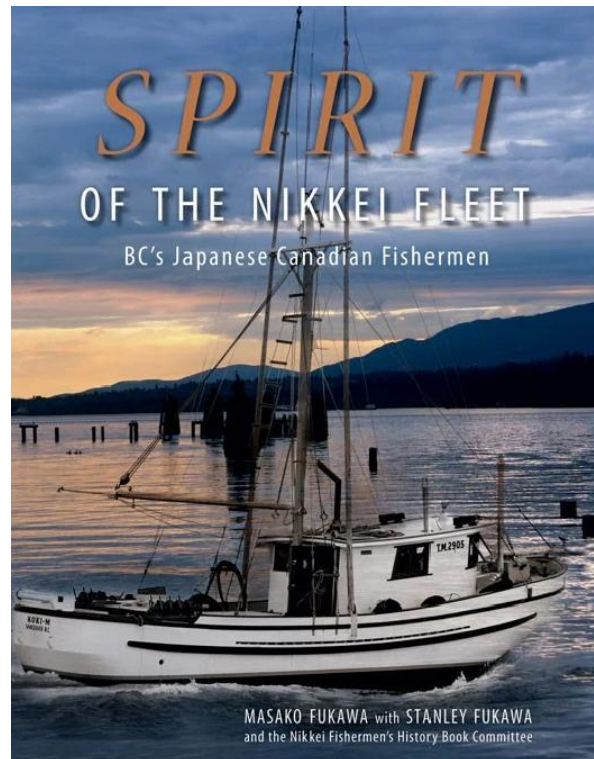


Book Review: *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet, BC's Japanese Canadian Fishermen (2009)*

Takashi Ohki, 1 May 2026

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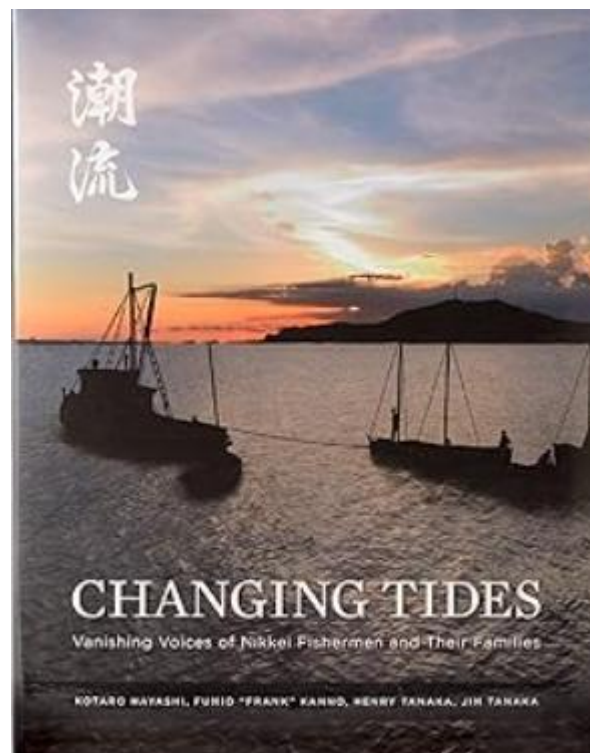
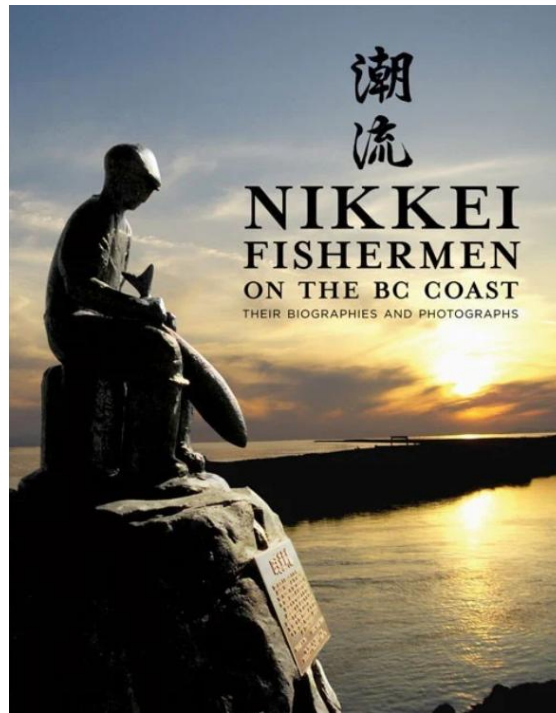


1. Introduction

This is a detailed introduction to Masako Fukawa with Stanley Fukawa and the Nikkei Fishermen's History Book Committee, *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet, BC's Japanese Canadian Fishermen* (Madeira Park, BC, Harbour Publishing, 2009). Before the Pacific War, more than 3,000 first- and second-generation Japanese Canadians involved in the fishing industry lived in Steveston, British Columbia, forming the second-largest Japanese community in Canada after Vancouver. However, with the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Japanese community in Steveston was devastated by the federal government's confiscation of assets, forced sales and forced relocation. It was not until April 1949 that the return of Japanese Canadians to British Columbia was finally permitted, but only a small number returned to Steveston.

A group of Japanese Canadian volunteers who had returned to Steveston formed the Nikkei Fishermen's Reunion Committee. On 3 November 2001, they held a reunion dinner and commissioned sculptor Junichiro Iwase to create a bronze statue of a Japanese fisherman. The bronze statue was erected on 20 September 2002 at a location overlooking the Fraser River in Steveston. The committee also decided to publish a history of Japanese fishermen in Steveston. Regarding the history book, the Nikkei Fishermen's Book Committee was formed in 2003. The committee consulted with the publisher, Harbour Publishing, and decided to publish two volumes in order to organise the vast amount of material.

The first book, **The Nikkei Fishermen on the BC Coast: Their Biographies and Photographs**, was published by Harbour Publishing in 2007.



This book contains the names of 3,600 Nikkei fishermen and the biographies of 767 deceased individuals. The second book is *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet, BC's Japanese Canadian Fishermen* by

Masako Fukawa with Stanley Fukawa and the Nikkei Fishermen's History Book Committee (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2009).

The Nikkei Fishermen's History Book Committee continued to collect personal histories and photographs of Nikkei fishermen, leading to the publication of **Changing Tides: Vanishing Voices of Nikkei Fishermen and Their Families** by Jim Kotaro Hayashi, Fumio Kannno, and Henry Tanaka through Harbour Publishing in 2017.

Nikkei Fishermen on the BC Coast and *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet* are out of stock at the publisher and are becoming difficult to obtain. I found a second-hand copy of *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet* at a second-hand bookshop in London and purchased it. *Changing Tides* can be purchased from the National Museum and Cultural Centre in Burnaby.

2. A Brief History of the Japanese Community in Steveston

Before introducing **Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet**, I shall provide an overview of the process by which the Japanese settlement in Steveston developed, disappeared, and was revived.

In the 1880s, as the fishing industry on Canada's Pacific coast expanded, immigrants primarily from Mio Village in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan, arrived in Steveston and began working in the salmon fishery. They demonstrated their skills and diligence in harsh working conditions and eventually became a vital force supporting the local fishing industry. From the 1890s through to the 1900s, the population grew rapidly, and people of Japanese descent thrived as fishermen, shipbuilders and cannery workers. A Japanese-language school, a hospital, a shopping district and a temple were established in the town, forming a distinct Japanese community.

Development continued even after the First World War, and in the 1920s and 1930s, the mechanisation of fishing vessels and the establishment of cooperatives progressed, transforming the community into a socially and economically mature one. However, at the same time, competition with white fishermen and anti-Japanese sentiment intensified, and institutional discrimination, such as restrictions on fishing licences, became more severe. Nevertheless, the Japanese community maintained a spirit of mutual aid and continued to put down roots in the local area through education, healthcare and cultural activities. By 1941, Steveston had developed to the point where it was known as 'one of Canada's largest Japanese fishing villages', but this prosperity was abruptly cut short by the outbreak of the Pacific War.

In December 1941, when the Pacific War broke out, the Japanese community in Steveston lost its peace overnight. Immediately after the outbreak of war, the Canadian government classified Japanese Canadians as 'enemy aliens' and rapidly proceeded with their removal from coastal areas. First, all the boats belonging to Japanese fishermen, who were the backbone of the fishing industry, were confiscated and placed under government control whilst moored in the harbour. Fishing licences were also immediately suspended, completely cutting off their means of livelihood. Subsequently, night-time curfews and movement restrictions were imposed, and bank accounts and assets were frozen.

In early 1942, the decision was made to forcibly relocate Japanese Canadians from the British Columbia coast, including Steveston, and families were sent to internment camps inland with only a few belongings. Their property—including houses, land, fishing boats and shops—was disposed of by the War Materials Supply Commission in their absence, with much of it sold at low prices. Thus, the

Japanese town that had flourished before the war ceased to exist both physically and socially due to the absence of its residents and the loss of their property. The community that had been built up over many years was torn apart, and even those who returned after the war were unable to regain their former livelihoods. The outbreak of the Pacific War brought about a decisive rupture for the Japanese community in Steveston.

In the 1980s, many members of the generation who had known the pre-war Japanese town still remained in Steveston, and efforts to conduct oral history interviews and preserve local records gained momentum. During this period, through residents' testimonies, the vibrant Japanese community that had once existed began to be re-evaluated. However, the post-war journey, which marked the starting point of this revival, was a fresh beginning born of profound loss. From 1949 onwards, some of the Japanese Canadians who had been forcibly relocated during the war returned to Steveston, but their houses, land and fishing boats had already been sold off under government control, and the foundations of the community had been completely lost.

The Japanese town, which before the war had boasted a hospital, schools, a shopping district and a shipyard, and where Japanese Canadians made up the majority of the population, had been physically and socially wiped out as a result of the Pacific War. Those who returned after the war were unable to reclaim their fishing rights and had no choice but to rebuild their lives in scattered communities. Under these circumstances, the Japanese town of the pre-war era never revived, and the local community transformed into a new form amidst the trend towards multiculturalism. The historical preservation activities of the 1980s provided a crucial opportunity to pass on the memories of the lost Japanese town to the next generation.

3. Summary of the Spirit of the Japanese Fleet, BC's Japanese Canadian Fishermen

3.1 Introduction

In 2001, a small group of volunteers launched the 'Japanese Fishermen's Reunion Project' to pass on the history of Japanese Canadian fishermen to future generations. Many of their grandparents and parents had travelled to Canada from impoverished villages in search of a better life; they supported their families whilst working in the fishing industry under harsh conditions, laying the foundations for the next generation. The project had three objectives. Firstly, to hold a banquet in honour of Nikkei fishermen and their spouses. Secondly, to erect a memorial in Steveston, British Columbia. Thirdly, to publish a book compiling the oral and photographic histories of Nikkei fishermen and their families. The banquet was held on 3 November 2001, and the memorial was unveiled on 20 September 2002. Subsequently, in 2007, the first volume, **Nikkei Fishermen on the BC Coast**, was published; the present volume, **Changing Tides**, serves as its sequel, completing the full collection of oral and photographic histories.

The foreword emphasises the importance of oral history. Whilst history books record 'what happened' and 'why it happened', personal narratives depict events from the perspective of those who lived through them, lending depth and concreteness to history. Indeed, the testimonies included in this book are filled with the 'memories of daily life' of Japanese Canadian fishermen and their families, spanning from the pre-war period to the post-war era. Some accounts were spoken in Japanese, recorded in Japanese, and subsequently translated into English, whilst others consist of interviews conducted in English or memoirs written in Japanese or English. These accounts capture a diverse range of emotions

and experiences, including anger at discrimination and injustice, the determination to overcome adversity, and moments of acceptance and success. The editorial committee states that ‘these stories are recorded exactly as the narrators remember them’ and expresses its gratitude for any corrections or additions.

The book is organised into six chapters based on the content of the collected personal histories: Pre-war, Internment, Resettlement, Shipbuilding, the Post-war Era, and the Post-Mifflin Plan Era. Each chapter is accompanied by a concise historical background, designed to help readers gain a deeper understanding of the individual accounts. The background information is strictly supplementary; the focus remains on the narrators’ own experiences.

The foreword states that the freedoms and opportunities enjoyed by Japanese Canadians who grew up after the war were made possible by the efforts of the first and second generations who endured the harsh discriminatory policies of the pre-war and wartime periods.

It is pointed out that the internment is a dark chapter in Canadian history and should be remembered as an instance where ‘democratic rights were stripped away without just cause’. At the same time, however, the post-war generation feels a deep sense of gratitude for the expanded choices available to them in education and employment. Whilst some of the narrators have already passed away, many Japanese Canadian fishermen still have experiences worth sharing. The editorial committee hopes that, through this book, readers will re-recognize the importance of their own family history and appreciate the significance of preserving a record of it.

It is also noted that whilst many of the early immigrants were unable to realise their dream of ‘becoming wealthy’, they derived great satisfaction from seeing their children and grandchildren receive an education, secure stable employment, and play active roles as members of society. The foreword concludes by stating: ‘We offer our eternal gratitude for the pioneering spirit of our forebears, their contributions to our multicultural society, and the sacrifices they made on our behalf.’

The table of contents that follows provides a vital guide to the book’s overall structure. Part One, ‘Pre-war’, depicts the fishing culture and daily life in various regions, featuring Ichiro Miki, a pioneer of the Nass River; Roy Tanaka, who discusses his role as a fishing supervisor; lingcod fishing in the Strait of Georgia; memories of Tofino; and recollections of pre-war Steveston. These testimonies demonstrate the significant role Japanese Canadian fishermen played in the fishing industry on Canada’s west coast, whilst also conveying the community’s solidarity and the harshness of the labour.

Part Two, ‘Incarceration’, vividly recounts the anxiety and confusion of wartime, including Kazuo Nakagawa’s ‘Twelve Days of Terror’, the Kimoto family’s decision, the Murao family’s hardships, life at the Angler internment camp, the gruelling labour on sugar beet farms, and the experiences of those forced to return to Japan. Through individual testimonies, the reality of the injustices faced by Japanese Americans—such as forced relocation, confiscation of property and the separation of families—comes to light.

Part Three, ‘Resettlement’, continues with stories of the journey back to their hometowns after the war, their return to fishing, the hardships experienced by the younger generation in their new homes, the emotional scars they bore, and the stories of those who chose to emigrate to Japan once more. Starting afresh after the war was no easy task; discrimination and economic hardship persisted, yet the film

depicts how they rebuilt their lives with the support of their families and the cooperation of their communities.

Part Four, 'Shipbuilders', presents testimonies from craftsmen who have inherited traditional shipbuilding techniques. They discuss the techniques of wooden shipbuilding, changes in materials and design over time, and the role of Japanese Canadian shipbuilders in the local fishing industry, conveying their pride as craftsmen and their ingenuity.

Part Five, 'The Post-War Era', depicts the development and changes in the fishing industry after the war through a variety of testimonies. Memories spanning seventy years, a fisherman's life blessed with good fortune, work on fish aggregating vessels, gratitude towards nature, passion for the summer fishing season, fishing along the northern coast, innovations in shrimp fishing, and the relationship between faith and the fishing industry—these individual lives reveal a rich tapestry of experiences.

Part Six, 'After the Mifflin Plan', examines the impact of the 1996 fisheries restructuring policy on Japanese Canadian fishermen. Whilst many were forced to change careers due to the reallocation of fishing rights and the reduction of the fishing fleet, the book also portrays those who devised ingenious ways to continue fishing. Their attitude, which values connections with family and the local community whilst looking to the industry's future, is particularly striking.

Throughout the book, it is clearly demonstrated that the history of Nikkei fishermen is not merely a labour history, but a history of struggle as immigrants, family narratives, community building, and contributions to Canadian society. The editorial approach, evident from the preface and table of contents, is that the accumulation of individual testimonies brings the journey of Nikkei Canadians to life in three dimensions. The narrators' voices are at times painful, at times warm, and at times filled with pride. These stories are not merely records of the past; they constitute a vital cultural heritage that enables Japanese Canadians living today to understand their roots and connect them to the future.

3.2 Introduction

This book, **Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet: BC's Japanese Canadian Fishermen**, is positioned as the final phase of a three-stage project designed to pass on the history and spirit of Japanese Canadian fishermen to future generations. The introduction begins by explaining the background to this project. Following the 2001 alumni dinner and the 2002 unveiling of the fishermen's statue by Junichiro Iwase, work began on the third initiative: the production of a book documenting the history, photographs and genealogy of Japanese Canadian fishermen. The document states, 'The Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet... This is the third phase of a three-phase project conceived by the Nikkei Fishermen's Revival Committee, indicating a long-standing vision.

An editorial committee was formed in 2003; given the vast amount of material, a two-volume structure was proposed, and the first volume was published in 2007. Since then, research into English and Japanese sources, oral history recordings and contributions from families have continued, gradually building up the historical record for this book. Committee members shared their own experiences, reached out to others and scrutinized the content, laying the foundations for this book through their collaborative efforts.

The following section depicts the lives of the mere forty-four Japanese Canadian fishermen currently engaged in the industry. They continue to await the 'opening' of the salmon fishing season, with those few hours of operation determining their income. The text states that '44 Japanese Canadian fishermen are eagerly awaiting the opening of the fishing season', emphasizing the harshness and instability of the fishing industry in the modern era. Whereas there were once as many as 4,000 Japanese Canadian fishermen, engaged in the industry on a scale surpassing that of white and Indigenous communities, today only a very small number carry on this tradition. They have inherited the fishing heritage passed down from their grandparents and great-grandparents and bear the history of the Japanese Canadian fishermen who once fished year-round in waters stretching from Alaska to Washington State.

The central theme of the introduction is that the history of Japanese Canadians is a 'history of struggle as a racial minority'. The document states that it is 'the history of a racial minority that strove for economic advancement and fought to survive in a foreign and often hostile environment', depicting their efforts to survive in a hostile social environment whilst seeking economic betterment. In particular, following the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, Japanese Canadian fishermen had their boats confiscated, their property seized, and were forcibly removed from coastal areas. This situation persisted for four years after the war ended, and the mental and psychological impact was immeasurable. The document quotes David Suzuki as saying, "Almost all of my inner turmoil stemmed from that," illustrating how forced relocation and the confiscation of property left deep scars on individuals' lives.

Furthermore, the history of Japanese Canadian fishermen is also a history of labour. The immigrants were excluded from white labour unions and continued to be deprived of their salmon fishing rights until 1949. Even when they found opportunities in other sectors of the fishing industry, the cycle of exclusion repeated itself. However, those who returned to the coast and resumed fishing after the war went on to experience what is known as the 'golden age of commercial fishing'. Despite their disadvantages, they played a vital role in the fishing industry through their skills and diligence.

Furthermore, the history of Japanese Canadian fishermen is also a history of socio-politics. For many years, they were denied the right to vote and were politically disenfranchised by policies designed to maintain British Columbia as a 'white province'. Documents state that 'in order to maintain British Columbia as a "white province", they were not granted the right to vote', clearly illustrating the severity of institutional discrimination. Nevertheless, Japanese Canadian fishermen continued to seek their rights through legal action and other means, striving to secure equal treatment with other Canadians.

The latter half of the introduction recounts the major social changes from the post-war period to the present day. Canadian society has opened up significantly to racial and cultural minorities, leading to the granting of voting rights, membership in fishing cooperatives, and assimilation into wider society. In particular, the 1988 compensation and apology marked a symbolic turning point, signifying official recognition of the unjust treatment suffered during the war. Although the compensation came too late for many, it nevertheless contributed to the rebuilding of the Japanese Canadian community.

This book tells the stories of 'ordinary people' who did not yield to discrimination and inequality. It is characterized by its portrayal from an insider's perspective, drawing on a diverse range of sources including English and Japanese documents, archives, personal papers, oral histories and photographs. The text states that 'there is not one voice representing this group, but many', demonstrating an

approach that sought to gather voices from diverse perspectives, including different generations, genders, occupations, social classes and mixed-heritage backgrounds. The introduction concludes by emphasizing that the history of Japanese Canadian fishermen is not merely a marginal narrative, but an essential part of understanding Canada's transformation into a multicultural nation.

3.3 The Migration of Early Japanese Fishermen to Steveston

Migration from Japan to British Columbia accelerated rapidly from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. In post-Meiji Restoration Japan, rapid modernization coincided with population growth, land shortages and the introduction of conscription, leading many young people to choose to work overseas. Life was particularly harsh in regions with scarce farmland, and working abroad to bring money back home was seen as a great hope. Against this backdrop, those who crossed the Pacific built new lives for themselves, primarily in the fishing industry on Canada's west coast.

In British Columbia, the abundant salmon fisheries of the Fraser River attracted Japanese immigrants. The news sent home from Steveston in 1888 by Gihei Kuno, a native of Mio Village in Wakayama Prefecture, caused a great stir, and many young people travelled overseas under his guidance. They were involved not only in fishing but also in shipbuilding, shopkeeping and running inns, and Steveston rapidly developed into a Japanese settlement. By the 1890s, it had grown to such a scale that it was known as the 'Japanese Village', forming a vibrant local community where thousands gathered during the fishing season.

At that time, Canada did not impose strict restrictions on the entry of Japanese nationals, and there were many instances of seamen settling permanently after disembarking. Immigration accelerated following a 1894 treaty between Japan and the United Kingdom (which included Canada), which allowed Japanese nationals to enter Canada without a passport. The fishing industry and canneries were suffering from chronic labour shortages, and the Japanese were welcomed as a vital workforce. However, as they were forced to work for lower wages than white labourers, this provoked resentment among the white community, and they became the target of discrimination and exclusion campaigns. Institutional discrimination, such as the denial of voting rights and exclusion from public service, was severe, making it difficult for them to improve their social standing.

Nevertheless, Japanese immigrants steadily put down roots in the local community. Manzo Nagano, known as one of the earliest immigrants, succeeded in fishing and business, becoming a pillar of support for the Japanese community in Victoria. Pioneers like him served as important guides for subsequent immigrants and laid the foundations for the local Japanese community. Furthermore, many young people, including Shikazo Itakura and Kishu Sada, spread out across various regions, primarily engaged in fishing, and contributed to the development of the fishing industry in the Fraser River basin.

Gihei Kuno was a particularly significant figure, having encouraged large-scale emigration from Mio Village. Thousands of immigrants responded to his call, and those from Mio Village formed mutual aid organizations, supporting the village economy through remittances sent back to their home village. These connections fostered a strong bond between Canada and Wakayama, which later developed into a sister-city partnership.

Japanese immigrants expanded not only along the Fraser River but also into the Skeena and Nassy rivers in the north. Aikawa Shiga and Yoshizawa Yasukichi, both from Gunma Prefecture, travelled north in

small boats with their inexperienced companions to pioneer new fishing grounds. They worked at local sawmills and canneries whilst calling for more companions, laying the foundations for the northern fishing industry. Aikawa also distinguished himself as an entrepreneur, building a steamship and venturing into the management of a cannery. This expansion into the north greatly broadened the scope of activity for Japanese Canadian fishermen and contributed to the development of the fishing industry throughout British Columbia.

Meanwhile, Jinzaburō Oikawa, a native of Miyagi Prefecture, established a community on a sandbar in the Fraser River with his companions to alleviate the poverty in his hometown. He started a business processing salmon roe for export to Japan, attracting many young people from his hometown. In 1906, he transported more than 80 people who had left Japan without permission on a small vessel; although they were apprehended by the Canadian authorities, all were granted permission to stay due to the labour shortage. Over a period of more than 20 years, Oikawa assisted the migration of over 400 people, and the islands of the Fraser River developed into Japanese settlements.

Immigrants from Tottori Prefecture also settled there, maintaining strong bonds, and worked in fisheries and canneries based in Steveston and Sea Island. They adopted a cooperative approach to work, building a foundation for their livelihoods by working in coal mines, sawmills and on railway construction projects outside the fishing season. These regional association-style connections became a vital support system for life in a foreign land.

The majority of early immigrants were young men, and Steveston was known as a ‘village of men’. However, following the anti-Asian riots of 1907, an immigration restriction agreement was concluded between Canada and Japan; whilst male immigration was restricted, the bringing over of wives and children was permitted. Consequently, there was a sharp rise in ‘picture brides’—marriages arranged through the exchange of photographs—leading to an increase in female immigrants and the establishment of family-based settlements. From the moment they arrived, these women worked in canneries, on farms and as domestic workers, supporting households where fishing income was unstable. It was not uncommon to see them working whilst carrying their children on their backs, and communal childcare arrangements emerged. Their labour was indispensable to the maintenance of the fishing community.

By the 1920s, the number of second-generation Canadians born in Canada had surged, and the centre of the immigrant community gradually shifted to the younger generation. Whilst many families sent their children to Japan for an education, second-generation Canadians raised in Canada spoke English as their first language, widening the cultural gap with their parents’ generation. Nevertheless, the second generation still faced discrimination, and the path to professional careers remained closed to them. Consequently, fishing became an important profession for young second-generation Canadians, offering a relatively stable income.

Even with an education, second-generation women's career choices were limited, and they often found themselves working in domestic service or canneries. There were, however, some who succeeded as teachers, contributing to the preservation of education and culture within the Japanese Canadian community. During the war, some women supported the education of children in the internment camps.

By the 1930s, schools, churches, shops and mutual aid organizations had been established in Steveston, Sea Island and the islands of the Fraser River, and the Japanese Canadian community had matured into a thriving community. However, with the outbreak of the Pacific War, these communities were suddenly dismantled, and their residents were forcibly relocated to various parts of Canada. This chapter depicts the history of Japanese Canadian fishermen built up prior to the war and the vibrant nature of their society.

3.4 Fishing Gear and Methods

Building on the fishing techniques they had honed in Japan, Japanese Canadian fishermen adapted their methods to the coastal environment of British Columbia and actively adopted new technologies and equipment, thereby ensuring their survival in the commercial fishing industry. They possessed a deep understanding of fish behaviour and habitats and used this knowledge to refine their boats and gear, developing increasingly efficient fishing methods. On the Fraser River, drift-net fishing for salmon began in the mid-19th century, and coastal canneries eventually came to rely on the drift-net fishermen. A drift net is a long net suspended vertically in the water, with the upper part buoyed and the lower part secured by lead weights; the mechanism works by the fish becoming entangled in the mesh when they pass their heads through it. Initially, operations were conducted from canoes, but by the time Japanese fishermen arrived, the flat-bottomed skiffs unique to the Fraser River had become the norm; these were shaped with pointed ends to facilitate manoeuvring and handling of the nets. Most were owned by canning companies and leased to fishermen; they were towed to the fishing grounds by the companies' tugboats. As hundreds of skiffs gathered at the river mouth, fishermen had to take great care to ensure their nets did not become entangled, whilst also keeping a watchful eye on the passage of larger vessels.

By the end of the 19th century, operations in the Strait of Georgia, closer to the open sea, increased, and Columbia River-type vessels, which were sturdier and more seaworthy than Fraser River skiffs, were introduced. These had rounded hulls and planking and were propelled by a combination of sails and oars. The interior of the vessel was divided into a work area at the stern for handling the catch and nets, and a living space at the bow. Initially, this consisted of simple sleeping quarters covered with canvas, but later evolved into wooden quarters, and with the introduction of engines, a small wheelhouse was added. By the 1930s, the hulls had grown larger and were equipped with more powerful engines, comfortable berths and cooking facilities.

The nets, indispensable for drift-net fishing, were initially hand-woven by indigenous women using imported linen. The nets were expensive and had a short lifespan, making them the fishermen's most important asset. Vulnerable to sunlight and moisture, they required great care; at weekends, they were soaked in a copper sulphate solution at the cannery to remove dirt and bacteria. During the off-season, they were repaired in the factory lofts, and float lines and sinker lines were fitted in preparation for the following year. Eventually, Japanese Canadian fishermen began weaving the nets themselves during the winter, spending long hours creating a uniform mesh.

The target species for salmon fishing varied by season; the summer fishing season was particularly important, as sockeye salmon were the mainstay of the canning industry. On the Fraser River, the fishing season ran from Sunday evening to Saturday morning, with a closed season established to allow fish to migrate upstream. On the Skeena and Nas rivers, the start and end of the fishing season were signalled

by loud explosions; fishermen spent a week on board, cooking and sleeping in simple quarters whilst working. The diet of Japanese Canadian fishermen centred on rice, miso, soy sauce, vegetables and fish, which they cooked on makeshift stoves fashioned from oil drums.

The introduction of petrol engines marked a major turning point in the early 20th century. They began to be used on large vessels in 1902, and by the 1910s, many Japanese Canadian fishermen owned Columbia River-type boats fitted with engines. In particular, the small engines produced by the East Hope Company were highly reliable and became widely popular. However, in the Skina area, canning companies prohibited Japanese fishermen from using engines, thereby maintaining their income from boat rentals. This unfair regulation severely restricted Japanese fishermen's operating range and fishing efficiency, but in 1929, the Japanese fishermen took the matter to court, eventually won the case, and had the ban lifted. The following year, the number of motorboats surged, increasing Japanese Canadian fishermen's independence.

With the spread of engines, a winching device known as a 'drum' was introduced on driftnet vessels in the 1930s. This mechanized the setting and hauling of nets, eliminating the need for the 'haulers' previously required. Whilst the introduction of the drum dramatically improved operational efficiency, there was a risk of getting one's feet caught in the net if operated incorrectly, and accidents did occur. Furthermore, improvements in fishing gear and vessel performance led to increased fishing pressure. To protect fish stocks, the US and Canada signed an agreement in 1937 that strengthened restrictions on the fishing season.

Trolling began with single-line fishing and eventually developed into a method where large vessels operated multiple long lines. As the fish were unharmed, they fetched high prices, and Japanese Canadian fishermen moved to the West Coast to avoid congestion on the Fraser River. In the 1930s, specialized trawlers were built, enabling fishing in deeper waters using line-reeling mechanisms and weights, whilst the use of ice allowed for extended fishing operations.

Japanese Canadian fishermen also contributed to the improvement of fishing gear. In particular, the metal lure known as the 'spoon' was devised and crafted by Japanese Canadian fishermen and later became widely popular as a commercial product. Furthermore, rigs that enable efficient switching between spoons and devices to handle multiple lines simultaneously were developed, contributing to the sophistication of fishing methods.

Moreover, the 'purse seine'—which evolved from the traditional Indigenous dragnet—enabled the capture of large quantities of fish at once across a wide coastal area, thanks to larger vessels and more powerful engines. Although some Japanese fishermen succeeded with this method, competition from white fishermen and political pressure led to a ban on Japanese fishermen obtaining licences for salmon purse-seine fishing in the 1920s, thereby restricting their participation.

Transport vessels known as 'packers', which carried the catch to canneries, also played a vital role. Some Japanese Canadian fishermen owned their own packers and contracted with companies to carry out transport operations. In remote areas, fishermen would signal by raising a flag, and collection vessels would take the catch and transport it to the canneries.

Japanese Canadian fishermen were also actively involved in bottom fishing for species such as cod and halibut. Handline and longline fishing were important sources of income outside the main fishing

season; in particular, the market for halibut expanded with the opening of the railway, and Prince Rupert developed to such an extent that it came to be known as the 'Halibut Capital'. In longline fishing, numerous branch lines and hooks were attached to a long main line, which was then weighted and sunk to the seabed to catch fish. Japanese Canadian fishermen ingeniously adapted even small vessels to venture into the open sea, achieving substantial catches.

Furthermore, the 'live tank' devised by Japanese Canadian fishermen was a revolutionary method for delivering fresh fish to market before the widespread use of ice. By creating a structure with circulating water on board, they were able to transport herring (used as bait) and freshly caught cod whilst keeping them alive. Live tanks were also installed along the Vancouver coast, contributing to the development of the fresh fish market.

In this way, Japanese Canadian fishermen were involved in a diverse range of fishing methods, including drift-net fishing, trolling, longline fishing, purse-seine fishing and bottom trawling. Through improvements to vessels and fishing gear, innovations in fishing techniques, and ingenious methods for distributing fresh fish, they made a significant contribution to the development of British Columbia's fishing industry. Despite facing a harsh natural environment and discriminatory regulations, they forged a path through skill and hard work, leaving a deep mark on the region's fishing culture.

3.5 Salmon Canning Factories and Salmon Fishing Camps

The salmon canning industry in British Columbia began in earnest in the late 19th century, with numerous canning factories being built along the coast. Although early attempts failed due to financial difficulties, the industry developed rapidly from the 1870s onwards, driven by technological advances and market expansion. Steveston, at the mouth of the Fraser River, became a hub of this industry, where the sight of many sailing ships loading canned fish was a common occurrence. Canning factories were built along the river and the coastline, operating close to fishing grounds to ensure an efficient supply of fish. The factories were equipped with canning lines and net repair workshops, and some even had facilities for manufacturing their own wooden crates and cans.

As the canning industry grew, fishing companies established their own fleets and operated camps, accommodation and transport vessels to bring in fishermen. Fishermen stayed near the canneries, spending several months of the fishing season there. The canneries often took on the character of small, self-sufficient settlements, with dwellings, shops, warehouses and workshops arranged in orderly rows. The number of canneries reached 80 by 1918, and a total of 223 processing sites have been identified along the entire coastline.

Early Japanese immigrants played a vital role not only in the fishing industry but also in supplying the charcoal required by the canneries. Charcoal was an essential fuel in the salmon canning process, and Japanese immigrants produced it during the winter months and delivered it to the factories. Remains of charcoal kilns from that era can still be found on the Gulf Islands, and their structures resembled those of traditional kilns in Wakayama Prefecture.

The canning industry was highly competitive, and large-scale mergers began in earnest in the late 19th century. Companies with sufficient capital acquired multiple factories, and eventually, a group of major corporations known as the 'Big Four' came to dominate the factories along the coast. From the 1920s onwards, partly due to the economic depression, small-scale factories closed down, and the industry

became increasingly concentrated in the hands of large corporations. By 1939, there were 35 factories in operation along the entire coast.

The Gulf of Georgia Canning Factory in Steveston was built in 1894 and was known as the largest factory of its time. It was later acquired by the Canadian Fishing Company and was also used for herring processing during the war. Following its closure, it was preserved by local residents and is now open to the public as a National Historic Site. The Britannia Canning Factory has also been preserved; the shipyard and the homes of Japanese families have been restored, making it a place that conveys the region's history.

The canning factories were not merely workplaces but also living spaces where diverse ethnic groups coexisted. White, Indigenous, Chinese and Japanese people each played their respective roles, and the work was divided according to race and gender. Chinese men worked as skilled processors under the 'China Boss', whilst Indigenous and Japanese women were engaged in washing and canning tasks. Although housing was segregated by ethnicity, with differences in building colours and facilities, there were many opportunities for interaction; children played together and family-to-family friendships developed.

The North Pacific Canning Factory on the Skeena River was a vast community where many workers gathered during the few months of the fishing season. The factory operated a fleet of transport vessels and fishing boats, and fishermen arrived by steamship or train. The factory grounds were divided into sections by ethnicity, with the White Quarter, Japanese Quarter, Indigenous Quarter and Chinese Quarters each possessing their own distinct atmosphere. The Japanese Quarter featured bathhouses and dormitories characterised by white walls and green trim. At the end of the fishing season, there was a unique custom whereby fishermen and managers settled accounts individually, and the ledgers were burned once the last fisherman had departed.

Among the canneries, there was a rare instance in which the ship itself served as the processing plant. A 'floating cannery', a converted sailing vessel, operated whilst moving along the coast, but it was seized for contravening government regulations, leading to a court case. This trial became an important legal precedent concerning federal and state jurisdiction over fisheries and led to the rectification of the discriminatory policies faced by Japanese Canadian fishermen.

As the number of Japanese Canadian fishermen increased, the relationship between the canneries and the fishermen changed. Early Japanese fishermen worked as 'helpers' to white fishermen; as they gained experience, they became independent fishermen and went on to mentor new immigrants. Eventually, they formed fishing units under leaders known as 'bosses' and worked alongside fellow countrymen. The bosses negotiated with the canneries, organised the fishermen's lives and work, and the fishermen paid a portion of their earnings to the bosses. This system served as a safety net for immigrants unfamiliar with the language and institutions, whilst also providing the canneries with a means of securing a stable workforce.

Some bosses became successful, owning boats, nets and fishing rights, which they leased to fishermen to generate income. They took on many roles, including providing accommodation and meals, handling laundry and mail, and managing the bathhouse. At the end of the fishing season, a system was in place

whereby debts were deducted from the fishermen's earnings; in years of poor catches, the boss might even find himself in debt.

From the 1910s onwards, the number of independent fishermen in Steveston increased, and the boss system gradually declined. As fishermen started families and canneries began building family housing, life in communal lodgings diminished, and the shape of the local community changed. By the 1930s, many fishermen had purchased their own homes and settled permanently in the area.

Amidst these changes, the bosses continued to play a leading role in the local community, acting as negotiators and interpreters for the fishermen. Japanese fishermen were indispensable to the development of the canning industry, and their labour, skills and organisational abilities became key elements in shaping the coastal fishing culture. However, the forced relocation of 1942 abruptly severed the communities they had built, and many families were compelled to leave the coast. This chapter vividly depicts the close relationship between Japanese Canadian fishermen and the canning industry, as well as the rich society they built.

3.6 Japanese Shipyards

Japanese shipwrights played an extremely important role in the history of British Columbia's fishing industry. From the late 19th century to the first half of the 20th century, they were responsible for building wooden fishing vessels throughout the coast, supporting the development of the fishing industry. It is estimated that between 1895 and 1901, Japanese craftsmen built approximately half of the vessels used in the fishing industry, and Japanese shipwrights were stationed at almost every cannery. Many were part-time carpenters who built boats during the winter months when the fishing season was over, yet their skills were highly regarded, and vessels crafted by their hands were widely used from the Fraser River to the Skeena River and across Vancouver Island.

Although many of the early shipwrights could not read English, they could understand drawings, build models, and incorporate their own innovations. Drawing on their apprenticeship experience in Japan and the tools they had brought with them, they built Fraser River skiffs and Columbia River-style vessels, later refining their techniques by incorporating Western tools. The hull structure, based on the traditional Japanese 'shelving' method, was superior in strength and durability, earning the high trust of the fishing community.

The Steveston waterfront developed into a hub for Japanese Canadian shipbuilders. Many shipbuilders set up workshops within the grounds of the canneries; a mutually beneficial relationship was established whereby the canneries commissioned the construction and repair of fishing vessels, whilst the shipbuilders secured workshops facing the sea. In the 1880s, Gihei Kuno and Kawamura built skiffs, and in the 1890s, independent shipwrights such as Yamamoto, Isomura and Matsuzaki emerged. By the early 20th century, there were more than a dozen shipwrights' workshops, and the 1919 ship registry records 19 Japanese shipwrights' workshops.

The three leading shipbuilding families were the Atagi, Nakade and Kishi families. The Atagi family established their own workshop in 1905 and later began building large packer boats and purse seiners. Although they lost their workshop due to forced relocation during the war, they resumed operations after the war and made a significant contribution to the reconstruction of the fishing fleet in the 1950s and 1960s. The Nakade family had built many vessels since before the war and had grown to a scale where

they were launching ten vessels a year after the war. They are also known as the first workshop in Steveston to build FRP (fibre-reinforced plastic) boats. The Kishi family established their workshop in 1914 and were responsible for many renowned vessels, including the 'May S' series of purse seiners. Although some vessels were confiscated during the war, many remained in active service for a long time after the war, a testament to the high standard of craftsmanship.

Matsunaga Juichi's 'Soyokaze' was a representative vessel built by the Kishi family in 1939; although it was confiscated during the war, it miraculously returned to its owner after the war and was cherished for many years. It was eventually donated to a museum, becoming a symbol of Japanese shipbuilders' craftsmanship and the fishermen's spirit.

In pre-war Steveston, there were over a dozen Japanese shipbuilding workshops, almost all of which were run by Japanese people. Many families, including the Murakamis, Sakamotos, Yamanakas, Kimuras and Katous, continued to build small but high-quality boats. The Murakami family built two boats a year before the war; after the war, their workshop was preserved and has become a heritage site conveying the history of Japanese Canadian boatbuilders. The Sakamoto family spanned two generations of boatbuilders, and after the war, they built many boats under the name 'M. Sakamoto Boat Works'. Mamoru Sakamoto was renowned for his precision in wooden boat construction and possessed techniques that significantly extended the lifespan of wooden vessels.

Forced relocation due to the war dealt a severe blow to Japanese Canadian boat builders. Workshops and tools were confiscated, and in many cases were not returned after the war. Nevertheless, many boat builders returned after the war and reopened their workshops. Nishijima, Hamada, Maekawa, Asari and others continued building after the war, resuming shipbuilding in new locations such as Kaslo and Delta. Toshio Asari was one of the few who obtained special permission to complete a vessel that had been under construction during the war, and he remained active after the war.

There were also many Japanese shipbuilders in the Vancouver area. The Suzuki family ran a workshop on Anasis Island and worked on building repairs inland during the war. The Machi family reopened their workshop in Queensborough after the war, engaging not only in the construction of wooden boats but also in the manufacture of hydraulic equipment and aluminum fishing gear. The Kawano, Taguchi and Tsumura families also contributed to the post-war construction of fishing vessels.

There were also several Japanese shipbuilding workshops in Vancouver, on the North Shore and in West Vancouver. Hisaoka's Pacific Boat Building, Nakamoto's Union Boat Works, and Kuramoto & Madokoro's K&M Boat Works built high-quality vessels and quickly gained a strong reputation. Isamu Matsumoto was particularly renowned; he had been building large purse seiners since before the war and, after the war, gained worldwide acclaim as a pioneer of aluminum boats. His workshop built over 180 aluminum boats between the 1960s and 1980s, leaving a significant mark on the history of fishing vessel construction in British Columbia.

During the war, Hirano built pleasure boats in Vernon, and after the war, he reopened his workshop in West Vancouver. His workshop, too, played a vital role in meeting the post-war demand for fishing vessels.

In this way, Japanese Canadian shipbuilders were indispensable to the development of British Columbia's fishing industry, and their skills, diligence and ingenuity shaped the region's fishing vessel

culture. Overcoming the hardships of wartime interruptions and property confiscation, many shipbuilders returned after the war and developed a wide range of skills, from wooden to aluminium vessels. The vessels they built not only supported the livelihoods of fishermen but are still celebrated today as symbols of the region's history and culture.

3.7 Fishermen's Guilds

In early 20th-century British Columbia, Japanese fishermen formed the core of the fishing workforce, accounting for approximately 40 percent of fishing licences issued in 1900. As each fishing boat was crewed by two people—a fisherman and a deckhand—this meant that around 4,000 Japanese people were engaged in the fishing industry, a scale that had a significant impact on the local community. This large number formed the basis for them to organise themselves to protect their rights and livelihoods, and fishermen's associations were formed in various locations such as Steveston, Port Ascot, Ucluelet and Tofino.

The Steveston fishermen's association was known as the 'Dantai', and the first organisation was established in 1897. This was the first Japanese organisation in British Columbia, and also the first fisheries organisation. Although ostensibly established to address a medical crisis, its primary purpose was in fact to protect the economic interests of the fishermen. At that time, many Japanese immigrants were contracting dysentery and typhoid fever from drinking the polluted waters of the Fraser River, leading to serious health problems. The disease spread rapidly because canneries were dumping waste into the river and living conditions were poor. In response to this situation, the Dantai took on the responsibility of running a hospital, playing a vital role in supporting local healthcare.

The hospital's predecessor was a chapel built around 1894, originally established to keep young single men away from unhealthy entertainment. However, due to the spread of infectious diseases, it was hastily converted into a hospital, with volunteer nurses providing treatment. The hospital served as a medical facility during the fishing season and as a church and school in winter, becoming a central hub for the community. In 1900, a new hospital was built with a capacity of approximately 50 patients, featuring consultation rooms, an operating theatre, wards and accommodation for nurses.

The organisation focused not only on medical care but also on protecting the rights of fishermen. In response to the reformation of a white fishermen's union advocating the exclusion of Japanese workers, the organisation was formally registered as a 'charitable organisation' in 1900 and established regulations to safeguard the interests of fishermen. The regulations included compliance with fishing regulations, contractual relations with canneries, the duty of fellow fishermen to assist one another, and detailed provisions regarding the management and return of nets, thereby establishing a framework to maintain order within the community. Furthermore, an obligation to report catch statistics to the Japanese Consulate was introduced, along with a system to commend outstanding fishermen.

The association was also involved in managing fishing units known as 'bosses' and 'boys'. The boss organised the fishermen, negotiated with canneries and provided livelihood support, forming fishing units primarily from fellow countrymen. The association regulated the relationship between bosses and fishermen and acted as a mediator when disputes arose. As many fishermen had limited proficiency in English, the association played a vital role in supporting their lives and work.

In 1908, the word ‘Fraser River’ was removed from the organisation’s name, and it was renamed the ‘Steveston Fishermen’s Charitable Association’. This change reflected local and political considerations, prompted by the fact that hospital users were predominantly Steveston residents and by the rising tide of anti-Japanese sentiment. Furthermore, in 1934, the organisation’s remit was expanded to encompass a wider range of activities, including not only healthcare but also education, mutual aid and support with local administrative procedures.

The organisation was also deeply involved in education. Japanese children were often refused admission to public schools in the early days, so in 1909, the organization established a Japanese-language school. Education there focused primarily on the Japanese language, though English instruction was later introduced. By the 1920s, Japanese families had become increasingly determined to settle in Canada, and there was a growing demand to send their children to public schools. Although a new public school was built in 1925 and began accepting Japanese children, a lack of English proficiency remained a challenge; consequently, the organisation supported the establishment of a kindergarten and endeavoured to strengthen English language education.

The kindergarten was run in cooperation with the church, and children were sometimes left in care from early morning until late at night. For families busy with farming and fishing, the kindergarten was a vital facility that supported their daily lives. It also served as a venue for cultural exchange, with nuns caring for the children without speaking Japanese, whilst Japanese women received instruction in cooking and housework.

As the centre of the local community, the organisation took on the full range of responsibilities—medical care, education, employment and social support—and contributed significantly to the development of the Japanese community. However, following the forced relocation of 1942, the hospital and school were confiscated, and the organisation’s activities were forced to cease. Nevertheless, the systems and spirit established by the organisation had a profound influence on post-war reconstruction and the solidarity of the Japanese Canadian community. This chapter provides a detailed account of the history of how Japanese Canadian fishermen built their social infrastructure through their own efforts.

3.8 The Struggle for Equal Rights

In British Columbia during the first half of the 20th century, conflicts over the fishing industry were constant, and Japanese fishermen found themselves at the centre of these disputes. As the salmon fishing industry grew, conflicts of interest arose between canneries and fishermen, as well as between white, Indigenous and Japanese communities, leading to intensified disputes over fishing grounds and prices. When the canneries united to form an organisation in 1888, white fishermen formed a union in response, and movements aimed at excluding Asian fishermen gained momentum. Initially, Japanese fishermen sought to join the white union but were refused, leading them to pursue their own organisation.

In 1897, Japanese fishermen formed the Fraser River Fishermen’s Association (later known as ‘the Association’) and entered into price negotiations with the canneries. Faced with low prices offered just before the fishing season, the Association decided that the fishermen could not make a living and resolved to strike, whilst also seeking cooperation with white and Indigenous fishermen. The Japanese fishermen constituted a significant force, accounting for about one-third of the fishing population, and

the Association's unity was strong. However, the canning companies exerted pressure by using the Japanese fishermen's housing and credit facilities as leverage, attempting to induce strike breaking. Tensions rose when a few fishermen, struggling to find food, went out to sea, only for white fishermen to throw their catch back into the ocean.

The strike of 1900 escalated into violent clashes, with white and Indigenous fishermen attacking the Japanese fishermen. As the situation deteriorated, the government dispatched troops, and armed soldiers were stationed in Steveston. An abnormal situation arose in which Japanese fishermen had to go out to sea under military escort; although price negotiations were eventually settled, resentment among white fishermen intensified. Similar conflicts arose the following year, in 1901, when white fishermen went on strike again, calling for the expulsion of the Japanese. Under the guidance of their union, the Japanese fishermen set out to fish accompanied by escort vessels, but harassment and violence from white fishermen continued.

Underlying these conflicts were the decline in fishery resources and competition from the American fishing industry, whilst canning companies sought to reduce costs by cutting payments to fishermen. White fishermen viewed the Japanese presence as a threat and launched a campaign calling for their political exclusion. In 1914, the local Chamber of Commerce and labour organizations jointly adopted a resolution calling on the government to restrict Japanese fishermen's fishing grounds and licences, and the movement to exclude them began to take on an institutional form.

Similar conflicts arose on the northern coast, with large-scale strikes breaking out on the Skeena River and at Rivers Inlet in 1899 and 1904. By the 1930s, the organization of fishermen had progressed further, creating a complex situation in which white, Indigenous and Japanese fishermen each had their own organizations. During the 1936 strike at Rivers Inlet, the solidarity of the Japanese fishermen was highly praised, drawing expressions of surprise even from white fishermen. In the strike on the Skeena River that same year, Japanese fishermen took the lead in organizing the action, and it developed into a large-scale movement in which white and Indigenous fishermen also participated; however, due to pressure from the canning companies, the Indigenous fishermen withdrew, and the strike ultimately ended with only a slight pay rise.

During the 1937 Nam strike, Japanese and Indigenous people worked together, whilst some white fishermen were criticized for acting as strike-breakers. This strike was a symbolic event that demonstrated how solidarity among different ethnic groups could improve working conditions.

In the late 1930s, a growing movement to unify the entire fishing workforce led to the development of organizations that transcended differences in ethnicity and fishing methods. Japanese Canadian fishermen also joined organizations such as the Amalgamated Fishermen's Association and sought cooperative relationships with white fishermen. With the rise of the second generation of Japanese Canadians, the younger, English-speaking generation began campaigning for political rights; in 1938, the English-language newspaper *The New Canadian* was launched, helping to widely convey the voice of the Japanese Canadian community.

However, with the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, these efforts at solidarity collapsed overnight. The fishermen's union newspaper took a stance supporting the revocation of Japanese fishermen's licences, and Japanese Canadian fishermen were excluded from the fishing industry. In 1942, Japanese-owned

fishing vessels were confiscated; canning companies provided these to Indigenous fishermen, contributing to the development of Indigenous organizations.

In terms of political rights, too, Japanese people faced long-standing discrimination. By the late 19th century, following the Chinese community, Japanese people were also deprived of the right to vote, rendering political participation at both provincial and federal levels impossible. Their choice of occupation was also restricted, preventing them from entering many professions, such as the legal profession, pharmacy and the civil service. In response to this situation, the organization sought to restore their rights through legal means, and in 1900, the first president, Tomokichi Honma, filed a lawsuit demanding the right to vote. Whilst the Provincial Court and the Supreme Court of Canada upheld Honma's claims, the Privy Council of the United Kingdom ultimately recognized the province's discretion, and the Japanese were denied the right to vote. This ruling brought deep disappointment to the Japanese Canadian community, but at the same time served as a catalyst for raising awareness of the need to secure their rights.

This chapter traces the history of Japanese Canadian fishermen's united efforts in the face of discrimination and conflict, striving to improve their working conditions and secure political rights. Despite facing violence and exclusion, they sought to improve their status through organization, negotiation and legal battles, whilst continuing to demand equality within Canadian society. These efforts laid a vital foundation for the post-war movement to restore rights and the formation of a multicultural society.

3.9 Loss of Fishing Rights and Fishing Vessels

Following Japan's opening to the outside world, overseas labour migration was encouraged. Against a backdrop of poverty and the introduction of conscription in Meiji-era Japan, many young people sought temporary employment abroad. As part of this trend, Japanese people began migrating to British Columbia in the late 1870s and eventually became deeply involved in the fishing industries of the Fraser and Skeena rivers. The earliest settlers travelled to North America as seamen and, after disembarking, established a livelihood by working in the fishing and logging industries. Those with skills as craftsmen and those who brought fellow countrymen from their home regions played a significant role in the subsequent formation of the Japanese fishing community. There were particularly many immigrants from the fishing village of Mio in Wakayama Prefecture; their reports of the abundant salmon fishing on the Fraser River spurred a large-scale migration of fellow villagers, and Steveston became a settlement so densely populated with Japanese residents that it was known as the 'Japanese Village'. They contributed to the formation of the local community by bringing a diverse range of skills, including not only fishing but also running inns and general stores and working as shipwrights.

The Japanese fishermen adapted to the Canadian fishing grounds whilst utilizing the skills they had cultivated in their homeland. Early fishing was carried out in hand-rowed skiffs; nets were expensive and difficult to handle, and the fishermen were constantly busy repairing them. Eventually, Columbia River-style boats were introduced, and by using both sails and oars, they became capable of venturing out to the open sea. The making and repair of nets was an important winter task, and the fishermen wove their own nets by hand before heading out to the fishing grounds each season. In the early 20th century, petrol engines were introduced, leading to larger vessels equipped with living quarters and cooking facilities. Furthermore, in the 1930s, reel drums became widespread, mechanizing the hauling and

lowering of nets and significantly improving operational efficiency. Whilst these technological innovations led to increased catches, they were accompanied by shorter fishing seasons and stricter regulations aimed at conserving resources.

Fishing methods also diversified, with trolling and purse-seine fishing developing alongside drift-net fishing for salmon. In trolling, vessels became larger, and gear was improved to target high-quality fish in deeper waters. The spoon-shaped lure, devised by Japanese fishermen, became a significant invention that later gained widespread use. In purse seine fishing, the expansion of vessel size and mechanization enabled catching fish without relying on small coastal rivers; however, Japanese fishermen were sometimes prevented from entering the industry by institutional restrictions. Furthermore, in demersal and halibut fishing, longline fishing—which involves attaching numerous hooks to a long main line—developed, and as fresh fish markets expanded with the railway network's development, Japanese fishermen also entered the industry.

As the fishing industry developed, canneries and fishing companies were established along the coast, with numerous processing plants lining the banks of the Steveston and Skeena rivers. Within the factories, skilled Chinese workers, Indigenous women and Japanese women shared the workload, with housing and workplaces segregated by ethnicity. Japanese fishermen contracted with the factories and spent the fishing season under the supervision of a leader known as a 'boss'. The 'boss' organized the fishermen's daily lives and work, handling negotiations with the factories and managing supplies, whilst the fishermen supported one another through communal living with fellow countrymen. This system served as a vital safety net for immigrants facing language and cultural barriers, but it gradually diminished as the fishermen became more independent.

The technical skills of Japanese shipwrights were also highly regarded, and many Japanese shipwrights established workshops in and around Steveston and Vancouver. Applying traditional Japanese wooden shipbuilding techniques, they built a succession of vessels suited to the Canadian fishing industry. Workshops such as Atagi, Kishi, Nakade and Mukai became major local shipyards, and many pre-war fishing vessels were built by Japanese hands. Their skills were passed down after the war and played a vital role during the transition from wooden to aluminum vessels.

The organization of fishermen also progressed; the Steveston Fishermen's Association (commonly known as the Dantai), established in 1897, carried out a wide range of activities, including medical support, education and the improvement of working conditions. As infectious diseases caused by contaminated river water were a serious problem, the Dantai established a hospital to support local healthcare. They also built a Japanese-language school to educate their children and later engaged in repeated negotiations to secure admission to public schools. To protect their rights as fishermen, they actively negotiated with white fishermen and canning companies, acting in unity during disputes over wages and catch prices. Violent clashes occasionally broke out; the strikes of 1900 and 1901 were particularly fierce, leading to the deployment of the army.

A campaign for political rights was also launched, and in 1900, Tomoyoshi Honma, a fisherman from Toyama Prefecture, brought a lawsuit seeking the right to vote. Although he won the case in the Canadian courts, the ruling was ultimately overturned by the Privy Council in London, and Japanese people were not granted voting rights. This verdict brought deep disappointment to the Japanese community, but it laid the foundation for the later citizenship movement.

However, despite these efforts, the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941 completely transformed the lives of Japanese fishermen. The morning after the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Canadian government seized the Japanese fishermen's boats en masse, with over 1,100 fishing vessels forcibly confiscated. The fishermen were suspected of possessing weapons; their boats were gathered in ports under military supervision, stripped of their equipment, and sold off. Many vessels were damaged whilst being towed long distances across rough seas, and some even sank. Deprived of their livelihoods, the fishermen were eventually transported with their families to internment camps inland. Their boats were sold at low prices by the War Disposal Commission, and they lost their fishing rights. The skills, vessels and livelihoods they had built up over many years were lost in an instant, and even after the war, many fishermen were unable to return to the sea.

Thus, the history of coastal fishing established by Japanese fishermen unfolded amidst the great waves of migration, labour, technological innovation, the struggle against discrimination, and wartime confiscation. Their efforts were indispensable to the development of British Columbia's fishing industry and played a vital role in shaping local communities, yet their progress was cut short by repeated institutional discrimination and the ravages of war. Nevertheless, their skills, culture and communal memories continue to leave a lasting imprint on today's Japanese Canadian community and the history of the fishing industry.

3.10 Forced Relocation

Following the outbreak of the Pacific War, the atmosphere towards Japanese people in British Columbia deteriorated rapidly; the initially calm situation took a sharp turn, leading to a succession of dismissals and discriminatory measures. Railway companies, hotels and sawmills dismissed their Japanese employees one after another, and many fishermen joined the ranks of the unemployed. A curfew forced Japanese-owned shops to close early, and local social activities came to a halt. Japanese mutual aid organizations were overwhelmed by the growing number of people in financial distress, and their funds and supplies soon ran dry. As politicians and certain groups stoked public anxiety, public sentiment became increasingly heated, and calls for exclusion grew louder. Newspapers intensified their rhetoric linking Japanese people to threats, and rallies and statements demanding the expulsion of Japanese people took place across the region. Although national security was cited as the official reason, the underlying motive was a desire to eliminate the economic foundations—such as fisheries and agriculture—that the Japanese had established.

Meanwhile, law enforcement authorities and senior military officials rejected the view that the Japanese posed a threat to national security. The police, who had been monitoring them since before the war, reported that dangerous individuals had already been detained and that there were no issues with the general Japanese population. Senior officers in the Army and Navy also stated that Japanese fishermen had already been excluded from the seas and that no military threat existed. However, these expert assessments were swept aside by political pressure and calls for exclusion influenced policy decisions. Although opinions were divided within the federal government, dissenting views held no sway, and the forced relocation of the Japanese was ultimately decided.

In March 1942, the British Columbia Security Committee was established as the body responsible for implementing the forced relocation, tasked with managing the movement, internment and daily lives of the Japanese. At the same time, an administrator was appointed to manage Japanese property under

the pretext of 'protection', but much of this property was disposed of against the owners' will. Although the Committee selected several individuals from the Japanese community to serve as liaison officers, they were unable to alter the policy's fundamental nature.

Securing relocation sites proved difficult. Local authorities across Canada refused to accept Japanese people, and protests arose even in inland towns. In rural areas, signs reading 'No Japanese' were displayed, and there were even voices suggesting violence. Amidst such hostility, the Japanese were relocated under the pretext of 'protection', yet found themselves in a situation where they were unwelcome everywhere.

The first to be subjected to forced relocation were the approximately 2,500 Japanese people living in coastal fishing villages. In Tofino, families were given little time to pack their belongings; they locked their homes and were put on boats. A chill settled among the residents, and long-standing friendships rapidly soured. Cries rang out during the move, and families were overcome by anxiety and a sense of loss. Upon arriving in Vancouver, they were sent to the 'internment camp' at Hastings Park, which had been converted from livestock sheds. It was an unsanitary environment, reeking of livestock and offering almost no privacy. Many felt humiliated and despairing.

In Ucluelet, too, a sudden evacuation order was issued, and residents were forced to pack up quickly and board ships. A woman nearing childbirth was compelled to leave a town with no hospital and endured the ordeal whilst separated from her family. At the self-support camps where they were sent, living costs were high, and food was scarce, leaving families to suffer from hunger. Families running out of funds walked to inland towns, begging to be taken in, and only then were they able to secure a place to live.

In towns along the northern coast, eviction orders were issued just as suddenly. Even veterans who had served in the First World War were no exception; they were forced to move while caring for sick family members. Schoolteachers witnessed the sense of loss among their pupils and encouraged them not to lose their pride. Residents were forced to board trains carrying only the bare minimum, in accordance with luggage weight restrictions. The windows were covered, their destination was not disclosed, and they travelled under the watchful eye of armed police.

On the east coast of Vancouver Island, too, they were initially ordered to stand by, but in April, a mass evacuation order was issued. In Nanaimo, many families left the homes they had lived in for years, leaving their possessions behind. Even those who had been successful in the fishing industry had their boats and land confiscated by the government and received only meagre compensation. Children faced discrimination at school and were excluded from war-preparedness training. They suffered from the injustice of being the only ones regarded as 'enemies' whilst their German and Italian classmates continued their training.

One family buried their savings in the basement before leaving, but as their prolonged internment continued, they grew anxious. With the help of an acquaintance, they returned temporarily to Nanaimo to retrieve the hidden money. Whilst some local people did not view the Japanese as a threat and helped them out of personal goodwill, overall, the loss of property and the collapse of their livelihoods were unavoidable.

Among the young people who moved from Nanaimo, some were separated from their families and endured harsh conditions in internment camps and road construction work sites. Another woman experienced poor food and unsanitary conditions at Hastings Park; she met her future husband at her subsequent destination and returned to the coast after the war, but she was never able to regain her pre-war life.

Hastings Park was a facility hastily converted from livestock sheds; sanitary conditions were poor, and the stench lingered, leaving those who arrived deeply shocked. Many families were crammed into cramped quarters, deprived of both privacy and dignity. People felt they were being treated like criminals, harbouring deep humiliation and sorrow.

This series of forced relocations and internments arose from a combination of unfounded fears and prejudices that Japanese people posed a threat to the nation and economic interests. Many families lost their homes, possessions, jobs and ties to their local communities; the foundations of the lives they had built over many years were shattered in an instant. After the war, they were forced to start afresh, but the memory of the forced relocation remained as a deep wound.

3.11 Post-war Return to Steveston and Rebuilding Lives

As the Second World War ended and it became apparent that the War Measures Act would expire at the end of 1945, many Japanese Canadian fishermen hoped they would finally be able to return to the West Coast and resume their fishing livelihoods. They sent polite letters from various internment camps to the Fisheries Bureau, enquiring about the possibility of returning and reacquiring their fishing licences. However, the government continued to impose restrictions on Japanese Americans even after the war, and in 1946, a new bill extended these restrictions on movement and the acquisition of licences until 1949. Consequently, fishermen hoping to return were still denied licences simply because they were 'Japanese', leaving them deeply disappointed.

When the return of Japanese Americans to the West Coast was finally permitted in 1949, former fishermen scattered across the country began preparing to return to the sea after many long years. Like the Teranishi family, many had moved from town to town during the war, making a living through farm work or factory labour. As soon as they received permission to return, they headed for the coast, found accommodation, and queued up outside the Fisheries Bureau the very next morning to apply for licences. Whilst the licence itself could be obtained for one dollar, the problem was that they had almost no boats or funds left. Having exhausted their savings during their internment, they lacked the money to purchase boats; consequently, of the 119 people who obtained licences in 1949, only about 40 were actually able to go out fishing.

Nevertheless, they did not give up; they searched for old boats and, at times, repaired dilapidated vessels to return to the sea. One family found a boat so dilapidated that it nearly sank whilst underway, forcing them to search for another vessel. Another fisherman was finally able to return to fishing because his former employer offered support, overcoming strong opposition. In some cases, relationships of trust dating back to before the war remained intact, but many large fishing companies refused to re-employ Japanese Americans for fear of backlash from white fishermen. It was not uncommon even for fishermen who had worked for many years before the war to be turned away at the door.

Nevertheless, a small number of companies and individuals supported the Japanese American fishermen, and they relied on these few opportunities to make a fresh start. One fisherman used the trophy for the 'High Catch Award' he had won before the war as collateral to secure a loan and purchase a boat, continuing to operate whilst enduring discrimination and harassment. Upon returning to port, he was sometimes met with cold shoulders from former friends and classmates, and even finding a place to rent proved difficult. Nevertheless, with the support of a small number of understanding people, he once again achieved high catch rates and regained the company's trust.

In the northern fishing grounds, too, fishermen who had been active before the war began were returning one after another. One fisherman had worked as a tomato farmer during the war, but as soon as he was granted permission to return, he set out to find a boat, purchased an old vessel, and returned to the sea. He was warmly welcomed by local Finnish fishermen, and his family moved to the coast the following year. In such areas, where pre-war relationships had been relatively good, the return proceeded smoothly.

Meanwhile, to address the post-war labour shortage, fishing companies began recruiting Japanese Canadian fishermen from inland areas, Alberta, and even as far afield as Ontario and Montreal. Fishermen known as 'Highliners'—who had achieved outstanding results before the war—were particularly welcomed, and the companies offered various forms of support, including the provision of boats, housing, and information on schooling for their children. Although these recruitment efforts bore some resemblance to the pre-war 'boss system', they provided a valuable opportunity for a fresh start for Japanese Canadians who had lost their livelihoods during internment.

In 1950, there were instances where both father and son returned to fishing together. The father was a skilled fisherman who had boasted high catches since before the war; although he had been engaged in farming and forestry inland after the war, he could not abandon his passion for fishing and returned to the sea once more. For the son, it was his first time fishing, and he experienced the rigours of the spring salmon fishery and the dangers of operating at the mouth of the Fraser River. One night, a combination of strong winds and low tide left the boat at risk of flooding and drifting away, but they were rescued by a large vessel passing by, and their lives were spared. This experience deeply instilled in them an awareness of the sea's harshness and a profound respect for nature.

Returning after the war was not merely a matter of regaining their fishing licences; it was a long journey of rebuilding their livelihoods whilst confronting discrimination and prejudice. One fisherman managed to track down the large vessel he had owned before the war, but it had been sold by the government during the war and subsequently extensively refitted, causing the price to skyrocket to more than six times its original value, making it impossible for him to buy it back. He had no choice but to purchase a small boat and set out to sea once more to support his family. Another fisherman, whose pre-war employer refused to rehire him for fear of backlash from white fishermen, moved to another company, gathered his colleagues, and headed for the northern fishing grounds.

By the early 1950s, major fishing companies had finally begun to rehire Japanese Canadian fishermen. One fisherman praised the company's policy of treating all fishermen equally, without appointing Japanese Canadian middle managers known as 'Strobos' and continued to work for that company for many years. Pre-war discriminatory practices gradually changed, and relations among fishermen also improved.

However, not everything went smoothly. As West Coast trawler fishermen had belonged to Japanese Canadian cooperatives before the war, their ties with fishing companies were weak after the war, making it difficult to secure funding. One fisherman, repeatedly turned down for loans by banks, showed a trophy he had won before the war to a company as his only asset, and finally obtained the funds to purchase a boat. He continued to operate despite harassment at the port and damage to his vessel and eventually regained trust by achieving high catches once more.

Through the accumulation of such individual efforts and perseverance, Japanese Canadian fishermen gradually re-established their presence in the post-war fishing industry. By the 1950s, recruitment efforts by fishing companies had borne fruit, and many Japanese Canadian fishermen returned to the West Coast to begin building new lives with their families. The fact that they were no longer restricted to specific fishing grounds as they had been before the war, but could now operate freely along the entire coastline, represented a major step forward for them.

It took many years to recover the boats, homes, property and livelihoods that had been taken from them by the war, but the Japanese Canadian fishermen supported one another and, whilst facing discrimination and hardship, forged a path to live with the sea once more. Their return was not merely a resumption of their profession, but also a struggle to reclaim their dignity and livelihoods. Their pre-war experience and skills, coupled with a deep love for the sea, led them back to the fishing grounds and enabled them to play a vital role in the post-war fishing industry.

3.12 The Movement Demanding an Apology and Compensation from the Federal Government for Anti-Japanese Policies (The Redress Movement)

The long-running post-war campaign by Japanese Canadians for war reparations reached a major milestone with the government's apology and compensation agreement on 22 September 1988, though pinpointing its exact origins is no easy task. Roger Obata, one of the movement's key figures, had been campaigning for the redress of injustices for over 45 years, ever since he and his colleagues founded an organization in 1943 to defend the democratic rights of Japanese Canadians. He grew up in Prince Rupert, where his father told him stories of the discrimination faced by Japanese Canadian fishermen, including the 1907 anti-Asian riots, restrictions on fishing licences, bans on the use of petrol engines, and refusal to admit them to white-only unions. During the war, under the pretext of the attack on Pearl Harbour, Japanese Canadian fishermen had their boats confiscated and were expelled from the coast—a grave injustice. These experiences formed the basis of Obata's long-standing activism.

After the war, Obata became involved in organizational activities in Toronto to restore the rights of Japanese Canadians, calling on the government to revoke the deportation orders issued following the forced relocation. In 1947, he became the first president of a national organization, and in the 1970s, he was involved in efforts to re-evaluate the history of the Japanese Canadian community. By the 1980s, progress in the compensation movement in the United States had begun to influence Canada; historian Anne Gomer Sunahara analyzed government documents and revealed that the wartime measures had been based not on military necessity but on political prejudice. This provided a major boost to the compensation movement.

In 1984, Art Miki was elected president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), and the organization formally adopted a demand for compensation. Although the government's stance was

initially reluctant, the situation changed following the 1984 change of government, and negotiations began in earnest. The NAJC commissioned a specialist body to calculate the extent of the losses, which demonstrated that there had been enormous economic losses, including non-quantifiable damages such as the loss of educational opportunities. By the late 1980s, broad support had been gathered from civic groups, religious organizations, and trade unions, and momentum for securing compensation was building.

In 1988, following negotiations between Art Miki and Gary Weiner on behalf of the government, an agreement was reached on a formal apology, individual compensation payments, and the establishment of a fund for human rights education and the elimination of racial discrimination. The citizenship of those who had been deported was restored, and criminal records resulting from the War Powers Act were expunged. By 1994, approximately 18,000 people had received compensation.

However, opinions within the Japanese American community were divided, with concerns about reopening old wounds and disagreements over the form of compensation. Positions varied widely: some sought only an apology, others desired compensation for the community, and still others prioritized individual compensation. Many in the Nisei generation, preoccupied with rebuilding their lives after the war, did not speak of their suffering to their children; consequently, there were many instances in which the Sansei generation learned of their family history only after they had grown up.

Among those who returned to fishing after the war, such as Takemi Miyazaki and Tom Oikawa, some, mindful of their parents' hardships, became actively involved in the compensation campaign. On the other hand, there were those who kept their distance from the movement due to bitter memories of not having received sufficient support from Japanese Canadian organizations during the war. Nevertheless, it is said that many fishermen, despite harbouring complex feelings, did not hesitate to cooperate, for example by providing fish for the campaign.

Furthermore, many of the third-generation Japanese Americans grew up hearing almost nothing about their parents' wartime experiences. The testimonies of Dan Nomura and Paul Kariya suggest that the reason their families maintained their silence was a fear of discrimination and anxiety about being hurt again. In many cases, family members were concerned about their involvement in the compensation movement and chose to watch over them from the sidelines.

Following the realization of compensation, the reconstruction of the Japanese Canadian community also progressed. Pre-war schools, temples and meeting halls had been sold or destroyed during the war, creating a need for facilities to support local culture and the elderly. In Steveston, discussions about constructing a community centre began in the 1950s, and the area's regeneration proceeded with the construction of a martial arts hall and the opening of a Japanese Cultural Centre, funded by the compensation. These facilities play a vital role as hubs for cultural preservation and support for the elderly.

Efforts were also made to preserve the history of the fishing industry, with exhibitions showcasing the skills and way of life of Japanese Canadian fishermen established in various locations. The compensation fund was also utilized for fishermen's reunions and cultural exchange programmes for young people, helping to strengthen community bonds once again.

From a political perspective, it is also interesting to consider how the Nisei generation—who had long supported social democratic parties after the war—related to the Conservative government that secured the compensation. As with Yoshiharu Shinde, who did not live to see the realization of compensation, the feelings of the generation that experienced wartime injustices were complex; the significance of compensation lay not merely in monetary compensation, but in the state's acknowledgement of historical errors and the restoration of honour.

In this way, the compensation movement was not merely a political negotiation, but the very process by which a community that had been forced into silence regained its voice, re-examined its history, and passed it on to the next generation. Testimonies from those involved in the movement reveal individual struggles, family sentiments and changes within local communities, conveying how the achievement of compensation was underpinned by the efforts and courage of so many people. Rectifying wartime injustices served not only to settle the past but also as a crucial opportunity for Canadian society to reaffirm the principles of multicultural coexistence and respect for human rights.

3.13 The Next Generation of Japanese Canadian Fishermen

The second-generation fishermen who returned to the fishing industry after the war began to retire gradually from the 1970s onwards, and by the 1990s, most had left the industry. Many of them worked at sea for over half a century, supporting their families in harsh conditions and laying the foundations of their local communities. Like Bungorō Gotō and Tomizō Sakata, many remained active until their late seventies; fishing was their very life. However, as they grew older, retirements became more frequent, and the time for a generational handover gradually arrived.

Immediately after the post-war return, discrimination and hostility still lingered, and there were incidents where fishermen were shot at sea or had their nets cut. There were quite a few people, such as Sakai Terry, who continued fishing for many years despite facing danger immediately after the reversion. Relying on their pre-war experience and skills, they returned to the sea and worked tirelessly to support their families.

On the other hand, for the third generation who grew up after the war, the restoration of voting rights broadened their career choices, and fishing became just one of many options. Some naturally entered the fishing trade as a family business, whilst others faced strong opposition from their parents. Some, like Takemi Miyazaki, had been familiar with fishing from a young age and naturally became fishermen, whilst others, like Terry Sakai, were called out to sea by their fathers with no prior experience and mastered their skills whilst facing harsh realities.

There were also third-generation fishermen, such as Kiyo Goto, who carried on their family's fishing history dating back to before the war. He returned to the sea with his family after the war and, despite the hardships of working on an old boat, established himself as an independent fisherman. In the late 1950s, the 'Mosquito Fleet' emerged, comprising students and young people who took part in fishing operations exclusively during the summer months. Operating from small skiffs, they were not only key contributors to the fishing industry but also vital to local youth culture. For many, including Jim Kojima and Mo Yesaki, experiences with the Mosquito Fleet had a profound impact on their subsequent lives, fostering a sense of camaraderie and responsibility through their involvement in fishing.

Although fishing was a male-dominated profession, there were also instances of couples working together. Women such as Nancy Murakami and Marge Sakai, who worked on their husbands' boats and handled every task from steering and netting to fish processing, played vital roles on the front lines of fishing. They supported their husbands' work on the dangerous seas and shouldered the responsibilities of both family life and the fishing trade.

There were also examples of women who worked as full-time fisherwomen, such as Nadine Inoue. Fascinated by fishing from a young age, she worked in the same demanding conditions as the men and earned their respect. However, due to political changes in the fishing industry and stricter regulations, it gradually became difficult for her to make a living, and she eventually left the industry.

The post-war fishing industry was also an era of technological innovation. In the 1950s, nylon nets were introduced; they were more durable than traditional hemp or cotton nets and enabled more efficient fishing. Whilst this led to increased catches, regulations were also tightened, including shortening fishing seasons to protect resources. Trolling and seining techniques also evolved; with the increase in vessel size and the introduction of electronic equipment, the operational range expanded, and the nature of the fishing industry changed significantly.

From the 1970s onwards, the herring roe (kazunoko) fishery experienced rapid growth, and Japanese fishermen actively entered this new market. Whilst some, such as Johnny Toyoda and Takao Matsunaga, made substantial profits from herring fishing, it was also a high-risk industry due to price fluctuations and tighter regulations. The fragmentation of fishing rights and the increasing complexity of the licensing system placed a financial burden on fishermen, leading to a rise in cases where it became difficult to continue fishing.

Fishing has always been a dangerous occupation, and many accidents and shipwrecks have been recorded. The risk of losing one's life was ever-present, whether from capsizing in storms, becoming entangled in nets, or collisions. There were also fishermen, such as Frank Nishii and Susumu Nomura, who were praised for their bravery in rescuing colleagues from dangerous situations. Such experiences demonstrate that fishing is not merely a profession, but a community where members support one another.

Since the 1990s, the fishing industry has faced political and economic changes; catch restrictions, resource depletion, and the increasing complexity of the licensing system have made it difficult to earn a living as a fisherman. Many fishermen retired, and fewer members of the next generation entered the industry. Some, like Richard Nomura, became the last fishermen to carry on their family traditions.

Nevertheless, fishing remained at the heart of the Japanese Canadian community's history and culture. The skills, values and sense of camaraderie forged through fishing have been passed down across generations. The experiences of these fishermen occupy an important place in Japanese Canadian history and have contributed significantly to the development of local communities.

3.14 The Dawn of Fishing in the 2000s

Towards the end of the 20th century, the fishing industry along the British Columbia coast reached a major turning point, leaving independent small-scale fishermen in a difficult situation. According to the attached document, policies by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) aimed at protecting

fishery resources reduced the number of days open for commercial fishing on the Fraser River to almost zero and significantly cut the number of trolling days on the west coast. Nas Joyce, who moved to Ucluelet in 1951, recalls that for some time after the war, fishing was possible year-round, highlighting the stark contrast with today's short fishing seasons (now, even in a good year, fishing is only permitted for a few weeks). Furthermore, Taku Miyazaki, having witnessed the massive salmon returns to the Adams River in 2002 and 2003, describes it as 'very sad' that commercial fishing was permitted on only a handful of occasions.

Behind this situation lie several 'buy-back programmes' introduced since 1986. The first, the 'Davis Plan', was introduced to reduce the surplus of vessels and stabilize the income of full-time fishermen. The subsequent 'Mifflin Plan' of 1996 introduced a licensing system based on gear type and the subdivision of fishing grounds, and allowed the accumulation of multiple licences, forcing fishermen to bear substantial costs to obtain the necessary licences. Taku Miyazaki states that 'purchasing multiple licences is impossible for most fishermen'. Researcher Kelly Voden points out that this policy had a devastating impact on coastal fishing communities, with areas such as Alert Bay being particularly hard hit.

As a result of additional buybacks in the late 1990s, the number of vessels halved from 4,367 in 1995 to 2,217 in 2001. The number of salmon fishing licences also fell, and employment plummeted from around 26,000 to 13,000. Not only fishermen, but also workers in processing plants, machine shops and supply businesses were severely affected; in particular, Japanese Canadian women lost their jobs in the processing plants.

Furthermore, due to the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Imperial Canning Factory in Steveston ceased salmon canning production for the first time in 100 years, with processing operations moving to the United States. The scent of the canning factory, once known as the 'smell of gold', vanished, and Steveston transformed into a tourist destination.

Meanwhile, the management of salmon resources also sparked significant debate regarding Indigenous rights. The 1990 Sparrow ruling confirmed that Indigenous peoples' fishing rights for subsistence purposes are constitutionally guaranteed and take precedence. In response, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) launched the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy (AFS), and in 1992, a pilot sales programme was introduced, limited to the Tsawwassen, Musqueam and Ballard tribes. However, non-Indigenous fishermen strongly opposed this, viewing it as 'unfair commercial fishing based on bloodline'. In 1998, 145 fishermen staged a protest fishing operation, and Japanese Canadian fishermen, including Koyanagi Leonard, Nakatsuka Dennis, Yoshikawa Kenny and Nomura Richard, were prosecuted.

This dispute was taken all the way to the Supreme Court as the 'Cup Case', and in 2008, the Supreme Court ruled that the Pilot Sales Programme was constitutional. Whilst acknowledging that 'there is a real conflict in which rights restricted to Indigenous peoples disadvantage non-Indigenous fishermen', the judgment concluded that policies aimed at assisting socially disadvantaged groups do not contravene the Constitution.

On the Japanese Canadian side, the Japanese Canadian Fishermen's Association (JCFA) was formed in 2007, with Leslie Baden, the grandson of Rintaro Hayashi, serving as chair, and it called for the

restoration of fairness in fisheries policy. The JCFA called for the reaffirmation of the 1928 government policy that ‘race shall not be a criterion for fisheries regulations’, and for compliance with the government’s 1988 promise, made during the war reparations process, to ‘apply policies equally to all citizens.

On the ground, it has been noted that the balance of fishing gear has been lost, with large purse-seine vessels now accounting for the majority of the catch. Kiyoo Goto stated that ‘the issues facing independent fishermen have been overshadowed by the conflict between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Research has also shown that, even after the buyback, catch volumes did not decrease; rather, intensive fishing by large vessels has continued to increase.

inherited pre-war fishing ground customs and the territorial awareness that varied from region to region, operating whilst preserving local cultures—such as in the upper reaches, where many were from Miyagi Prefecture, and around Steveston, where many were from Wakayama Prefecture.

There were also those, like Akira Horii, who went out fishing to help their fathers whilst attending university. He managed to balance his studies with fishing and later became a doctor, but the experience he gained in the fishing industry had a significant influence on his life thereafter. There were also cases, such as that of Theo Okabe, where individuals entered the fishing industry by chance and went on to run a shipyard. Others, like Taro Hirose, worked as farmers or shoemakers before the war and successfully switched to fishing after the war.

Furthermore, the deterioration of salmon habitats is a serious concern. The disappearance of wetlands, the destruction of small rivers in urban areas, and the discharge of sewage are hindering recovery; even in regions that were once abundant, such as Rivers Inlet, the situation has become catastrophic, with salmon numbers plummeting. As the salmon ecosystem affects over 190 species of flora and fauna, civic groups such as the Pacific Salmon Foundation continue to carry out conservation activities.

Despite these harsh conditions, 5 September 2006 became an unforgettable ‘best day’ of ‘fishing’ for many Japanese Canadian fishermen. A combination of fine weather, abundant salmon, the widespread use of super skiffs, and efficient three-man crews saw Taylor Justin catch 2,800 fish, whilst other fishermen also caught around 2,000. Richard Nomura landed 1,700 fish, so many that his daughter worried the boat might sink. Ken Takahashi remarked, ‘It is days like this that have kept me fishing all these years.’

There are currently 44 Japanese Canadian fishermen operating on the West Coast; the oldest was born in 1929 and the youngest in 1975–76. The third generation makes up the largest group, and they are primarily salmon gillnet fishermen.

The history of the Takasaki family epitomizes the history of Japanese Canadian fishing itself. The first-generation Kotaro Takasaki left Ibusuki in Kagoshima Prefecture to escape poverty and, despite his ship being on the verge of breaking up, managed to wash ashore in Canada. After working for the CPR, he became a fisherman on the Fraser River and obtained his own fishing licence in 1892. In the early 20th century, the number of Japanese Canadian fishermen surged, leading to the formation of communities in Steveston and Powell Street, alongside the establishment of hospitals and organizations.

Kosuke, the second generation, married in Japan and continued fishing whilst travelling back and forth with his children; however, in the 1920s, many Nikkei fishermen were excluded by the Duff Commission's anti-Japanese policies. Nevertheless, the Takasaki family continued fishing, formed a cooperative with their peers, and overcame difficulties through a spirit of mutual aid.

In the 1930s, three sons returned from Japan and, alongside technological innovations, developed the family business. However, with the outbreak of war in 1941, they lost everything three generations had built and faced forced relocation and the confiscation of their property. After the war, in the 1950s, they returned to the sea and rebuilt the fishing industry from scratch.

In the post-war fishing industry, thanks to the efforts of Suzuki Buck and others, trade unions fostered multicultural solidarity, deepening cooperation among fishermen. Meanwhile, within the Nikkei community, assimilation progressed; Nisei became more reserved about their ethnicity, and the third generation came to share values largely identical to those of mainstream society. Due to a focus on education, many entered professional careers, and average incomes rose.

3.15 Resolution of the Japanese Canadian Compensation Issue (Redress Agreement)

The campaign seeking compensation for the unjust treatment suffered by Japanese Canadians during the Second World War reached a formal agreement in September 1988, though it is considered difficult to pinpoint its exact origins. Within the Japanese Canadian community, which had been forced into silence for a long time after the war, this movement served as a crucial catalyst for bringing past injustices to light and holding Canadian society to account for its historical responsibilities. At the heart of the movement were second-generation activists who had been fighting discrimination since the war years, and a leading figure among them was Roger Obata. He had faced discriminatory policies even before the war and continued to devote himself to restoring the rights of the Japanese Canadian community for many years after the war; he was a symbolic figure linking the pre-war and post-war eras, as well as the compensation movement.

From a young age, Obata had experienced institutional discrimination first-hand, including restrictions on fishing licences, bans on the use of petrol engines, and refusal of membership in white labour unions. During the war, Japanese fishing boats were confiscated and sold, and Japanese Canadian fishermen were stripped of their livelihoods. After the war, he was involved in establishing Japanese Canadian organizations in Toronto and continued his campaign for the return of those who had been forcibly relocated and for the restoration of their citizenship. In the 1970s, through his work on the Centennial of Japanese Immigration, he also helped rekindle an interest in history within a community that had remained silent.

From the 1970s onwards, growing awareness of human rights in both Canada and the United States, coupled with a re-examination of wartime policies, provided a tailwind for the compensation movement. A major turning point for the movement came when historian Anne Gomer Sunahara analyzed government documents and revealed that the wartime measures had been driven by political motives rather than military necessity. In the United States, a commission was established in 1980 to investigate the internment of Japanese Americans, and discussions regarding compensation were progressing by the early 1980s. In response, Japanese Canadian organizations in Canada began to publicly advocate for compensation from around 1982.

In 1984, Art Miki was elected president of the NAJC (National Association of Japanese Canadians), and the demand for compensation became official policy. Within the government, a report on visible minorities recommended the recognition of unfair treatment and compensation negotiations; however, then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau opposed providing compensation for past injustices. Meanwhile, the opposition leader, Brian Mulroney, took a positive stance on compensation, and when a change of government occurred following the 1984 election, negotiations began in earnest. However, there was a significant gap between the government's proposal and the demands of the Japanese Canadian community, so the NAJC commissioned a specialist body to calculate the amount of losses. A 1986 report estimated that economic losses exceeded \$ 400 million and highlighted non-quantifiable damages, such as the loss of educational opportunities.

By the late 1980s, a broad spectrum of groups—including religious organizations, trade unions and prominent figures—had declared their support for compensation, fostering a nationwide movement of solidarity. Buoyed by the success of compensation efforts in the United States, the Canadian government and the NAJC finally reached an agreement in 1988. The terms of the agreement included an official apology, individual compensation payments, a fund to support the Japanese Canadian community, and the establishment of a foundation to combat racial discrimination. The honour of those who had been stripped of their citizenship was also restored, and by 1994, compensation had been paid to approximately 18,000 people.

However, opinions within the Japanese Canadian community were divided regarding the compensation campaign, and there was not necessarily complete unity. Many second-generation Japanese Canadians, preoccupied with rebuilding their lives after the war, were reluctant to speak of the past, and there were voices opposing compensation. Positions varied widely: some sought only an apology, others hoped for compensation for the community, whilst others prioritized individual compensation. Many third-generation Japanese Canadians had not heard about their parents' wartime experiences, and there are numerous testimonies stating that they first learned of this history through the campaign.

Through the compensation campaign, the community, which had remained silent, began to speak out once more. Former fishermen and their families across the region joined the movement; it is said that those who had moved outside British Columbia, such as to Toronto, found it easier to engage actively due to the geographical and psychological distance. On the other hand, fishermen who remained in British Columbia were cautious about speaking out, partly due to anxieties regarding their livelihoods, such as the renewal of fishing licences.

Following the compensation agreement, the reconstruction of the Japanese Canadian community progressed. As almost all pre-war facilities had been lost, there was a need for spaces for the elderly and centres for cultural preservation. In Steveston, construction of a martial arts hall and a community centre proceeded, and the Japanese Cultural Centre was opened in 1992 using funds from the compensation fund. The centre hosts language classes, cultural activities and programmes for the elderly, functioning as a cultural hub for the local community. Furthermore, the compensation fund supported exhibitions that preserved the history of the fishing industry and exchange programmes that enabled younger generations to learn about Japanese culture.

The compensation also marked a significant turning point in political terms. For the second generation, who had long supported the CCF (later the NDP) after the war, a deep-rooted gratitude towards the

politicians who had once defended them was firmly established. However, the Conservative government's decision to issue an official apology and compensation in 1988 marked a new political experience for the Japanese Canadian community. Although many of the generation who had suffered injustice during the war had already passed away, their children and grandchildren came to recognize anew, through this compensation, the weight of history and the importance of social justice.

In this way, the compensation movement went beyond mere financial restitution, contributing significantly to the restoration of the historical honour of Japanese Canadians, the revitalization of the community, and the enhancement of human rights awareness within Canadian society. It can be said that the movement's most significant achievement was breaking the long silence and providing an opportunity to pass history down across generations.

3.16 The Next Generation of Japanese Canadian Fishermen

The second-generation fishermen who returned to the fishing industry after the war began to retire gradually from the 1970s onwards, and by the 1990s, most had left the profession. Many of them continued to work at sea for over half a century, supporting their families in harsh conditions and preserving the skills and pride passed down from before the war. There were also those, such as Bungorō Gotō and Tomizō Sakata, who continued to go out to sea into their late 70s and 80s; their lives were truly intertwined with the sea. However, as they aged, their physical strength waned, and the number of those suffering from illness or dementia increased, with families often having to take on the burden of care. Paul Kariya, the son of Takeo Kariya, watched his father's decline and vowed to pass on the teachings he had inherited to his own children, speaking of the weight of this intergenerational legacy.

Meanwhile, technological innovation in the post-war fishing industry led to improvements in equipment and safety, making the work more efficient and less dangerous than before. In the 1980s, Vietnamese immigrants entered the fishing industry, and many Japanese Canadian fishermen taught them their skills. This interaction was one way the techniques of Japanese Canadian fishermen, passed down since before the war, were handed down to a new generation.

For the younger post-war generation, fishing was no longer the only option; paths to university education and other professions opened up. However, among third-generation Japanese Canadians born into fishing families, some who grew up close to the sea naturally chose to enter the fishing trade. Takemi Miyazaki grew up in pre-war Steveston, helping unload fish from a young age, and began working on his father's boat immediately after the war. He built his own boat, fished for a variety of species including salmon, halibut and prawns, and eventually passed the boat on to his son.

Terry Sakai, too, learned the trade from his father immediately after the war and became a fully-fledged fisherman through gruelling experiences, such as encountering a storm on his very first voyage. Despite facing discrimination and hostility, he worked together with his colleagues to overcome dangerous situations. Kiyo Goto, a third-generation fisherman, returned to the industry following in his family's footsteps. Starting out on an old, noisy boat, he gradually acquired new vessels and built a life as a fisherman. He cannot forget the experience of being addressed with a derogatory term when applying for his fishing licence in his youth, and even now, more than half a century later, he still speaks of that pain.

In the Fraser River basin, each region had its own fishing customs; in the upper reaches, where many people hailed from Miyagi Prefecture, a system known as 'Junban Drift'—a rotation system—was strictly observed. This was a wise practice designed to respect each other's turn and avoid unnecessary conflict. Conversely, around Steveston, where many people hailed from Wakayama Prefecture, there was an unspoken sense of territoriality between different areas. This cultural backdrop influenced both the competition between fishermen and their playful rivalries.

Some, like Akira Horii, managed to balance their studies with fishing, helping their fathers whilst attending university. He later became a doctor and has said that his experience as a fisherman fostered his interest in marine life and his understanding of local healthcare. There were also examples, such as Teo Okabe, who entered the fishing industry by chance and went on to run a shipyard, demonstrating how post-war fishing served as a gateway to diverse life paths.

Taro Hirose helped with farming and shoemaking before the war, was forced to work on a sugar beet farm during the war and returned to fishing after the war. Through hard work and trust, he acquired a new boat and achieved success. He worked not only as a fisherman but also as a sales representative for a fishing gear company, acting as a bridge between Japanese Canadian fishermen and others.

In the late 1950s, a small fleet of young people known as the 'Mosquito Fleet' emerged, with high school and university students setting out to fish in small boats during the summer. Supported by experienced fishermen, they learnt the trade and grew through mutual assistance amongst their peers. Jim Kojima recounts memories of crossing the river with friends after school to fish by the light of a campfire, illustrating how fishing fostered friendship and community bonds.

Among those who came from the Mosquito Fleet, some continued in the fishing industry and pursued professional careers, whilst others went on to follow diverse paths, becoming architects, civil servants, researchers and more. Bad Sakamoto earned his tuition fees through fishing and later worked as an architect whilst dedicating himself to the preservation of local history. Mo Yesaki worked as a fisheries researcher around the world and later became involved in writing the history of the fishing industry.

Third-generation fishermen such as Ken Takahashi and Richard Nomura inherited their family traditions while facing changes in the fishing industry. They made a living by adapting to the times, such as introducing new vessels, improving insurance schemes and complying with stricter fishing regulations. However, the politicization of the fishing industry and stricter resource management made it difficult to secure a stable income, leading an increasing number to choose retirement or a career change.

Although few women worked in the fishing industry, some, such as Nancy Murakami and Marge Sakai, went out to sea with their husbands and took on many roles, including steering the boat, handling the nets, cooking, and keeping watch. They worked with their husbands on the dangerous seas, sometimes risking their lives, yet they carried out their work with pride as fishermen. Nadine Inoue was known as the only full-time female fisher; she worked a diverse range of fisheries, including salmon, halibut, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers, earning the respect of her male counterparts.

In the post-war period, technological innovation advanced in the fishing industry, and efficiency improved dramatically through the widespread use of nylon nets, the introduction of monofilament, the development of freezing equipment and the installation of electronic devices. However, this resulted in excessive catches, prompting the government to introduce shorter fishing seasons and area

restrictions, forcing fishermen to make a living under strict regulations. Herring fishing, in particular, was thrown into turmoil by soaring prices, overfishing and speculative licence trading, leaving many fishermen facing significant financial risks.

Fishing is a profession that is constantly fraught with danger, and many fishermen have lost their lives in storms or accidents. While colleagues who went to their rescue were sometimes honoured, a spirit of mutual aid lay at the very heart of the fishing community. The memorial erected at Gally Point in Steveston preserves the memory of the fishermen who lost their lives at sea.

Viewed in this light, the journey of post-war Japanese Canadian fishermen is a history in itself: one of overcoming discrimination and hardship to support their families and communities, honing their skills, and passing on their wisdom and pride to the next generation. Although the former vibrancy is fading due to the decline of the fishing industry and tighter regulations, their experience and spirit still live on within the community.

3.17 Fishing in British Columbia in the 21st Century

Towards the end of the 20th century, small-scale independent fishermen along the British Columbia coast began to face unprecedented challenges. Whereas in the post-war era they could fish year-round—with the long summer daylight hours leaving them exhausted—by the start of the 21st century, the fishing season had shrunk to just a few weeks; indeed, in 2008, there was even a year when there were zero fishing days on the Fraser River. Veteran fishermen such as Nas Joyce and Tak Miyazaki, who remember the once-abundant fishing grounds, speak of the current situation with deep sadness. Even in years when salmon returns were high, the fishing opportunities granted to commercial fishermen are minimal, making it extremely difficult to earn a living from fishing.

Behind this situation lies a series of policies introduced by the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Beginning with the ‘Davis Plan’ in 1986, followed by the ‘Mifflin Plan’ in 1996, and the additional buy-back policy from 1998 to 2000, a succession of measures aimed at reducing the number of fishing vessels and licences were implemented. Whilst these were intended to correct excess fishing capacity and protect resources, the result was a halving of the fishing fleet, leading to job losses for many fishermen, processors and those employed in related industries. Economically vulnerable regions and Indigenous communities were particularly hard hit, and in places such as Alert Bay, efforts were made to transition to the tourism industry.

Furthermore, due to the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Imperial Canning Factory in Steveston ceased salmon canning production for the first time in 100 years. As a result of consolidation within the processing industry, Canadian catches began to be sent to American factories. Steveston, once known as the ‘Salmon Capital’, was forced to transform from a fishing town into a tourist destination.

The decline in the number of fishermen created opportunities to sell assets such as fishing vessels and licences, but it had a severe impact on related industries. Machinery factories and repair shops lost their customer base; their stock became worthless, and, unable to find buyers, they were forced to close down. Japanese Canadian women who had worked in the processing plants also lost their jobs, cutting off the source of income that had supported their households.

Meanwhile, the buy-back policy was also linked to policies concerning Indigenous rights. The 1990 Sparrow ruling confirmed that Indigenous peoples' rights to fish for subsistence purposes are constitutionally guaranteed and take precedence over those of other users. In response, DFO launched the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy (AFS) and, in 1992, introduced a 'Pilot Sales Programme' allowing the Tsawwassen, Musqueam and Ballard Bands to sell fish on a trial basis. However, this policy provoked strong opposition from non-Indigenous fishers, and in 1998, 145 fishers staged a 'net-down' protest. Japanese Canadian fishers, including Koyanagi Leonard, Nakatsuka Dennis, Yoshikawa Kenny and Nomura Richard, also took part, arguing that the system created an unfair commercial fishing industry based on bloodline.

The issue was taken all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, where the 2008 'Kup' ruling determined that policies granting benefits to specific groups do not violate the Constitution, provided they are intended to remedy social and economic disadvantages faced by Indigenous peoples. Whilst acknowledging the disadvantages suffered by non-Indigenous fishermen, the Supreme Court prioritized the policy's objectives. This ruling was a major disappointment to many Japanese Canadian fishermen, and many felt that their dignity as fishermen had been undermined.

On the fishing front, the balance of fishing methods has been disrupted, and large seine vessels now account for the majority of the catch. Research has shown that the buy-back policy did not lead to a decline in catch volumes; rather, it has facilitated increased fishing by large, high-performance vessels. It has been noted that in the Strait of Johnston, seine vessels can catch 80–90 percent of migrating salmon in a single operation.

Even more serious is the loss of salmon habitats. Due to the destruction of wetlands, the filling in of small rivers in urban areas, and the inflow of sewage, the conditions for salmon to return are deteriorating year by year. Non-profit organizations such as the Pacific Salmon Foundation are working to restore salmon habitats and protect stocks, but due to a lack of long-term government support, their activities rely heavily on public awareness and effort.

Despite these challenging circumstances, 5 September 2006 proved to be an unforgettable day for many Japanese Canadian fishermen. Although the fishing season was open for only a short 12 hours that day, the weather was favourable, and the salmon run had reached its peak, allowing Japanese Canadian fishermen to record a surprisingly large catch. Taylor Justin landed 2,800 fish, breaking his father's record. Many fishermen landed over 2,000 fish, and Richard Nomura's boat was so full that he had to store 300 fish in the cabin. They achieved in just 12 hours a catch that would previously have taken three weeks to complete. The fishermen remarked, 'It's days like this that keep us in the business,' but with the purchase price as low as \$1 per pound, their joy was tempered by mixed feelings.

Currently, the number of Japanese Canadian fishermen has fallen to 44, many of whom belong to third-, fourth- or fifth-generation fishing families. They are engaged in gillnet salmon fishing, herring roe fishing, trolling and shrimp fishing, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to make a stable living from fishing.

The latter half of this chapter introduces the history of the Takasaki family, symbolically depicting the journey of Japanese Canadian fishermen. Since Kotaro Takasaki crossed over to Canada in the late 19th century and began fishing on the Fraser River, the family has been engaged in the fishing industry for three generations. However, due to wartime measures in 1941, they lost their boats, homes and

property, and experienced forced relocation and internment. After the war, they started again from scratch and returned to fishing, but it was not easy to regain the prosperity they had enjoyed before the war.

In post-war society, Japanese Canadians gained freedom of education and career choice, and began to thrive in diverse fields such as medicine, law, architecture and teaching. The number of those remaining in the fishing industry declined, and it became common for the younger generation to choose paths other than fishing. Assimilation has progressed within the Japanese Canadian community to the point where they are now virtually indistinguishable from most of Canadian society.

However, those who remained in the fishing industry continue to cherish their pride and history as Japanese Canadian fishermen. Younger generations, such as Troy Takasaki and Justin Taylor, have chosen fishing despite the harsh conditions and are carrying on their family traditions. They feel that fishing is not merely a profession, but a cultural heritage deeply intertwined with Japanese Canadian history.

Yet the future of the fishing industry is uncertain. A host of challenges lie ahead, including reduced operating days, soaring fuel costs, depressed prices, policy uncertainty, and relations with Indigenous fisheries. Whilst cherishing the history and pride built by their ancestors, Japanese Canadian fishermen are forced to accept the reality that they may be the 'last generation'.

This chapter carefully depicts how the journey of Japanese Canadian fishermen is the history of Canadian fishing itself, portraying the intertwining of their efforts, hardships, pride, and anxieties about the future. The decline of the fishing industry is not merely an industrial issue,

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5. Photographs

Although this book contains many photographs, they cannot be reproduced here due to copyright restrictions. The photographs included cover the following subjects:

- The passenger ship Kumeric docking in Vancouver (1907)
- Japanese women working at a cannery in Steveston (1913)
- Graduation photograph from the Steveston Japanese School (1940)
- Gillnet fishing boats and hand-rowed skiffs from the early days of Japanese settlement
- The Great Northern Company cannery (1920s)
- Japanese Canadian children playing at a Japanese fisherman's home in Steveston shortly before the forced relocation (1942)
- Fishing boats belonging to Japanese fishermen gathered at Port Edward by the Royal Canadian Navy (1942)
- Patients and staff at the Japanese Fishermen's Charity Hospital in Steveston (pre-war)
- The school building of the Steveston Japanese School (pre-war)
- Japanese fishing boats in Tofino (pre-war)
- Japanese fishing boats in Ucluelet (pre-war)
- Damaged Japanese fishing boats moored by the Royal Canadian Navy (1942)
- Japanese homes and fishing boats in Nanaimo were seized by the federal government (1942)
- Japanese-owned cars seized by the federal government in Vancouver (1942)
- Buildings at the Angler internment camp (1942)
- A Buddhist temple under construction by Japanese Canadians in Slocan (1942)
- Japanese Canadians waiting for deportation to Japan at Slocan station (1946)