

## Intergenerational Conflict and Cooperation: Japanese Canadian Experience

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**Abstract** In 1977 the Japanese Canadian community celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the arrival of the first immigrant to Canada. Looking back at the community's history, younger generations started questioning their parents and grandparents on their silence about wartime experiences of unjust uprooting and incarceration by Canada's government. The redress movement started with this awareness of their history. To begin with, leaders of the movement had to overcome resistance from older generations who feared backlash from government and the public. A series of kitchen-table meetings were effective means for helping older people open up and share their wartime experiences with younger generations. Some bilingual Nisei and postwar immigrants, including the author himself, had a role to play in this process by facilitating communication between Japanese speaking Issei and English speaking Sansei. Unified efforts through intergenerational co-operation were crucial for the successful campaign that prevented the government from taking advantage of division in the community. By making the redress for Japanese Canadians an issue of democratic principles, the redress campaign gained support from the wider public, including prominent individuals and organizations. The mainstream media also supported the Japanese Canadians, which contributed to bringing about the redress settlement in September 22, 1988.

**Keywords:** Issei, Nisei, Sansei, generations, immigration, racial discrimination, uprooting, incarceration, redress

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**INTRODUCTION** The experience of the Japanese immigrants and their descendants in Canada stretches for over a period of 130 years. The focuses of this paper are: firstly, to review the generational makeup of the Japanese Canadian community in the prewar period, namely, Issei or prewar immigrants, and their children, the Nisei; secondly, to look into the way both generations had to deal with an unprecedented challenge, which was the government's wartime measures of uprooting and incarceration of the entire community between 1942 and 1949, and thirdly, to analyze the redress movement. After the end of World War II, Sansei or the third generation eventually spearheaded the redress movement along with some Nisei community leaders, even though most Sansei were too young to have direct experience of the government's wartime measures. Redress has been regarded as a major achievement in the history of Human Rights in Canada. The question to be addressed is how these generations interacted in order to achieve redress in 1988. Joy Kogawa, a Nisei writer, says "We are such a small community, a minority among minorities", "But the song and the story of the struggle for justice that we have *jointly* created will endure through time" (Kogawa, 2000; emphasis is by the author).

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A standard work on the history of Japanese Canadians was written by Ken Adachi, a Nisei journalist, in 1976. He covered some interactions between Issei immigrants and the Canadian-born Nisei. His work is so far the best source of information about Nisei. The background of uprooting and incarceration is analyzed by Ann Gomer Sunahara in 1981, based on newly available government documents. Soon after the redress settlement of 1988 Roy Miki and Cassandra Kobayashi published in 1991 an excellent overview of the wartime experience of Japanese Canadians, the redress movement and its settlement. Miki's more recent work of 2004 includes detailed analysis of some aspects of the Japanese Canadian experiences, such as the Nisei mass evacuation group which resisted the government measures of uprooting, and negotiations with ministers in charge of redress. All previous publications touch various generations of the community, but their main interest is not the intergenerational issues and their reference to this aspect of the community is sporadic. The author would like to argue that intergenerational cooperation led to the successful settlement of redress for the injustices inflicted on Japanese Canadians during and after the World War II (Note 1).

**ISSEI PIONEERS** The history of Japanese Canadians will be briefly reviewed in order to see the formation of their community in Canada. Issei, the prewar immigrants, were mostly born in the Meiji era, from 1868 to 1912. The first known Japanese immigrant, Manzo Nagano, came to Canada in 1877. Others followed between 1880's and 1920's. If some of them are still alive, they are over 90 years old and this generation is rapidly disappearing. Typical early immigrants of the late 19th century were young males who came to work at lumber mills, salmon fishing or coal mining. Farming came a little later. By the turn of the century several thousand Japanese lived on the West Coast of British Columbia and Japantown was established in Vancouver. At that time the male/female ratio was unbalanced by about ten to one. Because of racism in Canada, Asian immigrants, even with citizenship, did not have the right to vote. At the turn of the century, Tomekichi Honma, a naturalized Issei, fought for franchise, but his lawsuit was unsuccessful.

In 1906/1907 the US restricted immigrants from Japan coming to the mainland. They came mostly through Hawaii and sought to proceed to California, resulting in an influx of several thousand Japanese to the west coast of Canada. This sudden influx alarmed the white population in British Columbia, resulting in an anti-Asian rally in Vancouver in September, 1907. Mobs gathered and assaulted the Chinatown and Japantown areas of the city (Kage, 2007). These anti-Asian Riots in Vancouver had a twofold impact on the future of the Japanese community. Firstly, in response to anti-Asian incidents, community activities were intensified. For example, through their representative organization, Japanese protested and requested compensation for the damages done by the riot mobs. Secondly, after the incidents, through negotiation with Canada, Japan agreed to voluntarily limit the number of male immigrant workers coming to Canada. However, at the time the immigration of sponsored women was not restricted, and thousands of young women were able to arrive as brides in 1910's and 1920's. Male immigrants settled down with their own families and the Japanese community became more stable.

By then, the Issei had formed numerous community organizations. Their representative organization was the Canadian Japanese Association, led by prominent Issei, such as successful businessmen. Issei controlled the community, and their families, in a typically authoritarian way and also worked closely with the Japanese Consulate by taking charge of some of consular businesses, such as a paper work needed for sponsoring family members from Japan. Fees for these services were an important source of income for the association.

The Issei were the product of Meiji Japan. They strongly valued *isshoukenmei* (hard work with one's heart and soul), *gaman* (self-restraint) and *ganbari* (perseverance). The next generation, Nisei, had a different outlook.

**NISEI, THE SECOND GENERATION** Most Nisei were born between 1910-1935 (peak year 1925-30) (Makabe, 1998). By 1931, the Census of Canada showed that the number of Canadian-born community members was only slightly less than those born in Japan - 47% vs. 53% (See below Table 1).

**Table 1** Census of Canada 1931

	BC	Canada
Canadian-born	10,728	11,081
Japan-born	11,477	12,261
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,205</b>	<b>23,342</b>

**Source:** Adachi, 1991

Issei parents tried to transmit traditional values and customs to their Nisei children. Many of them attended an extra-curricular Japanese language school and became bilingual, but generally speaking their fluency in Japanese was minimal as they were educated in the public school system, learning Canadian values and behavior. As one often observes in immigrant communities, cultural and language gaps were growing more rapidly than in their home country between immigrant parents and their children and the Japanese community in Canada was no exception.

Roy Ito, a Nisei in Hamilton, Ontario, observed a communication gap in Japanese Canadian homes in the prewar years between Issei parents and Nisei children “My father read Japanese language newspapers, he could not read English. I read English language newspapers, Japanese newspapers were too difficult in spite of my years at the Japanese language school”; “Meaningful conversation about politics, government, philosophy and religion was difficult between Issei parents and Nisei offspring. Perhaps it was impossible. The paucity of good conversation at home and around the dinner table probably contributed to the difficulties many Nisei had articulating ideas and thoughts” (Ito, 1994).

In the 1930’s generational differences became evident as the Nisei grew to adulthood. Many of them were concerned with questions of citizenship and civil rights rather than tradition and connections with Japan.

“Nisei, not very Japanese-like”. This is a comment made by one of characters - an uncle in “Obasan”. Responding to this, Aunt Emily, a Nisei and political activist says “Why should we be?” “We’re Canadian” (Kogawa , 1983) .

The striving for assimilation by the Nisei, however, was blocked by systemic racism toward Asians. Even though many Nikkei people were either naturalized or Canadian-born, they were denied voting rights and barred from entrance to professions such as engineering, law, medicine, education and public services. In the 1930’s the Nisei formed their own organization called Japanese Canadian Citizens League (JCCL), primarily for the purpose of fighting for the right to vote. They also started in 1938 the first newspaper in English, the “New Canadian, ” with the slogan “the Voices of the Second Generation”.

In 1936, with the encouragement of Angus McInnis, a progressive member of parliament from Vancouver, the Japanese Canadian Citizens League wanted to send a delegation to Ottawa to the Special Committee on Elections and Franchise Acts to lobby for franchise. Afraid of losing their authority, the Issei leaders resented this action.

Roger Obata (1915-2002) was a Nisei who belonged to this new group. He recalls when the Nisei delegation to Ottawa was organized they received a negative reaction from Issei leaders. He states “As expected, many Issei opposed the trip, even threatening violence to prevent the delegation from boarding the train to Ottawa. But some leaders managed to calm them down and we eventually won their reluctant support”. The presentation in Ottawa by the Nisei delegation did not accomplish their goal, but it was a lesson in political action and was a symbolic event that marked

the end of the Issei's exclusive control over Japanese Canadian organizations. Obata points out "Issei had been totally opposed to the idea of sending a delegation to Ottawa, claiming that it was too *namaiki* (bold and brash) to question the authority of the government (Obata, 2000). This example illustrates a generation gap between Issei and Nisei before the outbreak of World War II, the period prior to the uprooting and incarceration.

The deeper conflict of loyalty to Japan versus loyalty to Canada created a more serious division in the community, a division that was an embarrassment to many Nisei and proved harmful to their struggle for equal rights and recognition as loyal Canadian citizens.

Like many first generation immigrants in other communities, the hearts of Issei immigrants were torn between their homeland of Japan and their adopted country, Canada.

In 1937 the Sino-Japanese War started. Many Issei were enthusiastic about Japan's military campaign. There were, however, a few open-minded Issei. For example, Takaichi Umetsuki was the editor of a labor-oriented Japanese Newspaper, *the Nikkan Minshu* (Daily People). Nakayama (1984) wrote a criticism of some Nikkei people's attitude "People were so enthusiastic about the war between Japan and China without carefully studying and analyzing it. It is natural for us to be interested in the war... I hear that there are Nisei people who are unhappy about a big fuss made by the Issei people. However, we can not easily criticize Nisei as 'they know nothing about the Sino-Japanese relations'. The more they approach the event calmly with a blank sheet of paper, they could more objectively observe the issue. Different from the Issei, they may have developed a more critical mind". Because of this article, Umetsuki was severely reproached by the nationalistic leaders of Japantown (Tamura, 2003).

Umetsuki's commentary illustrates the information gap existing between two generations. Most Issei subscribed to and read the Japanese language newspapers, such as the *Tairiku Nippo*, which carried news from Japanese news services, whereas Nisei's source of information was English-language mainstream papers. At the time the Nisei were able to learn about the Nanjing Massacre of 1937 which was widely reported through the English media. But the Issei hardly heard about the atrocious aspects of the war as the Japanese-language media reported only the victorious aspect of the campaign by the Japanese military (*Tairiku Nippo*, 1937).

**COMMUNITY DESTROYED** The 1942 Uprooting and Incarceration were major turning points in the history of the community. Japanese navy planes attacked Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. Canada declared war on Japan mainly because simultaneously with Pearl Harbour, Japan attacked British territories including Hong Kong and Malaya. Soon after that, a number of government orders of restrictive security measures were introduced under the War Measures Act, which allowed the government of Canada to issue emergency orders. Even before the war broke out the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) fingerprinted and registered all Japanese Canadians over the age of 19.

All fishing boats owned by Japanese Canadians were impounded. In January 14, 1942, the male adults (18-45) of Japanese nationals were ordered to work on remote road camps. Then in February, all people of Japanese ancestry were regarded as enemy aliens, and were ordered to evacuate from the 160 km protected zone along the west coast. By the fall of that year, 21,000 Japanese Canadians had been moved from the protected zone to camps in ghost towns in the interior of BC, or to sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba.

The properties of Japanese Canadians including houses, businesses and other possessions were left behind under the care of a government agency called the Custodian of Enemy Property. These properties were eventually sold without the owner's consent.

**Photo 1** Japanese evacuees leaving Vancouver  
Vancouver, B.C., 1942.



Credit: Japanese Canadian National  
Museum, 94/69.4.029a-b

Since more than 90% of the Japanese Canadian population of 23,000 was living on the West Coast before the war, the community was totally destroyed. Through this process of uprooting and incarceration, Issei lost their power and influence as community leaders. They lost property, businesses and self-confidence. Japanese language schools were closed and the publication of Japanese language newspapers was prohibited. They had to rely on their teenage children who interpreted or wrote letters for their parents to deal with the BC Security Commission, the government agency in charge of the “evacuation” and the administration of camps.

Because Japanese language newspapers were prohibited, there was confusion and anxiety among Japanese-speaking Issei as rumors were rampant and information was lacking. The BC Security Commission decided to allow *the New Canadian* to continue publishing with an added Japanese language section as the government needed a means to communicate its notices and orders to the community.

How did Issei and Nisei react to the uprooting? For most Issei, defying an order of government was out of the question, even though these orders were unprecedented and outrageous. Their attitude can be summed up with the expression “*shikataganai*” – fatalistic resignation, as they dealt with hardship according to the traditional codes of *gaman* and *ganbari*. At that time *the New Canadian* advocated full cooperation with the government measures, while also reporting in detail the disappearing community and scattering of families.

Was compliance with the government policy a natural response for Nisei? One policy, an order to send adult males to road camps, was causing strong anxiety. Some Nisei formed the “Mass Evacuation Group,” which split away from the larger Nisei organization and resisted the order. In April, 1942, they sent a protest to the BC Security Commission about the road camps which were causing the break-up of families.

*“...we have said YES to all your previous orders, however unreasonable they might have seemed. But we are firm in saying NO to your last order which calls for breakup of our families”* (Letter to Austin C Taylor, April 15, 1942) (Adachi, 1991; Miki, 2004).

Those who evaded or resisted “evacuation” were arrested by the RCMP and detained in Vancouver. Then they were transferred to internment camps in Ontario where POWs were interned. The camp in Angler, Ontario, held over 700 Japanese Canadians. Sending away male adults for road construction did not work well and within the same year they were allowed to join their families who had already been sent to the camps.

## **CONTINUATION OF THE WARTIME RESTRICTIONS 1945–1949**

Another challenge for the community came when the government announced the dispersal and “repatriation” policy in 1944. The government rationale was that the concentration of the Japanese population in BC had been the cause of anti-Japanese sentiment among the wider population, therefore, Japanese Canadians were in fact coerced to disperse evenly throughout Canada and show their loyalty to Canada in this way. If they did not, they would be regarded as disloyal and deported when the war was over.

To implement this policy, a survey was conducted in the spring of 1945. All Japanese Canadians over the age of 16 had to “choose” either another uprooting to east of the Rocky Mountains, or “repatriation” as the government called it.

It is understandable that the policy of “dispersal” or “repatriation” caused great confusion in the community and even within families: the Issei had been demoralized with over 3 years confinement and expropriation. Many were unwilling to rebuild their lives in an unknown part of Canada. They wanted rather to go to Japan where they at least had familiarity and family connections. For many Nisei, however, Japan was an unknown foreign land, and some would rather go to Eastern Canada with their spirit of adventure. For teenage and younger Nisei, there was no choice but going along with their parents to the country foreign to them (Kage, 1998).

In the end the government policy of dispersal had a tremendous impact on the community. The prewar concentration of the Japanese Canadian population in BC ended and Ontario, with the urban center of Toronto, has become another major center equal to that of BC for the Japanese Canadian population.

For Japanese Canadians World War II did not end in September 1945 with Japan’s surrender, i.e., the wartime policies of the restriction of basic rights continued until March 31, 1949, almost 4 years after the end of the war. In particular, in 1946 3,964 Japanese Canadians were banished to war-torn Japan, aboard US ships chartered by the Canadian government. Since 2/3 of them were either Canada-born (51%) or naturalized (15%), this “repatriation” policy could better be called ‘expulsion of own citizens to a foreign country’.

Comparing with the situation in the US, the wartime treatment of Japanese Canadians was much harsher. In the US Japanese Americans were not expropriated and many of them were allowed to return to the West Coast in 1945, before the end of the war. In Canada, finally, in 1949, all restrictions were rescinded. They also received the franchise.

**REBUILDING THE COMMUNITY WITH SANSEI** When restrictions were finally lifted, some Japanese Canadians came back to the West Coast. In the 1950’s and 1960’s, the aged Issei and Nisei were busy to rebuild their lives in Canada and they hardly engaged in political activities, including the issue of wartime injustices.

Around that time the Sansei generations were growing up. Many were born between 1935 and 1965. Some Nisei parents advised them to forget about their Japanese heritage and assimilate to the mainstream society, hoping that they would excel there. Such advice was well taken. Comparing with the general population, they were better educated and many went into professions. The exceptionally high rate of interracial marriage among younger generations (mostly Sansei) is well-known. In the under 35 age group 94.5 % of Japanese Canadian females and 92.7 % of males marry partners of non-Japanese ethnicity (Kobayashi, 1995). Many do not understand Japanese except for a few expressions used within the family. Different from Issei and Nisei, most of them did not have direct experience of prewar racial discrimination as being persons of Japanese ancestry. Nevertheless, they were often wondering about their Japanese ancestry or identity.

In 1977 the Japanese Canadian community celebrated the centennial of the arrival of the first immigrant. A series of cultural and educational events were held across Canada, and Japanese Canadians were recovering confidence in their ancestry and cultural heritage. One good example was a photo exhibit of the history of Japanese Canadians called “A Dream of Riches” produced by a group of Nisei, Sansei and postwar-immigrants in Vancouver. The exhibit was soon developed into

a photo book. People involved with this project were aware of generation gaps they encountered around that time:

*“The distance between generations now assume the nature of a gulf as the Sansei, unable to speak Japanese, are cut off from the experience of the their grandparents. Since the evacuation our people have become more dispersed, more scattered, and our story more difficult to tell”* (Japanese Canadian Centennial Project; AAVV,1978).

It was also the time of the civil rights movement and social unrest in North America. Searching for their identity and looking back at the community’s history, younger generations, i.e., Sansei, started questioning their parent and grandparent generations on their silence about the wartime experience - the uprooting and incarceration by Canada’s government. Their queries can be summarized:

*Why didn’t you tell us what you went through during the war? You didn’t do anything wrong, but because you are either from Japan or you have parents from Japan, you are regarded as enemies and you were unjustly uprooted and confined for many years. Wasn’t it obvious racism or an outright violation of Human Rights and democratic principles?*

Coinciding with this resurgence of pride and self-awareness among Japanese Canadians in the late 1970’s, an important research was published by Sunahara, a historian. Using newly released government documents after a 30 year’s ban of publication had been lifted, Sunahara’s study proved that the uprooting of Japanese Canadians was a political, not a security measure. Military and police leaders had not viewed the Japanese Canadian community on the west coast as a threat to national security. In other words, they viewed the mass uprooting of Japanese Canadians as unnecessary. It was in fact a political measure to accommodate powerful pressures from racist politicians and individuals in BC (Sunahara, 1981).

Renewed interest in the community’s history among Japanese Canadians and these new research findings were the immediate background of the redress movement.

**REDRESS MOVEMENT** From about 1983 redress was intensely discussed among Japanese Canadians throughout the country, including Vancouver where the author was residing. Nationally, Arthur K. Miki, a Sansei from Winnipeg, was spearheading the redress movement as president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians in 1984. This national network made redress a priority issue (Miki, 2003). It was around the same time when Joy Kogawa published “Obasan,” which depicted the wartime experience of Japanese Canadians (Kogawa, 1983).

It was difficult to break the silence, or resignation, of “Shikatanai” for the Issei. Some Issei were afraid of a backlash from the government or mainstream community. Mrs. Haruko Kobayakawa, an Issei member of the Greater Vancouver JCCA Redress committee, explained very well about this Issei’s anxiety:

*“Some older Issei used to say that it would be hopeless to expect from this manipulative and untrustworthy government an apology or compensation. They said that they had been receiving a fair amount of old age pension, which made them independent from the mercy of their children for pocket money. Further, they said that by making a fuss they might lose pension benefits, then their life would become very tough”* (Kobayakawa, October 1991).

In the early 1980’s the author was on the Board of the Greater Vancouver JCCA, a local Japanese Canadian Association affiliated with the national network of the NAJC. When the issue of redress was brought up for the first time at a meeting in 1983, the author expressed his interest in pursuing the redress issue. Right after the meeting the author was warned by Takeo Arakawa, an

influential Issei Board member who made exactly the same point as Mrs. Kobayakawa mentioned regarding the reason for his opposition to redress.

It took various efforts to overcome this resistance against pursuing redress among community members:

1. To begin with, a series of small meetings were held mostly at private homes. The author attended a number of meetings accompanying the Sansei leaders as an interpreter to facilitate communication between Japanese speaking Issei elders and English speaking Sansei. Through these small and informal meetings he saw that the silence was breaking. For those who had kept silent, it was much easier to speak and share with others their wartime experiences in an informal setting around a kitchen table. Suppressed memories were revived and the healing process began (Miki, 2004; Kage, 1990).
2. A number of larger community meetings were also held with well-known community leaders such as David Suzuki, environmentalist, and Thomas Kunito Shoyama (1916-2006), who was once the editor of the *New Canadian*, and later became deputy finance minister with the Trudeau government.  
During this period of struggle, there were very few Nikkei who had full language capacity in both Japanese and English. To bring the different generations together, the role of bilingual community members as interpreters and translators was critical (Kage, 1991). In this regard the author was privileged to work with Gordon Kadota, a Nisei businessman and community leader, and Takeo Yamashiro, a postwar immigrant who worked for many years as a community service worker for Issei and Nisei seniors.
3. At a later stage of the movement, representatives from other communities such as the First Nations, Chinese Canadians and Jewish Canadians, were invited to support redress because they had also experienced discrimination and recognized that redress for Japanese Canadians would have tremendous implications for strengthening the principles of democracy and human rights. In addition to ethnic groups, support was solicited from important organizations such as churches, labor unions and civil rights societies. In April 1988, Japanese Canadians with hundreds of seniors rallied at the Parliament Hill in Ottawa.
4. At first skeptical, the media came around to support Japanese Canadians. Some reporters followed the progress of the movement closely and were very supportive throughout the process (Kage, 1990).

The redress movement had various aspects. Community leaders had to negotiate with the government about the contents of the redress, such as the acknowledgement of injustices done, both individual and community compensation, and measures to prevent such violation of rights in future (AAVV, 1984; Miki, 2004). They also had to negotiate the procedures and language or concept to be used in the negotiation. The leaders had to communicate with grass roots people to keep them updated. They lobbied both the government and the opposition parties. Fundraising was necessary. Until the last phase of the movement in 1988 the government offered only symbolic group redress. At the early stage of the movement the community was divided. George Imai, a Nisei from Toronto, was the chairman of the National Redress Committee. He pursued group redress without approval of the national Board. Imai claimed that he represented surviving Issei. He argued that they did not want individual redress and wanted only apology and symbolic community redress. The government tried to take advantage of community divisions with divide and rule tactics. Imai could not prove that he had substantial support from the Issei group. Eventually the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) proved itself as the leader. In other words, the leadership of the redress movement was based on those Nisei and Sansei whose focal points were on citizenship and democratic rights. At the same time, they sincerely acted to acknowledge and honour the feelings of the Issei, who mostly did not have the capacity for a prolonged fight with the government (Makabe, 1998).

The NAJJC’s position was to ask for both individual and community redress. The reason for this was that the government wartime measures had violated individual human rights, therefore, individuals should be compensated. Further, the government measures destroyed the community, therefore, community should also be compensated.

During the redress campaign it was generally believed that younger people were more interested in individual compensation because of their awareness in human rights, whereas older people were more community oriented and interested more in community compensation.

In 1986 a community survey was conducted and the results were unexpected: It turned out that support for individual compensation by Issei was 72.3%, by Nisei support was 81.9% and by Sansei 66.7%. The position of only community compensation was supported by Issei 27.6%, by Nisei 16.5% and by Sansei 30.3%. In short, unexpectedly, individual compensation was supported by Issei more than by Sansei. The data are from the Survey in the Vancouver area. Nationally the result was similar.

**Table 2** Community Survey 1986 (Note 2)

	Forms of compensation			
	a	b	c	a + c
<b>Group 1.</b> Those who were born before 1949 and answered in Japanese (mostly Issei)	43.4%	27.6%	28.9%	72.3%
<b>Group 2.</b> Those who were born before 1949 and answered in English (mostly Nisei)	49.5%	16.5%	32.4%	81.9%
<b>Group 3.</b> Those who were born after 1949 (mostly Sansei)	27.3%	30.3%	39.4%	66.7%

**Source:** Greater Vancouver JCCA Bulletin, pp.26f., November 1986.

How can one interpret this result? By this time, after an intense campaign, Issei and Nisei became aware of the injustices they actually suffered. They felt that they could legitimately claim compensation for themselves individually (it should be noted that the Issei suffered the most from the wartime injustices, but were hesitant to express publicly their indignation and their wish to be individually redressed).

On the other hand, many belonging to post-war generations (e.g., Sansei) did not personally experience the wartime measures. Therefore their interest was more in rebuilding the community.

## REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE REDRESS MOVEMENT – THREE INDIVIDUALS

Each generation had reasons for participating in the redress movement. From the following three examples it is clear that the unjust treatment by the government experienced by either themselves or their immediate family members motivated them to participate in the movement of seeking justice.

### a) Haruko Kobayakawa – Her husband lost everything.

The author became acquainted with some redress supporters. One of them was Haruko Kobayakawa (1902-1989), an Issei who was good at tanka poetry and writing in Japanese. The author sat together with her in the Redress Committee in Vancouver for several years. When other seniors of her generation were withdrawing from public affairs, Mrs. Kobayakawa became an active member of the redress movement in Vancouver.

She came to Canada in 1921 as a bride and became the first Japanese language teacher in the community where she and her husband lived. While visiting her in-laws in Japan in 1941, the war broke out and she was unfortunately stranded there, consequently separated from her Nisei husband

for 8 years. After her husband passed away, she moved to the Vancouver area in 1970. Like other Japanese Canadians, her husband had lost their home, his dairy farm and other properties on Vancouver Island, which were all sold without their consent.

In her interview in 1987, Mrs. Kobayakawa commented:

*“When I moved to Vancouver, I decided to get involved here too and one way was to serve on the JCCA Redress Committee. Many young people were working on our behalf with Redress so even though I am old I couldn’t sit back and let them do everything. The immigrants are also helping with Redress and I felt that as an Issei I should be involved too. I can’t help much but I hope I can give encouragement by my presence”.*

She believed in her community’s dream of justice and she shared her late husband’s reaction to the uprooting: “He always used to say he was a native-born Canadian and had looked upon Canada as his homeland... He often talked about that and what a terrible injustice it was.” (Miyata & Shikaze, 1987; Miki & Kobayashi, 1991)

### **b) Irene Tsuyuki, Nisei and her father**

Another supporter of redress in Vancouver was Irene Tsuyuki, a Nisei born in Vancouver in 1925. Her father came to Canada as a teenager and spent some 30 years building up his businesses and accumulating property. He was a naturalized Canadian who owned a prosperous shoe store in Japantown, a hotel and their home before the war. When uprooting took place in 1942, he was ill with a heart problem and was sent to a camp 200 km away called Tashme in an ambulance.

All his properties were confiscated and disposed of without his consent, with only a small portion of the actual value sent to the owner. The misfortune of Irene’s father, over and above the loss of his property and his livelihood, was that “he was robbed of his pride, and his faith in Canada”. She recalls: “It was when he got a cheque from the Custodian of Enemy Property that he really felt betrayed by his country. He said the cheque was an outrage. So, he’d been deprived of his rights and his assets...”. Her father’s experience of unjust treatment by Canada’s government was certainly the reason for her to join the redress movement: after the redress settlement came, she expressed regret that her parents could not share her delight on that occasion as they had passed away many years before (Kage, 1998).

### **c) Maryka Omatsu, a Sansei – unhealed trauma of her parent motivated her to work on redress.**

Why did Sansei people work for redress? There is an illustrative example. Soon after the redress settlement, Maryka Omatsu (1949), a Japanese Canadian lawyer in Toronto, spoke about her father: When he died several years before the redress settlement, she found in his wallet three Identification certificates. Along with his senior’s card and citizenship certificate there was an alien registration card issued for Japanese Canadians shortly before the outbreak of the Asia Pacific War. He carried that ID with him for over 30 years until his death at 82 years of age. After his death Maryka learned that even though he had not told anyone, during the war he was arrested and put in jail because he was not carrying the proper ID and had entered a restricted area. Perhaps because of this experience, even long after the restriction was lifted, he must have been afraid that he might encounter the same shameful experience if he did not carry the ID with him. Maryka, the daughter, said that her father’s experience and attitude motivated her to seek redress for Japanese Canadians. She also mentioned that through the redress movement a healing came to the community process with the awareness that Japanese Canadians did not do anything wrong, but the government acted wrongly. It was a process which she compared to rape victims’ experience of overcoming self-blame (Nishihata, 1988; Omatsu, 1992).

## INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

**Photo 2** Redress Celebration. Vancouver, B.C. September 1988.  
Caption: A few days after the redress settlement the Redress Committee members consisting of different generations held a celebration party at Roy Miki's home in Vancouver. (Left to right) Wayland Miki (Yonsei), Marylyn Seki (Sansei), Mary Seki (Nisei), Masue Tagashira (Issei), Lilian Kadota (Nisei).



Credit: Tatsuo Kage

**Photo 3** Redress Celebration and Orientation. Vernon, B.C. April 22, 1989.  
Caption: The redress celebration and orientation meetings were held all over Canada. Left to right: Art Miki (President of the NAJC), Ed Ouchi (Community leader, a founder of the New Canadian in 1938), Tatsuo Kage (Western Canada Regional Coordinator, Redress Implementation Program of the NAJC).



Credit: Tatsuo Kage

**CONCLUSIONS** On September 22, 1988, 20 years ago, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced the Redress Settlement with an acknowledgement of the injustices done during and after World War II, an apology, \$ 21,000 compensation for surviving individuals and \$12 million dollars for the community. In addition, the settlement includes the establishment of the Race Relations Foundation with \$ 24 million funds, pardons for those convicted under the War Measures Act, as well as the recovery of Canadian citizenship to those who had lost it through “repatriation” (Miki, 2003). Even though the settlement was primarily due to the efforts of Japanese Canadians, by

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making it an issue of democratic principles, the campaign went beyond the community to gain support from the wider public, including prominent individuals, organizations and the major media. Developments in the United States also influenced the political climate as President Ronald Reagan had approved Redress for Japanese Americans one month earlier, in August 1988.

The redress settlement was the catalysis of healing in the community. As an example, the author had a memorable conversation with a Nisei physician: Soon after the redress settlement a series of celebrative events took place across Canada. Attending a celebration dinner, the author sat next to Dr. Wesley Fujiwara, an expert in treating meningitis. He had been a strong supporter of redress in Toronto. He told the author that as a Japanese Canadian he used to feel that he was a second-class citizen. He added that since the recent redress settlement with the government's acknowledgement of injustices done to Japanese Canadians, "Now I am able to proudly say I am a Canadian".

Looking back, intergenerational conflicts have existed throughout history, but tend to be more pronounced in recent immigrant/minority communities where cultural and linguistic difference and resulting communication gaps develop between the generations.

On the other hand, unified efforts through co-operation among all generations were crucial for the success of the redress campaign. The author feels fortunate that along with a few other bilingual persons, he was able to assist in facilitating communication and understanding among diverse community members to achieve this victory for justice, affecting not only Japanese Canadians, but also the society at large.

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## NOTES

1. Terms to be used in this article are, Issei, Nisei and Sansei, first, second and third generations. Other key terms are "Japanese Canadians" and "Nikkei." During the redress campaign the term "Japanese Canadians" acquired a new, inclusive meaning. It now means not only Canadian citizens of Japanese ancestry, such as Nisei and Sansei, but it also includes residents with Japanese nationality. During the redress campaign Japanese Canadians coined this term because the government uprooted both groups on racial grounds, regardless of their citizenship, therefore the term Japanese Canadians was used for the purpose of all to be redressed regardless of nationality. It should also be noted that an inclusive term: "Nikkei", i.e. people of Japanese ancestry living outside Japan, is used more frequently these days, as it more appropriately describes the members of the community, consisting of not only Issei, Nisei, Sansei but also Yonsei (4<sup>th</sup> generation), Gosei (5<sup>th</sup> generation), and Shin Issei, which means new Issei or postwar immigrants. This term is also useful when Japanese Canadians consider their affinity and solidarity with Japanese Americans, Japanese Brazilians, etc.
2. In the Greater Vancouver area, 447 responses were received. The question asked was "What form of compensation they would support?"
  - (a) individual compensation
  - (b) community compensation
  - (c) combination of individual and community compensation.

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