

Review of Changing Tides: Vanishing Voices of Nikkei Fishermen and Their Families by Jim Tanaka, Kotaro Hayashi, Fumio Kanno, and Henry Tanaka (Harbour Publishing, 2017)

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1. Summary of the Preface

The Preface explains that the Nikkei Fishermen's Reunion Project began in 2001 as an effort by descendants of Japanese Canadian fishermen to honour the immigrant generation who left impoverished villages in Japan to build better lives in Canada. The project set out to organize a tribute dinner, establish a commemorative monument in Steveston, and publish a comprehensive oral and photographic history of Japanese Canadian fishermen and their families. The dinner took place in 2001, the monument was unveiled in 2002, and the first volume of the history was published in 2007. The current book completes this historical record, emphasizing the importance of oral histories in deepening public understanding of Japanese Canadian heritage. According to the Preface, personal stories provide insight into lived experiences that complement the broader historical narrative.

The Preface describes the diverse origins of the stories included in the book. Some accounts were spoken in Japanese, recorded, and later translated; others were gathered through English interviews or written directly by individuals in either language. These stories span the period from before the Second World War to the present and reflect a wide range of emotions and experiences, including hardship, discrimination, perseverance, acceptance, and achievement. The editors acknowledge the possibility of unintentional errors but emphasize that each story is presented as remembered by the storyteller.

The editors explain that the book's structure was shaped by the nature of the collected stories. To provide context, the book is divided into six thematic sections: the pre-war era, the internment period, resettlement, boat builders, the post-war era, and the period following the Mifflin Plan. Each section includes a brief historical introduction and short explanatory notes on technical or linguistic matters. These contextual elements are intentionally concise to keep the focus on the personal narratives themselves.

The Preface also reflects on the legacy of the Issei and Nisei generations. Their endurance in the face of discriminatory laws and wartime internment is described as a difficult but essential part of Canadian history. Later generations benefited from the opportunities that became available after the war, and the editor's express gratitude for the sacrifices that made these opportunities possible. The Preface notes that some contributors have since passed away, but many more stories remain untold, and the editors hope that this book will encourage others to record their memories. They believe that descendants of Nikkei fishermen will gain a deeper appreciation of their heritage and feel pride in the accomplishments of earlier generations, even though most early immigrants never achieved the material success they once hoped for. The Preface concludes with an expression of lasting gratitude for the pioneering spirit and contributions of the early immigrants.

2. Contents

The contents of the book are composed of personal stories of fishermen and their families in the following categories:

1. Before the war
2. The internment
3. Resettlement
4. Boat builders
5. The post-war era
6. After the Mifflin Plan

Here are the summaries of some stories told by fishermen and their families.

2.1 Thomas Madokoro, “Good Old Days in Tofino,” interviewed on October 17 and November 21, 2012

Thomas Madokoro recounts his early life, beginning with his birth in Steveston in 1920 and his family’s move to Tofino when he was a toddler. He grew up attending both English and Japanese schools, generally enjoying friendships with local children except for occasional racial slurs from a few older girls. His strongest school memory was receiving corporal punishment almost daily, something he later understood as part of the strict discipline style of his English teacher. Despite this, he held no resentment toward her when they met again after the war. His childhood changed dramatically at age seven when his father died unexpectedly. His older brother Johnny left school to take over their father’s fishing boat, becoming the family’s main provider with guidance from their uncle Rinshiro. Their mother also shouldered heavy responsibilities, raising the younger children while worrying about Johnny’s safety and success at sea. In 1930, Thomas, his mother, and sister Kuniko moved to Vancouver to join siblings Yaeko and Michi, who were living there as “schoolboy” and “schoolgirl” workers. Their mother found work peeling shrimp and saved money by walking long distances to the cannery rather than paying for streetcar fare, a sacrifice that deeply impressed Thomas. Thomas attended Model School and the Fairview Japanese School but continued to struggle academically and with discipline. During the summers, he worked as a deckhand on the Skeena River with relatives, gaining early exposure to the fishing industry.

At sixteen, Thomas returned to Tofino and worked for the Japanese fishermen’s co-op, loading and icing fish. He also spent seasons salting salmon roe at Green Cove near Port Alberni. His life changed in 1939 when his uncle Rinshiro retired to Japan and sold him his 28-foot boat and co-op share. Thomas eagerly entered the fishing grounds alongside his brother. He describes the technical details of trolling at the time: handlines spaced by fathoms, heavy lead weights, and baiting techniques using pilchards caught at night with gill nets. When pilchards were unavailable, fishermen used spoons, some homemade and others purchased. Mechanical gurdies, introduced just before the war, eased the physical burden of hauling lines. Thomas fished year-round in the waters around Tofino, including Rafael Point, Lennard Island, Ahousat, and Hot Springs Cove. Relations with white fishermen were generally peaceful, partly because there were few of them and partly because they sold their catch to the Japanese co-op for better prices. However, discriminatory fisheries regulations restricted Japanese fishermen to certain areas and prohibited them from fishing in major rivers such as the Fraser and Skeena, while white

fishermen faced no such limits. Japanese trollers were also barred from having two people on board while trolling, a rule Thomas believed was intended to suppress their income. As a child, he had to hide in the cabin to avoid being seen by fisheries officers, illustrating the constant surveillance and unequal treatment Japanese fishermen faced.

Despite these constraints, fishing was prosperous in the late 1930s and early 1940s, especially with wartime demand for salmon. The Japanese trollers in Tofino formed their own co-op to sell directly to Seattle, securing higher prices. Thomas recalls being able to fill his small troller with hundreds of pounds of spring salmon on good days. In his second year, he took over Johnny's larger 35-foot boat when Johnny commissioned a new one. By 1941, co-op members were earning high incomes, but this period of stability ended abruptly with the bombing of Pearl Harbour. Anti-Japanese sentiment surged, fueled by media and political rhetoric. About a week after the attack, a storm led Thomas and others to check their boats, but armed Navy officers confronted them, suspecting escape attempts. Although the misunderstanding was resolved, the incident made clear that they were now under constant suspicion and surveillance.

The situation deteriorated quickly. When the order came for Japanese residents to leave Tofino, only one person came to the wharf to say goodbye; most townspeople were at a dance hall instead. This indifference deeply affected Thomas and confirmed that the community no longer welcomed them. The forced removal was especially painful for Issei and older Nisei families. They were allowed only one suitcase each, losing homes, boats, and livelihoods in an instant. Upon arrival in Vancouver, they were transported to Hastings Park, where they were housed in foul-smelling barns previously used for livestock. Men were separated from women and children, and families hung sheets for privacy. Despite the degrading conditions, they tried to make the space livable while awaiting government decisions. During this period, Thomas worried about how long they would be detained, whether they would be relocated, and whether he would ever fish again. News soon reached them that Tofino residents did not want them back, confirming the earlier cold farewell. When they learned they would be sent to internment camps in the B.C. interior, Thomas realized he would not return to fishing in 1942. With his boat and assets confiscated, he understood that rebuilding his life after the war would require starting from nothing. His nephew later documented the details of the family's evacuation in *Nikkei Images*, but Thomas's own account conveys the emotional weight of losing a community, a livelihood, and a sense of belonging in a matter of days.

2.2 Roy Tanaka, "The Important Role of Fishing Bosses," interviewed in 2010

Roy Tanaka reflects on his return in 2006 to the North Pacific Cannery at the mouth of the Skeena River, a place where he spent his childhood summers before the 1942 forced removal of Japanese Canadians. The visit, taken with his wife after sixty-five years away, stirred vivid memories of the salmon-fishing seasons of his youth. He recalls that his parents, Tomijiro and Kazue Tanaka, worked at the cannery each year from late May to August, as part of a predominantly Japanese and Indigenous gillnet fleet that included only a few Caucasian fishermen. Walking along the familiar boardwalk, he recognized the railroad track, the old road, and the scent of salt water and mud, which brought back the atmosphere of the 1930s. Yet the once-lively community had vanished; many buildings had rotted or burned, leaving only weathered pilings where homes once stood. What remained were about thirty preserved wooden structures—bunkhouses, a net loft, a general store, offices, and the cannery itself—now maintained as

a museum by the Port Edward Historical Society. Inside, he found ledgers listing Japanese fishermen and fishing bosses, along with artifacts and equipment from the era, reminders of a community that had been designated a National Historic Site in 1987.

The heart of Roy's recollection centres on his father, Tomijiro, who became a fishing boss in the early 1930s. As an experienced fisherman fluent in English and owner of a packer boat, he recruited young, single men from Mio village in Wakayama Prefecture who hoped to enter the fishing industry. These men, often called "boys," typically numbered between seven and ten under his supervision. His responsibilities included securing boats, licences, nets, and cash advances from the cannery, and he sometimes supplemented their funds from his own pocket because many arrived in Canada with little money. Acting as a subcontractor for both the North Pacific Cannery and the Gulf of Georgia Cannery in Steveston, he ensured a steady supply of salmon for the companies while relieving them of the burden of caring for the young fishermen. In return, the canneries provided him with financial support and services, and at the end of each season, he received a substantial commission based on the catches of the men he supervised. He also likely earned additional income by renting out his fishing licence to one of them at the same rate charged by the cannery.

Tomijiro's responsibilities extended beyond the salmon season. After the Skeena and Fraser River fisheries closed, he worked as a bookkeeper at Takejiro Ode's herring saltery camp on Galiano Island, a job he held until the camp burned down on December 7, 1941. He also arranged winter employment for his "boys" at the camp, helping them supplement their income. His relationship with them was familial and respectful; they called him *Tomi-ni*, meaning "big brother," rather than using formal honorifics. Weekends were times for camaraderie, when he socialized with them, discussed their catches, and offered advice on fishing grounds and tidal conditions. This mutually supportive relationship, however, came to an abrupt end with the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, which triggered the forced removal and internment of Japanese Canadians. Tomijiro was sent to Greenwood in 1942 and never returned to the coast, despite the cannery's desire to have him resume his role as a fishing boss. Instead, he remained in Greenwood, working in a sawmill until retirement, after which he moved to Vancouver and became a dedicated volunteer at Tonari Gumi, staying active in Oppenheimer Park for many years.

Roy also describes the demanding and often overlooked work of his mother, Kazue, who accompanied her husband to the cannery each summer to care for the young fishermen. Acting as a maternal figure and housekeeper, she managed physically exhausting, constant tasks. On weekends, when the men returned from fishing, she prepared Japanese meals for them, while her husband provided room and board in the bunkhouse and charged for meals, laundry, and other services. Her workload included hand-washing their dirty, smelly work clothes so they would be ready for the Sunday evening fishing openings, sewing and mending garments, and preparing boxed meals for their days at sea. She also ensured their grocery supplies were stocked. One of her most important duties was preparing a large wooden Japanese soaking bath each weekend, a ritual that helped maintain the men's loyalty to her husband. Senior fishermen often helped her heat the metal-bottomed tub, recognizing how demanding her weekends were. During the week, while the men were out fishing, she cleaned the bunkhouse, laundered and ironed bedding, and prepared their weekend clothes. She also worked on the cannery's production line, effectively labouring seven days a week throughout the salmon season.

Kazue's work was mirrored by many other women who travelled to the Skeena and Nass River canneries to support groups of ten to twenty young fishermen. These women, including Mrs. Fude Mizuyabu, Ume Shiyoji, Toku Nishi, Tsugi Matsuba, Kamenō Nakamura, and Tokiko Hamanishi, played essential roles in maintaining the health, morale, and productivity of the crews. Some, like Mrs. Shiyoji, also worked at the Ode herring camp during the winter season. Their contributions were vital to the functioning of the fishing-boss system, which depended on both the organizational leadership of the men and the domestic labour of the women.

Over time, many of the young fishermen under the bosses' supervision gained naturalization status and mastered the skills needed to become independent. They eventually acquired their own boats, nets, and licences, freeing them to fish for any cannery or sell to the highest bidder. After the War Measures Act was lifted in 1949, some Japanese Canadian fishermen returned to Steveston despite lingering hostility on the coast. Support from the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union helped them re-establish their careers. In the years that followed, canneries encouraged pre-war fishing bosses to recruit experienced fishermen—known as “highliners”—from Japanese Canadian communities across Canada, including the B.C. interior, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Montreal. This recruitment effort lasted from 1949 to 1951.

By the early 1980s, however, the role of fishing bosses had faded. As older fishermen retired and younger generations entered the industry with greater independence, the system that once supported new immigrants became obsolete. Roy notes that this decline coincided with the beginning of ineffective management of B.C.'s salmon resources, marking the end of an era in which fishing bosses played a crucial role in sustaining both the industry and the Japanese Canadian fishing community.

2.3 Fumio Kanno, “Faith in Fishing.” Interviewed on September 26 and November 7, 2013

Fumio “Frank” Kanno recounts a life shaped by migration, family separation, and a long career on the water. Born in 1937 in the small town of Tome in Miyagi Prefecture, he grew up in a rural community of about 5,000 people, enjoying school and especially fishing in the flooded rice fields. His father, a fisherman, lived in Canada for financial reasons while Frank, his mother, and his brother remained in Japan. The father supported them by sending money, food, and supplies, and Frank saw him only twice before emigrating—first in 1952, when his father had saved enough to return after the war, and again in 1954, when he came to bring the family to Canada. In April 1955, before finishing high school, Frank boarded the *Hikawa Maru* with his family and sailed to Vancouver. He felt fear and uncertainty about leaving his home and friends, but also anticipation at finally living together as a family. The first two years in Canada were spent living with his father's friend, Seikichi Tani, in Steveston. Frank initially knew no English and was frightened when people spoke to him, but he was determined to learn. He attended English classes four times a week near the old Eaton's store and took night classes at John Oliver High School. Later, he lived with a Caucasian family in exchange for chores, which helped him immerse himself in the language. By the time he returned north to the Skeena region, he felt confident enough to converse about daily life.

Frank's first fishing experience came in May 1955, when he accompanied his father to the Skeena area. His father fished for Nelson Brothers cannery in Port Edward, where about 80 to 100 Nikkei fishermen were tied up, and across the region, roughly 400 Nikkei fishermen prepared for the salmon season at canneries such as Sunnyside, North Pacific, Inverness, and Porcher Island. Before the season began,

canneries held opening parties with abundant liquor, often leading to fights that required the boss to restore order. Frank and his father first headed to the Nass River, where Frank served as a deckhand. His father suffered from severe eczema on his legs and feet, which made him unsteady, so Frank learned to set nets, pick fish, and chase them into the net. He avoided tangling the net in the propeller, something he attributed to careful attention to his father's teaching. He also vividly remembers the beauty of the coastline and mountains, as well as his first encounter with cod while jigging. The fish's appearance and smell initially repelled him, but once his father cooked it, he found it delicious. Weekends offered a break from the five-day fishing schedule, with meals, laundry, and bunkhouse accommodations arranged by the boss. The Japanese bath at the cannery was a social hub where fishermen compared catches and relaxed. Frank met many other fishermen during these weekends, including Tamejiro Nakanishi and Kotaro Hayashi. The season took them from northern areas down the central coast, through Johnstone Strait, and finally to Howe Sound, ending in late October.

In his second season, Frank worked on the packer *Harry N*, owned by Mr. Nakamura, while his brother Eiji fished with their father. After the 1956 season, his father died suddenly. Frank took over his father's boat, the *Lake Oyama*, and with the guidance of Seikichi Tani—whom he credits deeply—he learned to become a competent fisherman. In 1958, he rigged his boat for trolling and headed to the west coast of Vancouver Island. He knew almost nothing about trolling and felt overwhelmed, but experienced fisherman Toshio Murao accompanied him on opening day and taught him the basics. The next day, Frank attempted to fish alone but mistakenly clipped the pigs to the wrong lines, causing them to detach. Trying to retrieve them without hauling in the lines led to a tangled mess, forcing him to return to Ucluelet. Passing a Native village with his lines still out embarrassed him, but other Nikkei trollers helped him untangle the gear and offered advice. This early experience taught him humility and the importance of helping inexperienced fishermen, something he later practiced himself.

One of the most dramatic episodes of Frank's fishing life occurred in 1965 while returning from fall fishing in Haida Gwaii with Yoshikazu Maede, Daryl Gomez, and Frank Gomez. The weather forecast predicted manageable winds of 20 to 25 miles per hour, but midway across Hecate Strait, the southeast wind intensified to 40 to 50 miles per hour. All four boats deployed stabilizers, but Frank lost his starboard stabilizer, causing his boat to list dangerously. With waves pounding the vessel and the cabin window nearly touching the water, he had no radar or GPS to determine his position. Turning back was impossible. He considered deploying part of his net to stabilize the boat if he could not locate the Bonilla Island lighthouse before dark. Just before nightfall, he finally saw the lighthouse lights, a moment of immense relief. As he approached, the seas calmed due to the shelter of Banks Island, and the remainder of the journey to Port Edward felt routine. He later reflected that his boat had nearly capsized several times during the crossing.

Frank also describes the economic shifts in the fishing industry. The exceptional herring season of 1972 drove licence prices to \$180,000 by 1988, but by 2005 they had fallen to \$80,000 and later to \$40,000. Salmon prices fluctuated with the Japanese economy, and after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, demand for uncontaminated food caused troll-caught pink salmon prices to double. He emphasizes that sustainability requires cooperation among Native, sport, and commercial fishermen, along with stronger habitat protection. He criticizes federal policies for placing most conservation burdens on commercial fishermen without significantly improving salmon survival rates.

In retirement, Frank became active in the Miyagi Prefecture Friendly Association, serving first as vice-president and later as president after 2011. The association hosts annual New Year's gatherings and preserves the history of immigrants from the prefecture. For the 100th anniversary of the *Suian Maru* voyage in 2006, a memorial plaque was installed on Lulu Island, and a large celebration was held with guests from Japan. Through the association, Frank met many immigrants and descendants and learned more about their histories. Retirement also allowed him to enjoy gardening, karaoke, travel, and time with his wife. Reflecting on his career, he feels grateful for the help he received, the good years of fishing, and the health to enjoy retirement. He acknowledges the challenges facing today's fishermen—declining stocks, increased regulations, and uncertain openings—and considers himself fortunate to have fished when he did.

2.4 Itsuji Hamada, "Our Journey Home," interviewed in 2017, and Takao Tanaka on various days in 1996

Takao Tanaka and Itsuji Hamada describe their difficult but determined return to Steveston in 1949 after seven years of internment in Manitoba. When they learned through the *New Canadian* newspaper that restrictions on Japanese Canadians returning to the West Coast would be lifted on April 1, 1949, Takao left the farm in Lorette, Manitoba, and met Itsuji in Winnipeg to persuade him to return to fishing. Both men had been fishermen before the war, and although Itsuji hesitated, he agreed because he wanted to leave Manitoba. Their families had chosen internment in Manitoba in 1942 because they were promised fair wages, free housing, and the ability to stay together, but only the last promise was kept. They earned 25 cents an hour while Caucasian workers earned 35 to 50 cents an hour, and they lived in hastily built shacks in the middle of farm fields. Itsuji recalls the seven years as harsh and exhausting: the shacks had no electricity or running water, temperatures dropped to 30–50 degrees below zero, with strong prairie winds, and snow piled so deep that ice formed on the inside walls. Summers were extremely hot and humid, and mosquitoes were a constant presence. The physical and emotional toll on their families was severe.

Despite knowing they would face discrimination upon returning to the coast, the two men were determined to resume fishing for the 1949 salmon season. On their journey west, they stopped in Minto, an abandoned mining town that had housed other interned Japanese Canadians, and visited Unosuke Sakamoto, who also hoped to return to the coast. Their first stop on the coast was New Westminster, where they met Buck Suzuki, who helped them join the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union and obtain fishing licences. Buck warned them that re-establishing themselves in Steveston would be difficult but assured them of union support. When they arrived in Steveston, they encountered no problems at first, though they expected hostility. Since Itsuji had fished for the New England Cannery before the war, they approached that cannery first. The manager rejected them, saying no cannery would accept Japanese fishermen. They visited other canneries eastward and received similar refusals. Their final stop was J.H. Todd & Sons, where manager Bob Hepple welcomed them and agreed to provide a boat and a new linen net, even though they lacked the funds. Bob trusted they could repay the debt by season's end and supported them despite criticism from other cannery managers and fishermen, risking backlash for accepting Japanese Canadians back into the industry.

The day before the fishing season opened, while tied up at Scotch Pond near Garry Point, they were confronted by a gillnetter carrying about twenty Caucasian fishermen. Ten boarded their boat and

shouted racial slurs and threats, warning them not to fish and threatening sabotage if they tried. The men understood that the hostility was not only racial but also economic, as their return threatened the livelihoods of Caucasian and Native fishermen. Years later, Homer Stevens wrote that many fishermen wanted to keep Japanese Canadians out because they were competition. Despite the intimidation, Takao and Itsuji remained determined. After a sleepless night, they visited Buck Suzuki in Sunbury and reported the incident. Buck was furious and immediately involved the union. He and Homer Stevens confronted the hostile fishermen, informing them that Takao and Itsuji were union members and Canadian citizens with equal rights to fish. They warned of consequences if any harm came to the men or their gear. This decisive intervention allowed them to begin fishing during the second week of the season, though some threats continued.

Their success encouraged other Japanese Canadians to return. They contacted Unosuke Sakamoto and others, and word spread quickly. Cannery managers began recruiting Japanese fishermen from the B.C. interior, Alberta, and Ontario. As more Japanese Canadians returned, the union continued to support them, and open hostility gradually subsided. By late August 1949, about twenty-two Japanese fishermen were back on the Fraser River, and by the end of the season, twenty-eight were documented as having returned. The boat provided by Bob Hepple was a double-ender with a high-speed gas motor, a drum, and electric lights, likely a vessel confiscated from a Japanese fisherman in 1942. With this equipment and a new net, Takao and Itsuji earned about \$1,500 each in their first season, despite sockeye selling for only fifty cents apiece. Their success prompted Bob to encourage them to build new boats for the 1950 season, and with cannery assistance, they each built a new vessel costing \$8,500.

Reflecting on their return, Itsuji emphasized that he and Takao were the first Japanese Canadians to resume fishing in Steveston after the war, making their experience a crucial test for the community's re-entry into the industry. He expressed deep gratitude to Takao for persuading him to return and for his unwavering optimism, which helped him overcome doubts. He also credited Bob Hepple for his courage and fairness in supporting them, and Buck Suzuki and Homer Stevens for their decisive union advocacy, without which the process would have been far more dangerous and prolonged. Itsuji acknowledged that life in Canada had been good overall and that fishing had provided a comfortable living, but he felt lasting bitterness about the internment years, when the government seized property, uprooted families, and forced them into camps. After the war, Japanese Canadians were given the choice of moving east of the Rockies or being repatriated to Japan, but they were barred from returning to the coast until 1949. Takao echoed these sentiments, noting that Japanese-Canadian fishermen's lives had been shattered during internment, but through perseverance, they rebuilt their lives upon returning to the coast.

2.5 Isabel Kimoto and Mary Kimoto, "Restarting Our Life at Spring Cove," interviewed on August 28, 2012

Isabel Chizuko Kimoto and Mary Kimoto recount the upheaval, hardship, and rebuilding that shaped their families' postwar lives on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Isabel begins by describing her early childhood in Steveston and Tofino, where her family settled in Eik Bay. She attended both English and Japanese schools and helped her mother deliver tofu around town, often chased by local white children. Her father, a fisherman, suffered a stroke when she was thirteen, leaving him unable to work. After two years of care in Tofino, he returned to Japan, and soon Isabel, her mother, and younger siblings followed,

supported by remittances from her older brothers. She finished school in Japan and trained in kimono sewing. At nineteen, her family decided she should return to Canada for a better life. Her aunt escorted her back on the *Heian Maru*, and Isabel reunited with her brothers and married Bob Kimoto, a young fisherman in Tofino. Their first child, Ellen, was born in December 1941.

The bombing of Pearl Harbour abruptly transformed their lives. Within days, the RCMP confiscated phones, radios, firearms, and even cameras from Japanese households. Bob was ordered to move his boat to New Westminster under naval escort, as authorities feared Japanese fishermen might act as spies. Community reactions in Tofino were mixed; some families were kind, while others expressed prejudice. In March 1942, Isabel and her baby were sent to Hastings Park, where they were housed in horse barns with straw mattresses and no proper facilities for infants. She recalls lining up for food with pie plates and washing clothes at night due to overcrowding. Mothers struggled emotionally and physically, relying on *shimbo* and *gaman*—forms of perseverance—to endure the conditions. While Isabel and Ellen were confined at Hastings Park, Bob was sent to a road camp in Ontario. He later returned briefly, and the family chose to relocate to Bridge River, a self-supporting site near Lillooet, where they could live together again.

Life in Bridge River was modest but more bearable. The community was almost entirely Japanese, and residents could move around with limited restrictions. Initially, even shopping required permission, and the local store owner expressed hostility before realizing the newcomers were reliable customers. Bob worked on a tomato farm organized by Japanese families and helped form a cooperative to share fish from the nearby lake. Their son Ted was born there. When the war ended in 1945, Japanese Canadians were given only two choices: move east of the Rockies or be repatriated to Japan. Since they had no ties in Japan, the Kimotos moved to Hamilton, where Bob worked in a factory pouring hot iron. Their daughter Nina was born during this period.

In 1951, with the help of Bob's brother Tom, the family returned to the West Coast. Tom picked them up in Port Alberni and brought them to Spring Cove in his new boat. They lived in an old army first-aid hut with no electricity or running water, relying on a well that dried up in summer and hauling water from town when necessary. Despite the hardships, they were grateful to be back on the coast and had the support of Tom's family next door. Community reactions in Ucluelet varied: some residents welcomed them, while others were openly prejudiced. Indigenous residents were supportive and understanding of discrimination, drawing on their own experiences. The Kimoto children faced bullying and name-calling at school, reflecting the attitudes of some adults in the community.

Tom encouraged the families to integrate, and Isabel joined the PTA and volunteered widely, walking two kilometres into town at night with Mary, lantern in hand, along a plank walkway through the forest. The families contributed actively to community events. Around 1961, they created a Japanese float for the July 1st parade, complete with a handmade *sanbashi* bridge, children in kimonos, and thousands of paper sakura flowers. They also sold Japanese food during Ukee Days and later invited the taiko group Chibi Taiko, whose performance was warmly received. The Vancouver Opera's school program staged *Naomi's Road* in Ucluelet, and the community embraced the event.

Mary describes her own adjustment after arriving in Spring Cove in 1951. Coming from the city, she had to adapt to a rural life without utilities, relying on boats for transportation and freighters for provisions. She became deeply involved in community organizations, serving on the PTA, the Kennedy Lake Swim

Club, the Recreation Commission, the Consumer Co-operative Association, and the Ucluelet Japanese Community group. She also represented the Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association's Victoria chapter and later joined the Ucluelet and Area Historical Society. Her extensive volunteer work earned her the title of Citizen of the Year in 2011. The historical society sponsored *Naomi's Road* in 2007, turning it into a community-wide celebration with Joy Kogawa in attendance. Plans for a future Ucluelet museum are underway, supported by fundraising and a \$50,000 grant.

Life at Spring Cove remained challenging for many years. Without electricity or running water, household tasks were laborious. Water had to be carried from the well or from town, heated on a stove, and used sparingly. Food came from the sea—fish, seaweed, periwinkles, crabs, clams—and from canned goods delivered by freighters. Shopping required boat trips to Ucluelet or Port Alberni, and sometimes groceries spoiled before they reached home. Isabel often rowed into town with Mary when the men were away fishing, despite neither woman being able to swim.

One of Isabel's cherished memories is the *ofuro*, a cedar Japanese bath Bob built in the hut. Rainwater collected in barrels filled the tub, and a fire heated the water through a pipe system. Bathing followed a strict order—Bob first, then the children, then Isabel—and guests always went first. The bath became a weekly ritual and a source of comfort.

A major social highlight for the fishing community was the annual Fishermen's Ball, which began in the mid-1950s with about thirty fishermen and grew to over 260 attendees. Seafood platters, Japanese dishes, dancing lessons, and traditional dances like *tanko bushi* made it a beloved event. It ended after about twenty-five years due to declining participation, but commemorative plaques were later given to families who contributed.

Electricity finally reached Spring Cove in the late 1950s, followed by running water. These changes transformed daily life, allowing families to acquire freezers, radios, televisions, and other modern appliances. A gravel road to Ucluelet made travel easier, and the community gradually modernized.

Both Isabel and Mary later worked outside the home—Isabel at the Ucluelet Lodge for twenty years, and Mary at the Co-op butcher shop and later the Trans-Pacific fish plant. Although many Japanese families eventually left Spring Cove, both women remained, tied to the ocean and the fishing life. Their fondest memories include family celebrations, community gatherings, and the enduring sense of belonging they built through perseverance and contribution.

2.6 Kiyoo Goto, "Seven Decades of Memories." Interviewed on September 20, 2012

Kiyoo Goto reflects on a life of fishing that spans seven decades, beginning with his return to Sunbury in July 1950, after internment in St. Vital, near Winnipeg. He had been working as an apprentice auto-body worker but was eager to leave that job, and his father and uncle—who had already returned to the coast—encouraged him to come back because fishing was good. He began as a deckhand for his father, but after several arguments, his father helped him purchase his first boat from Masakazu Hori for \$800. It was a converted Columbia River sailboat with a worn 6¾-horsepower Easthope engine, so unreliable that he could sleep no more than two hours at a time because he had to bail water. The next year, he bought a better boat—a Vestad-built double-ender financed by Nelson Brothers due to his father's strong reputation. With this vessel, he could fish competitively and travel to Rivers Inlet for sockeye. He paid off the boat within five years and went on to own several others, enabling him to seine, gillnet, and

troll across the B.C. coast. His current boat, the *Seiren*, is restricted to gillnetting in the Fraser and south coast due to modern regulations.

Kiyoo describes memorable fishing grounds from the 1950s, especially the southwest end of Annacis Island, known among Japanese fishermen as the *junban* set and among white fishermen as “Jap Bar.” Salmon crowded this area at slack tide, and if the net was set correctly, the fish had nowhere to escape. The set required careful timing and coordination among nine boats working in rotation. Fishermen had to swing the net inside the can buoy, follow the Annacis shoreline, and avoid snagging the end of the net on the *hotokesama*—a submerged “dead man” snag near Don Island. Tide timing, wind direction, and rainfall all influenced success. In those days, Sunbury fishermen worked hard because their wives could see them from the dyke, while fishermen from Queensborough—out of sight—were less pressured to stay productive. Today, he notes, the area is controlled by younger white fishermen who aggressively guard it; when he last fished there in 2007, he was cut off and yelled at, prompting him to leave rather than escalate the confrontation.

Another Fraser River location he fished was the Cottonwood drift, called the *wando* by older Japanese fishermen. Three boats could set nets in this area, and unlike Annacis Island, it was not dominated by territorial groups. Before radar, deckhands would bang pots on shore during fog to signal when to pick up nets. Kiyoo also recalls the extraordinary period in the early 1950s when Canada allowed unlimited gillnet fishing at San Juan in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. This policy emerged from a dispute with the United States over the allocation of Fraser River salmon. The fisheries minister at the time, James Sinclair, permitted fishermen to use nets of any length, fish outside the usual boundaries, and fish daily. Kiyoo used a 300-fathom net, avoiding longer ones to reduce the risk of loading up on hake or dogfish. The Americans retaliated by putting gillnets on seiners, creating nets nearly a mile long. The unlimited fishing lasted about three years until the two governments reached an agreement.

The 1960s brought rapid technological change. Radar was one of the most important innovations. Ted Narukami was the first to install a primitive radar that required manual rotation and produced a “blip” when it detected land or vessels. It helped prevent freighters from running over nets in foggy San Juan. While wintering in Toronto, Kiyoo saw a Decca 101 radar at a boat show and ordered one, becoming the first B.C. gillnet or troll fisherman to have such equipment. It displayed land contours and distances, allowing him to travel safely in fog and at night. However, faulty installation caused electrical corrosion that nearly destroyed his propeller and shaft; he heard a strange *shi-shi* sound in *Clam Bay* before *discovering the damage*. Fortunately, he repaired it before the propeller fell off. Soon, many fishermen installed radar, and Furuno introduced a sharper green-screen model.

Other electronic tools transformed fishing: sounders, LORAN, direction finders, and autopilots. Early sounders used smelly, wet paper that could induce seasickness, but they revealed bottom contours and depth, helping fishermen locate shallows. Dots on the screen indicated fish, though they could not distinguish salmon from junk fish, leading some fishermen to mistakenly set nets on hake or dogfish. Kiyoo ignored the dots and used the sounder mainly for depth. Autopilot was like having an extra crew member, allowing fishermen to cook or rest while maintaining course, though some who fell asleep ran aground. Loran provided precise geographic positioning, invaluable for trollers who wanted to record productive spots. Direction finders helped locate lighthouses. The decade also saw the rise of fast boats, such as Les Ramsey’s plywood-hulled *Wasp*, which could reach fishing grounds quickly but

deteriorated within a few years. Combo boats capable of both gillnetting and trolling became popular as gillnet openings decreased. Trolling had unlimited days, and with electronic navigation, fishermen could record exact positions of successful catches. Kiyoo trolled in April on the South Bank near Ucluelet and at Long Beach, then gillnetted at Rivers Inlet or San Juan.

The 1970s brought the explosive rise of the herring roe fishery. In 1972, Goro Suzuki and his nephew Beany fished at Georgina Point and caught a fair amount, sparking interest. The next year, Kiyoo partnered with George Oikawa; Kiyoo bought a punt and George an outboard motor. Aluminum shops were overwhelmed with orders. Their first year at Nanoose Bay, they loaded the punt so heavily with herring and water that they had only inches of clearance and had to beach it at a Native village to bail water before reaching the packer. Competition was fierce: fishermen sometimes picked up others' nets or rammed boats to secure prime spawning grounds. When Japanese buyers later offered up to \$5,000 per ton in cash, tensions escalated further. Kiyoo believes that if quotas had been implemented earlier, much conflict could have been avoided.

In his final reflections, Kiyoo notes that he is still fishing as of 2012, though he sometimes wonders whether he should have sold his licence during the buyback program. Modern regulations restrict him to Area E, limiting him to the Fraser River, San Juan, and the Gulf of Georgia. Openings have been scarce for a decade, and he estimates spending about \$50,000 on moorage, maintenance, licences, and insurance over ten years while earning far less. Only in 2006 and 2010 did he have strong fishing days, but low prices and limited openings meant he barely covered expenses. As of 2012, there had been no openings at all. He is unsure how much longer he will continue, but still feels the thrill when salmon hit his net and remembers the days when his net was so full it nearly sank.

2.7 Kazuo Nakagawa, "Twelve Terrifying Days," interviewed on October 26, 2009

Kazuo Nakagawa recounts a life shaped by the fishing world of the Skeena River, the upheaval of wartime Canada, and a harrowing twelve-day forced voyage that remains one of the most traumatic episodes in Japanese-Canadian fishing history. Born in 1914 at the Dominion Cannery on the Skeena, he grew up in a community dominated by house boss—leaders responsible for supervising young fishermen and managing cannery operations. His father, known as Captain Nakagawa, oversaw the largest boss house on the river, and his mother worked tirelessly, cooking, doing laundry, and running a small store, with support from neighbours such as the Fujimoto family. Many of the bosses came from Shiga Prefecture, forming a tight-knit cultural network along the Skeena. Kazuo was sent to Japan as a young child but returned at fourteen, joining his father on a fishing boat and later working at Inverness Cannery, beginning in 1931. Fishing life followed a seasonal rhythm: halibut in spring, sockeye in summer, coho in fall, and herring at Mr. Ode's camp through December. Winters were spent in Vancouver's Powell Street district, where Kazuo worked in white households to learn English. Prince Rupert, known among Japanese fishermen as the "Halibut Capital," was home to large boats and prominent Japanese skippers, including Toyokichi Uyeno, Mr. Isokai, the Yamashitas, and Kazuo himself, with his boat *Kongo*. The Japanese community there included stores, restaurants, and hotels run by families like the Yamanakas, Shimizus, Kitagawas, Mochidas, and Sugas.

In 1940, Kazuo returned to Japan to marry Shizuyo Nakamura, and the couple came back to the Skeena in 1941 to build a home at Inverness Cannery. They were preparing for winter drydock when the Pacific War broke out. On December 14, 1941, the military ordered that all floating boats in Inverness be

confiscated. Six boats—including Kazuo's *Midori*—were to be evacuated to Seal Cove in Prince Rupert, while twenty others had already been seized. Expecting to return home in a few days, Kazuo boarded his boat with only a sweater, an overcoat, and ten dollars. The Navy refused to let the fishermen go ashore to gather food or clothing. He spent the night tied behind other boats, with no bedding or supplies except a stove. A fellow fisherman, Yamashita, shared a small amount of food, including a tobacco tin half-filled with rice grains that Kazuo stretched into congee over fourteen days. Under the guard of three minesweepers, twenty-six chained boats were pulled by a tugboat out of Prince Rupert on December 15. As they passed Inverness Slough, Kazuo saw the cannery and his home, where he had left his pregnant wife, and he was overwhelmed with grief and anger at the Canadian government's treatment of him as a second-generation Canadian. Marines threatened the men, and the young soldiers—unfamiliar with Japanese people or the ocean—treated them harshly.

The convoy soon entered the dangerous Grenville Channel, where winter tides, floating logs, and narrow passages made travel perilous. Three unpowered boats overturned and filled with water. The fishermen begged to pilot their own vessels but were refused. On December 17, the fleet reached Bella Bella, where the men were finally allowed to buy food. The Navy, worried about delays, ordered the fishermen to pilot their own boats from that point, though they were warned to stay close to the guard ship. Repairs to the waterlogged boats delayed departure, and the Navy abandoned its hope of reaching Vancouver by Christmas. The next leg—crossing Queen Charlotte Sound—was the most dangerous. Winter tides, driftwood, and high waves battered the small boats. One vessel, belonging to Masaru Maeda, struck driftwood, rose on it, and sank. Kazuo and the others steered with “sweaty hands,” praying as they navigated eleven hours of violent seas. Three unpowered boats rolled repeatedly behind the tug. Eventually, the Navy diverted to Alert Bay, where the fleet arrived on December 25. The Japanese fishermen were not allowed to disembark; they spent Christmas eating congee and hard bread and sleeping on the wooden floor while the sailors went ashore. Kazuo believed that only the fishermen's cooperation made it possible to navigate such treacherous waters.

The journey continued through Seymour Narrows, one of the most dangerous tidal channels on the coast. The fishermen advanced only when the tide slowed and retreated when it surged. Kazuo felt deep anger at the government's refusal to allow them even basic dignity, such as shopping for food, and at being treated as spies despite their cooperation. On December 28, the fleet finally reached Steveston, where the men were released. Kazuo stayed briefly with relatives on Powell Street, borrowed money, and boarded the supply ship *Kadena* for the return to Prince Rupert. He arrived home on December 31 after a fourteen-day ordeal during which he often feared he would die. His wife, who had been moved to Port Essington for the birth of their child, safely delivered their daughter on January 23, 1942.

The document then shifts to the next phase of his wartime experience: the uprooting of approximately six hundred Japanese residents from the Skeena region in March 1942. They were transported by train to Hastings Park, where they lived for thirty days in degrading conditions. Young men were then sent east; Kazuo was taken to Schreiber, Ontario, where he worked building highways in minus-30-degree weather. Later, he was moved to Glencoe to farm, where he and others sabotaged their work out of anger. After earning only two dollars a day, he attempted to return west, but Japanese Canadians were barred from the coast. In Winnipeg, he and others were refused service in Chinatown but were welcomed by a German hotel manager who recognized them as wartime allies. Kazuo eventually reached the Sandon

internment camp near Kaslo, where he reunited with his family after eight months. He later worked in Roseberry's logging camp, and his second daughter was born in New Denver.

The narrative continues into his forced repatriation to Japan in 1948, his difficult postwar life in rural Shiga and later Osaka, and his eventual retirement—but the uploaded document ends mid-story, cutting off the remainder of the “Weathering the Storm” section.

2.8 Toshio Murao, “Weathering the Storm,” interviewed between February 2012 and December 2013

Toshio Murao recounts the chaotic days immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbour and the forced removal of Japanese-Canadian fishermen from the West Coast, describing a journey marked by fear, danger, and profound injustice. Living in Steveston at the time, he received a call from the Kasho brothers—owners of a herring saltery—asking him and several other employees to move their packer boats to Nanaimo. The group travelled by ferry to Galiano Island, then by taxi and boat to Reid Island, where the saltery was located. Upon arrival, they found the site already under guard by Royal Canadian Navy soldiers, who ordered them to take the Kasho packer boats to Nanaimo. Toshio was assigned to the *Izumi VIII*, powered by a 125-horsepower diesel engine. After delivering the boats, he met other fishermen who had been ordered to go to Bamfield, where Nikkei-owned trolling and packer boats from Tofino and Ucluelet—including his own—that were being held. Toshio joined them and travelled to Port Alberni, where soldiers and community liaison Larry Saichiro Maekawa met them. Families in Ucluelet were terrified, having no information about the whereabouts of their husbands and sons. The fishermen were taken by Maekawa's boat through rough seas to Bamfield, where they found the bay filled with confiscated Japanese-Canadian boats under military guard.

The men were briefly allowed to reunite with their families in Ucluelet. They were transported in the hold of the *Santa Maria*, a large vessel whose hatch reeked of rotting vegetables and damp earth, making many seasick as bilge water splashed around them. After a short stay with their families, they were returned to Bamfield and ordered to depart the next morning at 5 a.m. But late that afternoon, the Navy abruptly changed the departure time to 5 p.m., forcing them to leave in darkness with no opportunity to buy food. Toshio had only a loaf of bread and a pot of water for the journey. The sudden change, combined with the winter conditions and the uncertainty of their fate, left the men angry and frightened, but they had no choice but to obey.

The fleet consisted of more than seventy small boats arranged in rows, led by two experienced trolling boats and flanked by two large packers, the *Loyal I* and *Loyal II*, with soldiers aboard. Two Navy patrol vessels escorted the flotilla from behind. As they left Bamfield, the boats were battered by high rolling waves, forcing them to travel slowly. The small wooden vessels swayed, rolled, and dipped like leaves on the water as they passed Cape Beale and Pachena Point Lighthouse. Near Carmanah Point, the cables securing a tugboat's log boom broke, scattering logs across the fleet's path. Several boats struck the logs, though none were seriously damaged. Toshio's boat hit a log hard as it descended into a wave trough, causing his heavy trolling weights to break free, jam against electrical wires, and send sparks flying across the deck. He checked for leaks in the bow, relieved to find none. He notes that every fisherman fears hitting a deadhead or semi-submerged log, which can puncture a hull or break caulking and sink a boat.

During this ordeal, the clutch on Yoshio Nitsui's engine failed. His brother Shigeru attempted a rescue in the darkness and heavy seas, a manoeuvre requiring extraordinary skill to avoid collision while getting close enough to throw a towline. The rope snapped hours later, forcing Shigeru to repeat the dangerous procedure. Eventually, the sea calmed as the fleet entered the Juan de Fuca Strait, sheltered by the Olympic Peninsula. Toshio could not understand why the Navy had forced them to depart at night in such conditions, believing the commander showed no regard for their safety. At dawn, the fleet approached Race Rocks and entered Esquimalt, the Royal Canadian Navy base, where they stopped briefly before continuing toward Steveston.

As the fleet passed Otter Bay on North Pender Island, Toshio observed one fisherman, Tsunetaro Oye, drifting erratically. Oye suddenly cut across the fleet and collided with the boat Yoshio Nitsui was towing. Although the boats were not badly damaged, Toshio suspected Oye was suffering from illness or poisoning. As the fleet entered Active Pass, they encountered a CPR tug towing a scow loaded with railcars directly across their path. To avoid collision, the fleet split into two groups, one on the Canadian side and one on the American side. After the tug passed, the fleet regrouped, but Oye's boat was missing. It was found the next day drifting on the American side, with Oye slumped over the wheel and his throat slashed. He was taken to a hospital in Anacortes but died a few days later, unable to speak and communicating only by writing.

By mid-afternoon, the fleet finally reached the Fraser River lighthouse. The tide was ebbing, making the final approach to Steveston difficult. One fisherman grounded his boat near Scotch Pond but refloated it at high tide. Toshio tied up his boat around 5 p.m., overwhelmed by exhaustion and hunger after twenty-four hours without food. When he returned home, his father had no idea where he had been for the past eight days. The next morning, the fishermen travelled up the Fraser to New Westminster, where their boats were impounded. Toshio was deeply emotional as he tied up his boat, the *Fragrance*, for the last time, knowing he would never fish with it again.

With his boat gone and no work available, Toshio joined the Nisei Mass Evacuation Group (NMEG), which organized secret meetings after curfew to protest the forced removal of Japanese-Canadian men to road camps. Caucasian friends helped them evade RCMP surveillance. Leaders such as Fujikazu Tanaka and Robert Okazaki attended meetings, and protests were held outside the home of Austin Taylor, chair of the B.C. Security Commission. Toshio joined a sit-down protest of about thirty-five men outside the federal Immigration Hall at Burrard and Hastings. Supporters like Mrs. Tsune Kariya brought rice balls to sustain them. After several days, the protesters were detained on the third floor of the Immigration Hall. When visitation was banned, and no officials came to negotiate, frustration erupted into a riot. Detainees broke through walls, removed window bars, and threw debris at guards. Soldiers fired shots that ricocheted off the building, and tear gas was deployed, filling the room with choking fumes. The men were denied meals for days as punishment. Finally, on May 16, 1942, about 130 detainees were loaded onto a military train and transported under guard to Petawawa Internment Camp No. 33, beginning yet another chapter of confinement.