous, strong-willed women" who

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<sup>10</sup> Ayukawa, "Creating and Recreating Community," 109-11.

<sup>11</sup> Ayukawa, "Good Wives and Wise Mothers," 110 and Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991) 89-90.

<sup>12</sup> Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), 116-18.

<sup>13</sup> Biographical profile of Etsu Hashizume, Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>14</sup> Ayukawa, "Creating and Recreating Community," 112.

became picture brides.<sup>15</sup> Tsutayo Nakashima claims that a Japanese woman's desire to emigrate was completely dependent on her marriage opportunities. Regarding immigration to Canada she states, "At the time, you couldn't come over unless you were married. No matter how much you wanted to, it was impossible to come alone. Any husband would do, so all I had to do was get married."<sup>16</sup> In 1916, Mrs. Nakashima's dream came true with her picture bride marriage and voyage to Canada.

Adventure aside, the picture bride marriage-by-proxy arrangement was economical and practical for Japanese men living in both North and South America. Back home in Japan, a trusted *baishakunin*, or go-between, arranged the marriage and helped assure that it was carried out in accordance with Japanese law and local tradition. When the bride arrived in Canada, usually a year later, the exchange of marriage vows was repeated in the presence of a Christian minister, an interpreter, and witnesses. The couple then embarked on a new and challenging life together.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to household and childrearing duties, *issei* wives were expected to assume work in the proximity of their husband's workplace whether that was the family farm or a logging camp. Domestic, hospitality, and food processing jobs were common among those who laboured outside the home setting. However, financial need often served to broaden the range of socially acceptable occupations for women, particularly in remote

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<sup>15</sup> Ayukawa, "Creating and Recreating Community," 118.

<sup>16</sup> Makabe, 131.

<sup>17</sup> Ayukawa, "Creating and Recreating Community," 109, explains that the marriage had to be registered for six months before the bride could apply for a passport in Japan.

wilderness settings where choice was limited. Labour shortages in specific occupations and locales often demanded greater flexibility by women, both before and after family farms were established.

Although the occupational paths of all *issei* women demanded flexibility, all were linked to some extent to their husband's work and his assets. Therefore, those *issei* women who arrived in Canada after 1900 and became farmers will be considered in two groups: firstly, those whose husbands were not landholding farmers at the time of their arrival and, secondly, those whose husbands were. This distinction set the two groups on very different paths to a similar end.

The wives of landless men generally faced a more diverse living and working experience than those who went straight to a family farm that was in the process of development. Within days of arriving in Canada, they accompanied their new spouses on a rugged journey to the logging camp, the fishing village, or the mining town where he was employed. Haru Moriyama's first home, was a shingle camp in Gibson's Landing. Tsuchiye Kunimoto first accompanied her husband to a logging operation on Texada Island.<sup>18</sup> For Koto Kawamoto, it was an uncleared, leased plot of potential farmland in Hammond.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Roy S. Kunimoto, "Life Story," 1, Japanese Canadian Exhibit Collection (JCEC), Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>19</sup> Koto Kawamoto, "The Way of Endurance: A Berry Farmer's Memoir," *The New Canadian* 24 December 1958. Maple Ridge Museum, Maple Ridge, BC.

Mrs. Kawamoto's reaction to seeing her new home for the first time after a train trip and a long, jarring wagon ride in the rain was typical of the experience of many *issei* brides:

We kept on going, leaving behind the forest and coming upon an open field which had two shacks standing upon it. The beggars must be numerous in Canada, I thought. Then I saw a third log house, this one even smaller than the others. Mr. Ebisuzaki said, "Here you are!" and I was dumbfounded. I will never forget that moment of dismay even after fifty years.<sup>20</sup>

Looking after this "shack" was only a small part of Mrs. Kawamoto's responsibilities. She also toiled with her husband day after day to clear and cultivate the land according to the terms and time limit imposed by the lease. Not only did the hard work and crude living conditions make her feel as if she "was in some kind of hell," but in the end, they failed to meet the deadline and lost the land.<sup>21</sup> During Mrs. Kawamoto's first three years in Canada, she and her husband took on three parcels of leased land, all of which they eventually lost in the same way. She had advised her husband against the last two leases because of the poor condition of the land but he ignored her. It was through her persistence and hard work that she eventually convinced her husband that it was better to buy land on credit than to risk another lease and loss situation. Also during that period, Mrs. Kawamoto gave birth to her first two children but she was not able to give them the time and attention she felt

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<sup>20</sup> Kawamoto, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Kawamoto, 1.

they deserved. In summing up that period of her life, she stated, "Life seemed to consist of backbreaking work that reaped no returns."<sup>22</sup>

In most cases, new brides began working immediately either beside their husbands or in related work. Cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry for work crews were common domestic service jobs for *issei* women living in logging and mining camps. Many of Ito Imada's jobs, which usually involved cooking and cleaning, were arranged by her husband. At times their moves were precipitated primarily by a job opportunity for her rather than for him. In 1912, Kaichi Imada accepted a position for his wife as the cook for a sawmill camp in Mt. Lehman. After their arrival, he acquired a position as a wood planer.<sup>23</sup>

The Imadas' journey to the remote Mt. Lehman camp was even more strenuous than Mrs. Kawamoto's bumpy wagon ride. Carrying all their belongings, the Imadas took a train from Vancouver to New Westminster, crossed the Fraser River, and boarded a streetcar for the central Fraser Valley. After disembarking, they walked three miles over a rough, slippery skid road made of logs meant for transporting logs pulled by horses. It was not constructed with either the ease or comfort of pedestrians in mind. At the time, Mrs. Imada was six months pregnant with her first child. At the camp, she worked every day until her daughter was born, received seven days off, and returned to work.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kawamoto, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito," 32-3.

<sup>24</sup> Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito", 32-4.

Although Mrs. Imada's occupational path included at least eight jobs cooking and cleaning in logging, sawmill, and railway construction camps, she held a number of other jobs as well. During her first winter in Canada, she cleaned the house of a *hakujin* woman in Vancouver and performed housekeeping tasks at a Powell Street hotel. In the Vancouver Island *hakujin* community of Ladysmith, she ran a fish shop from 1913 to 1916 and hired a *hakujin* boy to assist her and to take orders from her English-speaking customers. She had her first experience with small fruit farming near Ladysmith where she tended a strawberry field and harvested the crop all on her own in 1916.<sup>25</sup> What is perhaps most surprising is that she also held at least two jobs in logging. The first was in 1918 near Squamish and the second was the following year at Stave Falls north of Mission. In both instances, Mrs. Imada toiled side by side with her husband and a large crew. She worked an eight-foot saw with her husband, chopped logs, and moved them using a peavey. Nor was her experience unique: in her memoirs, Mrs. Imada noted that other women did the same kind of work.<sup>26</sup>

Mrs. Imada's claim is supported by Mrs. Kawamoto's experience in several logging jobs. Regarding the winter of 1911, she states, "I helped my husband who had a contract job of cutting wood. I cut wood and dug stumps until just a few days before my third child came."<sup>27</sup> In 1914, Mrs. Kawamoto worked with her husband in the Coquitlam area; she sawed trees while he piled the logs. Around the same time, Sada Oike and her husband worked a

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<sup>25</sup> Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito," 48.

<sup>26</sup> Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito," 15.

<sup>27</sup> Kawamoto, 2.



double bladed saw to cut stumps near Haney.<sup>28</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga of Haney describes a similar working arrangement:

Some of the pioneer wives often went to the camp in the woods with their husbands to tackle man-sized jobs. The couple would fell a large cedar tree of 5 to 6 feet in diameter. The wife would saw it while her husband would split it with a wedge and a 9 pound hammer to make shingle bolts.<sup>29</sup>

Similar to Mrs. Imada, Mrs. Kawamoto also experienced an assortment of roles in the work force including strawberry and raspberry picker and laundress.<sup>30</sup>

Mrs. Moriyama, on the other hand, mentions only two jobs for herself outside the home during the 14 years she lived in Canada before becoming a farmer. She cooked for a logging camp and she operated a Powell Street confectionery store with her husband for a short time in the early 1920s.<sup>31</sup> Despite this short list of jobs, she experienced numerous moves and upheavals related to her husband's diverse work history as described in the previous chapter.

Even if her work life was relatively stable, it is clear the strain and challenges of migrant life for *issei* women like Mrs. Moriyama, were compounded by the stigma of being a racialized visible minority. Japanese immigrants, like others of Asian descent, received lower pay for work equal to

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<sup>28</sup> *Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows News*, 10 January 1993, 13. This newspaper article is based on an interview with Sada Oike's son, Doug Oike, who was born and raised in Haney and returned to settle there after the Second World War.

<sup>29</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga, "My Footsteps on British Columbia," 1958, 5. Yasutaro Yamaga Papers, Special Collections, University of British Columbia.

<sup>30</sup> Kawamoto, 2.

<sup>31</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences of Haru Moriyama," a memoir recorded and expanded by her daughter, Fumi Tamagi (nee Moriyama) in Lethbridge, Alberta, 12, 13, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

that of *hakujins*.<sup>32</sup> They frequently experienced discrimination and segregation both on the job and where they lived. Separate living arrangements in work camps, towns, and even on farms were the norm for workers such as Japanese-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians, Indo-Canadians and aboriginals. For reasons already explained, women of Japanese descent were much more numerous than women of any other Asian immigrant groups. Thus they were either the only woman in a camp or one of a very small group. According to Mrs. Imada, white women in camps were not expected to work, even if they had no children.<sup>33</sup>

The memoirs and other documents left by *issei* women like Mrs. Imada offer a glimpse into the everyday experiences and difficulties faced by these women. For example, when Mrs. Imada was a camp cook for 35 men at Seymour River in 1912, her daily routine included cooking 50 pounds of rice before breakfast, cleaning the men's cabins and filling their kerosene lamps before lunch, doing the camp laundry in the afternoon, and preparing the evening bath for the men after dinner. She recalls being given unfamiliar foods to cook and having no helpers to turn to for advice or assistance. One day she confused dried seaweed with black tea. When the tea was served, the men laughed at her mistake and she was deeply humiliated by what she

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<sup>32</sup> See Peter C. Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002), Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politics and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989) and Gillian Creese, "Class, Ethnicity, and Conflict: The Case of Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1880-1923," in Rennie Warburton and David Coburn, eds., *Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988) 55-85.

<sup>33</sup> Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito," 13.

regarded as a personal failure.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the first time Mrs. Imada worked as a camp laundress her lack of experience with woollen fabrics resulted in her shrinking an assortment of the workers' clothing. Although she knew that heavily soiled work clothes could be cleaned by boiling them in water with cut up soap and kerosene, she had to learn an alternate method for woollen items. Even when the arduous tasks of washing and ironing were completed, Mrs. Imada's work day continued until she finished mending any worn and ripped clothing in the batch.<sup>35</sup>

By 1918, when she was logging at Stave Falls, Mrs. Imada had two young sons. However, she had no friends or relatives to assist with childcare and she regretted having to leave them alone in the cabin all day while she worked in the bush with her husband. Recalling how little she was able to do for her sons in their early childhood, she states, "I could only give them their three meals. When I think of it now, my heart aches."<sup>36</sup> However, the goal of saving enough money for a down payment on land was largely motivated by Mrs. Imada's concern for her children's future. She was determined to settle down permanently and to send her children to school.

Mrs. Kawamoto also remembers struggling to meet the needs of her children while keeping up with the urgency and demands of the berry harvest. In 1912, a neighbouring *hakujin* farmer treated her kindly and paid her the same wage as a man:

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<sup>34</sup> Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito," 35.

<sup>35</sup> Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito," 27.

<sup>36</sup> Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito," 66.

For the sake of the children, I started to work one hour later than my husband who started at 7 am. And since I took the three children with me, I felt obliged to work harder than the others. The owner recognized my hard work, for he always paid me the same amount as the men – 20 cents an hour. He always told me to take a few minutes respite to feed my baby. He had such a warm heart. During the winter, he gave me work washing the family's clothes.<sup>37</sup>

While a harsher boss could have made life for the Kawamoto family even more difficult, Mrs. Kawamoto nonetheless expressed regret for neglecting her children when she wrote, "In the evenings, I used to watch the children's faces as they slept peacefully, and I often cried because I couldn't take better care of them, particularly the baby who always had to be left alone in her carriage."<sup>38</sup> While the *issei* fathers examined in Chapter One expressed concern for their children's future, the women's role of serving their children's day to day emotional and developmental needs was more difficult within the loose social structure of the migrant lifestyle and the wilderness setting of many migrant jobs. There was no day care or extended family to help with childcare. There were few if any other women, least of all Japanese-speaking women. The immediate concern of most *issei* mothers was to meet the emotional and developmental needs of their children in the form of food, comfort, and safety. However, they also recognized the need for long-term stability and security as their children grew and approached school age. For many, such as Mrs. Kawamoto and Mrs. Imada, taking on paid work was the only way to hasten the purchase of the family farm that would enable a degree of long-term stability and security.

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<sup>37</sup> Kawamoto, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Kawamoto, 2.

In Mrs. Imada's case, her work in the bush and the camp cookhouse enabled her family to achieve the goal of providing a permanent home and education for the children. Many factors, including an unpredictable economy and an anti-Asian social and political atmosphere, made saving the down payment a difficult, long-range task. Mrs. Imada, however, faced additional setbacks because of her husband's habit of gambling away their hard-earned savings.<sup>39</sup> For her, the family farm represented a safe investment that could not be wagered in a game of chance, but it took eleven years of migrant work to achieve. If she and other *issei* woman had less presence in their children's lives during the migrant period than they desired, it was because they directed much of their personal resources toward addressing the long-term needs of their children. Those needs, as they perceived them, included the stability and security of a permanent home in a community with schools.

That is not to say that the *issei* women immigrants who went directly to the family farm automatically achieved stability and security. All pioneer farming women faced years of hardship and strenuous labour. The family farm was often no more developed than the wilderness logging camp and sometimes considerably less so. In addition, during the early decades of agricultural settlement, social isolation and loneliness remained a fact of life for most *issei* women. Because *issei* women had little or no opportunity to learn English, they had difficulty conversing with their *hakujin* neighbours. In Mission, Sumako Fujino was the only Japanese-Canadian woman from 1904 to 1912, when Kin Hisaoka and Etsu Hashizume arrived with their husbands.

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<sup>39</sup> Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito," 46-7 and 68.

In Maple Ridge, the influx of women started with Kane Inouye in 1910 and progressed slowly until the 1920s. Nevertheless, the steady arrival of Japanese-Canadian women and children into the Fraser Valley expanded the history of farming settlement into one of community making.

Early female *issei* farmers did not go unnoticed by the *hakujin*-dominated communities of the Fraser Valley. Mrs. Fujino's daughter confirms this in a summary of her mother's experience:

In those pioneer days as related to me by my mother, Japanese women were a novelty. On hearing that a Japanese woman was in the area, men packed their lunch and came from miles around to look at this rare spectacle.<sup>40</sup>

Did these spectators realize they were equally novel to their Japanese immigrant neighbours? The Hisaoka memoirs state not only that Kin Hisaoka suffered loneliness in her early years in Mission, but also "like others from rural Japan, she had never even seen a Caucasian person before she came to Victoria."<sup>41</sup>

The social isolation of Japanese-Canadian women farmers did not begin to ease significantly until other families moved within close enough proximity to allow the women to initiate friendships and systems of mutual support. In Mission, Mrs. Fujino made a point of visiting and welcoming new *issei* women to the community. By 1918, a women's club or *Fujinkai* held

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<sup>40</sup> Mrs. Sheno Ikeda (nee Fujino), August 21, 1982, untitled document, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>41</sup> *Hisaoka Family Memoirs*, Marjene Turnbull, ed. (Edmonton: Scholastic Duplicators, 1991) 7.

regular gatherings of *issei* women and their children.<sup>42</sup> In Haney, visiting and organizing duties were assumed by community activist Kane Inouye. According to Toyo Takata, the *issei* women's club formed by Mrs. Inouye was "the first Japanese organization in the Valley to discuss mutual problems and to learn English and Canadian customs."<sup>43</sup>

During the 1920s, there are frequent newspaper articles about the meetings of "Japanese mothers for their regular fortnightly study," conducted by Methodist missionaries.<sup>44</sup> The meetings were sometimes referred to as classes involving "lectures and lessons."<sup>45</sup> Since Mrs. Inouye and her husband were early converts to Christianity it is possible that this group was an outgrowth of Mrs. Inouye's group. Although occasional reference is made to the singing of English hymns and reading aloud from the Bible, the "talks" were given in Japanese by missionary women fluent in the language.<sup>46</sup> While the *Gazette* applauds the efforts of both the attendees and the organizers, it highlights the *hakujin* women by publishing their names and praising them for "the valuable service" they provide to the "Japanese ladies" who remain, with rare exception, nameless.<sup>47</sup> As a group of beneficiaries, however, the *issei* women were placed on journalistic display. That they were seen as needing

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<sup>42</sup> See 1918 group photo of Fujinkai meeting outside the home of Eda Shikaze. Photo #185-011, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>43</sup> Toyo Takata, *Nikkei Legacy: The Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today* (Toronto: NC Press, 1983). See also Gordon Nakayama, *Issei: Stories of Japanese Canadian Pioneers* (Toronto: NC Press, 1984) 51.

<sup>44</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 25 November 1926, 8. See *MRPM Gazette*, 15 February 1923, 26 January 1927, and most months in between.

<sup>45</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 8 October 1925, 7.

<sup>46</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 12 November 1925, 8.

<sup>47</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 16 April 1925, 6.

to be made into new citizens implies they were somehow deficient. A typical evaluation of the meetings follows:

The interest [of the Japanese women] was admirable and certainly these efforts [of the missionary women] cannot but prove of the widest possible benefit to the mothers and also their children towards making them members of the newer Canadian citizenship.<sup>48</sup>

One report of a “pleasing” meeting ends with the exclamation: “What splendid work is being accomplished in this way and for these people!”<sup>49</sup> It is ironic that this attempt to build an inter-racial group was riven with racialization and discrimination. The demands of the family farm, however, limited the access of many *issei* women to such groups, particularly in the early years and during harvest time.

On the farm, *issei* women took part in everything from clearing the land to harvesting crops, often with a baby strapped to their back “*ombo*” or piggyback style.<sup>50</sup> Mrs. Nakashima recalls using another method of managing her babies: “When the babies got a little bigger, I used to put them in a small box and take them out into the fields, and they were beside me as I picked berries.”<sup>51</sup> In 1912, before Mrs. Hisaoka had children, she helped grow tons of potatoes between the tree stumps in a partially cleared field. Later, her youngest children spent harvest time playing along side her in the fields. Although she put them to work as soon as they were old enough, her

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<sup>48</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 15 February 1923, 5. Similar sentiments were expressed again in the *MRPM Gazette*, 18 March 1926, 4.

<sup>49</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 15 April 1926, 4.

<sup>50</sup> “Rambling Reminiscences,” 20. Mrs. Imada also states she carried her youngest child on her back while picking strawberries. From excerpt of Mrs. Imada’s memoirs translated by Dr. Michiko Midge Ayukawa, 3, in the author’s possession.

<sup>51</sup> Makabe, 139.



family memoirs claim that as the children “stooped and squatted to weed and pick the acres of berries, Kin told stories of her childhood to keep up their spirits during the relentless and monotonous work.”<sup>52</sup> Also with children in tow, *issei* women performed the equally relentless and monotonous daily tasks of providing sustenance for both the family and the hired help.

Mrs. Nakashima recalls the four months of harvest from May to August as the most labour intensive time of the year. She would get up at four o'clock in the morning to begin cooking the day's meals for 40 or more people.<sup>53</sup> For Mrs. Moriyama, preserving, storing, and cooking enough food for the family and the hired hands was a full time occupation. As she points out, “We did not have things like freezers and so had to preserve food by canning, drying, and pickling.”<sup>54</sup> She also describes family efforts to gather food from the surrounding wilderness, including mushrooms, fiddleheads, cress, and fish.<sup>55</sup>

Just as acquiring the family farm did not end the struggle for financial security, neither did it necessarily end the need for *issei* women to work outside the home, despite the endless demands of farm and family life. Mrs. Kawamoto, for example, worked as a berry picker, a laundress, and a logger during the early years of clearing and developing the family farm.<sup>56</sup> Mrs. Imada reports supplementing the family income with jobs in the Haney jam factory and “a greenhouse where chrysanthemum shoots were planted in

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<sup>52</sup> *Hisaoka Family Memoirs*, 14. See also 15.

<sup>53</sup> Makabe, 137.

<sup>54</sup> “Rambling Reminiscences,” 19.

<sup>55</sup> “Rambling Reminiscences,” 20.

<sup>56</sup> Kawamoto, 2.

horse manure.”<sup>57</sup> Mrs. Moriyama reports taking her children to pick hops as a “poor man’s holiday” in the Sardis area of the Fraser Valley.<sup>58</sup> This was a common late summer activity for Japanese-Canadian families needing to supplement the family income.

Yasutaro Yamaga verifies that *issei* wives worked outside the home and away from the family farm, writing, “After the busy season was over some of them would work in the fruit cannery or hired out as a domestic worker.”<sup>59</sup> Yamaga also cites an instance of job action taken by women employed at the Haney fruit cannery in 1939. They were paid by piecework at a lower rate than other canneries when the following incident occurred:

The girls worked so hard that the average girls earned \$4.00 a day which was a man’s wage in those days. The employer thought that he was paying too much and cut the rate so that girls made about \$3.00 a day. The girls wanted \$4.00 a day and worked harder than ever like crazy and averaged \$4.00. The employer cut the rate again but the girls’ endurance hit the bottom and they all voted for a sitdown strike.<sup>60</sup>

It was at this point that the women approached Yamaga for help. His phone call to the labour department was followed by a visit from an inspector who required the employer to pay the women the original rate. Only then did the women return to work. In addition, Yamaga stated that Setsuko Ryoji, who was the president of the Haney Fujinkai, or women’s club, led the workers in the strike, represented them in the negotiations, and acted as liaison with the

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<sup>57</sup> Excerpt of Mrs. Imada’s memoirs, translated by Dr. Michiko Midge Ayukawa, 3, in author’s possession.

<sup>58</sup> “Rambling Reminiscences,” 27.

<sup>59</sup> Yamaga, “My Footsteps in British Columbia,” 5.

<sup>60</sup> Yamaga, “My Footsteps in British Columbia,” 15.

labour office in Vancouver. Sadly, when she was fired for her actions, none of the other women protested her firing.<sup>61</sup> Although the *nisei*, or second-generation, girls and women began entering the job market in the 1930s, *issei* women like Mrs. Ryoji remained an active and important part of it.

Most often the occupational paths of *issei* women paralleled that of their husband's, but not always. Some *issei* wives accepted jobs off the farm before having children. Mrs. Nakashima, for example, left the Mission farm in late 1916 for a three-month stint as a domestic in a *hakujin* home in Vancouver. She found this job through an employment agency. The benefits, in addition to the pay of fifteen dollars a month, included the opportunity "to study housekeeping."<sup>62</sup> Although Mrs. Nakashima had also hoped to improve her English skills, she claims that did not happen. Nevertheless, her experience demonstrates that work was not only valued for the income it provided, but also for the skills and knowledge it might impart.

Other *issei* women were tied to the family farm as sole managers and operators for a significant part of the year, and in a few cases permanently. For example, Mitsu Oikawa separated from her husband in 1929 after many years of family life in logging and sawmill camps. With her five sons, she purchased land in Mission and settled down in farming. Two of her sons were old enough to supplement the family income with work in logging camps near Mission. She was able to manage the farm and send her younger sons to

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<sup>61</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga, *Hene'e nokai shi* [The History of the Haney Agricultural Association] (Tokyo: Kasai shuppan insetsusha, 1963). The text shown on page 37 has been translated by Mr. William T. Hashizume who has agreed to its publication in this thesis.

<sup>62</sup> Makabe, 136.

school.<sup>63</sup> According to Ayukawa, Shizu Sasaki of Haney worked the family farm on her own while her husband worked full time in a shingle bolt camp at Stave Lake. The same is true of Mrs. Yoshihara, first name unknown, of Webster's Corners in Maple Ridge, whose husband worked full-time in logging.<sup>64</sup> The purchase of the five-acre farm in 1926 coincided with the need for the Sasaki's seven-year-old daughter to enter school. At the time, Mrs. Sasaki also had three-year-old twin sons to care for.<sup>65</sup> Mrs. Imada was frequently left alone to care for the children and the farm after settling in Haney. From 1923 to 1931, her husband spent a substantial amount of time away from the farm running small logging camps. Because he gambled much of his earnings, his contribution to the family farm during that time consisted mainly of clearing additional sections of land during his visits home. Finally, in 1931, he decided to give up logging and turned his energy toward developing and working the farm with his wife. By this time, the Imadas had six children.<sup>66</sup> Another example of a woman taking charge of the family farm for significant periods of time is Kimiyo Ohno of Mission. Because Mrs. Ohno's husband worked full-time for the Pacific Berry Co-op during the berry season, she managed the farm during the busiest time of the year while raising seven children.<sup>67</sup> All of these women drew from a vast range of

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<sup>63</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission: A Brief History, 1904-1942*, (Toronto: Musson Copy Centres, 2003) 58, and Oikawa Family History Survey, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>64</sup> Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), Maple Ridge Branch, *Maple Ridge: A History of Settlement* (Mission: The Fraser Valley Record, 1972) 82.

<sup>65</sup> Ayukawa, "Creating and Recreating Community," 161-2.

<sup>66</sup> Excerpt of Mrs. Imada's memoirs, translated by Dr. Michiko Midge Ayukawa, 4, in the author's possession and Ayukawa, "The Memoirs of Imada Ito," 73-4.

<sup>67</sup> Ayukawa, "Creating and Recreating Community," 170-1 and Hashizume, *Japanese*

knowledge and skills to fulfill their occupational duties both inside and outside the home.

Skills and knowledge, however, could not remove the risk of accidental injury and death in rural pioneer communities. Fatal accidents were more likely to befall *issei* men than women, often leaving wives and children to cope on their own. Some *issei* widows chose to leave farming, particularly if their families were small or their children were too young to offer substantial assistance. Mrs. Inouye, whose husband died in 1931 at the age of 60, temporarily returned to Japan with her only child, an adopted daughter. It is unknown when she returned to Canada. However, she died on 25 June 1960 and was buried beside her husband in the Maple Ridge Cemetery. Ritsuko Uyeda was 26 years old when her husband died in 1924 at the age of 33. She chose to sell her share of the Mission farm to her husband's partner. She and her two young children moved to Vancouver where she worked as a seamstress and as a teacher at one of several Japanese language schools in that community.<sup>68</sup>

*Issei* women with adult and teenaged children, on the other hand, often remained on the family farm after their husband's death. Such was the case with Mrs. Hashizume, whose son took charge of the farm when Tashiro Hashizume died in 1938.<sup>69</sup> Imayo Kodama, whose husband, Sanjiro, also

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*Community in Mission*, 56-7.

<sup>68</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 75-80.

<sup>69</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 32. For examples of six widows who remained on the farm but are not included in my database, see 30, 51, 55, 58-9, 73, and 74.

died in 1938 remained on the family farm. In this case, however, her daughter and son-in-law took over the management of the farm.<sup>70</sup>

Many *issei* women brought special skills and training with them from Japan. Mrs. Moriyama, for example, not only raised silk worms and tended rice paddies in Japan, but was also an accomplished weaver and seamstress of silk kimonos.<sup>71</sup> Her sewing skills transferred well to her household duties in Canada and eventually to her daughters. Her eldest daughter, Midori, established her own dressmaking shop in Vancouver shortly before the bombing of Pearl Harbor.<sup>72</sup> Tsuka Sakon also knew about silkworms and had helped her family with their small farm in Japan.<sup>73</sup> Mrs. Nakashima, like most Japanese women, learned to sew but also knew how to embroider and how to play the Japanese harp.

Other *issei* women brought professional skills to share with their farming communities. Mrs. Hashizume, who trained as a midwife and nurse in Japan, found her skills in high demand in the growing Japanese-Canadian community in Mission.<sup>74</sup> All seven of the Nakashima children, for example, were delivered by Mrs. Hashizume.<sup>75</sup> Hatsune Kudo, who trained and worked as a teacher in Japan, withdrew from farming in 1928 to teach in the

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<sup>70</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 43. Mrs. Kodama does not appear in Table 3.1 because very little is known about her life beyond the information given above.

<sup>71</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 4-5.

<sup>72</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 29.

<sup>73</sup> Patricia Tanaka, "A Family History," *Nikkei Images: Japanese Canadian National Museum Newsletter*, 6:2 (Summer 2001) 4.

<sup>74</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 33 and biographical profile of Etsu Hashizume, Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>75</sup> Makabe, 138.

Japanese language schools of Mission until 1942.<sup>76</sup> These Japanese language classes met after public school and on Saturdays. In the Maple Ridge area, Seiji Yano taught Japanese in her home beginning in 1914. Other women who taught in these schools include Eda Shikaze and Ise Shirakawa of Mission, and Chikae Kubodera, Etsu Yoshino, and Fuki Sakiyama of the Maple Ridge area.<sup>77</sup> By the mid-1930s, Mission had two Japanese language schools and the Maple Ridge area had at least three.<sup>78</sup> As more *nisei* reached school age and English became their dominant language, their parents demanded more Japanese language classes and teachers to enable the survival of the language within the home. Thus, the *issei* farming community provided numerous teaching jobs to women farmers.

Although *issei* women assumed many supportive roles related to the education of their children they also exercised choice and resistance when confronted by unfair treatment within those roles. One example involves the English language kindergarten established in 1927 in Maple Ridge to facilitate the smooth transition of Japanese-Canadian children into the public school system. Yamaga recalls a group of *issei* mothers who took turns heating and cleaning the kindergarten room in a local church. However, after just one week of operation, the women abruptly ended their involvement without offering an explanation. Yamaga explains:

It was found that someone had created and spread a gossip

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<sup>76</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 18, 45. Ayukawa, "Creating and Recreating Community," 141.

<sup>77</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 18 and Yamaga, "Footsteps," 6.

<sup>78</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 18-9 and Reginda Sumida "The Japanese in British Columbia," (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1935) 523.

that Yamaga was paid \$45.00 a month by the church, including the janitor work. This was why the mothers declined to work free.<sup>79</sup>

The misunderstanding was resolved and the women resumed their volunteer work when a church official explained that Yamaga was not being paid.

Yamaga also facilitated the involvement of *issei* women in the Parent and Teachers Association (PTA) and served as interpreter at the meetings.<sup>80</sup>

For years he taxied the women to meetings “in his model T Ford.”<sup>81</sup> Of their involvement, he states:

Although they spoke very little English, they contributed more than their share toward the PTA work. They gave generously and worked side by side with white ladies with whom they became friendly and learned many things through their eyes.

Besides benefiting the schools and the community at large, Yamaga suggests it boosted the self-esteem of the *nisei* to see their mothers as involved in school matters as the mothers of their *hakujin* friends.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to demands of raising children, working the farm, and supporting their children’s education, these women also played a significant role in the making of the Japanese-Canadian rural community and in fostering a positive relationship with the broader Euro-Canadian community. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn states, *issei* women “played a crucial role in building and maintaining ethnic culture,” by maintaining every day practices related to activities such food preparation, folk medicine practices, and relating peasant

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<sup>79</sup> Yamaga, “Footsteps,” 10.

<sup>80</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 7 February 1924, 3 and 10 December 1925, 5,

<sup>81</sup> Yamaga, “Footsteps,” 11.

<sup>82</sup> Yamaga, “Footsteps,” 11.



folk lore.<sup>83</sup> They also served as mediators of cultural change by introducing selected aspects of the *hakujin* culture around them.<sup>84</sup> As seen with Mrs. Inouye's early women's group and later the Methodist "Japanese mothers" group in Haney, cultural change may have been gradual but exposure to Euro-Canadian culture was continuous. This was particularly true as children began playing with *hakujin* neighbours and attending public school where they embraced the practices, beliefs, and language of their *hakujin* peers. For rural *issei* women, community making often began between neighbours. Pete Lowe, who emigrated in 1911 from Sweden to Silverhill near Mission, recalls his Japanese neighbours, the Hatori family. Lowe states, "Mother and Mrs. Hatori could not speak English, but they got along just fine with their tea and coffee sessions."<sup>85</sup> Mrs. Moriyama describes her friendship with her German neighbours, the Hammond family:

They were a large family and our children and the Hammond children became good friends. Mrs. Hammond was a kindly German lady who introduced me to many western dishes. She taught me how to cook dumplings, fruitcake, doughnuts, buns and bread to name a few. I remember I used Royal yeast then. Although I could not speak English, my children served as interpreters and with much gesturing and laughing, Mrs. Hammond and I managed to communicate well.<sup>86</sup>

Mrs. Moriyama was able to reciprocate by sharing Japanese delicacies with the Hammonds when they joined the Moriyama family for a traditional

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<sup>83</sup> Glenn, 38.

<sup>84</sup> Glenn, 38.

<sup>85</sup> Ella Wickstrom, Karin Edberg-Lee, and Linda Eide Kask, "Recollections of Silverhill," 2<sup>nd</sup> printing (January 1992) 13, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>86</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 15.

Japanese New Year celebration.<sup>87</sup> Mrs. Imada recalls some helpful *hakujin* neighbours in Ladysmith in 1915. During the week she spent in bed while recovering from the birth of her second child, they visited daily, bringing her pies, cakes, salads, “and other delicious food” she had not tasted before.<sup>88</sup>

The sharing of food and cultural traditions by women also occurred on a broader scale in relation to Canadian holidays such as May Day, Empire Day, and Thanksgiving. In 1928, Mrs. Yamamoto was listed on the refreshment committee for the Empire Day celebrations in Maple Ridge.<sup>89</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga describes a Thanksgiving tradition in Haney that began in 1932 and continued for many years. The Japanese-Canadian women prepared chicken salad for 200 people and the *hakujin* women provided dessert and beverages. The meal was followed by singing and recitals.<sup>90</sup> In 1922, “the Japanese and their friends enjoyed a splendid Hallowe’en Party in their hall on Lillooet Road” in Maple Ridge.<sup>91</sup> Included in the festivities were refreshments, “songs, recitations, instrumental solos, and Japanese drill by the children.”<sup>92</sup> *Issei* women enabled this kind of coming together over food and celebration not only as cooks and servers but also as wives, mothers,

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<sup>87</sup> “Rambling Reminiscences,” 15.

<sup>88</sup> Ayukawa, “The Memoirs of Imada Ito,” 44.

<sup>89</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 31 May 1928, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Yamaga, “My Footsteps in British Columbia,” 8.

<sup>91</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 9 November 1922, 2.

<sup>92</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 9 November 1922, 2. According to Anne Bloomfield, “Drill and Dance as Symbols of Imperialism,” in *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialization and British Imperialism*, ed. J. A. Mangan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 74, drill is physical activity, usually done in groups, used to express ideological belief. Drill was publicly performed by children in Canada and other parts of the British Empire, particularly at patriotic celebrations such as Empire Day from 1902 onward. Drill was originally inspired “inspired by the Japanese ‘bushido’ – a code of honour extolling the virtues of loyalty, patriotism, and obedience.” Thus, it is likely that Japanese Canadian children practiced drill in their *hakujin* schools and communities as well as within the smaller Japanese Canadian transnational community.

and neighbours interacting within the broader community context of a shared agricultural economy.

In addition, *issei* women were involved in the charitable activities of the *hakuji*n community. In Haney, Mrs. Inouye organized “local Red Cross works” in support of the First World War effort.<sup>93</sup> In 1925, Mrs. Nakana presented the Maple Ridge PTA with a donation of \$78.50 from the Japanese-Canadian community.<sup>94</sup> Mrs. Shikaze of Mission frequently visited Vancouver “to lend a helping hand to those suffering from sickness.”<sup>95</sup> In 1927, the Armistice Day sales of poppies by *issei* women and their young daughters in Maple Ridge yielded an intake of \$125.<sup>96</sup>

In both Mission and Maple Ridge, the use of the Japanese Community Hall was offered to the community at large for events including school concerts, graduations, and activities sponsored by the Parent and Teacher’s Association.<sup>97</sup> On many occasions, the *hakuji*n community was invited to attend activities sponsored and organized by the Japanese-Canadian community. These included judo tournaments, variety shows, and operettas. *Issei* women made significant contributions to these events by providing food,

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<sup>93</sup> Yamaga, “Footsteps,” 3.

<sup>94</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 5 March 1925, 7.

<sup>95</sup> Suzuki, 13.

<sup>96</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 8 December 1927, 8.

<sup>97</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 6 January 1927, 12 November 1931, 2, and *Fraser Valley Record*, 7 January 1932, and 6 May 1941.

costumes, uniforms and decorations.<sup>98</sup> Despite the language barrier, they also functioned as warm and cordial hostesses.<sup>99</sup>

For example, the operetta *The Mikado*, by the British lyricist and composer team of William S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan, was presented in the Hammond Theatre in November 1924 to a crowd of both Japanese and *hakujin* Canadians.<sup>100</sup> To what extent this operetta, which has been called racist and imperialist, may have reinforced Orientalist stereotypes among the *hakujin* population of Hammond is not clear. The offensiveness of the portrayal of the Japanese in *The Mikado* was recognized in England as early as 1907, when a ban was placed on the music during an official visit by Japan's Prince Sadanaru.<sup>101</sup> However, the *Gazette* declared the production a "splendid success" and praised every aspect of it, including the music, dancing, acting, costumes, and scenery. Just as noteworthy, however, were the article's closing comments:

It is pleasant to note that the Union Jack held king place throughout the evening. Nor was any other of the flags of earth displayed. The national anthem was sung to close.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> For examples, see *MRPM Gazette*, 21 March 1929, 4, 2 April 1936, 30 October 1930, 1, and 30 March 1933, 1.

<sup>99</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 26, May, 1927, 1, 27 December 1927, 8 and *Fraser Valley Record*, 2 April 1936, 1.

<sup>100</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 13 November 1924, 1. *The Mikado* was first performed in 1885 in London.

<sup>101</sup> Colin Holmes and A.H. Ion, "Bushido and the Samurai: Images in British Public Opinion, 1894-1914," *Modern Asian Studies*, 14:2 (1980) 328. For discussions of racism and imperialism related to *The Mikado*, see William L. Hicks, "Social Discourse in the Savoy Theatre's Productions of *The Nautch Girl* (1891) and *Utopia Limited* (1893): Exoticism and Victorian Self-Reflection" (MM thesis, University of North Texas, 2003) 5, 19, 20 and J.M.Balkin and Sanford Levinson, "Interpreting Law and Music: Performance Notes on "The Banjo Serenader" and "The Lying Crowd of Jews,"" *Candoza Law Review* 20 (1999) 101-6, 112, 116.

<sup>102</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 13 November 1924, 12.

Although the Japanese theme and atmosphere of the production demonstrate both a resistance to cultural domination and a proud demonstration of Japanese heritage, the Japanese-Canadians were careful to balance that with a final show of patriotism and loyalty to the British Empire. *Issei* women's contributions to such events testify not only to the upholding of their own traditions but also to their role in promoting positive inter-community relations, even at the cost of perpetuating the racial and cultural stereotypes engrained in the popular culture of the day.

Thus, the success of many public events reflected the willingness of *issei* farming women to step out of their usual occupational spheres of domesticity and agriculture and to adapt their skills to the community project at hand. Further, their participation helped generate positive coverage in the *hakujin* press that reflected well on the Japanese-Canadian community as a whole. Without *issei* women's support and involvement, however quiet and inconspicuous, many of these activities would not have been possible. The women were instrumental both in the making of the Japanese-Canadian community and in fostering connections with the *hakujin* community.

Although *issei* women may have appeared to follow their husbands unquestioningly, they assumed an active role in the workforce and in establishing and maintaining the family farm. Their working lives were intermeshed with a strong conviction for supporting both family and community. The goals of providing their children with an education and security motivated them to endure extreme hardship, social isolation, and

arduous labour. For those who married migrant men, the same goals led them to push their husbands towards landownership and farming. While the *issei* woman's role in establishing and maintaining the family farm was essential, her role in supporting the growth of the farming community was significant and extended beyond the ethnic enclave to the broader community.

Because of the patriarchal nature of both Japanese and Canadian culture, women's influence outside the home was more limited and subtle than that of men. In chapter four, the focus turns to the making of community in Mission and Maple Ridge, focusing on the roles of men. The experience and contributions of women will be included wherever possible.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Making of Community in Mission and Maple Ridge

The transnational farming communities of Japanese-Canadians were a gradual but purposeful outgrowth of *issei* settlement in the Fraser Valley.<sup>1</sup> In addition to supporting Japanese culture and language, these communities provided a haven from prejudice and discrimination in the broader *hakujin* community. Not unlike *issei* occupational paths, the making of community reflected *issei* resistance to oppression and their assertion of control over their own lives. For *issei* farmers, community was a dynamic, ongoing process. Similar to what E. P. Thompson claims about class, community is also “a historical phenomenon” that is “present at its own making” and it “entails the notion of historical relationship.”<sup>2</sup> All of this characterized the vibrant process of *issei* community making in the Fraser Valley, where community was an outgrowth of the historical phenomenon of occupational

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<sup>1</sup> See Anne Doré, “Transnational Communities: Japanese Canadians of the Fraser Valley, 1904-1942,” *BC Studies* 134 (Summer 2002) 35-70. William Alonso, “Citizenship, Nationality, and Other Identities,” *Journal of International Affairs* 48:2 (Winter 1995) 595, defines transnational communities as “solidaristic communities within a host country” which maintain bonds with their country of origin, particularly regarding ethnic traditions and values, while adopting some aspects of the host culture. Others have offered detailed studies of the concept of transnationalism, its origins, and applications. See Peter Kivisto, “Theorizing Transnational Immigration: A Critical Review of Current Efforts,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24:4 (July 2001) 549-77. Regarding Japanese Brazilian and Japanese Peruvian transnational communities, see Takeyuki (Gaku) Tsuda, “When Identities Become Modern: Japanese Emigration to Brazil and the Global Contextualization of Identity,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24:3 (May 2001) 412-432. See also Ayumi Takenaka, “Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences: The Return Migration and the Transformation of Ethnicity of Japanese Peruvians,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 42:9 (June/July 1999) 1459-75. For a look at Japanese Brazilian and to a lesser extent Japanese Peruvian ethnicity and community structure, see Christopher A. Reichl, “Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988,” *Ethnohistory* 42:1 (Winter 1995) 31-62.

<sup>2</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1980) 8.

paths. Moreover, the occupational paths of *issei* farmers did not stop with the purchase of the family farm. Rather, they evolved, sometimes branching and sometimes converging, while continually shaping community. The transnational overlap and intersection of *issei* settlement and occupational paths with those of the larger *hakujin* community informed both the ongoing negotiation of the terms of co-existence and the ongoing translation of culture.<sup>3</sup> In other words, neither community moved forward without being affected and defined by the other.

For *issei* farmers, however, community making was further complicated by their prominence as a visible, racialized<sup>4</sup> minority. They could neither isolate themselves from nor blend in with the broader *hakujin* community, its Anglo-Canadian culture, and its oppressive political climate. Nevertheless, Japanese-Canadian farmers of the Fraser Valley cultivated an important advantage that arose from their occupational paths: economic competitiveness. As they gradually dominated the berry growing industry in British Columbia,<sup>5</sup> they forged strong economic ties to the broader

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<sup>3</sup> For discussion of the translation and negotiation of culture, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 25-6, 37-39, and 228-9.

<sup>4</sup> Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson, "Japanese Canadians and the Racialization of Labour in the British Columbia Sawmill Industry," *BC Studies* 103 (Fall 1994) 33-58, explain racialization as a "social construction of race," by which a person's physical and cultural characteristics are used to identify "natural" differences that justify negative, hostile reactions toward them. See also Robert Miles, *Racism and Labour Migration*, (London: Routledge, 1982), Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989) and Bob Carter, Marci Green, and Rick Halpern, "Immigration Policy and the Racialization of Migrant Labour: The Construction of National Identities in the USA and Britain," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19:1 (January 1996) 135-57.

<sup>5</sup> Reginda Sumida, "The Japanese in British Columbia" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1935) 311-12, claims that by 1934, 90 percent of the Fraser Valley production of berries and soft fruit was produced by Japanese farmers who made up only 75 percent of the berry and soft fruit farmers. According to *The Chilliwack Progress*, 15 April 1942, 4, the Pacific Co-operative Union claimed that 83 percent of the strawberry crop and 47 percent of



community. These ties secured their position as an essential, integral part of the rural economy despite their lower social status as a visible, ethnic minority. Within this context, pioneer *issei*, particularly community leaders, exercised agency not only in the making of their own transnational communities but also in their efforts to minimize oppression, discrimination, and exclusion by the broader community. This chapter focuses on the concerns and activities of individual *issei* in the making of community and how occupational paths were integral to that process. Their voice and experience provide a view of community making from the inside out and the bottom up.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the small number of *issei* farming pioneers who settled in the Fraser Valley were respected by most of their *hakujiin* neighbours for their industriousness and frugality.<sup>6</sup> As the Japanese-Canadian population grew, community organizations and structures emerged in patterns similar to those they had known in the rural communities of Japan. For example, each farming community formed a *Nokai*, or agricultural association that not only functioned as a farmer's cooperative, but also offered families a wide range of social services, cultural activities, and educational opportunities. Each *Nokai* constructed a community hall to accommodate the various meetings, classes, social events, and other gatherings.<sup>7</sup> All members of the *issei* community were expected to join the *Nokai* and to contribute a percentage of their income to its operation.

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the raspberries in BC were grown by the "Japanese."

<sup>6</sup> Doré, "Transnational Communities," 45-6.

<sup>7</sup> Doré, "Transnational Communities," 48-9. Large communities, such as Maple Ridge, supported up to four *Nokai* and community halls. See also, John Mark Read, "The Pre-War

A further division of community is explained by Mrs. Moriyama who stated that, “The Japanese community still retained the old country custom of dividing into neighbourhood groups or *tonari-gumi*. Mission had four such groups, each of which had “a representative who was responsible for notifying all others of any news or notices of importance.” The families in these neighbourhood groupings “helped each other and acted as one big family.”<sup>8</sup> None of these traditional organizations were static or isolated; they evolved in relation to the larger context of the *hakujin* community and Canadian society.

As explained in chapter two, Japanese-Canadians came to farming as individuals with diverse skills and work experience rather than as a homogeneous occupational group. Those whose paths expanded into positions of leadership were fluent in English and cognizant of Canadian customs and practices. Similar to what Kurashige found among Japanese-Americans, leaders tended “to embrace a flexible identity that transcended racial and ethnic boundaries.”<sup>9</sup> They were not only able to relate well to the *hakujin* community, but as Ayukawa explains, they were able to help subsequent Japanese immigrants follow paths to farming by “inspiring, persuading, and smoothing the way” for them.<sup>10</sup>

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Japanese Canadians of Maple Ridge: Landownership and the *Ken-Tie*” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> “Rambling Reminiscences of Haru Moriyama,” a memoir recorded and expanded by her daughter, Fumi Tamagi in Lethbridge, Alberta, 22. Japanese Canadian Exhibit Collection (JCEC). Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>9</sup> Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) 7.

<sup>10</sup> Michiko Midge Ayukawa, “Creating and Recreating Community: Hiroshima and Canada, 1891-1941 (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 1996) 143.

Among the early leaders were Jiro Inouye and Yasutaro Yamaga who settled in Maple Ridge in 1906 and 1908 respectively. Mission's early leaders included Kumekichi Fujino (1904), Tashiro Hashizume (1910), and Minoru Kudo (1911). In addition to developing an understanding of Canadian culture, there was a tendency for leaders to convert to Christianity. Christian affiliation not only increased their contact with the *hakujin* community by providing additional sites and occasions for interaction but it also helped gain *hakujin* respect.<sup>11</sup> Fujino was the only one of this group of five to remain staunchly Buddhist all his life.<sup>12</sup>

All of these leaders and their families had permanent settlement in mind as they established their family farms. Subsequent leaders emerged within the *Nokai* and other organizations. For example, Taichiro Hattori, who settled in Mission in 1917, became active in the Mission Japanese Cooperative Union and the Japanese Language School.<sup>13</sup> In Maple Ridge, Sansuke Kawamoto held office in the Japanese Farmer's Association and was active in the Buddhist Church from the 1920s onward and Kaichi Imada helped establish the judo club in 1933.<sup>14</sup> The majority of *issei* farmers,

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<sup>11</sup> For examples of Christian institutions and activities involving both Japanese Canadians and their *hakujin* neighbours see Yamaga on the Corner Mission in "My Footsteps in British Columbia," 1958, 7-8, Yasutaro Yamaga, Papers, Special Collections, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, and *Fraser Valley Record*, 15 April 1937 on a gathering of *issei* and *hakujin* men of the United Church.

<sup>12</sup> Family History Survey #44, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>13</sup> William T. Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission: A Brief History, 1904-1942*, (Toronto: Musson Copy Centres, 2003), 34 and Juzo Suzuki, "Farming by Japanese in Mission Area," in *Kanada Nohgyo Hatten Go: Development of Farming in Canada Issue*, Canadian Nichinichi Shinbun (November 1929) 20-1.

<sup>14</sup> Kawamoto Family Memoir, Japanese Canadian Files, Maple Ridge Museum, Maple Ridge, BC, published as, Mrs. Koto Kawamoto, "The Way of Endurance: A Berry Farmer's Memoir," *The New Canadian* (24 December 1958), 2. and Yasutaro, Yamaga, *Hene'e nokai shi* [The History of the Haney Agricultural Association] (Tokyo: Kasai shuppan insetsusha, 1963) The

however, seem to have maintained a low profile, their names appearing infrequently in local newspapers, family histories, and other primary documents as they went about their work. Although this might suggest an atmosphere of considerable cooperation and tranquility, there is also evidence of tension and disagreement among *issei* farmers. Not all placed the making of community with their *hakujin* neighbours high on their list of priorities.

Yamaga, who held executive positions in *hakujin* organizations like the Haney Agricultural Association and the Haney Board of Trade, claimed that from the beginning, the Japanese “isolated themselves from the village society and took no interest of the other.”<sup>15</sup> Although there was a gradual improvement over time, he “always had to argue and fight” within the *Nokai* for greater *issei* involvement with the broader *hakujin* community. Inouye, who was called the “Japanese *soncho*,” or village chief, of Haney, also promoted cooperation and participation although it appears the task was daunting.<sup>16</sup> Just days before his death in 1931, Inouye called Yamaga and six other community leaders to his bedside to hear his dying wish:

With the present situation in Haney, I can't go away peacefully. I was thinking that during my golden years at least, I would work to maintain peace and harmony in Haney and also for the *niseis*. I am no longer able to fulfill that dream. I would like you to carry on my dream. Please make Haney as pleasant and peaceful as it was in the earlier days.”<sup>17</sup>

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text shown on page 30 has been translated by William Hashizume who has agreed to its publication in this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga, “Footsteps,” 14.

<sup>16</sup> Toyo Takata, *Nikkei Legacy: The Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today* (Toronto: NC Press, 1983) 72.

<sup>17</sup> Yamaga, *Hene'e nokai shi*. The text shown on page 29 has been translated by William Hashizume who had agreed to its publication in this thesis.

Although Inouye's death shifted more responsibility to Yamaga, prior to that, the two men had shared the tasks of leadership and public relations for over two decades. Yamaga's liaison work with the *hakujin* community supported many areas of cooperation in which he set an example and urged all Japanese-Canadians to participate.

First, Yamaga encouraged them to learn English, to understand Canadian culture, and to practice Canadian manners. He ran a free night school, teaching English every winter from 1913 "until the government night school opened in 1927 in Haney."<sup>18</sup> For those *issei* who chose not to learn English, however, Yamaga explains that "Mr. Inouye looked after every business transaction as interpreter."<sup>19</sup> Although it seems likely there was some form of payment for these services, Yamaga makes no reference to it in his papers. In Mission, similar services were provided by Minoru Kudo and Ken Hayashi.<sup>20</sup>

Second, Yamaga promoted the participation of both *issei* and *nisei* in *hakujin* community organizations and events, particularly charitable and fundraising activities. As a convert to Christianity, he also promoted church-affiliated organizations and events.

Third, Yamaga advocated *issei* membership in the cooperative movement and urged conformity to accepted work practices and marketing

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<sup>18</sup> Yamaga, "Footsteps," 6.

<sup>19</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga, "The History of Japanese Farming in British Columbia, 1906-1941," 2, Yasutaro Yamaga Papers, Special Collections, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.

<sup>20</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 35 and 45.

standards through his direct involvement in the development and management of farmer's cooperatives.<sup>21</sup> This further broadening of Yamaga's occupational path placed him into the influential position of not only informing farmers of the functions and benefits of cooperative membership but also of being able to urge their participation and compliance to standard practices. In addition to dealing with marketing and transportation issues, cooperatives offered benefits such as bulk buying of supplies and equipment, operating canneries and cold storage plants, and sharing both knowledge and information.

Mrs. Imada reports that on several occasions, Mr. Yamaga visited her family to inform them of land for sale and to report the finalization of their various land purchases.<sup>22</sup> This real estate work involved contact with the *hakujin* community and required a range of skills including the ability to speak and write English. Why would he take on such work, especially since much of it was unpaid? No doubt he and others like him were rewarded with a considerable amount of respect, status, and satisfaction for their effort and achievements on behalf of their communities. Furthermore, the low rates of fluency in English only increased community dependence on leaders such as Yamaga, but it also reinforced the leaders' power and status.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the most important function of cooperatives from Yamaga's standpoint, however, was the prospect of promoting better long-term

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<sup>21</sup> Yamaga, "Footsteps," 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Mrs. Imada's Memoirs, translated by Midge Ayukawa, 3, 4, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Sumida, 64, claims a 1924 study showed that 74 percent of Japanese immigrants could not read or write English and only 8 percent could understand daily English conversation.

economic and social relations with the *hakujin* community. For more than three decades, Yamaga worked tirelessly in all of these areas of liaison and public relations, in the making of community.

Although compliance with the agendas and policies of the leaders in both Maple Ridge and Mission gradually expanded, it was a long, slow process. Within the *issei* community, farming practices were the main focus of dialogue and disagreement. The overall success of *issei* farmers suggests that the leaders' demands for cooperation and adherence to specific farming and marketing guidelines were generally met with compliance. *Issei* good manners and quiet persistence may have served to mollify expressions of resistance and assertiveness and to promote the appearance of community cohesion and cooperation to the outside world. Nevertheless, internal resistance to the policies and expectations of *issei* leaders was not uncommon. Similar to what occurs in most communities, the ideas and policies of the leaders were neither wholly embraced nor practiced by the entire group.

Disagreement and resistance was not only expressed in verbal and written forms but it was also reflected in work and in everyday life. Although practices such as involving all family members in farm labour seven days a week and adhering to a frugal lifestyle were criticized by some members of *hakujin* society, *issei* reluctance to abandon those practices stemmed from both economic necessity and cultural tradition. One Haney farmer, when confronted by a *hakujin* neighbour about working in his fields on Sunday

replied, “Me Buddhist, you no policeman. I don’t care.”<sup>24</sup> Although this farmer and other *issei* may have stopped engaging in noisy and conspicuous activities such as dynamiting tree stumps on Sunday, they did not stop working. They merely shifted to quieter, less conspicuous work.<sup>25</sup> In their struggle to establish their homes and provide for their families, the *issei* also struggled to find a balance between their own needs and traditions and the expectations of their host country.

For example, *issei* families avoided conspicuousness in the outward appearance of their permanent residences while maintaining important aspects of their own culture. They built houses that looked like those of their *hakuji*n neighbours.<sup>26</sup> Inside, however, they constructed furniture from wooden dynamite crates, maintained Shinto shrines to their ancestors, and added the *ofuro*, or traditional Japanese bathhouse, at the back. Their agricultural labour catered to popular Canadian tastes in food but they kept small gardens for growing their own Japanese produce and they utilized Japanese businesses and pedlars when they could afford to.<sup>27</sup> As Kobayashi and Jackson suggest, “resistance takes many forms.”<sup>28</sup> It may have been expressed in the simple practice of eating ethnically familiar food or in working outdoors whenever necessary, regardless of the day of the week.

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<sup>24</sup> Ayukawa, “Creating and Recreating Community,” 148.

<sup>25</sup> Ayukawa, “Creating and Recreating Community,” 149 and Doré, “Transnational Communities,” 47.

<sup>26</sup> For examples of houses and floor plans see Family History Surveys and photos including #191/1-005 and #185-001, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>27</sup> “Rambling Reminiscences,” 19, 20, and 24.

<sup>28</sup> Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson, “Japanese Canadians and the Racialization of Labour in the British Columbia Sawmill Industry,” *BC Studies* 103 (Fall 1994), 55.



Subtle and politely phrased expressions of discontent and resistance abound in Juzo Suzuki's 1929 Japanese-language publication on farming and marketing practices.<sup>29</sup> Suzuki interviewed 35 male *issei* farmers of Mission out of the 67 *issei* households in the community at the time.<sup>30</sup> The interviews took place shortly after the collapse of the BC Berry Grower's Cooperative Association, only three years into the five year contract signed by most berry farmers.

While seven farmers did not express an opinion on cooperatives and organized marketing, twenty-one agreed that cooperative marketing was good in principle but had not yet lived up to farmer's expectations in actual practice. The farmers expressed a number of reasons for this failure, the most common of which was the lack of universal membership. Torakuma Yanoshita summarized his view of the problem:

If a parent breaks a promise to his children, the children will do likewise. After promising to ship his crops to the union and later learns that the union climate is bleak, the farmer immediately backs out and sells elsewhere. This practice is not acceptable. It is like teaching that to your children. I would like to see every farmer join the union<sup>31</sup>

Others, like Bunjiro Sakon, tactfully challenged the leaders: "It is difficult for growers to control the market. What is most important in cooperative marketing is that their leaders should work wholeheartedly for the

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<sup>29</sup> Juzo Suzuki, ed., "Farming by Japanese in Mission Area," in *Kanada Nohgyo Hatten Go: Development of Farming in Canada Issue*, Canada Nichinichi Shinbun (November 1929) W. T. Hashizume, trans., 25. Hashizume Fonds, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>30</sup> Of these farmers, 34 are listed in my database. The remaining one is an anonymous member of the community and so it is highly likely he is also included in my database.

<sup>31</sup> Suzuki, 22.

interests of the growers.”<sup>32</sup> Kahei Kamimura also asserted that the success of the cooperative union “depends on how the union is run.”<sup>33</sup> According to Yamaga, “It was unfortunate that the highly salaried officials of this newly organized co-op had not enough business experience to handle such a big enterprise.”<sup>34</sup> No doubt some of the farmers’ comments and disillusionment arose from that event. Yohzaburo Ito stated, “It is regrettable that nothing good has resulted because of the actual way [the cooperative union] is run.”<sup>35</sup> Three other farmers suggested that government should intervene to promote full co-op membership and unified action.<sup>36</sup> In their pursuit of success and security, all of these men looked to the cooperative movement for the solidarity and leadership that farmers had not been able to achieve on their own. Although the desire for independence had influenced their gravitation to landownership, once they were established in farming and marketing, most farmers regarded cooperation and the making of community as economically expedient to their success and security.

Another major concern expressed by several of Suzuki’s interviewees was a strong objection to the practice of a few farmers of packing their berry crates with good fruit on the top and poor quality or rotting fruit beneath.<sup>37</sup> This practice not only defied cooperation but it breached community trust and

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<sup>32</sup> Suzuki, 19.

<sup>33</sup> Suzuki, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga, “The History of Japanese Farming,” 3.

<sup>35</sup> Suzuki, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Suzuki, 9-10,

<sup>37</sup> Suzuki, 5, 8-10.

pride. Once again, the farmers relegated the responsibility for dealing with these offenses to the leaders of the cooperatives.

In his role as both community and co-op leader, Yamaga publicly renounced such illegal practices as they came to light in both Mission and Maple Ridge. In June 1928, two unnamed *issei* farmers in Maple Ridge were prosecuted and fined by the Fruit Branch of the Department of Agriculture for placing “small and decayed berries” under “larger and sound berries.”<sup>38</sup> The practices of these independent-minded farmers threatened community by placing individual interests ahead of those of other farmers and the community as a whole. Similarly, in 1930, J. Tamura and Y. Yamamoto, of Haney, were fined under section six of “the Fruit Act,” for “over-facing or fraudulent packing of strawberries.”<sup>39</sup> Ironically, six months before the second case, the *Gazette* published a letter to the editor from Yamaga who pledged the cooperation of the Japanese-Canadian community. He offered a New Year’s greeting along with reassurance that , “we, Japanese, are more than willing to cooperate with our Canadian friends in any interest, either educational and industrial, for the uplifting of this community.”<sup>40</sup> While it is clear the vast majority of Japanese-Canadians were law-abiding, those who were not attracted widespread attention and prompted Yamaga, whose work was primarily preventive, into palliative mode aimed at damage control. For example, between the initial accusations against Tamura and Yamamoto and the imposition of their fine, the *Gazette* reprinted a *Maclean's* magazine

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<sup>38</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 14 June 1928, 1.

<sup>39</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 26 June 1930, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 9 January 1930, 3.

article, written earlier in the year by Yamaga. The article supported Japanese Canadians by emphasizing their qualities and their loyalty to Canada. Moreover, the article was also an appropriate response to the situation involving Tamura and Yamamoto because it was styled to redirect community focus from the illegal or unpopular acts of the few to the cooperative spirit of the many:

The Japanese farmers have no wish to resort to any practice which will be to the detriment of the farming interests. It is our earnest wish to see the business of farming placed upon a sound basis, so that it may afford a decent livelihood to all who are engaged therein, regardless of color or creed.<sup>41</sup>

The legal system, which was in the process of dealing with Tamura and Yamamoto at the time, can be seen as part of the “sound basis” for the business of farming referred to in Yamaga’s article. He closed the article with an optimistic claim that any existing prejudice would disappear as all “become sufficiently acquainted” and “work side by side in harmony, striving to make Canada and the whole world a better place.”<sup>42</sup> The reprinting of these expectations in the *Gazette* was as much a reminder of behavioural standards to the Japanese-Canadian community as it was a message of reassurance to the broader *hakujiin* community.

To be fair to the accused such as Tamura and Yamamoto, Mission farmer Tokusaburo Ogawa pointed out that because “picking and sorting are

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<sup>41</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 19 June 1930, 2. The original publication in *Macleans* had been a response to an earlier *Macleans* article by Charles E. Pope, who criticized the industriousness of Japanese Canadian farmers and questioned their allegiance to Canada.

<sup>42</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 19 June 1930, 2.

left to the hired hands, poor grade berries tend to be intermixed.”<sup>43</sup> Those farm labourers who were paid by the weight of their harvest had a personal interest in favouring quantity over quality. Thus, the onus remained on the farmer to be aware of the quality of the berries he or she offered in the marketplace. Nevertheless, the definition and enforcement of fair practices ultimately depended upon the strength of the collective as represented by the various cooperatives and supported by appropriate levels of government.

For example, in 1933, concerns were brought before the Maple Ridge Board of Trade regarding another farming offence, “fruit bootlegging,” that was occurring in both Mission and Maple Ridge.<sup>44</sup> Yamaga and the other board members, all of whom were *hakujin*, condemned the practice of those farmers who had contracts with the cooperatives but sold their fruit to outside “bootleggers,” usually after nightfall. The board agreed on a plan to contact all Fraser Valley municipal boards of trade to explain the problem and to urge them to enforce license fees, “making it prohibitive for these pedlars to operate.”<sup>45</sup> Although the article does not specify either *hakujin* or Japanese farmers as culprits, neither does it exempt either group. No doubt Yamaga addressed this problem at meetings of the *Nokai* and other organizations within the Japanese-Canadian community

Whether the acts of fruit bootlegging and fraudulent berry packing reflected defiance or negligence, they simultaneously challenged both the

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<sup>43</sup> Suzuki, 10. By the 1930s, translators such as Yamaga were widely accepted at the meetings of organizations such as the Pacific Cooperative Union.

<sup>44</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 4 May 1933, 1.

<sup>45</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 4 May 1933, 1.

economic foundation of community and its cultural well-being. That most *issei* were law-abiding and voiced a renunciation of such practices through their leaders helped to minimize negative backlash from the *hakujin* community while allowing for the ongoing making of the transnational Japanese-Canadian community.

Another area of contention with *hakujin* farmers throughout the making of community involved *issei* work practices and ethnic traditions. In Mission, in 1920, when the local newspaper criticized Japanese-Canadian farmers for starting their own separate cooperatives, the *issei* response highlighted the problem of the language barrier. In a letter to the editor of the *Fraser Valley Record*, community leader Sataro Kuwahara explained that although Japanese immigrant farmers desired to work cooperatively with *hakujin* farmers, they did not have a good enough command of English to function in an English-language cooperative. This was before it became common practice for Japanese translators to attend farmer's meetings. Kuwahara offered reassurance of his community's loyalty to Canada when he explained that "all of us have a mind to live our lives here in this country, so that we are always striving to learn your manners, customs, and education."<sup>46</sup> This commitment to learning and conforming to Canadian standards was not only a common theme in *issei* communication within the *hakujin* community but also between various Japanese-Canadian communities.

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<sup>46</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 8 January 1920. See also Tom Kuwahara, "The Biography of Sataro Kuwahara, Retail Merchant," *Nikkei Images* 6:3 (Autumn 2001) 3. (Japanese Canadian National Museum Newsletter ISSN # 1203-9017) Kuwahara left Mission and farming in 1924 to pursue business interests in Calgary.

Kumekichi Fujino was instrumental in establishing regular contact and friendly ties between the *Nokais* of Haney, Hammond, and Whonnock. By 1920, these ties led to the formation of the four-member Federation of *Nokais*, whose meetings focused on finding ways to improve productivity, marketing practices, and relations with the *hakujin* community.<sup>47</sup> As early as 1919, Fujino wrote to the *Fraser Valley Record* to defend *issei* farmers against an article which exaggerated the growth rate of Japanese-Canadian farming communities and claimed that in both Mission and Maple Ridge, *issei* farmers received low interest loans from the government of Japan through its “Consul” in Vancouver. Fujino denied both claims, explained their unsoundness, and added, “we respectfully ask you to publish this to remove the wrong impression made to the public.”<sup>48</sup> Not only did Fujino and other *issei* leaders keep abreast of public opinion and the media but their responses, whether verbal or written, were timely and characterized by calm rationality and courtesy, that was both culturally correct and prudent. Similar to what Kurashige sees as “challenging *hakujin* society on its own terms and by its own rules,”<sup>49</sup> *issei* leaders in the Fraser Valley were fastidious in their adherence to Canadian manners and customs in their interaction with *hakujin* society. Such an approach offered hope for sustained cordial interaction, cooperation, and mutual economic success.

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<sup>47</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 13-14.

<sup>48</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 20 February 1919, 3. See also Michiko Midge Ayukawa, “The Memoirs of Imada Ito: A Japanese Pioneer Woman,” (BA honours thesis, University of Victoria, March 1988) 10, where Mrs. Ito Imada makes a similar claim in her memoirs, stating that although “the Japanese government sponsored and hired groups of men to work in the sugar plantations of Hawaii and the farms of California,” they did not sponsor immigrants to Canada.

<sup>49</sup> Kurashige, 5-6.

However, knowing that reassuring words and explanations would not eliminate racism and discrimination, *issei* leaders worked to develop Japanese-Canadian communities that exemplified the ideals and surpassed the accomplishments of the *hakujin* community. *Issei* leaders perceived this to be the most promising path to full rights in Canadian society. The effort to excel was evident in both the pursuit of agricultural success and also in the making of community.

For example, in 1927, Yamaga initiated an educational campaign on marketing practices and visited *issei* communities throughout the Fraser Valley. He invited Market Commissioner J.A. Grant and Chief Federal Fruit Inspector R. G. L. Clarke to accompany him as guest lecturers and educators. He also arranged for Dr. Sutomatsu Wakabayashi of the University of Washington to lecture and provide practical guidance throughout the Fraser Valley. Yamaga followed up these educational campaigns by compiling a booklet of guidelines published in Japanese and distributed to all *issei* farmers. He helped create joint *issei* and *hakujin* cooperative exchanges in Maple Ridge and Surrey, both of which functioned successfully until the early 1940s to promote and enforce accepted farming and marketing practices.<sup>50</sup>

*Hakujin* press coverage of the Maple Ridge Exchange in the 1930s was positive and supportive. Comments included enthusiastic observations such as, "The Maple Ridge Co-operative is off to a record again – just the same as last year."<sup>51</sup> Yamaga was referred to as a "Japanese-Canadian" and

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<sup>50</sup> Yamaga, "Footsteps," 16-17.

<sup>51</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 28 May 1931, 4



he was said to be “skillful in management.”<sup>52</sup> Even when a harvest went bad, the paper claimed, “Much credit is due Mr. Yamaga and his associates who “did their very best.”<sup>53</sup> That some of the *hakujin* population equated the qualities and strengths of Yamaga with the Japanese-Canadian community would have been regarded by Yamaga as an important step forward in inter-community relations.

Not all *issei*, however, placed a high priority on maintaining good relations with the *hakujin* community or striving to conform to their leaders wishes to do so. Perhaps many of those who failed to learn English or disregarded Yamaga’s push for involvement with the *hakujin* community found it difficult to see beyond the daily challenges of maintaining their farms and supporting their families. Although Mrs. Hisaoka’s brother, Torao Hirashima, often accompanied his youngest niece to the English kindergarten, he later regretted “that he didn’t pay more attention and learn along with the children.”<sup>54</sup> Likewise, those who hesitated to support marketing cooperatives may have underestimated their role in successful farming and in the long-term benefits of community making.

Farmers like Usaburo Nakashima of Mission, equated joining a cooperative with catering to the *hakujin* community. According to Nakashima, “There is no necessity of joining the cooperative union against your will just for the sake of easing anti-Japanese sentiment.”<sup>55</sup> Those farmers who

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<sup>52</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 18 June 1931, 4.

<sup>53</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 2 July 1931, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Hisaoka Family Memoirs, 11.

<sup>55</sup> Suzuki, 7.

avoided joining cooperatives or periodically withdrew from them not only threatened the cohesion of their transnational communities but they also strained existing ties to the *hakujin* community. Farmers like Taichiro Hattori saw cooperatives as “white man’s unions,” and openly objected to them because, “even at a membership rate of 7 Japanese to 3 white, the union was run by whites and they were always taking advantage of the Japanese farmers.” Similar to Nakashima, he asserted that “there is no need to drastically sacrifice our interests” because of anti-Japanese problems.<sup>56</sup> These expressions of resistance defied the recommendations of both *issei* and *hakujin* leaders but it is unlikely they reached the latter because they were not published in English.<sup>57</sup> Thus, they serve to call attention to a debate within the *issei* community rather than one open to the broader community.

Tanekichi Araki, also a Mission farmer, offered a plea for equality that transcended the issues of race and ethnicity when he spoke of the importance of farmers in general. He not only asserted that, “The wealth of a nation lies in the farmers,” but also that, “there shouldn’t be any discrimination against those creating this wealth for the nation.”<sup>58</sup> Over time, growing economic dependency between the *issei* and *hakujin* communities fostered greater cooperation and helped ease discrimination and oppression, particularly in economic matters. For instance, the problems arising from language barriers at community meetings and social events were effectively

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<sup>56</sup> Suzuki, 21.

<sup>57</sup> The first known English translation of Suzuki’s work appeared in 1998 and was done by William Hashizume.

<sup>58</sup> Suzuki, 19.

addressed through the use of Japanese translators. By the mid-1930s, translators were involved in the gatherings of organizations such as school boards, PTAs, farmer's associations, and Christian churches. They were frequently credited in the newspaper coverage of the event. In 1934, the *Fraser Valley Record* reported on a meeting of the large Pacific Cooperative Union, where a translator was regarded as "absolutely necessary to enable the Japanese members to follow the trend of the business."<sup>59</sup> In 1937 in Mission, Mr. Kudo served as translator for a United Church gathering of both *hakujin* and *issei* Christian men.<sup>60</sup> The inclusion of a translator at community events became an accepted and routine practice. This step in community making suggests a growing acceptance and accommodation by the *hakujin* community for a major economic partner with whom there shared similar occupational paths.

Although farming was the dominant occupation in the Fraser Valley, many related businesses and services were established by Japanese-Canadians, often in tandem with their farming activities. These new branches in occupational paths were both the products and the makers of community. They provided full time work for some individuals and part time work for others during the off-season and slower periods of the agricultural cycle. Such work was a welcome supplement to family incomes, particularly for those in the process of establishing their farms.

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<sup>59</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 21 December 1934, 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 15 April 1937, 1.

In 1910, Tashiro Hashizume of Mission advertised his services as a contractor who supplied “Japanese labour for all kinds of farm work.”<sup>61</sup> In 1921, the Whonnock Lumber Mill was built by a *hakujin*, R. S. Whiting, and two Japanese-Canadians, Bentaro Shin and Mr. Norishige.<sup>62</sup> The mill operated until 1930. Kahei Kamimura opened a tie mill in Hatzic near Mission in 1923. By 1928, he employed “20 Japanese and 3 to 4 white workers.”<sup>63</sup> He also “built and ran a sawmill by the river in Mission” and thus provided another cluster of jobs.<sup>64</sup> Also in 1923, Mr. Shinohara of Maple Ridge opened a “bean butter factory.”<sup>65</sup> Yojiro Takimoto operated several sawmills in both the Maple Ridge and Mission areas. In addition to employing local farmers, he offered free sawdust to those who used it for heating greenhouses.<sup>66</sup> In 1929, Kaichi Sugimura of Mission expressed a desire to start a berry “crate or box making mill during the winter season.”<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, he died a year later in an excavating accident before realizing his ambition.<sup>68</sup> In neighbouring Maple Ridge, however, three farmers named Masamoto Tanaka, Takuma Oka, and Magoichi Odanura formed a partnership to establish such a factory and supplied farmers in both communities with

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<sup>61</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 17 July 1910.

<sup>62</sup> Whonnock Community Association, Historical Project, Summer 1985, Fonds, Box 2. Transcribed and compiled by Fred Braches, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>63</sup> Suzuki, 15.

<sup>64</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 40.

<sup>65</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 26 April 1923, 5. Bean butter is a combination of peas and an unspecified variety of beans which are “treated,” processed, and shaped into what resembles a cake of butter. It can be served “with vinegar, pepper and salt, or ketchup,” or it can be eaten like an omelette with syrup.

<sup>66</sup> Maple Ridge Branch, Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), Sheila Nickols, et al. *Maple Ridge: A History of Settlement* (Mission: The Fraser Valley Record, 1972) 38. See also, People/Ethnic/Japanese File, Maple Ridge Museum, Maple Ridge, BC.

<sup>67</sup> Suzuki, 14.

<sup>68</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 23 October 1930, 1.

wooden containers for their produce.<sup>69</sup> In Mission, the Nishiyama family ran a grocery and general store “that catered to the local Japanese community.”<sup>70</sup> Even as the Second World War raged in Europe, *issei* and *nisei* farmers optimistically pursued major commercial projects such as building a hops drying facility in Mission during the summer of 1941.<sup>71</sup>

*Issei* farmers are also known to have been paid for their labour in publicly funded community projects. Road building was a prime example. One series of road building projects can be traced through the newspapers and village council minutes in Mission. The minutes of 5 August 1924 indicate that the council contracted the Japanese on Horne Avenue to “slash and burn 1300 feet, 400 feet wide” for a road, at a cost to the village of \$175.00.<sup>72</sup> Within a month, another project was set up with the Japanese “for clearing and grading 110 rods of Horne Avenue North,” for \$550.00.<sup>73</sup> It was a year later when the *Fraser Valley Record* reported that “a delegation of Japanese appeared before the Commissioners of the Village of Mission” to request another expansion of Horne Road North.<sup>74</sup> Apparently, the council approved this request since they contracted the Japanese once again on 18 September 1925 to do road work that included stumping, grading at 30 feet wide and the “provision of ditches on both sides for 400 feet at 50 cents per

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<sup>69</sup> CFUW, *Maple Ridge: A History of Settlement*, 18.

<sup>70</sup> Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission*, 54. See also, “Rambling Reminiscences of Haru Moriyama,” a memoir recorded and expanded by her daughter, Fumi Tamagi in Lethbridge, Alberta, 19, 21, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>71</sup> Hashizume, 17, 122.

<sup>72</sup> Village of Mission Council Minutes, 5 August 1924, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>73</sup> Village of Mission Council Minutes, 2 September 1924, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC. A rod is a unit of linear measure of 5.5 yards or 5.029 metres.

<sup>74</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 3 September 1925.

linear foot.”<sup>75</sup> As this ongoing project demonstrates, the *issei* worked within the established rules of order at the municipal level where they were under the scrutiny of both the press and *hakujin* community leaders. Such projects provided income and expanded community, not only by giving farmers easier access to potential new fields for cultivation and settlement but also by expanding their role and stake in the making of community.

More commonly, however, Japanese-Canadians volunteered their time and offered both monetary and material donations to projects within the *hakujin* dominated community. Among the earliest of these was in Ruskin near Mission in 1905. Two Roman Catholic nuns collected money for an orphanage in New Westminster. In addition to the Orangemen and other Protestants who contributed, the article points out that “even the Chinese and Japanese heathen contribute[d] freely, even though the latter will not be very apt to have orphans to be cared for.”<sup>76</sup> During the First World War, the Japanese-Canadian communities of British Columbia, including those of the Fraser Valley, were asked by the federal government to raise \$50,000 in victory bonds. They exceeded the requested amount by almost \$200,000.<sup>77</sup> In 1925, The Mission Memorial Hospital thanked the Japanese “who so kindly came forward with help in the form of teams and labour, in the matter of beautifying the grounds” of the hospital.<sup>78</sup> In 1927, the “Japanese Association” of Hammond gave 270 hours of free labour to install a water

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<sup>75</sup> Village of Mission Council Minutes, 18 September 1925, JCEC, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

<sup>76</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 20 June 1905.

<sup>77</sup> Maryka Omatsu, *Bittersweet Passage* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992) 67.

<sup>78</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 30 April 1925.

system in the primary school. They also donated \$155 to the project, nearly half of the cost of materials.<sup>79</sup> Other contributions included commemorative projects such as planting cherry trees on school property to mark the coronation of George VI in 1937.<sup>80</sup> All of these volunteer activities reflected an effort to uphold Canadian community standards in the making of Japanese Canadian rural communities. They also demonstrated that the *issei* and particularly the *nisei* were worthy of inclusion in Canadian society. Similar to the way the *nisei* had excelled both in the public schools and in community sport,<sup>81</sup> they also excelled in volunteerism and community spirit. That Japanese-Canadians could meet or surpass the standards and the expectations of *hakujin* society was seen by them as a promising path to full acceptance into Canadian society.

On the other hand, leaders also worked hard to ensure the survival of Japanese culture and tradition within the transnational community. For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, Yamaga, Kudo, and others organized and administered the Japanese language schools that were demanded by the *issei* to help sustain communication and ethnic ties between the generations. Outside the jurisdiction of the public school system, almost every aspect of *nisei* life was structured by their parents, whose focus

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<sup>79</sup> *MRPM Gazette*, 10 November 1927, 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Fraser Valley Record*, 30 April 1925 and Whonnock School Visitor Guest Book, 16 April 1937, entry by Sachiko Katakami, Grade VIII, Maple Ridge Museum, Maple Ridge, BC.

<sup>81</sup> Anne Doré, "Japanese Canadian Sport History in the Fraser Valley," *Journal of Sport History* 29:3 (Fall 2002) 441-2.

was on family and community cohesion, rather than the pursuit of individual identity and desires.<sup>82</sup>

On a typical day, *nisei* were expected to support the family by working on the family farm before and after school. According to Mrs. Nakashima, "the children, once they were old enough, went into the fields and worked hard."<sup>83</sup> Mrs. Imada claimed her children also helped clear the land, chop wood, clean house, and build sheds.<sup>84</sup> Even the forests and rivers surrounding farming settlements provided work rather than play for the *Nisei* who were assigned to gather food items such as wild mushrooms, cress, and fish.<sup>85</sup> Much of the leisure time available to *nisei* was structured by the *Nokai* with activities such as judo and kendo for the boys and traditional music, dance, and sewing classes for the girls.<sup>86</sup>

Because the *Nokai* also served as "a conduit for gestures of good will" toward the *hakujin* community and "for demonstrations of many pleasant aspects of Japanese culture," *nisei* were given prominent roles in community events shared with their *hakujin* neighbours.<sup>87</sup> For example, *nisei* participated in Japanese tea gardens, judo demonstrations, and performances of traditional dance and music within the context of *hakujin*-sanctioned activities such as Empire Day or May Day celebrations.<sup>88</sup> Because these contributions were rooted in Japanese tradition, they not only offered novel entertainment

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<sup>82</sup> Doré, "Transnational Communities, 41.

<sup>83</sup> Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) 144.

<sup>84</sup> Mrs. Imada's memoirs, translated by Midge Ayukawa, 2-3.

<sup>85</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences," 20.

<sup>86</sup> Doré, "Transnational Communities," 51. Kendo is Japanese swordsmanship.

<sup>87</sup> Doré, "Transnational Communities," 53.

<sup>88</sup> Doré, "Transnational Communities," 54 and Doré, "Japanese Canadian Sport History," 444.



to the broader community but they also supported the desire to distinguish and sustain the transnational community for future generations. Over time, Yamaga and other leaders provided a growing number of opportunities to share aspects of Japanese culture with the *hakujin* community. They promoted cultural overlap and interaction where the most esthetically pleasing aspects of Japanese culture could be enjoyed and admired by all.

For Japanese-Canadians of the Fraser Valley community making was a historical happening; it was an outgrowth of occupational paths established at the time of their arrival in Canada. Like occupational paths, community making reflected resistance to oppression and discrimination as well as the ongoing assertion of control over life and livelihood. Although settlement was a gradual process subject to the guidance of leaders who spoke English and understood Canadian culture, the rapid development of economic ties also promoted the interweaving of social and cultural connections. Through hardship and hard work aimed at establishing family farms, transnational communities, and cooperative ties to the *hakujin* community, Japanese-Canadians paved the way for their children to take up their rightful place in Canadian society.

## Conclusion

Although the making of community in the Fraser Valley before the Second World War reflected ongoing occupational paths, it was also characterized by the inseparable aspects of the culture and ethnicity of all those involved. However, community is a process and sometimes a fragile one; many things can disrupt it. For Japanese-Canadian transnational communities of the Fraser Valley, disruption and change accompanied the events of the Second World War and the decisions of the federal government to remove Japanese-Canadians from the West Coast.<sup>1</sup>

Few of the Fraser Valley families chose to leave Canada during the build-up to the war in the Pacific. Of the 112 male farmers referred to in this study, only six returned to live in Japan prior to 1942. The vast majority continued to attend to the daily and seasonal demands of farm and community life until their expulsion. By the time all families were removed from the Fraser Valley between April and June of 1942, most of them had planted their crops and their children had nearly completed the school year.

Fraser Valley farming families were widely scattered across Canada during the 1940s.<sup>2</sup> Many spent the war years in rural communities in Alberta and

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<sup>1</sup> See Thomas Berger, "The Banished Canadians: Mackenzie King and the Japanese Canadians," in *Fragile Freedoms: Human Rights and Dissent in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin, 1982) 93-126 and Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991) 199-224.

<sup>2</sup> Of the 106 male farmers in my database who remained in Canada, seven died before the Second World War. Of the remaining 99, the destination at the time of the expulsion is known for 95 of their families. Seventy-six families, or 80 per cent, were removed from British Columbia to locations in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario. Nine families, or 9 per cent, moved to communities in the interior at their own expense. Only eleven families, or 11 per cent, were sent to internment camps.

Manitoba where they laboured on sugar beet farms. A few experienced internment in British Columbia camps such as Tashme, New Denver, and Slocan. Some traveled as far as Ontario and Quebec in search of a new life. Most suffered severe financial losses on the farms and belongings they had been forced to leave in the hands of the federal government.<sup>3</sup> When all restrictions on movement were finally lifted in 1949, very few Japanese-Canadians returned to their original farming communities in the Fraser Valley.

The Nakamuras began their exile on a beet farm near Lethbridge but moved to Montreal so their children could complete their education. From there they moved to Ontario and bought a farm, working hard until they retired. In Japan, Mrs. Nakamura's family, except for her sister, was killed in the bombing of Hiroshima.<sup>4</sup>

The Yamaga family was sent to Tashme near Hope and moved to 70 Mile House after the war. When Yamaga was 70, he and his wife retired in Ontario, where they established a retirement home for aging *issei*.<sup>5</sup>

The Imada family was one of a few hundred who, in 1942, were allowed by the government to reestablish themselves, at their own expense, in the remote Lillooet area. There they had to organize their own communities, arranging their livelihood, and financing their children's education. As Ayukawa explains, these families "usually...lived on their savings while scratching out an

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<sup>3</sup> For accounts of the confiscation and dispersal of goods and property, see Roy Miki and Cassandra Kobayashi, *Justice in Our Time: The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1991) 20-55, and Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991) 228-9, 233, 260-1, 267, and 319-31.

<sup>4</sup> Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) 146-8.

<sup>5</sup> Gordon Nakayama, *Issei: Stories of Japanese Canadian Pioneers* (Toronto: NC Press, 1984) 54-5.

existence.”<sup>6</sup> The Kawamoto family was also part of this small exodus. However, in 1944 they moved to Vernon because it offered better educational opportunities for their children.<sup>7</sup>

The Moriyamas, with the exception of their eldest daughter, Midori, went to a sugar beet farm in southern Alberta where most of them settled after the war. Midori was interned at New Denver for struggling to keep her dressmaking shop in Vancouver.

The lives of the *issei* farmers and their children were so drastically altered by the events of the 1940s, that the previous decades of their history in the Fraser Valley are often overlooked. Their occupational paths to landownership and farming highlight that history and offer new insight into rural and ethnic experience. They provide an avenue for understanding the challenges, choices, and dreams of the individual men and women who chose farming. They also offer historical and cultural insight into the ongoing process of rural community making.

Because most people engage in work of some form, the concept of occupational paths as a window of understanding has broad application. No doubt the study of occupational paths has been used before and can be extended to groups in many situations and settings. For example, the post-expulsion paths of Japanese-Canadians, the rural to urban paths of Native

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<sup>6</sup> Midge Michiko Ayukawa, “The Memoirs of Imada Ito: A Japanese Pioneer Woman.” (BA Honours Thesis, University of Victoria, March 1988) 12. The property of these families was taken over by the government and sold in the same manner as that of the families who were sent out of the province or interned in camps.

<sup>7</sup> Koto Kawamoto, “The Way of Endurance: A Berry Farmer’s Memoir,” *The New Canadian* 24 December 1958, Maple Ridge Museum, Maple Ridge, BC, 2.

Canadian youth, and the paths of women to management are just a few. Moreover, activities such as the acquisition of land and property, the making of community, and the expression of popular culture, particularly sports, recreation, and music can also be examined from the broadly relevant perspective of occupational paths.

The gradual establishment of Japanese-Canadian farms and rural transnational communities reflects the response of the *issei* to their experience of work and life in Canada prior to becoming landowning farmers. Both men and women faced diverse and difficult occupational paths to landownership but their difficulties did not end with the purchase of potential farmland. The building of the family farm and the making of the rural community presented new hardships and unending challenges. However, the gradual establishment of cooperative rural networks offered *issei* farmers mutual support, a collective voice, and greater economic strength than they would have had as individuals.

Thus, although the movement to farming, landownership, and community making reflected *issei* resistance to the oppression and discrimination and demonstrates their assertion of control over their own lives and communities, the nature of farming in the Fraser Valley also enabled these to a greater extent than most other work settings in British Columbia. Farming and marketing essentially forged an economic interdependence between *issei* and *hakujiin* farmers that promoted interaction and cooperation through ongoing contact and overlap. This perpetuated the processes of the negotiation and translation of culture and generated ongoing change in both communities. For the Japanese-Canadian

community, the direction and degree of change was determined largely by the leaders who assumed responsibility for community policy and public relations. Their ongoing interaction with the *hakujin* community influenced the making of community on every level.

For farmers from every occupational path, settling down for the sake of their children was a prime motivating factor in their gravitation to farming. More specifically, they believed they could best provide for the safety, security, and education of their children in the rural, agricultural setting. The making of community flowed naturally from settlement. However, it was rooted in and continually re-shaped by the occupational paths of its members.

Not unlike other ethnic communities, Japanese-Canadian communities experienced a degree of internal disagreement and resistance to the policies and expectations of both their leaders and the broader *hakujin* community. Just as the *issei* gravitated to farming partly out of resistance to the oppressive atmosphere of British Columbia's political economy so, too, did they resist oppression and challenges to their independence within the agricultural communities of the Fraser Valley. Nonetheless, economic cooperation and community interaction between Japanese-Canadians and *hakujin* Canadians continued to expand into the 1940s. Even as the Second World War spread to the Pacific, Japanese-Canadians maintained their farms, their communities, and inter-community ties with the same diligence and dedication as before. No doubt they would have continued to do so had they been allowed to remain in their communities.

According to Yasutaro Yamaga, news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 left the Japanese-Canadian community stunned but calm and awaiting instructions from the government. Yamaga stated, "I trust the Canadian government to protect us, for we are doing our best as strawberry growers for the good of the community."<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, that trust was misplaced, since evidence suggests that the onset of the Pacific war set the wheels in motion for the provincial and federal governments to devise a plan to dismantle Japanese-Canadian communities on the West Coast and disperse their population throughout Canada.<sup>9</sup> During this period of severe oppression, however, resistance did not cease. By responding to Canada's humiliating demands with orderly compliance and calm dignity, Japanese-Canadians demonstrated their ability to uphold and even surpass the ideological and behavioural standards of the country they had chosen and respected.

Because leaders like Yasutaro Yamaga of Maple Ridge and Minoru Kudo of Mission complied with the evacuation orders, they no doubt expected their communities to do the same. Yamaga was said to be "so well respected in the [*hakujin*] community that he was selected as the only Japanese member of a five man committee which considered offers on the Japanese farms in the Fraser Valley during the disposition of Japanese property in 1942."<sup>10</sup> During the removal of Japanese-Canadians from Mission, Kudo "assisted the authorities so

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<sup>8</sup> *Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Gazette*, 12 December 1941.

<sup>9</sup> See Berger, 109-113, Adachi, 220-24 and Roy Miki, *Broken Entries*, (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1998) 18-21, for discussions and analyses of the "evacuation." British Columbian Members of the Legislative Assembly who were particularly vocal in their urging of dispersal and even repatriation of Japanese-Canadians included A.W. Neill of Vancouver Island, Howard Green and Ian Mackenzie of Vancouver, and Tom Reid of New Westminster.

<sup>10</sup> Yasutaro Yamaga Papers, Introduction, ii, Special Collections, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.

the evacuation could proceed smoothly.”<sup>11</sup> All reports indicate the so-called evacuation proceeded in an orderly fashion in both communities.

While Yamaga and Kudo’s participation in the process of the evacuation may appear to be a betrayal of community, several factors suggest that was not the case. First, it must be remembered that even in 1942, most *issei* did not have a good command of English. Although their children were fluent and able to assist their parents with translation, working with “evacuation” officials was a job for an adult and ideally a respected leader. Second, because trust and respect for the authority of the Canadian government were hallmarks of the Japanese-Canadian community, their leaders’ cooperation was an expression of the steadfastness of those convictions. Third, the participation of the leaders demonstrates an unwavering dedication to the spirit of cooperation, not just their own but that of the communities they represented. Finally, peaceful compliance to the orders of evacuation coupled with the assistance of Japanese-Canadian leaders, was consistent with the way Japanese-Canadians lived their lives and pursued their livelihood since their arrival in Canada. They rarely resorted to violence. Their protests in the labour force, the newspapers, and the community were well thought out and explained. They simply wished to live their lives and raise their families in peaceful accordance with the laws and customs of their adopted country.

Mrs. Moriyama, like many *issei*, did not live long enough to hear Prime Minister Mulroney’s official apology to Japanese-Canadians on 22 September

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<sup>11</sup> William T. Hashizume, *Japanese Community in Mission: A Brief History, 1904-1942* (Toronto: Musson Copy Centres, 2003) 45.



1988; she died in February 1987. At her funeral, her son read the following poem:

Two countries, two centuries.  
To live life harmlessly,  
And leave it with grace.  
Surely, this is enough.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "Rambling Reminiscences of Haru Moriyama," recorded and expanded by her daughter Fumi Tamagi in Lethbridge, Alberta (July 1982) 34, Box 185-11, Japanese Canadian Exhibit Collection, Mission Community Archives, Mission B.C.

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