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**The Re-creation of Vancouver's Japanese Community, 1945–2008**

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Article abstract

In 1942, the approximately 8,500 Japanese Canadian residents of Vancouver, like all other Japanese Canadians, were required to leave the coast. With limited exceptions, they could not return until 1 April 1949. Early returnees began to recreate a community; later, Japanese Canadians too young to remember the war and a handful of new immigrants reclaimed pride in the Japanese Canadian heritage. The re-created community is no longer an identifiable physical place; Japanese Canadians are scattered throughout Vancouver and its suburbs. The history of the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (JCCA) shows how, with difficulty and with some conflict over the advisability of retaining a Japanese identity, Japanese Canadians re-created a society whose members simultaneously take pride in their Japanese Canadian heritage and fully participate in the larger community of greater Vancouver.

# The Re-creation of Vancouver's Japanese Community, 1945–2008

PATRICIA E. ROY

## *Abstract*

*In 1942, the approximately 8,500 Japanese Canadian residents of Vancouver, like all other Japanese Canadians, were required to leave the coast. With limited exceptions, they could not return until 1 April 1949. Early returnees began to recreate a community; later, Japanese Canadians too young to remember the war and a handful of new immigrants reclaimed pride in the Japanese Canadian heritage. The re-created community is no longer an identifiable physical place; Japanese Canadians are scattered throughout Vancouver and its suburbs. The history of the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (JCCA) shows how, with difficulty and with some conflict over the advisability of retaining a Japanese identity, Japanese Canadians re-created a society whose members simultaneously take pride in their Japanese Canadian heritage and fully participate in the larger community of greater Vancouver.*

## *Résumé*

*En 1942, les quelque 8 500 résidents canado-japonais de Vancouver, comme tous les autres Canadiens japonais, ont été forcés de quitter la côte. Sauf exception, ils n'ont pas eu le droit d'y retourner avant le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 1949. Les premiers migrants de retour ont recréé une collectivité; plus tard, les Canadiens japonais trop jeunes pour se souvenir de la guerre et une poignée de nouveaux immigrants ont retrouvé la fierté de leurs origines canado-japonaises. La collectivité reconstituée n'est plus un lieu reconnaissable; les Canadiens japonais sont dispersés à Vancouver et dans les banlieues. L'histoire de la Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (JCCA) révèle la façon dont les Canadiens japonais ont su reconstruire une société dont les membres ont pu se montrer fiers de leurs origines tout en s'intégrant pleinement à la collectivité de la région métropolitaine de Vancouver, malgré les difficultés inhérentes au processus et les conflits concernant la préservation d'une identité clairement japonaise.*

## The Return to the Coast, 1945–1960s

The stores, boarding houses, and cultural institutions of Powell Street were the heart of Vancouver's pre-war Japanese community and regularly drew those Japanese who lived elsewhere in the city as they shopped for Japanese goods, worshipped at the Buddhist temple or one of the Christian churches that catered to them, attended social and educational activities at the Japanese Language School, or watched the Asahi play baseball at the Powell Street Grounds (Oppenheimer Park). Apart from the few business and professional families who resided in up-scale areas such as Kerrisdale and the entrepreneurs who lived adjacent to their grocery, dry cleaning, and dressmaking shops that existed throughout the city, the Japanese who did not live in the Powell Street area resided in several small concentrated pockets. About 200 families settled around the mills of False Creek and in the nearby Kitsilano district that had a small commercial area with "four Japanese stores, a barber shop, a tofu-ya, houses and several rooming houses."<sup>1</sup> Another small settlement developed around the sawmills at Marpole on the Fraser River. With the paranoia stimulated by Japan's rapid military advances early in 1942, tension at the coast was so great that the Canadian government — fearful of riots — ordered all Japanese, no matter their age, gender, or nationality to move at least 100 miles inland. By October 1942, "Little Tokyo" or "Japantown," the area around Powell Street, was no more and apart from a handful who were married to Caucasians or were too ill to be moved, there were no Japanese left in Vancouver. The Custodian of Enemy Property sold houses and shops, usually for a fraction of their value.<sup>2</sup>

Early in 1945, one of the about 60 *Nisei* (the Canadian-born children of Japanese immigrants) who came to Vancouver to attend the Army's Japanese Language School visited Powell Street during an off duty time. He reported that it had "certainly changed! Half the stores are vacant and the other half are occupied by the Chinese people."<sup>3</sup> Despite a great influx of munitions and shipyard workers during the war and continued growth afterwards, Powell Street remained largely empty.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from members of the Canadian armed forces and veterans, the only Japanese in Vancouver between 1945 and April 1949 were those with special permission, such as a few students and a young man who came with his parents

1 Frank Moritsugu, "Our Vision of Home," in *Where the Heart Is*, eds. Randy Enomoto, Tatsuo Kage, and K. Victor Ujimoto (Vancouver: NRC Publishing, 1993), 9.

2 For background, see Patricia E. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941–1967* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), chap. 1.

3 Quoted in Jorgen Dahlie, "Some Aspects of the Education of Minorities," *Rikka* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 34.

4 Even in 1946, "vacant" appeared beside many Powell Street area addresses in the city directory for that year.

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for his ordination in the United Church. Even Japanese Canadian children needed permission to accompany school sports teams to tournaments in Vancouver. A Kelowna boy got a “funny feeling” from visiting his former hometown. Other visitors returned to their inland homes “with the feeling they just hate the place and just don’t want to see or hear about the place.”<sup>5</sup> George Tanaka told the *Vancouver Sun* in 1948 that many Japanese Canadians had found that Ontario, where many of them had resettled in response to the federal government’s dispersal policy, was giving Japanese Canadians “their first opportunity to show they can become real Canadians.” He doubted that they would enjoy the same opportunities in British Columbia, a view confirmed by the *Vancouver Sun*’s editorial claim that British Columbia was only willing to take a quota and hoped that they would not congregate as they had in the past.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Seiji Homma, who had settled in Greenwood, admitted that young people might return to the coast for better educational and employment opportunities, but few Japanese Canadians would likely leave the interior where they had jobs, farms and businesses and where people were friendlier than on the coast. “Why should we risk our futures again by going back?” Homma asked. Explaining that few had the capital necessary to re-establish businesses or to buy boats or farms, he said, “We never talk about it any more. We were very bitter at the time but what’s the use of reviving all that now.”<sup>7</sup>

Since the Custodian of Enemy Property had sold their homes and business premises during the war, little remained for former residents.<sup>8</sup> Such “a small trickle” returned when barriers were lifted that the Vancouver press complained it could not find any to interview.<sup>9</sup> Six months after the ban was lifted, *The New Canadian*, the Japanese Canadian weekly then published in Toronto, reported that about half the *Nisei* in Vancouver were students, 24 of whom were at the University of British Columbia, three women were in nurses’ training at St. Paul’s Hospital, and others were attending a variety of sewing, technical, and

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5 *Vancouver Sun*, (hereafter *Sun*) (17 December 1948); *Kelowna Courier* (20 December 1948); *Kamloops Sentinel* (7 January 1948). For details, see Patricia E. Roy, “Lessons in Citizenship, 1945–1949: The Delayed Return of the Japanese to Canada’s Pacific Coast,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 93 (Spring 2002): 69–80.

6 *Sun* (6 and 7 April 1948). Tanaka expressed similar sentiments in March 1949 when he was *en route* to Victoria to lobby the government to remove all restrictions on Japanese Canadians and to enfranchise them (*Sun* 3 March 1949). His claim that the Japanese would not return to the coast may have been inspired by his desire to defuse opposition to his request for the granting of full civil rights to Japanese Canadians.

7 *Nanaimo Free Press* (26 February 1949).

8 A brief overview of property sales may be found in Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1981), 101–11.

9 Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Department of Labour (hereafter DLab), v. 655, C.V. Booth to A.H. Brown, 14 April 1949. By August, fewer than 150 Japanese lived in the city; LAC, DLab, v. 657, H.T. Pammett to Arthur MacNamara, 3 August 1949.

high schools.<sup>10</sup> The six Japanese Canadians who attended the University in 1947–1948 found no prejudice among the staff — many of whom were members of the Civil Liberties Union — but other students were not always as welcoming.<sup>11</sup> Other early returnees worked mainly in the city’s sawmills or were fishermen at Steveston.<sup>12</sup> At a meeting to discuss forming a branch of the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (JCCA), some of the twenty present boasted of “doing their utmost to prove that they are good citizens and thereby paving the way for other possible returnees.”<sup>13</sup>

Over the next few years, a few more returned mainly from the interior of British Columbia and Alberta. By early 1951 about 1,000 Japanese resided in greater Vancouver (including Steveston); a year later, the number had doubled. The Powell Street area still resembled “the abandoned roads of a ghost town” or a slum, “as dead as the proverbial door nail.”<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, despite that dismal picture and bitter memories of the wartime years, a few *Issei* (first generation immigrants) with limited English language skills or family members tended, “like the salmon going back to the river,” to return to Powell Street.<sup>15</sup> These elderly people had nostalgic memories, an appreciation of the coast’s temperate climate, and a desire to live in Japanese. By May 1950, other returnees had re-established a grocery store, a real estate office, a trading company and a rooming house.<sup>16</sup> A few more stores and restaurants slowly appeared; so too did families; by 1951–1952, 40 Japanese Canadian children attended Strathcona, the local public school. The child of one such family recalled how her mother “took comfort knowing the Japanese Language School and the Buddhist Church were part of the neighbourhood.” Moreover, while the father was away fishing, the mother could work at the nearby Canadian Fishing Company packing plant and send her pre-school child to the day care operated by the Franciscan Sisters of the

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10 *The New Canadian* (15 October 1949).

11 Susumu Tabata, “A Fisherman/Carpenter’s Turning Point,” in *Changing Japanese Identities in Multicultural Canada*, eds. Joseph F. Kess, Hiroko Noro, Midge M. Ayukawa, and Helen Lansdowne (Victoria: Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, 2003), 196.

12 *The New Canadian* (1 February 1950).

13 *Ibid.* (2 November 1949). See also Rolf Knight, *Along the no. 20 Line: Reminiscences of the Vancouver Waterfront* (Vancouver: New Star, 1980), 19.

14 Ted Otsu, “Vancouver As I See It today,” *The New Canadian* (1 February 1950). See also Masumi Izumi, “Reclaiming and Reinventing ‘Powell Street’: Reconstruction of the Japanese Canadian Community in Post-World War II Vancouver” in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 313.

15 Dick Nakamura, quoted in Tamio Wakayama and Linda Uyehara Hoffman, eds., *Kikyō: Coming Home to Powell Street* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing/Kobe, Su Press, 1992), 130.

16 *The New Canadian* (10 May 1950).

Atonement.<sup>17</sup> The movement back to Powell Street effectively ended about 1954.<sup>18</sup> Most of those who returned to the coast settled throughout the city where in 1954 the Japanese Canadian population was estimated to be about 2,000.<sup>19</sup>

The returnees slowly re-formed institutions though not necessarily the same ones that had existed before the war. A survey in 1934 had revealed the existence of approximately 84 groups, including prefectural, trade, labour, religious, educational, sports, and special interest groups. As the *Nisei* historian Michiko Midge Ayukawa has observed, although the pre-war Japanese in Vancouver generally co-operated with one another, there were "vast economic differences" and "hidden grievances and open animosities."<sup>20</sup> The existence of two omnibus groups symbolized this. The older Canadian Japanese Association (CJA) allegedly had a close relationship with the Japanese consulate and largely spoke for the *Issei*, particularly businessmen. A newer group, the Japanese Canadian Citizens League (JCCL) was largely the voice of the educated *Nisei*.<sup>21</sup> Both organizations died during the war, but some former members of the JCCL were active in the new groups that evolved into the National Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (NJCCA) that was officially established in September 1947.<sup>22</sup> Reflecting the generational change that was accelerated by the war, the CJA was not reformed; the JCCA, a mainly *Nisei* organization based in Toronto, became the main national organization with branches throughout the country.

In Vancouver, some *Nisei* formed a branch of the JCCA partly to advocate for the community. As Japanese Canadians left the interior, the National JCCA looked to the Vancouver chapter for leadership, but it had relatively few members.<sup>23</sup>

17 Judy Nanazawa, "The Japanese Canadian National Museum: What does it mean to me?" *The Bulletin: A Journal of Japanese Canadian Community, History and Culture* (hereafter *JCCA Bulletin*) 43, no. 3 (March 2001): 13.

18 Genichi Ohashi, "A Glance at the West Coast in 1954," *The New Canadian* (12 January 1955). A municipal study of urban renewal published in 1969 described Powell Street as one of the poorest and most rapidly deteriorating areas of the city; Izumi, "Reclaiming and Reinventing," 313.

19 *The New Canadian* (20 February 1952).

20 Michiko Midge Ayukawa, *Hiroshima Immigrants in Canada, 1891-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 78.

21 Charles H. Young and Helen R.Y. Reid, *The Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938), 108-12; Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 164-5.

22 For a sketch of the evolution of the JCCA, see Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending North American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, 1942-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 116-20, 144.

23 Because many Japanese moved from the interior to the Vancouver area, in 1952 the JCCA moved its provincial headquarters from Greenwood to Vancouver. LAC, National Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Records (hereafter NJCCAR), MFC12821, Kar Kobayahsi to George Tanaka, 15 March 1952. Not until 1955 did *Nisei* form a *Nisei* Club at UBC. *The New Canadian* (14 January 1956). Earlier, some joined the Chinese Varsity Club and one was elected its vice-president. *The New Canadian* (23 February 1955).

Many *Nisei*, anxious to be “good Canadians,” turned their backs on their Japanese heritage, but the chapter contributed to cultural events, for example, by having kimono-clad girls march in the Pacific National Exhibition Parade,<sup>24</sup> an ironic exercise given that the Exhibition Grounds had been the justifiably maligned holding place for many Japanese before they were sent inland in 1942. The JCCA also made presentations to the Civic Unity Council and the Vancouver Co-ordinating Council of Citizenship on racial problems and joined the Civic Unity Association in pressing for Fair Employment Practices and Fair Accommodation Practices legislation.<sup>25</sup>

After the federal government returned the school and hall, the Japanese School Society re-opened the Japanese Language School in May 1953. Its students included businessmen studying Japanese for purposes of trade.<sup>26</sup> Buddhists met at the School Hall to celebrate *Obon*, the festival honouring the dead, and began holding regular services. The pre-war temple had been sold, but the Custodian returned some family *butsudan*, the small altars or shrines within a cabinet containing icons such as a scroll of Buddhist teachings, images of Buddha, photographs of deceased family members, and tablets representing them. After extensive fund-raising, the Buddhists purchased a former United Church in 1954 and got a full time resident minister in 1958. As more families returned, membership grew. The temple reached out to Chinese Buddhists and in 1961 invited them to a trilingual (English, Japanese, and Chinese) *Obon* festival.<sup>27</sup>

Some *Nisei* claimed they were accepted “as fellow citizens,” got along well with fellow workers, and joined the appropriate unions.<sup>28</sup> The Vancouver chapter of the JCCA, however, noted their “very difficult position ... on the proving grounds that Japanese Canadians could live with other people and achieve results.”<sup>29</sup> Some employers, including a number of saw mills<sup>30</sup> and several large automobile dealerships, would not employ Japanese or were reluctant to do so.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Mary Seki, who as a 20 year old returned to Vancouver in

24 Fifth Provincial Conference of British Columbia JCCA at Kelowna, 2–4 February 1951, LAC, NJCCAR, MFC12829.

25 Report of the British Columbia Chapter in Report of the Proceedings of the Sixth National JCCA Conference at Toronto, 1-3 September 1961; LAC, NJCCAR, file 12–18.

26 *The New Canadian* (16 July 1952 and 11 September 1954). The Society raised funds mainly from Japanese Canadians in Toronto. Because the federal government used it for offices during the war, the building had not been sold.

27 Terry Watada, *Bukkyo Tozen: A History of Jodo shinshu Buddhism in Canada, 1905–1995* (Toronto: Toronto Buddhist Church, 1996), 189–95.

28 *The New Canadian* (2 November 1949).

29 LAC, NJCCAR, MFC12829, Report of Provincial Executive, British Columbia Japanese Canadian Citizens Association, 22 January 1950.

30 *The New Canadian* (25 October 1950 and 19 March 1952).

31 *Ibid.* (26 May 1951 and 15 August 1951).



1950, had no problem finding live-in domestic work, but when she appeared for interviews for clerical jobs she was told that the position had been filled.<sup>32</sup> A majority of telephone workers claimed that they would quit rather than work with Asians.<sup>33</sup> In the fall of 1951, however, the Vancouver School Board hired a *Nisei* teacher and over the next few years hired at least two others.<sup>34</sup> By 1953, delegates to the JCCA convention reported that their employment problems were no worse than those of any other group and that no prejudice had carried over from the war. Yet, apart from a handful of professionals, most men worked in the traditional jobs in sawmills, foundries, the fisheries, and as gardeners. Young women continued to work in canneries and factories, although some had jobs in offices and in stores, positions that had been largely denied to them outside the Japanese community before the war.<sup>35</sup> A few entrepreneurs became dry cleaners, florists, grocers, hairdressers, photographers, shoe repairers and proprietors of dress shops around the city,<sup>36</sup> though some experienced discrimination. When the proprietor of a service station wanted to make Ben Iwasaki a partner, Home Oil would not accept "Oriental" owners, so Iwasaki and his old partner, another Japanese Canadian, opened their own Chevron station on Powell Street.<sup>37</sup>

Some early returnees had housing problems. Mickey Tanaka came from Montréal in 1950 when her employer became head of the Anatomy Department at the new University of British Columbia Medical School. The university president assured her that there was no racial prejudice at UBC, but finding a room to rent was difficult. Except for restrictive covenants in up-scale areas, such as the University Endowment Lands and Shaughnessy Heights, those who had the means could buy whatever houses they could afford and many resided in "well constructed and furnished houses" mainly scattered throughout the working class district of East Vancouver.<sup>38</sup> The real estate market was undoubtedly a factor but, as in Toronto, this pattern of dispersing may have been a carry-over

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32 "An Exiled Japanese Canadian: The Experience of Mary Seki," *JCCA Bulletin* 41, no. 9 (September 1999): 15-7.

33 *The New Canadian* (4 and 18 March 1950).

34 *Ibid.* (3 October 1951 and 12 January 1955).

35 LAC, NJCCAR, MfC12829, Fifth Provincial Conference of British Columbia JCCA at Kelowna, 2-4 February 1951.

36 Ohashi, "A Glance at the West Coast in 1954"; John Endo Greenaway, "Mickey Tanaka," *JCCA Bulletin* 50, no. 4 (April 2008): 5. For the history of one of these businesses, see Mitsuo Yesaki and Tad Kitagawa, "Kozo Kitagawa and the *Omiya Shoten* and Tad's Sporting Goods," *Nikkei Images* 12 (Spring 2007): 17. The store was still in business in 2007.

37 Lynne R. Gardiner (née Iwasaki), "Ben Akira Iwasaki: How to Live to be Over One Hundred," *Nikkei Images*, 13 (Spring 2008): 13.

38 *The New Canadian* (8 November 1950 and 16 February 1952). See also Daniel Hiebert, "Immigration and the Changing Social Geography of Greater Vancouver," *BC Studies* no. 121 (Spring 1999): 40.



of the federal government's advice that they not congregate in particular neighbourhoods.<sup>39</sup> As their economic circumstances improved, they moved. The Iwasaki family, for example, first settled in a working class district of East Vancouver. Neighbours welcomed them, but as they prospered, they moved to fashionable Cambie Street.<sup>40</sup>

The scattering of their congregations made it difficult for the churches as they resumed their pre-war work. The Buddhists considered moving away from Powell Street but did not.<sup>41</sup> The mainstream Christian churches, which had gained adherents through their educational and religious work in the interior camps,<sup>42</sup> had problems in accommodating both the Japanese-speaking *Issei* and the English-speaking *Nisei* whose numbers were increasing. Rev. W.R. McWilliams of the United Church returned in 1951 and in 1953 began holding regular Japanese language services for about 50 members at First United Church near the old Japantown.<sup>43</sup> A succession of theological students held services for the *Nisei* in the former building of the Fairview United Church. The lack of continuity discouraged many *Nisei* and average attendance dropped to ten. The Home Mission Board suggested they join a white congregation, but they wanted to retain their own congregation.<sup>44</sup> In 1957, Rev. Tadashi Mitsui came from Japan and brought the *Issei* and *Nisei* congregations together in a Fairview building. He established a bilingual Sunday School because, he explained, "some of the children don't speak any English and some don't speak any Japanese." Even *Nisei* who seemed indifferent to all religion sent their children to Sunday School, which Mitsui regarded as "the key to integration for Vancouver's Japanese and Occidentals."<sup>45</sup> In time, the

39 Tomoko Makabe, *The Canadian Sansei* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 27–8.

40 Gardiner, "Ben Akira Iwasaki," 13.

41 The congregation planned to move to South Vancouver since Powell Street was deteriorating, but changed its mind. Some sources suggest a revival of the neighbourhood encouraged them to build a new temple on the same site. It was completed in 1977. Robert S. Akune, "The History of the Vancouver Buddhist Temple," *Nikkei Images* 12 (Winter 2007): 12; Tamio Wakayama, "Up from discrimination: The Japanese in Canada," *Sun* (20 September 1980). According to Mitsuru Shimpo, the Buddhists abandoned the move to South Vancouver when vandals attacked the building that was being renovated. Mitsuru Shimpo, "Japanese Cultural Traditions in the Greater Vancouver Area," in *Sakura in the Land of the Maple Leaf: Japanese Cultural Traditions in Canada*, ed. Ban Seng Hoe (Gatineau: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2007), 120; *Sun* (15 July 1961).

42 Mark Mullins, *Religious Minorities in Canada: A Sociological Study of the Japanese Experience* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 26.

43 N. Suzuki, "Keeping the Faith Alive," *JCCA Bulletin* 34, no. 6 (June 1992): 18–21.

44 Rev. Tadashi Mitsui, "Vancouver Japanese United Church After the War," in *A History of the Japanese Congregations of the United Church of Canada*, ed. Roland M. Kawano (Scarborough, Ont.: The Japanese Canadian Christian Churches Historical Project, 1998), 108–9.

45 *Sun* (30 May 1959).

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Japanese congregations held monthly bilingual services and occasionally met with the white congregation.

Few Anglicans were among the early returnees. In May 1949, the New Westminster Synod of the Anglican Church decided that “the need of Japanese Mission work is nil” and transferred the proceeds from the sale of its Japanese church and school buildings to the Bishopric Endowment Fund.<sup>46</sup> In 1952, however, Rev. W.H. Gale tracked down his congregation and resumed work at St. James Church near Powell Street. The diocese warned a new missionary that the scattered people required “shepherding” and some communicants had joined suburban parish churches<sup>47</sup> where, to the pleasure of the Provincial Board of Missions, they were “happy members of other Anglican congregations.”<sup>48</sup> The Church of the Holy Cross, however, gave Japanese Canadians an opportunity to attend services in the Japanese language and to meet other Japanese. Although its parishioners resided throughout the city and transportation was a problem, by 1955 Holy Cross had its own church building in Mount Pleasant<sup>49</sup> and sent a delegate to the annual diocesan synod. The appointment of Rev. R.T. Nishimura as a full time pastor in 1958 increased attendance, yet only about 30 families attended regularly and most of the 30 Sunday School students were neighbourhood white children. In 1955, there were only 133 baptized Japanese Anglicans — *Issei*, *Nisei*, and *Kika Nisei* — in the whole diocese of whom about 50 were communicants.<sup>50</sup> Language was a problem: older *Issei* were not fluent in English, younger *Nisei* were not familiar with Japanese, and the *Kika Nisei*, Canadian-born Japanese who had spent some years in Japan, felt isolated.<sup>51</sup>

The return of Japanese Canadians to Vancouver tapered off in the mid-1950s. Although the Vancouver JCCA urged the *Nisei* to contribute to Canadian society by joining institutions such as service clubs and churches, it also urged them to study the culture of Japan. It did not see a contradiction and it declared:

46 Anglican Archives of British Columbia (hereafter AABC), Bound Minutes of Executive Committee of Synod of New Westminster, 10 May 1949.

47 Ibid., box D34/2:3, Archdeacon of Vancouver to Rev. R.T. Nishimura, 30 May 1958.

48 Ibid., Report of Provincial Board of Missions to Orientals, Journal, Provincial Synod, 26 June 1962 at Vancouver (copy).

49 It was housed in what had been a Catholic Apostolic Church in the centrally located Mount Pleasant District and was acquired by the Anglican Synod in 1954. Anglican Diocese of New Westminster, Executive Committee Meetings, 2 November 1954, and New Westminster Synod, 56th Session 1955. In 1963, when the Holy Cross building needed renovations, diocesan officials questioned the mission's existence, but did not close it. AABC, box D34/1:1, Archdeacon D.P. Watney Report, 29 April 1963.

50 AABC, L. Matsumoto, delegate from Holy Cross Mission to New Westminster Synod, 1955.

51 *The New Canadian* (11 May 1955). Ronald Dore, a scholar of Japan at the University of British Columbia, observed that the Japanese language was dying out and predicted that in the next generation only those who made an academic study of Japanese would speak it. Art McKenzie, “Japanese language dying out in B.C.” *Vancouver Province* (14 May 1960).

“The JCs should not give up their heritage but rather make it a contribution” to Canadian society as a whole or, in other words, that they should seek integration which, it claimed, did not have to mean assimilation.<sup>52</sup> Like the Christian churches, the JCCA also had language problems. In 1956, it formed separate executive committees for its English-speaking members and for the Issei who preferred to work in Japanese.<sup>53</sup>

In April 1958, Mickey Tanaka started a newsletter, *The Bulletin*.<sup>54</sup> Its first issue boasted how Japanese Canadians had “contributed tangibly” to provincial development. It also recognized a continuing theme: the JCCA did not “inevitably” speak on behalf of Canadians of Japanese origin because the community was not monolithic.<sup>55</sup> That division in the community was underscored when some recipients of free copies of *The Bulletin* returned them with “strong notes saying that they do not want anything Japanese.”<sup>56</sup> By the early 1960s, provincial JCCA members themselves were unsure of the organization’s usefulness. Some believed that by eliminating legal barriers and by assisting the integration of Japanese Canadians into the general community it had accomplished its goals.<sup>57</sup> Interest in the Vancouver chapter waned. In March 1966, in an interview in the *Vancouver Sun*, Tom Hara, a lawyer and vice-president of the JCCA, warned its 4,000 members that the executive lacked the manpower to maintain another year of full activities and that it had difficulty getting a quorum at its meetings. He attributed the problem to the diverse interests of the membership and their involvement in projects in their own neighbourhoods. This situation was a bittersweet phenomenon. Although the JCCA wanted Japanese Canadians to participate in Canadian life, it also wanted them to keep the Association alive.<sup>58</sup> Hara’s admonition drew in some new help, but the status of the Vancouver chapter of the JCCA remained precarious.

In a decade and a half, Japanese Canadians had overcome initial barriers, such as difficulties in securing employment and accommodation, and had taken some steps to re-establish their institutions and create new ones. Yet they had not re-created a visible community; Japantown or Powell Street was but a

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52 *The New Canadian* (14 January 1956 and 6 March 1957).

53 *Ibid.*, (20 March 1956).

54 An earlier newsletter was discontinued shortly after its founding in April 1956 because members did not have time to produce it and interest seemed limited. *The New Canadian* (28 April 1956 and 21 November 1956); John Endo Greenaway, “History of the Bulletin: Part 1,” *JCCA Bulletin* 50, no. 4 (April 2008): 4.

55 “Birth of a Bulletin,” *JCCA Bulletin* (April 1958), reprinted in *JCCA Bulletin* 50, no. 4 (April 2008): 3.

56 LAC, NJCCAR, file 12–18, Report of the Proceedings of the Sixth National JCCA Conference at Toronto, 2-3 September 1961.

57 *Ibid.*, Report of the British Columbia Conference of the JCCA on 8 July 1961 in Report of the British Columbia Chapter for NJCCA Conference, 2-3 September 1961.

58 *Sun* (24 March 1966).

shadow of its pre-war self. The pre-war tensions between the *Issei* and the *Nisei* were fading as the *Issei* aged and more *Nisei* grew into adulthood, but difficulties persisted in the language problems experienced by the JCCA and the Christian churches. Among the *Nisei*, some wanted to preserve their Japanese identity, but others were anxious to blend into the larger community, a process made easier by their dispersal around greater Vancouver.

### **The Revival of the Japanese Community in the 1970s**

While integration with the larger community continued, repeated editorial comments in *The Bulletin* and reports of JCCA meetings implied that neither had the support of all Japanese Canadians. Nevertheless, by 1977, *The Bulletin*, published in both English and Japanese, had 4,000 subscribers, and as a later editor observed, its “tendency towards inward-looking reflection” was giving way “to a more outward, proactive stance.”<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Japanese Canadians created new organizations. How and why did this happen? The short answer is two-fold.

The first part of the answer is the coming of age of a new generation of Japanese Canadians. In 1956, in an article looking a quarter century forward to 1980, Toyo Takata presciently wrote: “While the *Nisei*, by experience and contact had closer association with their cultural heritage but had tried to forget it, the *Sansei*, as they mature, will be more curious about it and will more readily accept it as a part of their racial origin.”<sup>60</sup> As they grew up with the radical politics of the 1960s and the emergence of the Asian American movement, the *Sansei* and some younger *Nisei* searched for their roots.<sup>61</sup> In a larger context, Roy Miki, a *Nisei*, recalled that in the 1970s “as if overnight it was not only acceptable but even good to be Japanese Canadian .... This critical perspective .... was concurrent with anti-colonial critiques of the Canadian nation-state emerging on the critical edges of identity politics.”<sup>62</sup> Photographer Tamio Wakayama, a *Nisei* who had participated in the American civil rights movement, told readers of the *Vancouver Sun* that the parents of the *Nisei* had, unfortunately, “ill-prepared them for the search” by denying them “their legitimate birthright; knowledge of their historical traditions.”<sup>63</sup>

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59 Greenaway, “History,” 13. By 1984, *The Bulletin* reported that it had 4,800 subscribers. *JCCA Bulletin* 26, no. 9, (10 October 1984): 2.

60 Toyo Takata, “*Sansei* to Recall Cultural Heritage,” *The New Canadian* (21 January 1956).

61 Xiaoping Li, *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 18–22.

62 Roy Miki, “Turning In, Turning Out: The Shifting Formations of ‘Japanese Canadian’ from Uprooting to Redress,” in *Changing Japanese Identities*, eds. Kess, et al., 30.

63 Wakayama, “Up from discrimination: The Japanese in Canada,” *Sun* (20 September 1980).

The second but related cause of a revival was an infusion of new blood after Canada relaxed its immigration laws in the 1960s.<sup>64</sup> Because Japan was prospering and Canada was experiencing recession, the number of new immigrants was small, but, given Canada's immigration policy, they were well educated.<sup>65</sup> Some brought new skills, the most conspicuous being the sushi chefs. Aki's Restaurant on Powell Street opened in 1972 when "raw fish was an unthinkable food for the average Vancouverite." As non-Japanese became acquainted with the cuisine, Japanese restaurants proliferated. By 1982, there were about 50 Japanese restaurants and sushi bars in the lower mainland and the number continued to grow.<sup>66</sup> The restaurants and the enrolment of non-Japanese children and adults in Japanese language classes<sup>67</sup> were conspicuous evidence of the popularity of Japanese culture in Vancouver's mainstream society and an awareness that Japan was a major economic power.

Some new immigrants, the *Shin-Issei* or *ijusha*, had little contact with the Canadian-born Japanese, but others were anxious to become involved in the local Japanese community and helped re-energize it. Bringing with them "the cultural depth and the daring spirit of their predecessors, the early pioneers" and "the irresistible energy and sophistication of modern Japan," they "contributed immeasurably" to reviving the Japanese community and to giving the Canadian-born a sense of pride in being Japanese.<sup>68</sup> The "sophistication of modern Japan," however, was not the traditional Japanese culture known by pre-war immigrants and their children and that "both puzzled and disappointed" them.<sup>69</sup>

Some newcomers were not immigrants but birds of passage on assignment for a Japanese corporation for three to five years. In 1982, for example, about

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64 Details of changes in immigration policy may be found in Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship*, chap. 6. Post-1967 details are from Tatsuo Kage, "Post-War Japanese Immigrants and Their Involvement in the Community," *Nikkei Images* 11 (Autumn 2006): 12–9.

65 With the exception of 1973, when 1,020 arrived, fewer than 1,000 arrived in Canada each year between 1949 and 1992. See Makabe, *The Canadian Sansei*, 202. Not all, of course, settled in Vancouver.

66 Tatsuo Kage, "Greater Vancouver Japanese Immigrants Association of British Columbia," *JCCA Bulletin* 27, no. 1 (10 January 1985): 9–10; Pete McMartin, "Japan Inc thrives in B.C.," *Sun* (28 August 1982); Caitlin Ohama-Darus, "Kids Corner," *JCCA Bulletin* 50, no. 1 (January 2008): 12; John Endo Greenaway, "Shig Hirai: Fujiya Celebrating 30 Years," *JCCA Bulletin* 49, no. 10 (October 2007): 4.

67 *JCCA Bulletin* 28, no. 4 (April 1986): 9.

68 Tamio Wakayama, *A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians, 1977–1977* (Vancouver: The Japanese Canadian Centennial Project, 1978), 3–4.

69 Tatsuo Kage, "When Postwar immigrants arrived," *JCCA Bulletin* 48, no. 6 (June 2006): 11. In *The Canadian Sansei* (168, 203), Tomoko Makabe suggests that contact between the post-war immigrants and the pre-war immigrants and their children has been slight. The Vancouver experience suggests that their influence has been greater than their number would suggest. *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada*, trans. Kathleen Chisato Merken (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1995), 30.

1,500 such individuals resided in the area. They joined the best businessmen's and golf clubs, but tended to keep a low profile.<sup>70</sup> Their spouses, however, participated in Japanese language activities and their children became the main clients of several new Japanese language schools, while the old Japanese Language School expanded its enrolment.<sup>71</sup>

Despite a plethora of Japanese language advertisements in the mid-1980s from various Japanese churches and sects, including Tenriko Granville Church, Japanese Pentecostal Church, Seicho-no-ie Truth of Life Centre, The Church of World Messianity, and the Vancouver Japanese Christian Church,<sup>72</sup> few newcomers appeared very interested in affiliating with Japanese religious organizations. The Christian churches, however, saw opportunities. The Japanese United Church welcomed immigrants at social gatherings, while First United Church, drawing on *Nisei* volunteers, offered English language and citizenship classes. By the 1990s, as the *Issei* generation died and immigration continued, post-war immigrants formed about half the congregation. Among the Anglicans, newly arrived young married women formed a Women's Auxiliary even though few of them were baptized. In 1966, Rev. J. Shozawa, the rector, asked the archbishop for the services of an English-speaking woman missionary who could teach them English and acquaint them "with the teaching of Christ."<sup>73</sup> The congregation itself was poor. The People's Warden stressed that the "old faithful," the majority of the congregation, were often on fixed incomes and "still suffering financially from the consequences of the evacuation," while younger members, mainly new immigrants, were "struggling in bringing up their families."<sup>74</sup> The diocese considered integrating the Japanese with a regular occidental parish, but, after consulting the rector and wardens of Holy Cross, made the mission a parish in 1970.<sup>75</sup>

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70 McMartin, "Japan Inc.," *Sun* (28 August 1982). The Konwakai association in 1987 had 90 corporate members representing 400–500 employees of Japanese companies in greater Vancouver. It sought to promote trade and commercial relations with Japan and develop friendly relations in the Japanese business community. *JCCA Bulletin* 29, no. 5 (May 1987): 13. A second group, *Kiyu-Kai*, the Japanese Canadian Business and Professional Association, was formed late in 1987. Tatsuo Kage, "Kiyukai Report," *JCCA Bulletin* 30, no. 2 (February 1988): 13–4.

71 Hiroko Noro, "Japanese as a Heritage Language in British Columbia: Past, Present and Future" in *Changing Japanese Identities*, eds. Kess, et al., 515; *JCCA Bulletin* 28, no. 4 (April 1986): 9.

72 For example, see *JCCA Bulletin* 27, no. 4 (April 1985). The Buddhist Church occasionally advertised special events and a weekly Sunday School in English.

73 AABC, box D34/2:5a, J.R. Shozawa to Rt. Rev. G.P. Gower, 30 March 1966.

74 AABC, box D34/2:7, P.I. Matsumoto and J.S. Marakami to Rev. D.P. Watney, 24 February 1969.

75 By 1982, the Japanese United Church had about 20 *Shin-Issei* among its 130 *Issei* members. Mullins, *Religious Minorities in Canada*, 162–3; Kage, "Post-War Japanese Immigrants," 12; Greenaway, "History," 13; Suzuki, "Keeping the Faith Alive," 18–21; AABC, box D34/1:3,

While the churches may have provided spiritual comfort for some elderly Japanese, they did little for their material needs and catered to only a tiny portion of the Nikkei community. According to Yuko Shibata, a *Shin-Issei* anthropologist, some *Shin-Issei* “were drawn to the elders who displayed a sense of caring, generosity, and warmth” that had long ago been lost in Japan and “found comfort in helping *Issei* elders and listening to their stories,” while the *Issei* “were happy to share their memories.”<sup>76</sup> The Japanese-born Michiko Sakata, who came to Vancouver in 1970 after working for the United Nations in New York, looked for a Japanese community. She found a run-down Powell Street and noted the problems of the elders. With the financial help of a federal Local Initiatives Program (LIP) grant she formed “Language Aid” in an office on Powell Street.<sup>77</sup> The office was soon inundated with old people seeking help to write letters to Japan or to deal with government correspondence, especially relating to pensions.<sup>78</sup> Realizing how lonely they were, she started visiting them, sometimes accompanied by a nurse, and noted how some lived “under terrible conditions, often infested with cockroaches.” Yet, she noted, the *Issei* “never took our services for granted” and treated her to meals. Given their modest incomes, it embarrassed her until she realized that they were “the people of Meiji . . . [a] proud people and they know who they are.” She soon discovered “the stories of their lives in Canada — pioneer days, long years of hardship and labour, discrimination, internment during the war and a million details of their lives that were now only a memory.” As she recalled, “it suddenly started mushrooming . . . Powell Street seemed like a magnet . . . pulling all these people in.” In this grassroots organization, she explained, “We were all immigrants together helping one another.” A succession of new immigrants also patronized Language Aid for assistance in dealing with government and other bureaucracies.<sup>79</sup> Some younger patrons stayed to work on the Japanese language section of *The Bulletin*.<sup>80</sup>

The LIP grant for Language Aid ran out in 1973, but Sakata learned that another Japanese Canadian group, under the leadership of Jun Hamada, a Vancouver-born *Nisei* and a social worker, had a LIP grant for a similar pro-

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Archdeacon D. Watney to Archbishop and others, 14 May 1969; *Ibid.*, box D34/2:10, Harold J. McSherry to Rev. John Shozawa, 1 August 1959, and C.F. Wilkins to Warden and Rector of Holy Cross, 27 August 1970. The Anglican congregation has moved to another location, but still exists.

76 Yuko Shibata, “Across Five Generations and Beyond: Learning from and Sharing with Nikkei Women’s Narratives, A *Shin-Issei*’s Perspective” in *Changing Japanese Identities*, eds. Kess, et al., 370.

77 Language Aid later merged with another group involved in providing language services under the name, “Mosaic.” Mosaic operated in a number of languages, including Japanese. Michiko Sakata, “Tonari Gumi,” *Rikka* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1977): 9.

78 Michiko Sakata in Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 22.

79 Sakata, “Tonari Gumi,” 4–11.

80 *JCCA Bulletin* 30, no. 7 (July 1988): 6; *JCCA Bulletin* 30, no. 11 (November 1988): 6.



gram. The two groups co-operated. With the help of the grant and some recent young immigrants from Japan, Hamada visited run-down hotels and rooming houses to survey the need of the *Issei* for social services. When that grant expired, the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association provided funds for a drop-in centre at 573 East Hastings. Hamada's organization evolved into Tonari Gumi (Japanese Community Volunteers Association) that assists the *Issei* to deal with government and provides social and recreational activities, including a "Bento Express" that delivers Japanese-style meals to homebound seniors. Funding was frequently a problem. Provincial government cutbacks in the mid-1980s severely restricted Tonari Gumi's activities, but it received some municipal grants, assistance from the United Way, and gifts in cash and in kind from businesses and individuals.<sup>81</sup>

Some *Nisei* were initially suspicious of both Hamada and the newcomers. When Sakata asked a senior Japanese Canadian association (likely the JCCA) to put a small notice in their monthly publication to inform people of the services of Language Aid, she "was flatly refused" and was told, "We Japanese Canadians do not need such services. We and our children are taking care of these *Issei*' and he slammed down the telephone."<sup>82</sup> An early *Nisei* member of Tonari Gumi recalled that older *Nisei* and *Issei* did not want to "take money from government because they are supposed to have good jobs and the last time they worked for the government was in road camps."<sup>83</sup> Despite its apparent callousness to the plight of the *Issei*, the JCCA revived itself and investigated the housing needs of seniors. In 1977, with the help of a government grant, its spin-off, the Japanese Canadian Society of Greater Vancouver for Senior Citizens' Housing, bought and renovated the run-down Richmond Hotel at 374-378 Powell Street, which became Sakura-so, a seniors' residence.

Tonari Gumi also drew in some *Sansei* (third generation, the children of the *Nisei*) activists who began to recover their community's history and culture although some of the Canadian-born and the immigrants initially had doubts about each other.<sup>84</sup> One Canadian-born *Sansei*, Les Yamada, publicly admitted that he did not like the Japanese Japanese, "some of the ways they have or their attitudes .... I think it is very stifling."<sup>85</sup> When Takeo Yamashio, who came to Vancouver in 1972 from Hiroshima, began working on the centennial project,

81 Iziumi, "Reclaiming and Reinventing," 313-14; *JCCA Bulletin* 26, no. 10 (November 1984): 11; Tamio Wakayama, "Tonari Gumi Message," *JCCA Bulletin* 27, no. 1 (January 1985): 8-9. Individual donations rose after the Redress Settlement of 1988 and Tonari Gumi also received financial aid from the Redress Foundation. Gordon Kayahara, "Expo 86 and the Nikkei community," *JCCA Bulletin* 27, no. 6 (June 1985): 8-9; "Tonari Gumi Corner," *JCCA Bulletin* 38, no. 11 (November 1996) and no. 12 (December 1996).

82 Sakata, "Tonari Gumi," 6; see also Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 22.

83 Rick Shiomi, "The Journey Home," *JCCA Bulletin* 28, no. 8 (August 1986): 28-35.

84 Tamio Wakayama, "The First Powell Street Festival," *Nikkei Images* 6 (Autumn 2001): 9-10.

85 Les Yamada in Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 46.

he “was clearly told I was only an immigrant — the Centennial was not for immigrants, ‘not for you guys.’ I realized then how difficult the position of the *Ijusha* (postwar immigrants) is in the Japanese Canadian community. Nikkei people think they’ve gone through a lot of trouble to have gotten this far, while Japanese like me, who have lived the easy life in Japan, come here and think they can do anything they want.”<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, as Japanese scholar Masumi Izumi notes, the Canadian-born and the immigrants eventually found each other and the *Sansei* learned “the history of their community through stories told by the *Issei*.”<sup>87</sup> Despite language problems, the seniors, the *Sansei* and the *Shin-issei* forged “a lively renaissance of their community.”<sup>88</sup> “Flower arranging, handicrafts and gateball”<sup>89</sup> existed “alongside heated debates about civil rights and race relations.”<sup>90</sup> Tonari Gumi’s bilingual newsletter carried information for seniors and recent immigrants in Japanese and news about concerts, dances, and other social events in its English section. By 1986, Tonari Gumi had over 700 volunteers and members.<sup>91</sup> Its spirit spread into the community.

A major contribution of the new immigrants occurred with the 1977 celebration of the centennial of Japanese immigration to Canada. About 1975, Maya Koizumi, an immigrant, inspired by the stories of the *Issei*, suggested a photographic history as a centennial project.<sup>92</sup> Like other *Shin-Issei*, she had known nothing of Japanese Canadian history. While preparing for the centennial, the *Sansei* and the *Yonsei* (the fourth generation), many of whom have a parent who is not of Japanese ancestry, learned of the community destroyed by the wartime expulsion.<sup>93</sup> They, and some younger *Nisei*, knew little or nothing of the war because the parents “didn’t want to burden us with a legacy of such shame and humiliation. Most of them simply wanted to forget it.”<sup>94</sup> So negative

86 Takeo Yamashiro in Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 31.

87 Izumi, “Reclaiming and Reinventing,” 316.

88 Wakayama, “The First Powell Street Festival,” 8.

89 Gateball is a Japanese game for which the closest western equivalent is croquet.

90 Reiko Tagami, “From Far and Wide: Friends of the Museum from Across the Country,” *Nikkei Images* 5 (Spring 2000): 5.

91 Takio Wakayama, “Tonari Gumi moving to Sakura-so,” *JCCA Bulletin* 28, no. 2 (February 1986): 20.

92 Sakata, “Tonari Gumi.” Other sources suggest that Sakata herself initiated the idea. Japanese Canadian National Museum and Archives, Randy Enomoto, interview, n.d.

93 Intermarriage was apparent as early as 1950. *The New Canadian* (25 November 1950). By 1996, it was estimated that over 90 percent of the *sansei* and *yonsei* in Canada married non-Japanese and that a trend towards intermarriage was also evident among the post-war immigrants. *JCCA Bulletin* 38, no. 10 (October 1996): 24.

94 Tamiyo Wakayama, quoted in Li, *Voices Rising*, 102. See also Randy Enomoto, who mused that the “continuing silence” of his parents’ generation “was a residue of that shame,” quoted in Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 131). The reluctance of parents to talk of their wartime experiences was common. Makabe, *The Canadian Sansei*, 75, 78.

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were these impressions that one *Sansei* “didn’t want to be associated with other Asians.”<sup>95</sup> Randy Enomoto was struck by how it took the Japanese-born “to cause us *sansei* to acquire new eyes with which to see ourselves.”<sup>96</sup> Tamio Wakayama, a child during the war and one of many Japanese Canadians making an impact as dancers, film-makers, musicians, novelists, photographers, playwrights, poets, and visual artists,<sup>97</sup> recalled, “we were finally reclaiming our past and together we began to shed the wartime legacy of ignorance and subconscious shame.”<sup>98</sup>

The Vancouver Japanese Canadian Centennial Project resulted in an exhibit of historic photographs and a book, *A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians, 1877–1977*.<sup>99</sup> The warm reception of the exhibit encouraged the organizers to have “a grand party” to demonstrate how the Nikkei “had survived a century of racial oppression.”<sup>100</sup> They also hoped to make Powell Street “into a place that we could all go and identify with,” to unite the generations, and “to create a general public awareness of Japanese Canadian history.”<sup>101</sup> They overcame conflict between newer organizations, such as Tonari Gumi and its “brash young upstarts,” and the old guard of “the JCCA, the Buddhist Church and just about everybody else,” who regarded them “as unmannerly hippies or communists,” to launch the Powell Street Festival as a celebration of Japanese traditional culture.<sup>102</sup>

The Festival has featured a variety of artistic events, including folk dancing, martial arts, dancing, music, poetry readings, and *taiko* drumming. After the success of the first Festival, Wakayama mused on how “for the first time in years, the dispersed Nikkei community was reunited on the grounds where an older generation had once gathered to enact its rituals and acclaim its heroes. We came not as victims but as celebrants of our victory over a vicious racism . . . . We had come home to Powell St.” The Festival and events at the Japanese Hall created a “feeling of belonging” among the generations.<sup>103</sup> Afterwards, he remembered how he “had a sense that we, the Nikkei, had finally arrived. From the blur of activity of the festival weekend, two memories vividly remain — the unbridled joy of the Issei and the visceral beat of Taiko which gave us our first

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95 Ken Shikaze, quoted in Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 23.

96 Randy Enomoto, “Redress: where it came from, where it’s taking us,” *JCCA Bulletin* 40, no. 10 (October 1998): 8–9 (speech given at 10th anniversary Redress banquet, Vancouver, 18 September 1998).

97 For details, see Li, *Voices Rising*, *passim*.

98 Wakayama, “The First Powell Street Festival,” 9.

99 *Ibid.*, *A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians, 1877–1977* (Vancouver: The Japanese Canadian Centennial Project, 1977), 3–5.

100 Wakayama, “The First Powell Street Festival,” 9.

101 Rick Shiomi, quoted in Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 68.

102 A long interview with Wakayama, including much of this material, is in Li, *Voices Rising*, 89–106.

103 Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 12.

brief glimpse of the powerful role this ancient form would play in the growth of our community.”<sup>104</sup> Some *Shin Issei*, such as Mami Miyata, the artistic director of the Festival from 1979 to 1984, noted that the Festival was not authentic, even though some Japanese Canadians “behaved even more Japanese than the Japanese,” but that its goal was to promote Japanese Canadian culture.<sup>105</sup>

The Festival’s success helped Japanese Canadians to recover their Japanese culture and identity. A Toronto-born *Nisei*, who came to Vancouver in the 1980s, remembered the excitement of attending her first Festival when she “realized that what I had always accepted as a personal family history, was in fact a shared culture.”<sup>106</sup> Another *Sansei* explained that working on the Festival was “a reassurance that being Japanese Canadian is fun, that there’s a prideful tradition here.”<sup>107</sup> By contrast, a *Sansei* who did not speak Japanese felt out of place when she tried to help a friend in organizing the Festival and, as the sociologist Tomoko Makabe observed, the “key players” in the Festival “seem to consist of a particularized segment of the entire group” and that more people from outside than inside the Japanese Canadian community attended it.<sup>108</sup>

The Powell Street Grounds, the site of the Festival and the centre of the pre-war community, was symbolic “of recapturing conquered territory.” When the city rehabilitated the park in 1977, seniors from Tonari Gumi donated and planted nineteen cherry trees to show their appreciation. Unfortunately, the neighbourhood had become an extension of skid row; several Japanese-owned businesses left. Although the city tried to restore Japantown with Japanese-style banners, lights, street signs, and improved building façades to make it a tourist attraction, not all Japanese Canadians welcomed this effort. As one Japanese Canadian resident of the district said, the Japanese did not “want to be ghettoized.”<sup>109</sup> Despite some improvements, the area continued to deteriorate. Seniors were reluctant to visit Tonari Gumi. With the Japanese presence almost absent except for the August weekend of the Powell Street Festival and several food stores and fish markets, “Japantown” scarcely existed. A. Katsuyoshi Morita wrote in 1988, “it’s not a ‘Little Tokyo’ or ‘Japan Town’ but rather just ‘Powell Street.’”<sup>110</sup>

104 Wakayama, “The First Powell Street Festival,” 10. In 1979, they formed their own Katari Taiko, a collective. A comprehensive account of *taiko* drumming in Vancouver and its background is in Masumi Izumi, “Reconsidering Ethnic Culture and Community: A Case Study on Japanese Canadian Taiko Drumming,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 4 (February 2001): 35–56.

105 Mami Miyata in Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 55.

106 John Endo Greenaway, “Lynda Nakashima: At Home on Powell Street,” *JCCA Bulletin* 43, no. 7 (Summer 2001): 7.

107 Ron Yamauchi in Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 56.

108 Makabe, *The Canadian Sansei*, 66, 112.

109 Ken Matsune, quoted in Izumi, “Reclaiming and Reinventing,” 323.

110 Morita, *Powell Street Monogatari*, v. See also Joanne Blain, “Japantown: Unlocking a Secret,” *Sun* (20 September 1980).

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In addition to helping the Canadian-born find their heritage, Tonari Gumi also assisted new immigrants. In 1977, it helped to form the Greater Vancouver Japanese Immigrants' Association (GVJIA) to promote friendship and assistance among recent immigrants. The GVJIA organized workshops on citizenship, Canadian law, and mental health; offered Japanese language instruction for immigrants' children; and sponsored plays, parties, and picnics. Because most new immigrants, like many *Issei*, could not read English newspapers easily, the GVJIA published its own newsletter, *Kaiho*. Until Canada ended the program, the GVJIA also worked with the "silver immigrants," retirees who came as part of a Japanese government program, which one such retiree described as "a convenient way" of Japan ridding itself of an aging population by encouraging them to go overseas where the high value of the yen let them enjoy a higher standard of living and greater recreational activities than in Japan.<sup>111</sup>

The proliferation of new organizations drew support from the JCCA. Gordon Kadota, the newly elected president in 1984, admitted that it had "to a degree lost touch with many segments of the Japanese Canadian community," some of whom wanted no change and others who wanted many changes. While he admitted that the JCCA had done "little to arouse the public interest" and had "been too silent, too long," he put much of the blame on the community "for failing to participate."<sup>112</sup>

Some GVJIA members, such as Peter Kubotani, who arrived in 1972 and started his own computer business, thought the JCCA was "useless" and did not welcome immigrants.<sup>113</sup> On the other hand, an older *Nisei* complained that many new immigrants had not cut "their spiritual ties with Japan," spoke Japanese as their everyday language and did "not welcome too much 'foreign' influence even though that 'foreign' influence" included the Japanese Canadians who preceded them by some 50 years or more. In short, there was "indeed a cultural and language gap."<sup>114</sup>

That gap, complicated by the diversity of the generations and the blurring of them through the passing of time and intermarriage, created a problem in nomenclature. It was increasingly difficult to identify the *Issei*, *Nisei*, and *Sansei* generations.<sup>115</sup> In the mid-1980s, the term *Nikkei* came into use. It is a

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111 New immigrants set up the Yukihide Ogasawara in 1969, but it lasted only about a year. Mikihiro Kato, "One Immigrant's Hopes for the Nikkei Community," *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 2 (February 1997): 16-17.

112 Gordon Kadota, "Message from the president," *JCCA Bulletin* 26, no. 9 (10 September 1984): 9.

113 "Kudos to Kubotani," *JCCA Bulletin* 35, no. 2 (February 1993).

114 Charles Kadota, Letter to editor, *JCCA Bulletin* 29, no. 3 (March 1987): 8.

115 *Nikkei Place Monthly Update*, *JCCA Bulletin* 42, no.8 (August 2002): 28.

collective term for people of Japanese descent living abroad irrespective of birthplace or citizenship.<sup>116</sup>

By the mid-1980s, the JCCA was reaching out to the new immigrants, to those who had married outside the Japanese community, and to the offspring of the latter. In 1985, it elected several *Shin-Issei* who were Canadian citizens to its board. It also accepted non-citizens and non-Japanese as members. After much debate, a special general meeting in 1986 reached a “compromise rather than consensus,” that officers must be at least partially of Japanese descent and that permanent residents who were not citizens could be elected to the board, but the majority of directors must be Canadian citizens and the president must be a Canadian citizen. In explaining this decision, Randy Enomoto advised that securing and defending the rights of citizenship was “no longer the motive force” of the JCCA. “It is perhaps a measure of political maturity within the JCCA,” he asserted, “that the organization is no longer threatened by, but invites the participation of new immigrants. In years past, an exclusionary sentiment prevailed which was based in part, one suspects, on fear of ‘guilt by association’ i.e. that one’s own claim to citizenship would be diminished or discounted if one kept company with ‘non-citizens’ (the community was still trying to outdistance the ‘enemy alien’ label).”<sup>117</sup>

The success of the centennial celebrations and the Powell Street Festival, and anger at the injustices suffered by their parents and grandparents during the war, inspired several *Sansei* to begin meeting informally in 1981 to consider Redress. They formed a Redress subcommittee of the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project.<sup>118</sup> The complex story of the Redress Campaign, a national event that, especially in its early stages, demonstrated that the National JCCA “had little relevance in terms of identity formation” for many Japanese Canadians,<sup>119</sup> cannot be told here. Nevertheless, in Vancouver it drew many Nikkei back into the community, gained the support of some post-war immi-

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116 Gordon R. Kadota, “Diverse but not Divided,” *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 4, (April 1997): 18–19. The Nikkei Place website defines the term as follows: “Nikkei (nik’kei’), noun, adj.: [Nihon “Japan” Keitou “Lineage”] Persons of Japanese descent, and descendants, who have immigrated or are living abroad, creating unique communities and life styles within the context of the societies in which they live.” <[www.nikkeiplace.org](http://www.nikkeiplace.org)>, (viewed 1 August 2008).

117 *JCCA Bulletin* 28, no. 4 (April 1986): 5; Randy Enomoto, “JCCA News,” *JCCA Bulletin* 28, no. 1 (January 1986): 7.

118 Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (Vancouver: Raincoast, 2004), 144. Other accounts of the Redress Campaign by participants include, Cassandra Kobayashi and Roy Miki, eds., *Spirit of Redress: Japanese Canadians in Conference* (Vancouver: JC Publications, 1989); Maryka Omatsu, *Bittersweet Passage: Redress and the Japanese Canadian Experience* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992). Japanese Canadians in other cities formed similar committees about the same time.

119 Miki, *Redress*, 242.

grants — who seemed confused about their place in Canada — and stimulated interest in the Japanese language.<sup>120</sup>

### Redress and Revival

The Redress Campaign culminated on 22 September 1988, with the federal government acknowledging the injustice of its actions during the war and providing cash compensation to Japanese Canadians, pardons for those who had been convicted under the War Measures Act, and the restoration of Canadian citizenship to those who were deported after the war and their children.<sup>121</sup> The early stages of the campaign, however, were marked by many conflicts, the alienation of some community members who thought it overshadowed other JCCA obligations, debates over the organization of the campaign, and the disposition of the surplus funds that had been collected for the campaign.<sup>122</sup> Despite the ultimate success of the campaign, almost a decade later, Charles Kadota, who had not agreed with the JCCA over the redress process,<sup>123</sup> believed that Japanese Canadians still suffered the effects of “forced internment” in the form of the “loss of our identity, our attitudes, our values, and most of all, our self-esteem,” and claimed that the Redress agreement, “however important in terms of human rights, will never come close to healing the emotional and physical injuries suffered by Japanese Canadians.”<sup>124</sup> Others disagreed. For example, on the first anniversary of the settlement, Tom K. Tagami wrote that the acknowledgement of injustices in the Redress settlement had re-awakened “pride in the Japanese part of our Japanese Canadian identity. It is almost as if we have received official permission to be Japanese again and that it is possible to achieve success in Canada’s mosaic without having to become ‘white’ as most of us did in the past.”<sup>125</sup> Many others shared that idea and noted how the campaign had drawn the majority of the community together.

With Redress settled, however, the JCCA seemed to lose momentum. Board member Robert Bessler mused that the community “slowly but surely seems to be fading away into the horizon” as seniors, who had been the chief volunteers, passed on and many youth were more interested in being Canadian

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120 Wakayama, “Up from discrimination: The Japanese in Canada,” *Sun* (20 September 1980); Tatsuo Kage in *JCCA Bulletin* 29, no. 5 (May 1987): 17; *JCCA Bulletin* 30, no. 1 (January 1988): 5–6.

121 The agreement is reprinted in Kobayashi and Miki, *Spirit of Redress*, 138–9.

122 JCCA Executive to editor, *JCCA Bulletin* 32, no. 11 (November 1990): 9–10. Examples of these debates can be found in the pages of the *JCCA Bulletin* in 1990 and 1991.

123 Miki, *Redress*, 227, 245.

124 Charles Kadota, “A Challenge to the Nisei: Are we a lost generation?” *JCCA Bulletin* 38, no. 1 (January 1996): 21–2.

125 Tom K. Tagami in *JCCA Bulletin* 31, no. 9 (September 1989): 14.



than Japanese. Indeed, he mused, "Many of our youth have grown up with the idea that they are Canadians first and foremost, and if time allots then they will take some interest in their Japanese heritage. What is a Canadian anyway? .... Being Japanese Canadian is part of what Canada is about."<sup>126</sup> A *Sansei* interviewed in Vancouver in the early 1990s said he was not involved because he did not "feel drawn to the community."<sup>127</sup> A board member complained that the JCCA seemed to lack "self identity and purpose."<sup>128</sup> In addition, the community was divided by conflicts over personalities, politics, weak leadership, and jealousy.<sup>129</sup> By the early 1990s, even the survival of the Powell Street Festival was in some doubt. Because of a lack of volunteers, caused in part by changing demographics and the burn-out of many long-time volunteers, more non-Japanese than Japanese volunteered to work at the Festival.<sup>130</sup> Not only did that reflect an increasing number of marriages outside the Japanese community,<sup>131</sup> but it also indicated that Japanese culture had become popular among other Vancouver residents.

To meet the challenge of a lack of interest among Japanese Canadians, Eric Sokugawa, a Vancouver-born *Yonsei* and president of the JCCA, told members they must reach out beyond the *Issei* and their descendants to the new immigrants, many of whom did not see themselves as part of the Japanese Canadian community and still had Japanese passports.<sup>132</sup> A recent immigrant who praised the JCCA for its work on Redress and for establishing a Japanese Canadian identity averred, "for new immigrants, at least for me, the JCCA holds little significance."<sup>133</sup> To appeal to newcomers as well as to the younger *Sansei* and *Yonsei*, the JCCA proposed to offer bilingual classes on a variety of subjects, including career planning, business and social skills, health and medical issues, computer skills, and the Japanese language.<sup>134</sup> Three years later Sokugawa was still asking how the various generations could help the JCCA and how it could help them.<sup>135</sup>

126 Robert Bessler, "Message from the Board: From the Outside Looking In," *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 11 (November 1997): 7. See also John Endo Greenaway, "Editorial," *JCCA Bulletin* 38, no. 8 (August 1996): 6.

127 Makabe, *The Canadian Sansei*, 119.

128 Bob Honda, "A New Beginning: The JCCA into the New Millennium," *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 10 (October 1997): 7.

129 Sakata, "Tonari Gumi," 9.

130 John Endo Greenaway, "The Powell Street Festival: a tradition hanging in the balance," *JCCA Bulletin* 41, no. 10 (October 1999): 6.

131 Wakayama and Hoffman, *Kikyō*, 99–103.

132 Eric Sokugawa, "Message from the President," *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 10 (October 1997): 8.

133 Mikihiro Kato, "One Immigrant's Hopes for the Nikkei Community," *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 2 (February 1997): 16–17.

134 See also Honda, "A New Beginning"; Eric Sokugawa, "What does the future hold for the Japanese Canadian Community?" *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 3 (March 1997): 9.

135 Eric Sokugawa, "Message from the Board," *JCCA Bulletin* 42, no. 2 (February 2000): 7, 9.

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This “general sense of malaise,” the need to develop an understanding and working relationship between Japanese Canadians and recent immigrants, and to ensure the sustainability of the Japanese Canadian community was not confined to Vancouver. Late in 2002, the National Association of Japanese Canadians, of which the Vancouver JCCA was a member, sponsored “Meeting Point,” a national conference in Toronto. About a year later, approximately 30 people attended a “Meeting Point” discussion in Vancouver as the JCCA endeavoured “to bridge the gap between Japanese Canadian and Ijusha.”<sup>136</sup> New immigrants did not always feel comfortable in the JCCA. One concern was the word “Citizen” in its name because many of them were not Canadian citizens. The 1999 Annual General Meeting, however, tabled a motion to change its name to the Japanese Canadian Community Association, since many members still held to the idea of citizenship.<sup>137</sup>

Another difficulty was the number of organizations in Vancouver's Japanese community. Whereas the JCCA was once the “umbrella organization” for Japanese Canadians, the main group in town, many special interest groups, including some that were its offshoots, emerged over the years.<sup>138</sup> Estimates of their number ranged from 80 to 200. Some were very small; a few counted over 1,000 members.<sup>139</sup> New immigrants were “baffled” by the existence of so many different groups within “the small ‘Japanese village’ in Vancouver.”<sup>140</sup> Another immigrant, after complaining that many projects designed to strengthen the Nikkei community failed, asked why “we always seem to end up squabbling, even undermining one another's efforts, whenever we act in groups? As a result, a grey lethargy of resignation sets in. I heard one Nikkei businessman, who gave up on volunteer activities decades ago, call it a ‘quagmire’.”<sup>141</sup> The new immigrants were not the only ones confused; a *Yonsei* observed, “There are so many different groups, each with different focus. There are links between them but they never seem to pull together.”<sup>142</sup>

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136 Greenaway, “Editorial,” *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 1 (January 1997); “NAJC,” *JCCA Bulletin* 44, no. 9 (September 2002): 19; Ron Nishimura, “JCCA News,” *JCCA Bulletin* 45, no. 1 (January 2003): 16; Ron Nishimura, “JCCA NEWS,” *JCCA Bulletin* 45, no. 10 (October 2003): 16; Tatsuo Kage, “Panel discussion Ijusha and Japanese Canadians,” *JCCA Bulletin* 45, no. 10 (October 2003): 20.

137 Robert Bessler, “JCCA of Greater Vancouver Public Forum, Sunday, April 30, 2000,” *JCCA Bulletin* 42, no. 6 (June 2000): 8–10; Eric Sokugawa “A message to the Membership,” *JCCA Bulletin* 41, no. 6 (June 1999): 7; Judy Hanazawa, “A Renewed Board, A revised Constitution,” *JCCA Bulletin* 41, no. 6 (July 1999): 7–8.

138 Eric Sokugawa, “Message from the Board,” *JCCA Bulletin* 42, no. 5 (May 2000): 7.

139 Randy Kamiya, “Fragmented — the JC Community,” *JCCA Bulletin* 38, no. 3 (March 1996): 5, 24; Eric Sokugawa, “An open letter to all community leaders,” *JCCA Bulletin* 41, no. 7 (July 1999): 7.

140 Mikihiro Kato, “One Immigrant's Hopes for the Nikkei Community [trans],” *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 2 (February 1997): 16–17.

141 Masaki Watanabe, “Quagmire,” *JCCA Bulletin* 45, no. 2 (February 2003): 7–8.

142 Miwa Komori, quoted in John Endo Greenaway, “Vancouver Japanese Canadian Youth,” *JCCA Bulletin* 39, no. 11 (November 1997): 19–22.

Some complaints reflected controversy within the JCCA. At a public forum in April 2000, the fifty or so members overwhelmingly supported the organization, but many claimed it lacked the means to effectively address areas of concern. They believed it “should act as the ‘Hub’ of the community,” work with existing Japanese Canadian organizations and their programs to devise a “code of conduct” to provide for conflict resolution to avoid the internal breakdown of the community. Despite a consensus that the JCCA should be more active in supporting human rights issues, there was a sense that it should pay more attention to local matters than to international ones such as Sino-Japanese relations.<sup>143</sup>

Because attendance at meetings was small, *The Bulletin* was the JCCA’s main means of communicating with its members. Although *The Bulletin* had always had a Japanese language section, in 1989 the GVJIA merged its newsletter *Kaiho* with the JCCA’s *Bulletin*.<sup>144</sup> Reflecting the change in the composition of the Japanese Canadian community, in 2000 the long-time editor of *The Bulletin*, John Endo Greenaway, announced plans to expand the journal in order to “appeal to an increasingly diverse and fractured group that fall under the Nikkei banner.”<sup>145</sup> *The Bulletin* competed for Japanese language readers with four or five other papers in Vancouver that served students, visitors, and recent immigrants who were not interested in the concerns of the Canadian-born. JCCA members demanded that *The Bulletin* better reflect the community voice by such means as translating more articles, paying less attention to international issues, and expanding coverage of community events and businesses; it endeavoured to make the English and Japanese sections more parallel and gave more attention to the arts.<sup>146</sup>

No doubt other Japanese Canadians shared the view of a *Sansei* member of the board who believed that the JCCA provided “a sense of belonging and stability.”<sup>147</sup> Yet, another *Sansei* complained that despite “a youthful energy” at board meetings, members were “left perplexed and concerned about the conflicts between organizations and groups and the Board’s own turbulent and unstable history since the achievement of Redress.” Despite a desire “to bring people together,” they were anxious about the present and future rule of the JCCA.”<sup>148</sup> Successive JCCA presidents complained of the difficulty of

143 Robert Bessler, “JCCA of Greater Vancouver Public Forum.”

144 Kage, “Japanese Post-War Immigrants,” 13.

145 John Endo Greenaway, “The Winds of Change are Blowing,” *JCCA Bulletin* 42, no. 4 (April 2000): 6.

146 Ibid., “Editorial,” *JCCA Bulletin* 45, no. 2 (February 2003): 2; Bessler, “JCCA of Greater Vancouver Public Forum.”

147 Cheryl Suzuki, “Message from a JCCA Board Member,” *JCCA Bulletin* 38, no. 11 (November 1996): 7.

148 Judy Hanazawa, “The legacy of Redress,” *JCCA Bulletin* 40, no. 11 (November 1998): 7, 9.

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securing sufficient board members to get a quorum and to share the workload.<sup>149</sup>

Counteracting this picture of a fractured community are the monuments to its ability to work towards a common cause. Towards the end of the Redress Campaign, the community began planning for the future. Since at least 1968, there had been talk of building a Japanese Cultural Centre, but little was done until 1986 when it seemed that some of the former Expo '86 lands might be available. Mark Ando, a businessman who called a meeting to discuss the idea, explained that the "scattered Nikkei community" required a centre "to bring everyone together." He thought that with Vancouver "rapidly becoming an international city," a "new age" was beginning with "the tremendous growth in the Nikkei community" over the previous decade, the "increased importance of Pacific Rim trade," and the "general interest in all things Japanese."<sup>150</sup> Despite controversy over creating an independent committee to organize the project or giving the responsibility to a subcommittee of the JCCA, support for a cultural centre was widespread. The president of the JCCA suggested a Nikkei Centre would affirm "our future as a community"; new immigrants, the majority of the 50 people at the initial meeting, favoured it as the way for their children to retain their cultural heritage and learn the history of other Japanese Canadians.<sup>151</sup>

At a dinner that raised \$20,000, Thomas Shoyama, a *Nisei* and senior federal civil servant, observed the "positive impact" of the Toronto Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in developing a keen interest in their heritage among the "'lost generation' of *Sensei* and *Yonsei*." He suggested a centre would be an appropriate way to use any Redress endowment and would "strengthen the attractiveness and vitality of the community, create jobs and stimulate the flow of money through the system."<sup>152</sup>

When the Expo lands were assigned to other purposes, the city and committee considered other locations. Some were anxious to locate the centre near Powell Street; others wondered, "Will Powell St. be eventually abandoned and fade away?" The question was a good one. Because the city had long ago re-zoned the area as industrial, residential and commercial buildings continued to deteriorate, but few industries had moved in. Only a handful of Japanese merchants were interested in reviving Powell Street and their non-Japanese landlords did not "want the expense of gussying up." The planning

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149 For example, see Eric Sokugawa, "Message from the Board," *JCCA Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (January 1998): 7; *Ibid.*, "A message to the Membership," *JCCA Bulletin* 41, no. 3 (March 1999): 7; *Ibid.*, "President's Message," *JCCA Bulletin* 44, no. 2 (February 2002): 13.

150 Tamio Wakayama, "Nikkei Cultural Centre Meeting," *JCCA Bulletin* 28, no. 12 (December 1986): 24-7.

151 Irene Nemeth, "Nikkei Centre News," *JCCA Bulletin* 29, no. 1 (January 1987): 22-3.

152 Tamio Wakayama, "Nikkei Centre Dinner," *JCCA Bulletin* 29, no. 2 (February 1987): 22-5.

committee determined that few people considered Powell Street to be the ideal location.<sup>153</sup>

The success of the Redress Campaign and its reawakening of “pride in the Japanese part of our Japanese Canadian identity” spurred planning for the cultural centre. Vancouver’s Nikkei community had “fallen behind other cities across Canada” in this matter despite its large population of Japanese Canadians. The JCCA secured some funds from the Redress Foundation and urged members to donate part of their compensation to the building fund. In the meantime, representatives of the JCCA, Tonari Gumi, and other Japanese Canadian organizations met and raised funds, including at a dinner in December 1989, attended by approximately 500 people, which raised over \$80,000. They also hired Raymond Moriyama to design the centre, by which time the project had expanded to include facilities for educational projects, videos, performing arts, seminars, and other activities, as well as for the Japanese Canadian National Museum that had evolved from the Japanese Canadian History Preservation Committee that began in 1981 as an offshoot of the JCCA.<sup>154</sup>

Simultaneously, with planning a cultural centre, the JCCA concerned itself with health and seniors’ care. In 1985, it elected a Health Care Committee and a year later incorporated a Health Care Society. The need for seniors’ housing was acute. Long term care facilities in greater Vancouver were scarce; the staff of Tonari Gumi visited some 75 elderly Nikkei (as of 1989) who were in over 20 different care homes where they could rarely communicate in Japanese or enjoy Japanese food.<sup>155</sup> An unknown number were at home. Stories circulated of *Issei* who could not adjust to the “radically different diets” of white nursing homes and died within days or at most a few months.<sup>156</sup> Perhaps in an appeal to younger Nikkei, the Health Committee noted that recent immigrants would need such a facility in the future and the younger Canadian-born, though not requiring a Japanese Canadian facility, would “most certainly” want one. In addition, Japanese Canadians tended to want to return to their place of origin in Canada because of the Japanese tradition of attachment to place, sentimental memories of times past, and a way of helping to counteract some of the damage

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153 Dan Tokawa, “President’s report,” *JCCA Bulletin* 30, no. 4 (April 1988): 5; City Planning Department, Vancouver, “Technical Report Number 4, Industrial Districts,” *Vancouver Urban Renewal Study* (29 August 1969), 52–6, cited in Izumi, “Reclaiming and Reinventing,” 312–13; Denny Boyd in *Sun* (24 February 1989); *JCCA Bulletin* 34, no. 10 (October 1992): 12.

154 These activities were regularly reported in the *JCCA Bulletin*.

155 Robert Nimi, “Health Care for our community,” *JCCA Bulletin* 28, no. 10 (October 1986): 19; Ken Shiaz, “Tonari Gumi Health Care,” *JCCA Bulletin* 28, no. 10 (October 1986): 21.

156 Joy Kogawa, “Is there Justice?” *Rikka* IX, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 12–16. (First published in *Canadian Forum*).

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of their wartime experiences.<sup>157</sup> Because the Japanese-Canadian population was so scattered over greater Vancouver, finding a site that would be convenient for relatives and friends to visit was difficult, but eventually the Health Care Society decided to build at the site of the new Nikkei Centre.<sup>158</sup>

In recent years, there has been some consolidation of organizations. The Japanese Canadian Health Care Society merged with the Japanese Canadian Society for Senior Housing, and the Japanese Canadian National Museum Society and the National Nikkei Heritage Centre merged. Some new immigrants also found a place in the JCCA. A good example is Peter Kubotani, who by 1988 realized that the JCCA would welcome new immigrants; in 1991 he became its president. In 2006 the Greater Vancouver Japanese Immigrants Association became the Nihon Committee of the JCCA.<sup>159</sup>

In September 2000, on a three acre site in Burnaby, the “dead centre” of the lower mainland, the National Nikkei Museum & Heritage Centre opened. Its mandate is “to promote a better understanding and appreciation by all Canadians of Japanese Canadian culture and heritage” and their contribution “to Canadian society, through public programs, exhibits, services, publications, public use of the facilities and special events.” The Centre includes a museum, archives, gallery, and meeting rooms; the Nikkei Home, an assisted living facility; and New Sakura-so, a home for independent seniors. Through its programmes and publications, it has largely accomplished its mandate. By serving as a focal point for so many Japanese Canadian organizations and their friends, it has done much to reconstruct and preserve the community.

After the opening of the Nikkei Centre, Tonari Gumi took over the former quarters of the Japanese Canadian National Museum and Archives on Broadway East, but fewer people — old and young — seemed to be coming, even for its Japanese style lunches. As the demographics of the Japanese community changed, so too did Tonari Gumi. By the early 2000s, though it still served senior citizens, it was, in the words of its director, “not your grandfather’s Tonari Gumi anymore.” By organizing family drop-ins and educational workshops it drew in new volunteers and visitors.<sup>160</sup> Tonari Gumi and the Nikkei Centre reflect the growth of the Japanese Canadian community in

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157 Michael C. Wilson, “Japanese Canadian Places Project,” *Nikkei Images*, I (April/May 1996): 6.

158 Bob Nimi, “Health Care Society Report,” *JCCA Bulletin* 31, no. 1 (January 1989): 17.

159 “Nikkei Place Monthly Update,” *JCCA Bulletin* 44, no. 3 (March 2002): 25; Keiko Miko and Judy Hanazawa, “Merger of the JCCNMS and NNHCS,” *JCCA Bulletin* 44, no. 7 (July 2002): 15; *JCCA Bulletin* 33, no. 10 (October 1991); “JCCA News,” *JCCA Bulletin* 48, no. 5 (May 2006): 18.

160 *JCCA Bulletin* 35, no. 2 (February 1993): 12–13; <[www.nikkeiplace.org](http://www.nikkeiplace.org)>, (viewed 20 May 2008); “Seniors Scene,” *JCCA Bulletin* 44, no. 3 (March 2002): 14; “Tonari Gumi Corner,” *JCCA Bulletin* 45, no. 11 (November 2003): 18.

greater Vancouver. In 2001, 27,040 people of whole or partial Japanese origin lived in the census metropolitan district. More significantly, they illustrate how a community overcame obstacles, both those imposed from the outside and its internal conflicts. From what had been a wasteland, they and their descendants, encouraged by the enthusiasm of new immigrants and buoyed by the popularity of Japanese culture in mainstream society, recovered their heritage. Although they did not reconstruct “Little Tokyo,” they re-created a Japanese Canadian community that, though dispersed by geography, generation, and interests, is a vibrant one whose members also fully participate in the larger greater Vancouver community of which they are very much a part.

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