

TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES:

*Japanese Canadians of the Fraser Valley, 1904-1942*¹

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INTRODUCTION

FROM 1904 TO 1942 JAPANESE CANADIAN families established unique transnational farming communities across British Columbia's Fraser Valley.² The history of these close-knit communities in general and their participation in the farmer's cooperative movement in particular illustrate the process of transnational community formation. In addition, racialization was a dynamic force in shaping, strengthening, and sustaining these distinct communities.

Since the 1980s the concept of racialization, including its role in the history of Japanese immigrants to both North America and South America in the first half of the twentieth century, has gained prominence in scholarly literature.³ Canadian geographers Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson examine racialization in their study of early Japanese Canadian settlers working in the sawmill industry in British Columbia. They describe it as the process by which some of the migrant's physical and cultural characteristics are assigned

¹ I wish to thank my mentor, Robin Anderson, for his encouragement and guidance in the research and writing of this paper.

² For the purposes of this paper, the name "Fraser Valley" applies to what John Mark Read calls "the Upper Fraser Delta." See Read, "The Pre-War Japanese Canadians of Maple Ridge: Landownership and the KEN-Tie" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1975), 41. Included are the north and south sides of the Fraser River, beginning at Surrey in the west and stretching to Chilliwack in the east. The present-day communities in this area are Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Mission, Surrey, Langley, Abbotsford, and Chilliwack. The Japanese Canadian community of Mission is cited most frequently, followed by that of Maple Ridge. While the latter had a larger Japanese Canadian population, the former has been more extensively documented, thanks to the efforts of Valerie Billesberger and her staff at Mission Community Archives.

³ Robert Miles, *Racism and Labour Migration* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982) and *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989).

“political and ideological significance as a means of justifying negative, hostile reaction toward them.”⁴ The notions of the “social construction of race” and of the social construction of “natural difference” are basic to the process of racialization.⁵

Timothy Stanley demonstrates the racialization of Guangdong migrants, a group that was culturally distinct within China but that British and Anglo-Canadians saw as being no different from any other group of Chinese immigrants to Canada. By grouping ethnically distinct people under the broad label of “Chinamen,” and by perceiving the Chinese as intrinsically alien, mainstream Anglo-Canadians relegated all Chinese to a subordinate role in society.⁶ Similar categorization was imposed upon Japanese Canadians whether they hailed, for example, from Hiroshima prefecture or from the island of Okinawa.

Sociologists Gillian Creese and Laurie Peterson show how newspapers, representing the White middle class, racialized Asian immigrants by portraying Chinese Canadians as “foreign and problematic newcomers, who did not share an equal right to shape a community in which many families have lived for generations.”⁷ Interestingly, the authors point out that, by doing this, the dominant White community was also racializing itself.⁸

With regard to Asian Americans, Yen Le Espiritu claims that, although it is partly imposed from above, groups can construct their own ethnicity “within the limits of their situation ... to advance their own political demands.”⁹ In the case of Japanese Canadians, “the

⁴ Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson, “Japanese Canadians and the Racialization of Labour in the British Columbia Sawmill Industry,” *BC Studies* 103 (Fall 1994): 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 57-8. Regarding “natural difference” and the “race-making process,” see also Bob Carter, Marci Green, and Rick Halpern, “Immigration Policy and the Racialization of Migrant Labour: The Construction of National Identities in the USA and Britain,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19, 1 (January 1996): 135-57.

⁶ Timothy Stanley, “Chinamen, Wherever We Go’: Chinese Nationalism and Guangdong Merchants of British Columbia,” *Canadian Historical Review* 77, 4 (December 1996): 485-8.

⁷ Gillian Creese and Laurie Peterson, “Making the News: Racializing Chinese Canadians,” *Studies in Political Economy* 51 (Fall 1996): 137.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 139. See also Ruth Frankenburg, “Whiteness and Americanness: Examining Constructions of Race, Culture and Nation in White Women’s Life Narratives,” in *Race*, ed. Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 61-77. Although “whiteness” is normative in most American and Canadian communities, there is nevertheless a cultural specificity about it that sets it apart and categorizes it according to notions that presume a natural difference between Whites and non-Whites. The White racialization of ethnic groups endorses this “natural difference” and, hence, the racialization of Whites themselves.

⁹ Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Ethnicity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 133.

limits of their situation” included things like segregated communities and receiving lower pay than Whites for performing equivalent jobs. Furthering their own political demands could be as simple as partaking in public education or as complex as winning the vote for Japanese Canadian First World War veterans, which occurred in 1931. In other words, ethnicity is multilayered and is characterized by “the continual creation and re-creation of culture.”¹⁰

Even within the limits imposed by racialization, the culture of Japanese immigrants has never been static. In her study of Japanese Peruvians, Ayumi Takenaka found that they utilized their unique ethnic identity for their own benefit, thus implying that intent and agency play a role in the development and maintenance of ethnic identity.¹¹ She also examined the formation of transnational communities that had similarities with Japanese Canadian farming communities in the Fraser Valley.

Thus, while the racialization of an ethnic group imposes upon it limitations and restrictions, the group can, in turn, utilize aspects of the imposed categorization to further its own interests, to strengthen its solidarity, and to improve its image within the broader community. In other words, difference and otherness can be socially constructive for both the dominant group and for racialized minorities. The negative constructions of the former and the positive constructions of the latter intersect and are part of a dynamic recursive process. Furthermore, attitudes of superiority are not necessarily limited to the dominant group, even though it holds the psychological advantage of possessing greater power and influence. Minorities, too, can believe in their own superiority and use that belief to bolster, motivate, and empower their own communities.

At first glance, it may appear that the *Issei* (first-generation Japanese Canadians) farmers in British Columbia’s Fraser Valley accepted the implied superiority of White Canadians and acquiesced to the racialization imposed upon them by White society. Closer examination, however, suggests that they were not interested in the pursuit of interiorization (full inclusion in mainstream Canadian society) and only appeared to have accepted the inferior status assigned to them. Their belief in the superiority of the Japanese spirit, or *yamato-domashii*, made their exteriorization from White society not only

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹¹ Ayumi Takenaka, “Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, 9 (June/July 1999): 1457–8.

acceptable but also necessary to the preservation of their culture and ethnic identity. Just as Creese and Peterson point out that by racializing a minority group the White population racializes itself, so too the Japanese sense of moral and cultural superiority brought about internal (or self-) racialization long before the *Issei* settled in Canada. Japanese believing themselves to be naturally different from Whites is no less a form of racialization than is Whites believing themselves to be naturally different from Japanese. Interestingly, Japanese internal racialization was based on a positive interpretation of many of the same traits deemed negative by Euro-Canadians. These traits included respect for authority, highly structured family and community life, and a dedication to hard work and frugality. Furthermore, the function of Japanese self-racialization was internal in that it sustained and supported Japanese values and traditions without inflicting harm or imposing change upon mainstream society. This was not the case with White racialization, which was external, largely negative, and imposed restrictions and made demands upon the Japanese Canadian community.

While a degree of ethnic give-and-take is common to all immigrant groups, the *Issei* utilized such opportunities to maintain the essence of their culture, including language, family values, and community structure. Of course some change was inevitable, and the result was culturally distinct transnational communities. William Alonso defines transnational communities as “solidaristic communities in the host country.”¹² These are often geographically concentrated and maintain bonds with their places of origin through remittances, visiting back and forth, sending the children back for education, and thinking about returning for retirement. By the early 1940s these Fraser Valley farming communities met Alonso’s criteria and, with regard to their ethnic traditions, were neither fully Japanese nor fully Canadian but a unique blend of both. This was the result of the manipulation of both internal and external racialization through (1) the retention and evolution of many fundamental Japanese traditions and values, and (2) the acceptance of many aspects of Canadian culture.

Although Canada was heavily influenced by British culture, it was also shaped by multicultural influences within Canadian society. Furthermore, even if Japanese Canadians had not faced prejudice and discrimination, the experience of Japanese migrants in both Peru

¹² William Alonso, “Citizenship, Nationality and Other Identities,” *Journal of International Affairs* 48, 2 (Winter 1995): 595.

and Brazil suggests that, the 1942 expulsion aside,¹³ they were not likely to have assimilated any faster than they did.¹⁴ Moreover, Japanese Canadians did not pose a threat to Canada's security during the Second World War. Rather than maintaining their loyalty to a remote and distant Japan, they developed an allegiance both to their transnational Japanese Canadian communities and to Canada, whose "values of British fair play and democratic procedures"¹⁵ guaranteed their rights and safety. Racialization on both sides contributed significantly to this process, allowing the *Issei* and their communities enough maneuverability to embrace much of what they saw as the best of both cultures. Although the *Issei* may have given the appearance of accepting the racialization imposed by the dominant society, they did not internalize either it or the inferiority it implied. Rather, racialization served to affirm their superiority, encouraging them to maintain their distinct ethnicity. Thus, within the limits imposed upon them, they manipulated their position to their best advantage and, in so doing, over a period of almost forty years created unique transnational communities that were both grateful and loyal to their host country. A very brief look at Japanese history and culture will help to establish both the richness and uniqueness of the Japanese Canadian community.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Most Japanese immigrants who settled in the Fraser Valley were born during Japan's Meiji Period (1867-1912). Ann Waswo explains that, although this period was characterized by the rapid and intense modernization and Westernization of Japan, most Japanese continued

¹³ In agreement with Roy Miki, *Broken Entries* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1998), 18, I use the term "expulsion" rather than the more commonly used "evacuation." As Miki points out, evacuation implies a *temporary* removal from danger and a return when the danger recedes. However, we now know that government authorities planned on the permanent relocation and dispersal of Japanese Canadians.

¹⁴ See both Takenaka, "Transnational Community"; and Christopher A. Reichl, "Stages in the Historical Processes of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988," *Ethnohistory* 42, 1 (Winter 1995): 31-62. See also Tomoko Makabe, "The Theory of the Split Labour Market: A Comparison of the Japanese Experience in Brazil and Canada," *Social Forces* 29, 1 (March 1981): 786-809.

¹⁵ Fumi Tamagi, "Evacuation Experiences of the Moriyama Family," *Coyote Flats*, vol. 2 (Coyote Flats Historical Society, 1972), n.p. Reproduced in "Rambling Reminiscences of Haru Moriyama," recorded and expanded by her daughter Fumi Tamagi (nee Moriyama) in Lethbridge, Alberta, 28 July 1982. Located in Mission Community Archives, box 185-11, Mission, BC (hereafter Moriyama, "Rambling Reminiscences").

to adhere to many ancient *Samurai* traditions.¹⁶ More appropriately referred to as the military tradition of *bushido*, or the way of the warrior,¹⁷ these traditions included preserving the patriarchal family, holding collectivity above individuality, and maintaining discipline, loyalty, and service to authority. Reinforcing these values was a synthesized spirituality consisting of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism – a synthesis that is far too complex to be analyzed here. Suffice it to say that this synthesis promoted the important concepts of honour and pride.

Reginda Sumida explains that Buddhism recognizes the universal spiritual communion of all beings.¹⁸ According to Adachi, Buddhism provided strength of character and personality; it “inculcated *yamato-damashii*, or Japanese spirit,”¹⁹ among the people. They learned obedience to authority, parental dedication to the welfare of children, and filial devotion to parents. Confucianism instilled, among other things, a drive for self-improvement; and Shinto promoted loyalty through ancestor worship and the use of shrines in Japanese Canadian homes.

In addition, honour, based on proper behaviour and tied to a Buddhist/Confucian ethical code, also functioned as a guideline and control mechanism for each member of the Japanese Canadian family, whether within the local community or the larger White community. Moreover, the beliefs and practices of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism contributed to the Japanese immigrant’s sense of pride and moral superiority.

At a grassroots level, and based on personal experience, Maryka Omatsu explains how mythology contributed to these feelings of superiority. Because Japanese immigrants believed that their native land was the offspring of the gods, they prided themselves as a chosen people. What Omatsu calls “indomitable pride” served as “a talisman” to help them through the difficulties they faced in North America.²⁰ Adachi discusses this “pride of race” as something so strong that no amount of racial prejudice could eliminate it.²¹ Christopher Reichl

¹⁶ Ann Waswo, *Modern Japanese Society: 1868-1994* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1996), 22-30.

¹⁷ See Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 155, 180, 185-6, and 248.

¹⁸ Reginda Sumida “The Japanese in British Columbia” (MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1935), 139-40.

¹⁹ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 113.

²⁰ Maryka Omatsu, *Bittersweet Passage* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992), 55.

²¹ Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 109-10.

asserts that a belief in Japanese superiority helped immigrants to preserve ethnic identity and to slow social assimilation. He shows that, in Brazil and Peru, discrimination and segregation were not imposed upon Japanese immigrants; rather, this form of exteriorization was initiated and maintained by the immigrants themselves.²² Hence, it seems highly likely that Japanese Canadian pride and feelings of superiority limited their pursuit of assimilation and would have done so even if Euro-Canadians had been more welcoming. While prejudice and discrimination were clearly unjust and could not have been pleasant to bear, they facilitated a separation of White and Japanese immigrant communities that both groups desired and that both groups tested and altered over time. Thus religion, honour, and, perhaps most important, a sense of pride and superiority provided a seamless continuity between the individual, the patriarchal family, and the Japanese Canadian communities in British Columbia's Fraser Valley.

The 1901 census indicates that, of only 4,738 Japanese immigrants living in Canada, 97 per cent of them resided in British Columbia.²³ The total population of the province at the time was 178,657. But, as Thomas A. Berger points out, when the Chinese Canadian population of 14,885 was added to the Japanese Canadian numbers, it was clear that over 10 per cent of the population belonged to the visibly distinctive "Oriental" group:

The competition for jobs was felt mainly by the working class but all classes in British Columbia felt that the burgeoning Oriental population represented a long-term threat to the White character of the province. They regarded the Orientals, few of whom could speak English, as unassimilable. Thus, they endangered the ideal of White homogeneity in British Columbia.²⁴

This early example of clustering two distinctly different ethnic groups because of perceived similarities in physical appearance is what Espiritu refers to as ethnic "lumping."²⁵ It can also be seen as the beginnings of what might be called the pyramidization²⁶ of

²² Reichl, "Historical Processes of Ethnicity," 31-62.

²³ Charles H. Young and Helen R. Y. Reid, *The Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1939), 6.

²⁴ Thomas R. Berger, "The Banished Canadians: Mackenzie King and the Japanese Canadians," *Fragile Freedoms: Human Rights and Dissent in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin, 1982), 95.

²⁵ Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity*, 7, 23, and 140.

²⁶ Here the term "pyramidization of racialization" refers to the forced clustering of two or more distinctly different ethnic groups by a dominant group for its own purposes (e.g.,

racialization based on the previous racialization of two or more separate groups. However, because the various Asian groups did not share a common language, residential area, or work location in the first half of the twentieth century, they were unable to use this kind of ethnic lumping to their advantage by engaging in a form of panethnicity.²⁷ Therefore Japanese immigrants had to create and sustain their own unique support system not merely in order to survive but also in order to maximize the potential of their racialized position. That support system often emerged in a rudimentary form during the voyage to Canada or in the Canadian workplace.

Most early contact between Japanese Canadians and Whites occurred in the highly charged arena of competition for jobs. However, in the fishing, mining, railroad, and lumber industries, male Japanese Canadians were frequently segregated in work gangs headed by a “boss” who knew enough English to manage the work assignments and to maintain order.²⁸ While this clustering achieved the segregation desired by many employers and co-workers, it also fostered mutual support, the perpetuation of ethnic traits, and the formation of a communication network by which the *Issei* could share news of better opportunities. Through such networks, word of farming opportunities began to spread among the *Issei* during the early decades of the twentieth century. Tokutaro Tsuyuki bought a farm in the Maple Ridge area after a friend and pioneer farmer, Jiro Inouye, “encouraged him to acquire land and make his own living rather than depend on non-Japanese for jobs.”²⁹ In 1928 Tanekichi Araki of Mission said, “After listening to several distinguished people from Japan, farming seems to be the best way for Japanese to settle down.”³⁰ Farming presented an opportunity to convert work gangs and communication networks into permanent communities, to brace against unwanted cultural change, and to achieve a measure of distance from White criticism and discrimination. Moreover, in their country of origin,

segregation). However, the term may also be applied to the intentional coming together of two or more distinctly different ethnic groups for a common purpose, thus resulting in what Espiritu refers to as “panethnicity.”

²⁷ Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity*, 25.

²⁸ Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 31.

²⁹ Family History of Tokutaro Tsuyuki, Maple Ridge Museum and Archives, file entitled “Japanese-People/Ethnic/General History,” Maple Ridge, BC, 1.

³⁰ Juzo Suzuki, ed., “Farming by Japanese in Mission Area,” in *Kanada Nohgyo Hatten Go: Development of Farming in Canada Issue*, Canada Nichinichi Shinbun, November 1929, trans. W.T. Hashizume, p. 19. Located in Mission Community Archives, Hashizume Fonds, Mission, BC.

under the government of Meiji Japan, the *Issei* had seen agriculture as a highly honourable occupation; and under Confucian ideology, it was considered to be the foundation of society.³¹

FRASER VALLEY SETTLEMENT

The settlement of Japanese Canadians in the Fraser Valley progressed slowly and quietly. In 1904 four *Issei* took the first step in Mission, Pitt Meadows, and Haney, while the first *Issei* in Surrey and Mount Lehman arrived in 1907.³² In 1917 Mission had only eighteen *Issei* farms, but by 1942 there were approximately 111 families, almost all of them farmers.³³ They established work patterns and a lifestyle similar to those they had known in Japan.

Farming not only distanced Japanese Canadians from the frustrations of the mainstream but it also allowed them to construct their communities in the tradition of the Japanese farming village, based on the cooperative spirit of the Japanese, who came together to support each other and to work for the common good.³⁴ While the cultural isolation of the community tended to decrease the need to learn English, it provided *Issei* farmers with invaluable social and economic support. Moreover, during the early decades of the twentieth century these communities highlighted the uniqueness of the inland, rural experience as opposed to the coastal experience.³⁵

Discriminatory political and economic factors at work in fishing, mining, lumber mills, and railroad maintenance led many Japanese Canadians to seek stability and self-employment in farming.³⁶ As

³¹ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 34.

³² Read, "The Pre-War Japanese Canadians," 42; Sumida, "The Japanese in British Columbia," 290; Toyo Takata, *Nikkei Legacy: The Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today* (Toronto: NC Press, 1983), 70.

³³ Toyosaburo Nakamura, "Japanese Canadian Settlement in Mission: A Brief History," paper presented at 1980 reunion in Richmond, BC; and Chizu Uyemura, "Family History," 10. Both papers are located in the Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

³⁴ Read, "The Pre-War Japanese Canadians," 6-7.

³⁵ For several reasons, coastal fishing communities such as Steveston were more loosely constructed than were the farming buraku. The work in the former was seasonal and, therefore, the residents were transient and widely dispersed during the off-season. Adachi characterizes the Japanese Canadian section of Steveston in the early 1900s as "a rudimentary community." See Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 27, 47, and 58.

³⁶ While space does not allow for a detailed look at discriminatory legislation and workplace practices, these areas are thoroughly covered by Kobayashi and Jackson, "Japanese Canadians"; Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 26-35 and 50-1; and Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), 81-8 and 244-58.

Kobayashi and Jackson point out, “resistance takes many forms,” and because Japanese Canadians were denied their basic rights, including the right to vote, their resistance took subtle forms.³⁷ Changing jobs was one of them; striving to be hard-working, law abiding citizens was another.

Nevertheless, public outcry against Asian immigrants, partly fuelled by the fear of Japan’s growing industrial and military strength but largely racist, led to the Vancouver Riot of 1907.³⁸ Chinatown was ransacked, but Japanese Canadians were forewarned and, although extensive damage was inflicted, they managed to defend their homes in the “Little Tokyo” of Powell Street until the angry mob turned back and dispersed. However, it appears that the District Council of Mission was far enough removed from the urban and coastal scene to take a different, albeit self-serving, look at the 1907 riot:

This council recognizes the fact that on account of the scarcity of cheap labour in this Province, clearing and other improvements on land cannot be carried out successfully and the development of the Agricultural [sic] resources of the Province is suffering on this account. We, therefore, wish to place ourselves on record as not being in sympathy with the uncivilized actions of those who took part in the recent demonstration at Vancouver against Orientals and we would further recommend that the government take some steps to supply the Province with cheap labour.³⁹

As Patricia Roy points out, the early history of Japanese immigrants in British Columbia “demonstrates how racial antagonisms appear[ed] only *after* members of that race became an economic threat to white men.”⁴⁰ Apparently the few Japanese Canadian farmers scattered throughout the Fraser Valley in 1907 had not yet been categorized as an economic threat due to their work ethic or other “natural differences.”

The 1920s marked the biggest and final wave of Japanese immigration and settlement in the Fraser Valley. In 1923, the revised gentlemen’s agreement with Japan reduced immigration to 150 per year, but the influx of picture brides had already changed the structure of Japanese Canadian communities from one of single men to one of

³⁷ Kobayashi and Jackson, “Japanese Canadians,” 55.

³⁸ See Roy, *White Man’s Province*, chap. 8.

³⁹ Mission District Council Minutes, 5 October 1907, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

⁴⁰ Roy, *White Man’s Province*, 81.

growing families.⁴¹ Consequently, the racialization of Japanese Canadians was amended to include what Whites perceived as a predisposition to produce excessively large families and to promote child labour, particularly within farming families.⁴² Nevertheless, farming in the Fraser Valley offered a relatively settled, stable, and independent livelihood. As Cole Harris observes of immigrants in general, farming “provided a niche, somewhat apart from the modern commercial economy, for families.”⁴³ Moreover, in the specific case of Japanese Canadians, rural life offered the best opportunity for preserving ethnic identity and solidarity while assuring minimal outside interference and minimal cultural assimilation.

GROWTH OF FARMS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

With dynamite and back-breaking labour, Japanese Canadian families cleared thousands of acres in the Fraser Valley from 1904 to 1942. As in the resource industries, the persistent industriousness of Japanese Canadian families did not go unnoticed. However, in agriculture there was an important difference. Whereas *Issei* and Whites had competed for the same jobs in the resource industries, the *Issei* farmers in the Fraser Valley initially sought land that no one else wanted. For example, in 1934 Sumida reports:

The district municipality of Maple Ridge has grown from an uninhabited section of land to a thriving farming area, mainly through the influence of the Japanese, who, in the last 30 years, have turned over three thousand acres of wasteland into fertile and productive farm lands.⁴⁴

The fact that this land was not coveted, at least in its original state, by the White farmer put the individual *Issei* farmer in good stead with his new White neighbours. Moreover, Japanese Canadian settlers were said to be twice as fast at clearing land as were White settlers. In Port Hammond a White farmer reported, “I found out that this

⁴¹ For a detailed history of the series of gentlemen’s agreements, see Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 81-3; Berger, “Banished Canadians,” 98-100; and Young and Reid, *The Japanese Canadians*, 14-5.

⁴² Young and Reid, *The Japanese Canadians*, 27; and Read, “Pre-War Japanese Canadians,” 46.

⁴³ Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 259.

⁴⁴ Sumida, “The Japanese in British Columbia,” 299.

Japanese farmer in eighteen months had cleared four and one-half acres, an area which would take the average White farmer three years to clear.”⁴⁵ Thus, among some Whites, the racialization of Japanese Canadians based on their work ethic generated a certain amount of respect and admiration. So even positive regard was rooted in a view of the Japanese immigrant as “naturally different” and unassimilable. Meanwhile, every success of the *Issei* reinforced their own sense of pride and solidarity as well as their positive view of themselves as “naturally different.” This apparent juxtaposition of internal and external racialization constituted a narrow area of agreement between the two groups when it came to recognizing the “superiority” of the Japanese immigrant work ethic.

Although Japanese Canadians excelled in every type of work they had been allowed to pursue in British Columbia, it could be said that nothing tapped their industriousness and inventiveness as did farming their own land. Their farms were not particularly large, and so their choice of crops was crucial to their economic survival. For example, Sumida reports that in 1934 the average size of a farm in Mission was 12.1 acres.⁴⁶ In Maple Ridge the farms ranged from five to twenty acres.⁴⁷ From the beginning, strawberries and raspberries were the main crops of choice because they offered a high yield per acre and required only minimal capital outlay for equipment and machinery. The fact that the labour with berries was more intense than was the labour with most other local crops gave the *Issei* an opportunity to put their work ethic to full use. Their success not only sustained their families and communities but also surpassed that of their White neighbours and, thus, quietly demonstrated the Japanese immigrant’s superiority. Although the berry industry was still dominated by White farmers in 1920, by 1934 Japanese Canadian farmers were producing approximately 85 per cent of the berries grown in the Fraser Valley.⁴⁸ Sumida claims that these farmers were “largely responsible for placing British Columbia strawberries and raspberries in all the larger cities of Canada, as far east as Toronto, and processed berries as far as England.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 308. This average is based upon eighty-one farmers who paid property taxes in 1934.

⁴⁷ Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), Maple Ridge Branch, *Maple Ridge: A History of Settlement* (Maple Ridge, BC: *Fraser Valley Record*, 1972), 16.

⁴⁸ Young and Reid, *Japanese Canadians*, 55-6.

⁴⁹ Sumida, “The Japanese in British Columbia,” 299-300.

In the *Issei* farming family the wife was just as involved in maintaining the farm as was the husband. Moreover, children would be initiated into farm chores as soon as they were old enough to begin working their way up from the easiest to the most difficult tasks. Not only was the participation of all family members essential to survival, but it was also the Japanese way. To some White farmers this constituted unfair competition, an abuse of women and children, and disrespect for the Sabbath. While their observations of Japanese Canadian families working together in their fields seven days a week may have been accurate, their interpretations of that work scene was racialized. Although *Issei* farmers and their families quietly carried on, members of the Japanese Canadian communities got together to attempt to liaise with the dominant White community in order to discuss problems and work out solutions.

The most prominent and accomplished of these people was Yasutaro Yamaga, who lived in Haney from 1908 to 1942.⁵⁰ Possessing a good understanding of both languages and cultures, Yamaga worked for decades to bridge the gap between the two communities. He spoke to women's groups and youth clubs in the Japanese Canadian community in order to help them understand Canadian culture and traditions. When local Whites complained about Japanese Canadian families dynamiting on Sundays, Yamaga explained the Lord's Day Act to the *Issei* and suggested alternative Sunday activities. He formed a Japanese Canadian PTA to deal with clashes and misunderstandings in the public schools. He also taught Sunday school at an inter-racial, inter-denominational Christian church in Haney. He was a man to whom the White community could relate: he was Christian, he was fluent in English, and he understood Canadian society and politics. While such individuals fostered better relations between the two cultures, these compromises fostered minimal rather than radical change.⁵¹ For example, Sunday dynamiting, heard for miles around, could be replaced by quiet fieldwork that was only apparent to those who happened to pass within view of it. Thus liaisons not only helped achieve good relations with the White community, but they also helped to minimize change in the Japanese Canadian community and, thereby, maximize the preservation of tradition and autonomy.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 311; and Gordon G. Nakayama, *Issei: Stories of Japanese Canadian Pioneers* (Toronto: NC Press, 1984), 50-5.

⁵¹ Nakayama, *Issei*, 52; and Takata, *Nikkei Legacy*, 69.

Despite the usefulness of young people on the farm, *Issei* parents demanded that much of their children's time and energy be directed towards academic studies. A 1934 survey of BC schools evaluated the progress of *Nisei* (second-generation Japanese Canadian) students. The *Nisei* were generally seen as punctual, sincere, industrious, orderly, and disciplined. They were above average in most subjects but frequently showed some difficulty with English.⁵² The greatest ease with English appeared to be among the students in Mission, where, at the request of the Japanese Canadian community, an English kindergarten had been established by Mrs. Barnett around 1918,⁵³ and in Haney, where Yamaga had helped to organize a similar kindergarten in 1927.⁵⁴ The keenness of the *Issei* to enrol their children in English kindergarten year after year underscores their commitment to academic success. Because academic success upheld the honour of the family and the community as a whole, it was expected to earn the respect of the broader White community as well.

Although the *Issei* encouraged a Canadian education, they were also anxious for the *Nisei* to retain proficiency in the Japanese language and to learn about Japanese history and culture. Because most *Issei* could not communicate well in English, the use of Japanese at home was essential. The Japanese language school was designed to meet this need and to serve as a buffer against public education, which, it was feared, might adversely affect *Nisei* attitudes. Therefore, several days a week most *Nisei* attended the language school as well as the public school.⁵⁵ While language schools strengthened Japanese language skills, they also provided one of many organized activities that forged links within the Japanese Canadian community and, under the umbrella of the *Nokai* (see following section), reinforced ethnicity.

THE CENTRE OF THE COMMUNITY

Like their counterparts in rural Japan, most Japanese Canadian farming communities formed a *Nokai* – literally, an agricultural society. The *Nokai*, however, being a complex social and economic

⁵² Sumida, "Japanese in British Columbia," 513-5.

⁵³ Barnett Family Fonds, 172, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

⁵⁴ Yasutaro Yamaga Papers, University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections, Japanese Canadian Collection, box 20, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁵ Tomoko Makabe, "Tami Nakamura," *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 142-3; Moriyama, "Rambling Reminiscences," 27; Sumida, "Japanese in British Columbia," 524-7.

association, was much more than an agricultural society. Outside of Japan the *Nokai* also became the institutional defender of cultural integrity. In the Fraser Valley it was adapted to meet the needs of Japanese Canadian farming families. However, this adaptation was as gradual and inconspicuous as was the movement to rural life.

Construction of a centrally located *Nokai* hall ensured that the *Nokai* and its activities were accessible to all and established it as the focal point of the community. Mission, Pitt Meadows, and Surrey each had at least one *Nokai*, while Maple Ridge had a Japanese Canadian population of sufficient size and geographic spread to establish four *Nokais*, each with its own hall.⁵⁶ Takata claims that there were even small loosely structured *Nokai*, of no more than twenty families each, at Mount Lehman, Clayburn, and Coghlan.⁵⁷

The *Nokai* assumed two distinct roles within the farming community. The first was to serve as an economic grower cooperative to help regulate berry prices, provide a central depot for freshly picked berries, buy supplies and rent equipment in volume, provide a meeting place for farmers, and serve as a financial lending institution for its members. The second and more complex function was to serve as a benevolent society. To enable the *Nokai* to support both roles, Sumida explains that members, meaning *everyone* in the community, paid 10 per cent of their annual income to the association.⁵⁸

When some Whites criticized the *Issei* for starting up separate farmers associations, their response focused on language barriers. In a letter to the editor of the *Fraser Valley Record*, S. Kuwakara defended the *Nokai* on the grounds that most of its members were “unable to command English language.” He went on to offer reassurance of the members’ commitment to Canada:

I’m sure all of us have a mind to live our lives here in this country, so that we are always striving to learn your manners, customs and education. Our children are attending to the public schools or higher one, while young boys study English at home or at private night schools.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Michael Hoshiko, ed., *Who Was Who: Pioneer Japanese Families in Delta and Surrey* (Marceline, MO: Herff Jones, 1998), 214; and Read, “The Pre-War Japanese Canadians,” 18, whose thesis takes a close look at the structure and function of the *Nokai* of the Maple Ridge communities of Haney, Hammond, Ruskin, Albion, and Whonnock.

⁵⁷ Takata, *Nikkei Legacy*, 70. *New Canadian* periodically reports on activities in the Coghlan Japanese Hall, including 16 January 1940, 3; and also 17 January 1941, 6.

⁵⁸ Sumida, “Japanese in British Columbia,” 303.

⁵⁹ *Fraser Valley Record*, 8 January 1920.

The *Nokai* helped to perpetuate the Japanese language, and the *Issei* no doubt saw this as a positive function. Nevertheless, the growing number of English-speaking leaders and liaisons within the *Nokai* worked around the language barrier to address the concerns of the larger White community while helping to maintain Japanese traditions in the smaller community. The *Nokai* was, therefore, fundamental to the development of unique transnational communities throughout the Fraser Valley because it offered significant resistance to both radical cultural change and to full assimilation. This is particularly apparent in the *Nokai's* social and cultural functions.

As a benevolent society the *Nokai* was extremely diversified, supporting sports clubs, skill development, education, religious gatherings, and a variety of social services. Many of these activities (e.g., Sunday worship, the English kindergarten for pre-schoolers, and sports such as basketball and baseball) appeared to have a Canadian flavour. It is interesting to note that baseball was introduced to Japan in 1872 and that, within ten years, it was a standard sport in Japanese high schools.⁶⁰ In other words, baseball was already part of the Japanese immigrant's tradition and, contrary to appearances, did not constitute an adaptation to Canadian life. Likewise with the Buddhist Sunday worship: the *Issei* seem to have taken what they already practised within their community and made it fit the Canadian mould.

Although Buddhist temples were built in Mission and Port Haney by 1928, Buddhist services continued to be held in the *Nokai* hall of most communities.⁶¹ In 1931 66.7 per cent of Japanese Canadians in British Columbia claimed to be Buddhist. *Issei* Senjiro Tonomura of Mission explains his long-standing Buddhist faith: "I hope that the teachings of Buddha will make the '*Nohkai*' run more smoothly and result in harmony amongst the farming community."⁶² It should be pointed out, however, that the Buddhist faithful, such as Tonomura, allowed the gradual "Christianization" of their religion in Canada.

As Adachi tells us, Buddhist temples took the form of Christian churches, with hymnbooks, pews, and organs. Sunday services and Sunday school, whether in a *Nokai* hall or in a temple, were soon organized to resemble the Christian model. Even the conversion of Christian hymns to Buddhist versions – "Buddha loves me, this I know / For the Sutra tells me so" – demonstrate the influence of

⁶⁰ Paul R. Spickard, *Japanese Americans* (New York: Twayne, 1996), 9.

⁶¹ Sumida, "Japanese in British Columbia," 144.

⁶² Suzuki, "Farming by Japanese," 5.

Christianity.⁶³ Perhaps they not only reflect the inherent adaptability of Buddhism but also the *Issei* desire to give the impression of embracing Euro-Canadian culture while quietly maintaining Shinto shrines in their homes and Buddhist values in their family and community life.

Not only did the *Nokai* support both the Buddhist and later the Christian religious interests of its membership, but it also reinforced the social hierarchy and expectations of the community. With regard to young people, the *Nokai* kept them occupied and focused on sports and cultural activities that reflected well on the community as a whole, often leaving them little time to socialize with White classmates and neighbours. The *Nokai* not only housed the Japanese language school, but it also contributed to its operating expenses and arranged for teachers to come from Japan. Space was offered for clubs (e.g., Judo and Kendo for boys; sewing, crafts, and dance for girls; and *Fujinkai*, a club geared towards the needs and roles of the farming wife, for women). Of all the members of the Japanese Canadian farming community, it was the women who were most restricted within the world of the *Nokai*.

Traditionally, Japanese women served their husbands and children within the confines of the home and their village. Midge Ayukawa explains that the picture bride was taught her subservient role both at home and in the Japanese school system. However, Ayukawa cautions us not to regard Japanese Canadian women as passive. Even in their narrow roles they were able to work to improve their lives and, in particular, the lives of their children.⁶⁴ In the Maple Ridge area, Kane Inouye, whose husband was less traditional than were most *Issei*, formed the first Japanese Canadian women's club in 1910; its purpose was to enable people to discuss mutual concerns, to learn to speak English, and to understand Canadian customs.⁶⁵ Little is known of the extent of its success. However, we do know that low status coupled with the language barrier tended to maintain an unbridgeable gap between *Issei* women and White women. Although Tami Nakamura claims her White neighbours were "nice," she also verifies the narrowness of her sphere of interaction: "We never had any white friends to meet with."⁶⁶ Spud Murphy of Abbotsford admits that,

⁶³ Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 114.

⁶⁴ Midge Ayukawa, "Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in Early Twentieth Century British Columbia," *BC Studies* 105-6 (Spring/Summer 1995): 105-6, 112.

⁶⁵ Takata, *Nikkei Legacy*, 72.

⁶⁶ Makabe, *Picture Brides*, 141.

while he and his Japanese Canadian neighbours' children were the best of friends, their parents did not socialize together (telephone interview with author, 17 January 2000).

Although most *Issei* women had some involvement in women's clubs and social groups in the *Nokai* and within either the Buddhist or Christian churches, gendered roles were rigidly adhered to, leaving interaction with the White community firmly in the hands of the men. Machi Shinohara of Surrey seemed to enjoy a bit more mobility and socializing than did many *Issei* women. According to her son:

One of her few *tanoshimis* (pleasures) was to be a member of the New Westminster Buddhist *Fujinkai* where each Sunday the ladies gathered to socialize. Another was to buy a *bakappe* (Chinese lottery ticket), like all the ladies in the neighbourhood. There was a time when she won \$47 and didn't know what to do with the money, because her *bakappe* buying was a secret from her husband.⁶⁷

Even the more "worldly" Machi Shinohara worried about her husband's opinion and reaction, perhaps because she, like other picture brides, knew her place. With the help of the *Nokai*, segregation from the White community perpetuated not only the traditional position of the Japanese Canadian woman but also the language barrier between her and the white woman. This cultural isolation was instrumental in preserving Japanese tradition at its familial roots, and it serves as an example of ethnic practices resulting in more severe restrictions being placed on some of its own members than might have been imposed by the external racialization of the broader community.

In times of family hardship or tragedy, the *Nokai* became a social service agency. Read confirms that the association and its members provided every distraught or needy family with "whatever was necessary to get them through the difficult period."⁶⁸ This goes a long way to explaining why very few Japanese Canadians were dependent on government relief programs. Even in the depression year of 1934 "the percentage of Japanese on direct relief was less than one-third of the percentage of all groups on relief."⁶⁹ Haru Moriyama likens the Japanese Canadian community to a big family, adding, "No wonder the Japanese endured and survived so well no matter what misfortune befell them. They knew how to help each other."⁷⁰ The

⁶⁷ Hoshiko, *Who Was Who*, 221.

⁶⁸ Read, "Pre-War Japanese Canadians," 12.

⁶⁹ Young and Reid, *Japanese Canadians*, 147-8.

⁷⁰ Moriyama, "Rambling Reminiscences," 22.

traditional Japanese ethic of mutual help served to minimize the intrusion of the dominant society's social service agencies. Furthermore, it fit well with the exteriorization of Japanese Canadians desired by both groups.

Throughout the Fraser Valley the *Nokai* hall was also used for various forms of ethnic-based entertainment, including Japanese films, *odori* (Japanese dance), *naniwabushi* (stylized Japanese folk singing), and various festivals and celebrations.⁷¹ The *Nokai* organized work bees and building bees among its membership (interview with Mas Okamura, 19 July 1990).⁷² Whether it was to build a road, a family home, or a chicken coop, the "bee" provided an occasion for sharing meals and conversation.

Although the *Nokai*-dominated structure of the Japanese Canadian community was based on life in Japan, it evolved in relation to the Fraser Valley setting, whose crops, climate, and terrain differed from those found in Japan. And, of course, there was the larger Euro-Canadian community. Cole Harris strongly suggests that the new environment inhabited by an immigrant group is a "motor of social change" that makes replication of the society from which it came impossible.⁷³ While total replication is indeed impossible, for a number of reasons the Japanese Canadian community was able to replicate and preserve its heritage more fully than were most immigrant groups. These included the language barrier, the strength of *bushido* and Buddhist traditions, and, in particular, the belief in the superiority of the Japanese spirit. Another reason was the dominance of the *Nokai* in the community life of Japanese Canadians. The *Nokai* not only played an important role in maintaining the core of Japanese culture, but it also became a conduit for gestures of good will towards the dominant White community and for demonstrations of many pleasant aspects of Japanese culture.

Increasingly, through the *Nokai* the *Issei* organized activities that connected them in positive ways to the greater community but also minimized White involvement in their way of life and social structure. Essentially, the *Issei* protected their interests by revealing and sharing only what they wanted the dominant community to see. Because they sought the peaceful preservation of their communities and did not wish to lose them through banishment or assimilation, they painted a picture of Japanese Canadian life that would please their White

⁷¹ Hoshiko, *Who Was Who*, 90, 93.

⁷² Tape SMA 90.021-18, Surrey Archives, Surrey, BC.

⁷³ Harris, *Resettlement of British Columbia*, 254-5.

neighbours. Just as Kurashige shows how one of the purposes of “Nisei Week” in 1930s Los Angeles was to “underscore the community’s openness to white America,” so Japanese Canadian contributions were designed to do the same in the 1930s Fraser Valley without actually throwing the doors wide open to White scrutiny and influence.⁷⁴

For example, in both Mission and Maple Ridge the *Nokai* halls were often made available to the community at large for such mutually relevant gatherings as school concerts and graduations.⁷⁵ More commonly, the *Nokai* organized activities that took the *Issei* into the larger community. For instance, Yasutaro Yamaga tells us that, following the Armistice in November 1918, the Japanese Canadians of Haney joined in the community celebrations by staging a Japanese lantern parade, consisting of over 300 people with noisemakers and lighted paper lanterns waving up and down along the Trunk Road after dark.⁷⁶ In April 1925 the Mission Memorial Hospital thanked the Japanese Canadians “who so kindly came forward with help in the form of teams and labour ... in the matter of beautifying the grounds” of the hospital.⁷⁷ The *Nokai* in Mission entered a float in May Day celebrations, and *Nisei* school children participated in the maypole dance and other activities (interview with Beverley Mitchell, 21 January 2000).⁷⁸ Also in Mission, community celebrations of Empire Day in 1925 and George VI’s coronation in 1937 featured *Nokai*-sponsored fireworks displays, which demonstrated a spectacular crowd-pleasing aspect of Japanese culture.⁷⁹ However, although the *Nokai* offered the *Issei* farmers the basic structure from which to pursue broader affiliations with the White community, it also isolated them.

Robert Miles stresses that the racialization of people involves “the processes in which they participate and the structures and institutions that result.”⁸⁰ The *Nokai* functioned as an institution of external racial-

⁷⁴ Lon Kurashige, “The Problem of Biculturalism: Japanese American Identity and Festival before World War II,” *Journal of American History* 86:4 (March 2000): 1647.

⁷⁵ CFUW, 19 and 6 May 1941, 2.

⁷⁶ Yamaga Papers, University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections, Japanese Canadian Collection, box 20, 3-4.

⁷⁷ *Fraser Valley Record*, 30 April 1925.

⁷⁸ Mitchell recalls taking part in May Day festivities with her schoolmates, White and Japanese alike. See also Beverley Mitchell, “Letter from Sakaye,” *Fiddlehead* 99 (1973): 2-14, a short story based on Mitchell’s childhood experiences in Mission during the late 1930s and early 1940s. A photo of the Japanese Canadian May Day float for 1936 is available through the Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

⁷⁹ “Empire Day Programme, 25 May 1925,” *Fraser Valley Record*, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC. and “Coronation Souvenir Programme in Honour of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, 12 May 1937,” *Fraser Valley Record*, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

⁸⁰ Miles, *Racism*, 76.

ization by helping to maintain the segregation desired by the White community. The lack of White interference in the *Nokai* reinforces this theory since the White community made an effort neither to welcome Japanese Canadian membership in most Euro-Canadian organizations nor to prohibit or restrict the *Nokai*. For example, on 29 November 1929 Mission Village Council approved plans for the new Japanese Hall, and in March 1941 the Matsqui Municipal Council re-licensed the Clayburn Japanese Language School.⁸¹

On the other hand, by maintaining Japanese culture and social structure the *Nokai* was a highly effective tool of self-racialization. In Haney, Yamaga criticized the *Nokai* for isolating itself from the White community. He states that he always had to fight for Japanese Canadian participation in Haney community events.⁸² In Whonnock, Harry Pullen recalls that Japanese Canadians “kept pretty well to themselves in the early days” but that, as time went on, they began mixing more with the White community (interview with Harry Pullen, 22 July 1985).⁸³ Nevertheless, the most significant overlap with the dominant community grew out of the shared economic base of farming: as the *Issei* farmers excelled in berry production, White farmers recognized advantages in establishing and maintaining economic ties with them.

It was only after White and Japanese Canadians joined economic forces that a significant bond was created between the two communities. That bond, however, did not lead to social and political integration, nor did it diminish the importance of the *Nokai*, which remained the primary organization of Japanese Canadian farming families and a central element in the evolution of their unique transnational communities. The growth of economic ties stemmed from the competitive nature of the marketplace rather than from any desire for assimilation on either side.

Like the Powell Street entrepreneurs in Vancouver, the success of the *Issei* farmers in the Fraser Valley often depended upon sound investment and business decisions. Unlike the Powell Street merchants, the *Issei* farmers’ customers were not Japanese Canadians.⁸⁴ As can be seen from the berry production statistics (see above), the products

⁸¹ *Abbotsford, Sumas, Matsqui News*, 12 March 1941.

⁸² Yamaga, Papers, 14.

⁸³ Taped interview located under Whonnock Community Association, Historical Project 1985, box 2, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

⁸⁴ Hoshiko, *Who Was Who*, 214. Michael Hoshiko, son of a Surrey *Issei* farmer, makes this distinction in a short article on the Surrey Berry Co-op. Sumida, “Japanese in British Columbia,” 280, verifies the need for Japanese firms involved in trade and business to find most of their customers among the Japanese.

of the Fraser Valley *Issei* farmer had become an important and integrated part of British Columbia's food production system. This integration was enhanced and strengthened by the growth of the cooperative movement; however, as the farming communities of the Fraser Valley grew, it became increasingly important for Japanese Canadians and White farmers to join together in order to stabilize prices and to maximize profit.

EXPANSION AND THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

As the years passed, the *Issei* expanded their farms and diversified their products in order to ensure their survival. Both winter rhubarb grown in hothouses and spring strawberries grown in long, low greenhouses were Japanese Canadian innovations.⁸⁵ As a highly organized community tackling the day-to-day and season-to-season problems of farming, the *Issei* did well. However, as new crops and methods developed, overproduction often glutted the market, leading to price-slashing and financial loss. Dealing effectively with problems related to supply, pricing, and shipping necessitated connecting with the broader agricultural community. Small, specialized organizations, such as the Rhubarb Grower's Association established in 1925, began to bring Japanese Canadian and White farmers together.⁸⁶ While translators and liaisons like Yasutaro Yamaga partially bridged the language barrier affecting these business negotiations, one of Yamaga's greatest contributions to Fraser Valley farming communities proved to be his leadership skills within the cooperative union movement.

Yamaga's twofold purpose – to deal with marketing problems as well as anti-Japanese Canadian sentiment – was advanced when he drew Japanese Canadians and Whites together to form the Maple Ridge Berry Growers' Cooperative Exchange in 1927.⁸⁷ This co-op not only helped to stabilize market prices, but it also developed a packing plant, a processing plant, and storage facilities. Furthermore, it functioned successfully until the Second World War.⁸⁸ Also during 1927 Yamaga assisted in establishing a comparable co-op in Surrey.

Meanwhile, in Mission a similar movement was under way but took longer to come to fruition. In 1929 Taichiro Hattori wrote, "Of

⁸⁵ Suzuki, "Farming by Japanese," 20; CFUW, 18.

⁸⁶ Sumida, "Japanese in British Columbia," 311.

⁸⁷ Nakayama, *Issei*, 53-4; Sumida, "Japanese in British Columbia," 315-6.

⁸⁸ Nakayama, *Issei*, 54.

course, we would like to market in partnership with the white community. However hard we tried to date, it has ended with poor results.”⁸⁹ No public record of meetings and dialogue related to this effort is known to exist. However, on 30 December 1932 the *Fraser Valley Record* announced the formation of the Pacific Cooperative Union (PCU), declaring that the initial membership of 120 growers “means the majority of the growers in the district are behind this organization.”⁹⁰ While Cherrington credits only White farmer John B. Shimek with bringing about the formation of the PCU, he does acknowledge that the active participation of the Japanese Canadian growers was important to its success.⁹¹ Small wonder, considering that in 1934 the membership of the PCU was 75 per cent Japanese Canadian and 25 per cent White, while the produce handled was 90 per cent Japanese Canadian and 10 per cent White.⁹²

Although the language barrier may have prevented some *Issei* from assuming positions on boards like the PCU directorate, they *were* represented. In both 1936 and 1939, for example, Teizo Nakashima served as vice-president, and four other *Issei* farmers sat on the directorate.⁹³ Furthermore, the PCU and other large agricultural groups (such as the Federated Coast Growers [FCG]) welcomed translators and interpreters to their meetings “to enable the Japanese members to follow the trend of the business.”⁹⁴ The FCG is also reported to have issued and circulated Japanese translations of written materials related to its meetings about proposed changes in the provincial marketing act.⁹⁵

A 1934 article in the *Record* attests to the success of the PCU – “it is the premier shipping organization in the lower mainland” – and discusses the union’s connections with the Prairies and eastern Canada.⁹⁶ While the small local farmers’ associations (such as those in Whonnock, Ruskin, Mt. Lehman, and Coghlan) continued to serve local needs, their affiliation with the PCU addressed broader marketing concerns (interview with Harry Pullen, taped 22 July 1985. Whonnock Community Assoc., Box 2, Mission Community Archives).⁹⁷ The

⁸⁹ Suzuki, “Farming by Japanese,” 21.

⁹⁰ *Fraser Valley Record*, 30 December 1932.

⁹¹ John Cherrington, *Mission on the Fraser* (Vancouver: Mitchell, 1974), 146-7.

⁹² Sumida, “Japanese in British Columbia,” 311-2.

⁹³ *Fraser Valley Record*, 31 December 1936; 9 February 1939.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21 December 1934; 21 February 1935.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 February 1935.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 December 1934.

⁹⁷ See also *Chilliwack Progress*, 15 April 1942, 4.

extensive reach of the PCU is demonstrated by its 1938 collaboration with the Mennonites of the Yarrow Growers' Cooperative. T.D. Regehr reveals that the two co-ops negotiated a contract to sell barrels of berries packed in sodium dioxide to British jobbers.⁹⁸ Thus the cooperative movement not only developed a complicated web of interdependency within and between neighbouring communities, but it also extended that web across regions of the province, the nation, and the world. Furthermore, the success of the PCU reflected well on its Japanese Canadian members and their communities, perhaps even giving them an overblown sense of security in relation to the broader community.

Neither the outbreak of the Second World War nor Japan's entrance into it in 1941 severed the economic bond between Japanese Canadians and the PCU. It would take the federal government's order for "evacuation" to inflict that fatal wound. However, life in the Fraser Valley was not immune from world events.

SHADOWS CAST BY WORLD EVENTS

The First World War stimulated higher prices for berries and an expansion of cooperation between Japan and Britain, which had been initiated by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902. Both of these factors had a mellowing effect on public opinion towards Japanese Canadians. However, a series of economic downturns during the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s repeatedly stimulated anti-Japanese sentiment. No doubt most Japanese Canadians learned neither to invest too much hope in the occasional periods of tolerance during economic upswings nor to venture too far from the protection of the *Nokai* and the Japanese Canadian community. Their pride in the Japanese spirit and way of life strengthened and sustained them. A close reading of the resources shows that they not only believed they could see their way through any crisis but that they also believed their good example as productive, law-abiding citizens would eventually win the respect and trust of White Canadians. Perhaps they did not anticipate the extent to which many White Canadians would link them to the imperialistic actions of Japan.

Throughout the years of rural settlement by Japanese Canadians, the country they had left behind was frequently in the news. Early

⁹⁸ T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 110.

newspaper articles highlighting Japan's modernization and success at international diplomacy were soon replaced by reports on the expanding Japanese war machine and military conquests in Asia.⁹⁹ Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1932, and its continued aggression in Asia, elevated public fears to the point that, when the Sino-Japanese War erupted in 1937, some British Columbians believed their province would be Japan's next conquest. Politicians and other community leaders could be heard to play upon this fear in order to push for harsh measures against Japanese Canadians. Irrational fears and hatred had always been there: now they could be justified by citing national and international crises. New calls for the exclusion of Japanese Canadians were heard throughout the province. Few voices cited the long-standing loyalty and respect of Japanese Canadians for Canadian authorities.

Maryka Omatsu explains *Issei* regard for authority and for the concept of *shikataga-nai*, or fatalistic resignation:

The overwhelming majority of the *issei* were traditionalists, who respected authority, whether it was the Emperor, his consul, or the government of Mackenzie King. Unless pushed into a corner that allowed no saving of face they were willing to accept their second-class status in Canada with Confusion fatalism – *shikataga-nai*.¹⁰⁰

The *Issei* may have accepted the lower status assigned to them, but that does not mean that they believed in it. The protective structure of the *Nokai* community and family enabled the *Issei* to outwardly accept the status quo while inwardly embracing a spiritual and intellectual rejection of inferiority. Furthermore, the loyalty and respect of the community extended, as Omatsu says, to whomever the *Issei* perceived to be the ruling authority. In Canada that encompassed the existing political structure, from the municipal government right up to the office of the prime minister and even the British monarch. While Japanese Canadians may have expressed some pride in the military victories of Japan prior to the Second World War, this was essentially an extension of ethnic pride rather than a display of national loyalty. Just as Stanley demonstrates that Chinese Canadians believed a strong China would help earn them the respect of White Canadians, so too the *Issei* believed that Japan's growing

⁹⁹ See *Chilliwack Progress*, Wednesday, 1 June 1904, 4, and 11 October 1905, for early reports of Japanese modernization and expansion. In the 1930s and 1940s almost all Fraser Valley newspapers ran articles reporting on Japanese imperialism and military conquests.

¹⁰⁰ Omatsu, *Bittersweet Passage*, 57.

strength and imperialism in the 1920s and 1930s would reflect well upon them.¹⁰¹ Although they, like Stanley's subjects, may have wanted to maintain some ties to the homeland in case they were eventually expelled from Canada, their commitment to family and community in the Fraser Valley was extremely complex and was suggestive of a deep commitment to Canada itself. This commitment was most apparent as the children of the *Issei* matured and began to seek their place in Canadian society.

Throughout this time of growing international unease, the *Nisei* were maturing under the influence of two distinct cultures. Canadian citizens by birth, they were experiencing the same public education and peer group influence as were other Canadian children, while their home life continued to be shaped by the authoritarian, patriarchal, and honour-bound traditions of their parents and Japan. Over time, the Canadian values of individualism and egalitarianism began to challenge traditional Japanese values, creating stress and conflict between the *Nisei* and their parents. While the *Issei* wanted their children to understand and to embrace their Japanese heritage, they recognized that a degree of assimilation was necessary if they were to be accepted as Canadians with full rights and opportunities. But they also knew from experience that *Nisei* attempts at inclusion would not go unchallenged by the broader community. Only the Japanese Canadian community could provide the solidarity and support needed by the *Nisei*. It therefore became more important than ever to attempt to maintain ethnic values, customs, and institutions.¹⁰²

Sumida asserts that in rural areas such as the Fraser Valley there was more mingling of *Nisei* with Whites, better relations between White and Japanese Canadian families, and less discrimination than was the case in the urban and coastal areas. He further suggests that this relative harmony was related to the *Issei*'s integration into commercial agriculture and the system of cooperatives.¹⁰³ Tami Nakamura speaks to this in relation to the Mission community:

One reason there wasn't any discrimination in Mission was that whites and Japanese were in the same strawberry producers' association. Strawberries were all shipped out from the association at

¹⁰¹ Stanley, "Chinamen," 502-3.

¹⁰² A thorough look at *Issei/Nisei* relations can be found in Adachi's Chapter 7 entitled "Generations," 157-78.

¹⁰³ Sumida, "Japanese in British Columbia," 443 and 330.

the same price. So the races weren't likely to go up against each other on account of their interests.¹⁰⁴

Whatever the reason, numerous examples of joint community efforts between Japanese Canadians and Euro-Canadians have been recorded.

In Mission, the *Fraser Valley Record* reported on two annual Christmas programs that Emma Barnett organized for the Mission community.¹⁰⁵ One was given by the Japanese Canadian English kindergarten and the other by the Japanese Canadian Girls Club. Both programs were in English. In both 1936 and 1937, Jujutsu and Judo exhibitions, including youth classes, were held at the Japanese Hall and were open to the Mission community.¹⁰⁶ In April 1937 the *Fraser Valley Record* reported on a joint meeting of men from the English-speaking St. Andrews United Church and the Japanese United Church in Mission.¹⁰⁷ There was a service, a social hour, and an English speaker whose talk was translated by Mr. Kudo for the Japanese-speaking guests. In Haney, Yamaga describes an annual community Thanksgiving dinner and music program for which Japanese Canadian women provided the main course and for which White women provided pastry and beverages. Yamaga observes that "there could not be seen a speck of racial hatred among the audience."¹⁰⁸ Spud Murphy reports that, as a youth in the Abbotsford area, he played basketball and competed in track on school-based teams that were made up of Japanese Canadians and Whites. They often visited other communities to compete. Of the Japanese Canadian friends and teammates of his youth he said, "You don't see colour. I've never seen colour" (telephone interview with author, 17 January 2000). Many White children who had Japanese Canadian neighbours report playing together and being friends.¹⁰⁹

Outside the Fraser Valley, Takata tells us that *Nisei* were often excluded from public places such as restaurants and swimming pools and that they were often segregated in theatres.¹¹⁰ While this is an

¹⁰⁴Makabe, *Picture Brides*, 142.

¹⁰⁵*Fraser Valley Record*, 7 January 1932.

¹⁰⁶*Fraser Valley Record*, 2 April 1936 and 25 February 1937.

¹⁰⁷*Fraser Valley Record*, 15 April 1937.

¹⁰⁸Yamaga, Papers, 8-9.

¹⁰⁹Koazi Kujikawa interviewed by David Buss, March 1991. Tape at Mission Community Archives, Box 185-15; Sumida, "Japanese in British Columbia," 438. Also see Moriyama, "Rambling Reminiscences," 15, where she discusses her children's friendship with the children of their German neighbours.

¹¹⁰Takata, *Nikkei Legacy*, 23-4.

area that warrants further study, it does not appear to have been the case in the Fraser Valley. It is known, however, that in all communities, once the *Nisei* completed high school, they encountered many of the same types of job discrimination that their parents had faced decades earlier, before taking up farming. Education choices were also severely limited or led to dead ends in the job market. Violet Vachon (née Kujikawa) explained that she had wanted to take a commercial course after graduating from high school in 1938. However, knowing that she wouldn't get an office job because of her race, she abandoned the idea.¹¹¹ Teruko Hidaka of Whonnock was allowed to complete her teacher training but then was refused a teaching certificate.¹¹² Thus, *Nisei* dreams of economic and occupational advancement were dashed: the nation and society they had come to love and respect did not want them in the mainstream. For many *Nisei* in the Fraser Valley this meant remaining at home to work on the farm. While many did this begrudgingly, they did find solace in the transnational communities of their parents, where Japanese values and community spirit reinforced their ethnicity and self-esteem.

In spite of these challenges within the family, the Japanese Canadian farmers in the Fraser Valley found cause for optimism as the 1940s approached. Farming continued to diversify, offering new, promising opportunities. Fraser Valley newspapers tell us that by 1929 a hop farm of 640 acres was operating on the Sumas prairie and that within ten years PCU leaders were urging members to consider growing hops to check the overproduction of berries.¹¹³

Although the newspapers could also be counted on for periodic anti-Japanese Canadian ranting, the late 1930s produced some positive, supportive press for Japanese Canadians living in the Fraser Valley. On 14 April 1938 the *Maple Ridge Leader* ran two editorials in support of Japanese Canadians.¹¹⁴ The first refers to Japanese aggression in Asia and urges: "Let us be fair in our dealings with our Japanese citizens, who have no voice or part in this war, and with whose country Canada is at peace and likely to remain so." The second writer thought there was too much agitating against the local Japanese Canadians, who are "good industrious law-abiding citizen(s)," and

¹¹¹ Violet Vachon (nee Kujikawa) interviewed by David Buss, 15 March 1992. Tape #309, Box 185-15, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

¹¹² Whonnock Community Association – Historical Project, 1985. Transcription of alphabetical card file by Fred Braches, January 1996, 15. Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

¹¹³ *Abbotsford, Sumas, Matsqui News*, 17 April 1929 and 8 February 1939.

¹¹⁴ *Maple Ridge Leader*, 14 April 1938.

suggests that “a little more Christianity is the first stepping-stone.” In 1938 the inception of the *New Canadian* newspaper in Vancouver gave voice to the concerns and opinions of the *Nisei*. Although somewhat removed from the Fraser Valley, the *New Canadian* was distributed there and frequently printed brief reports and articles from local *Nisei* organizations. Furthermore, articles from the *New Canadian* were reprinted in mainstream papers all over the country. In 1939 the *North Fraser Leader* ran one such article, which quoted Yasutaro Yamaga on the contributions of the Japanese Canadian farmers to the berry industry in Maple Ridge.¹¹⁵ Because all of this positive press coverage preceded the war-induced economic upswing of the early 1940s, it cannot be linked to that phase of prosperity; rather, it likely signifies a gradual erosion of the external racialization of *Issei* farmers in the Fraser Valley. Unfortunately, that erosion was too late and too slow to save the Japanese Canadian farming communities.

DESTRUCTION OF THE TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES

Peter Ward’s scholarly study of the half-century public campaign against Japanese Canadians in British Columbia concluded that their expulsion from their homes and property in 1942 was a result of broad-based racism stimulated by two major factors. The first was the “deeply irrational yearning” for a racially and socially homogeneous White British Columbia; the second was “white British Columbia’s tendency to identify Japanese immigrants and their children with the expansionist foreign policy of Japan.”¹¹⁶ Although White fear and hatred may have waned periodically over the previous four decades, as international relations deteriorated calls for the removal of Japanese Canadians grew louder than ever.

It should be pointed out that almost all of the accusations and negative press against Japanese Canadians in British Columbia, particularly in the 1940s, originated in Vancouver, Victoria, and other coastal communities. Among the most vocal anti-Japanese Canadian politicians were A. W. Neill of Vancouver Island, Howard Green and Ian Mackenzie of Vancouver, Tom Reid of New Westminster, and

¹¹⁵ *North Fraser Leader*, 8 June 1939.

¹¹⁶ Peter W. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978), 117.

the Vancouver City Council of the 1940s.¹¹⁷ All anti-Asian leagues originated in Vancouver and Victoria.¹¹⁸ Although very little organized public expression of anti-Japanese Canadian sentiment seems to have originated in the Fraser Valley, there was the occasional anti-Japanese Canadian editorial. In January 1942 a group of Fraser Valley farmers called on the provincial government to disallow any further purchasing or renting of farmland by Japanese Canadians.¹¹⁹ However, this was mild compared to the calls for Japanese Canadian expulsion and deportation that, at the same time, were coming out of Vancouver. Two anti-Japanese voices in the Fraser Valley are worth noting. One was that of George Cruickshank, a Fraser Valley MP who advocated moving all Japanese Canadians “back east to Toronto.”¹²⁰ The other was that of Reverend G.L. Collins of Mission, whose demands for keeping British Columbia “Christian and British”¹²¹ led to at least one anti-Japanese Canadian community meeting in Mission in 1942.¹²² Prior to the events of 1942 neither of these men’s anti-Japanese Canadian sentiments appeared in Fraser Valley newspapers more than once or twice a year. Perhaps this infrequent appearance of anti-Japanese Canadian journalism is a reflection not only of the economic integration of the *Issei* farmers but also of a somewhat higher degree of social acceptance than existed along the coast of British Columbia.

Moreover, Fraser Valley newspapers occasionally printed letters and articles supportive of Japanese Canadians. On 18 December 1941, more than a week after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, a report on the annual meeting of the PCU, which at that time had over 600 members, summarized the closing remarks of John Shimek:

The manager said that 28 different nationalities are sitting together in the hall, peacefully and amicably discussing their common problems and their business. When we as nations can do the same,

¹¹⁷Patricia Roy, J. L. Granatstein, Masako Iino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 42; Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 189.

¹¹⁸Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 135-6, tells us that in the late 1920s four new “anti-Oriental leagues” formed in the province, one based in Victoria and the other three in Vancouver. It is interesting to note that none of these was based in rural communities and that, at that particular time, none of them thrived.

¹¹⁹*Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News*, 7 January 1942, 8.

¹²⁰*Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Gazette*, 14 March 1941; *Abbotsford, Sumas, Matsqui News*, 4 March 1942; and *Chilliwack Progress*, 6 May 1942.

¹²¹*Fraser Valley Record*, 18 and 25 February 1942. See also 5 March 1942.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 5 March 1942, 1.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 23 December 1941.

we can truly say that at least we are cultured and civilized, such as we claim to be. The Co-operative principal lends itself especially for this purpose and should and will be adopted more and more as common misery compells [sic] us more and more to do so.¹²³

On 24 February 1942, PCU manager Shimek defended the co-op against Reverend Collins, who criticized it for its support of Japanese Canadian members:

These people affected have been loyal to us for many years, have helped to build this Union and we must try our best, without getting the jitters, to see them through this difficulty, with which they are confronted, through no fault of their own.¹²⁴

Because the PCU stood alone in its support for Japanese Canadians, it seems to have had little influence on critics and hatemongers. However, the fact that it supported them to the bitter end says a great deal about the status and economic significance of the Japanese Canadian communities in the Fraser Valley.

Although Japanese Canadian farmers continued to maintain their separate communities and *Nokai*, their ties to Japan were virtually severed by the war. By 1942 both the *Issei* and the *Nisei* had not only created strong economic ties to Canada, but also strong ties of loyalty, gratitude, and trust. However, the Canadian government's decision to register, expel, and isolate Japanese Canadians made them, as Berger says, "a people without a country."¹²⁵ What no one seemed to recognize at the time was that Japanese Canadians had created unique transnational communities in the farmlands of the Fraser Valley. Although these communities were neither fully Japanese nor fully Canadian but combined the cultural traits of both, their success in agriculture and their social stability made them an asset rather than a threat to Canada. In spite of having achieved a significant degree of harmony and acceptance within their rural communities, the *Issei* and *Nisei* of the Fraser Valley were racialized, along with all other Japanese Canadians, because of the hatred, fear, and panic arising mainly from the province's coastal communities. Further, there is significant international evidence to indicate that these rural communities would have continued to thrive in peace and shared prosperity with their White neighbours if the government had protected them rather than having uprooted and scattered them.

¹²⁴Ibid., 4 February 1942.

¹²⁵Berger, "Banished Canadians," 114-5.

For example, in Brazil, Makabe found that *Issei* pioneers chose exclusion from the mainstream even though they neither experienced significant discrimination during settlement nor mass expulsion during the Second World War.¹²⁶ In both Brazil and Peru, Christopher Reichl reports that Japanese immigrants assumed anti-assimilationist positions and maintained separate communities even though they were not restricted from living with the native population and often worked side by side with them. Reichl's description of Japanese Brazilian farming communities closely resembles the descriptions of those established in Canada's Fraser Valley.¹²⁷

Takenaka shows that, by the 1990s, Peruvian Japanese were largely acculturated; that is, they were Spanish-speaking and Roman Catholic. However, they remained unassimilated, maintaining an ethnic identity as well as ethnic communities that were distinct from those of all other Peruvians. According to Takenaka, "it is values, or symbolic ideologies, rather than concrete knowledge about Japanese history, literature, or language that serve to bolster the [transnational] community."¹²⁸ We have seen that the movement by many Canadian *Nisei* towards Christianity and the use of the English language parallels the Japanese Peruvian move towards Roman Catholicism and the use of the Spanish language. In Canada, *Nisei* values and traditions were instilled by their parents and the *Nokai*, and were reinforced by *Nisei* organizations such as the Japanese Canadian Citizens League (with branches in Mission and Maple Ridge) and *Nisei* publications such as the *New Canadian*. Takenaka also demonstrates that the Japanese Peruvian formation of transnational communities has not only been instrumental in maintaining ethnic identity but that it has also been effective in maximizing economic benefits to the community and defending its members from ill treatment by outsiders. For Japanese Canadians, the transnational farming communities provided similar kinds of safeguards and, had they been protected and allowed to remain intact throughout the war, would have continued to do so.

Despite the domestic and international unrest of the early 1940s, Japanese Canadians of the Fraser Valley busied themselves with the essential routines of everyday life. Crops had to be planted, tended, and harvested. The growing and processing of hops was also well

¹²⁶Makabe, "Brazil and Canada," 789 and 808.

¹²⁷Reichl, "Historical Processes," 41.

¹²⁸Takenaka, "Transnational Community," 8.

under way in Mission, and expansion of that industry was anticipated throughout the Fraser Valley.¹²⁹ Furthermore, the children continued to attend school. Annual activities such as kindergarten graduations, Christmas concerts, and sports competitions proceeded as usual for the enjoyment of both the Japanese Canadian and White communities.¹³⁰ Hence there was little time for deviating from the busy routine of rural life, much less for organizing subversive activity. For those who cared to notice, signs of Japanese Canadian allegiance to their chosen country were everywhere.

Wishing to demonstrate their loyalty, many *Nisei* attempted to join Canada's armed forces during the Second World War, but the Canadian government disallowed this in January 1941.¹³¹ Spud Murphy of Abbotsford, who served in the Canadian Air Force, says that, had they been allowed, all his Japanese Canadian friends would have signed up (interview with author, 17 January 2000). In Maple Ridge, Doug Oike and his Japanese Canadian friends had tried to sign up for military service but were refused.¹³² Even as Japanese Canadians were being refused at the recruitment offices, they were offering other kinds of support in the form of generous monetary and food donations,¹³³ and they were participating in such war-support activities as organizing V-bundles.¹³⁴

Another example of cooperation typical of the Fraser Valley occurred in 1940 just after Japanese Canadians were prohibited, under wartime regulations, from handling ammunition and explosives. Yasutaro Yamaga attended a meeting of the Maple Ridge councillors to work out an arrangement that would enable Japanese Canadian farmers in the area to continue blasting to clear agricultural land. All agreed on the appointment of a "powder monkey"; that is, "a British subject who would have to give definite proof that the powder had been used in the specified time."¹³⁵ Although the special arrangements

¹²⁹ *Fraser Valley Record*, 2 September 1942.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 May 1941, 26 December 1940, 23 December 1941, and 30 May 1940.

¹³¹ Thirty-five *Nisei* who enlisted in the Canadian armed forces prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor "were quietly allowed to remain in the services." Eventually a total of 150 *Nisei* were allowed to enlist, many being assigned to a special language unit of the Canadian Intelligence Corps. From the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project, *The Japanese Canadians, 1877-1977: A Dream of Riches* (Toronto: Gilchrist Wright, 1978), 103.

¹³² "Forgotten Cultures," *Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Times*, 25 February 1996, 3.

¹³³ See articles describing donations in *Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Gazette*, 12 January 1940, 2 May 1941; *Fraser Valley Record*, 2 January 1942; and Roy, J. L. Granatstein, Masako Iino, and Hiroko Takamura, et al., *Mutual Hostages*, 45.

¹³⁴ *Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Gazette*, 12 December 1941

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 November 1940.

for explosives and the new registration were both carried out in case of Japan's entry into the war against the Allies, the timing and method of that entry caught everyone off guard.

When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, Japanese Canadian farmers were as shocked as was everyone else. Within days the *Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Gazette* interviewed Yamaga.¹³⁶ He claimed the Japanese Canadian community was stunned but calm and "awaiting any instructions from the Canadian government." He added, "I trust the Canadian government to protect us, for we are doing our best as strawberry growers for the good of the community."

However, before any official instructions appeared, the PCU sent a letter to all Japanese Canadian members sympathizing with their situation and urging them to adopt a code of behaviour that would not attract attention or criticism.¹³⁷ The letter, published in the *Fraser Valley Record* on 16 December, asserted that the Japanese Canadian members were "unfortunate victims of existing circumstances, law abiding and anxious to do what is right." The tone of the letter is calm and supportive.

A month later the PCU sent another letter to all Japanese Canadian members complaining that they were not following its suggestions.¹³⁸ The second letter had an impatient and fearful tone, in one instance asserting that Japanese Canadians were "causing great annoyance and placing [themselves] in a precarious position," and labelling their behaviour as "downright antagonistic." It closed with, "if you wish to stay out of trouble, please co-operate with us at once and definitely." The letter also warned of the possibility of having vehicles confiscated, curfews established, and internment imposed. Both letters suggested that the White members of the PCU did not favour removing Japanese Canadians from their communities. Whether their objection was more economic or humanitarian is of little consequence. Less than six weeks later, the government began issuing plans for mass expulsion, using the euphemism "evacuation."¹³⁹

On 26 February 1942 expulsion began along the north coast and Vancouver Island. No special consideration was to be given to Fraser Valley farmers as landowners, as an important link in the food production system of British Columbia, or as agricultural entrepreneurs in cooperative partnerships with Whites. No exception was

¹³⁶Ibid., 12 December 1941.

¹³⁷*Fraser Valley Record*, 16 December 1941.

¹³⁸*Fraser Valley Record*, 15 January 1942.

¹³⁹Ibid., 3 March 1942.

made for them out of consideration for their distance from the coast: the regulations applied to all. The expulsion of most Fraser Valley farmers, however, was delayed until between April and June, by which time they had planted their crops.

In the Fraser Valley, as elsewhere in 1942, there appear to have been no mass expressions of outrage or protest against government policy regarding the treatment of Japanese Canadians. Nor is there much evidence of collective sympathy and support. An exception, however, is found once again in the PCU, with whom Japanese Canadian and White farmers shared a common economic interest. This support is further born out in the minutes of a meeting of PCU directors on 9 March 1942. Both Shingo Kunimoto and Teizo Nahashima of the Japanese Canadian community were present at this meeting. The discussion focused on exploring the legal possibility of Japanese Canadian members transferring the title of their property and vehicles to the PCU to hold in trust for them. While this would have protected the PCU "from loss on account of indebtedness of the members," and while it would have given the PCU the use of fifty-nine additional trucks, it also afforded "the best protection of Japanese members."¹⁴⁰ Considering that the return of Japanese Canadians to their homes in the Fraser Valley after the war was still anticipated at this time, the PCU's efforts to find a mutually satisfactory solution were admirable. No other organization matched its effort.

In conclusion, the history of Japanese Canadians in the Fraser Valley, from their voluntary arrival in 1904 to their forced removal in 1942, constitutes a unique chapter in BC history. While racialization by the White community brought about the exteriorization *Issei* farmers desired, it also pre-judged and categorized them, severely restricting their opportunities and contributing to the tragedy of the 1942 expulsion. The *Issei* belief in the strength and superiority of the Japanese spirit, values, and traditions sustained their dignity and productivity despite the discrimination they encountered.

Rural Japanese Canadians not only initiated many agricultural developments and improvements, but they also enriched the cultural landscape of the Fraser Valley. That the economic structure of these communities was integrated with that of the White farming communities through a network of farmers cooperatives suggests a significant step towards mutual acceptance. A separate but peaceful co-existence evolved and, along with it, unique transnational

¹⁴⁰PCU Minutes, 9 March 1942, Mission Community Archives, Mission, BC.

communities of Japanese Canadians. The degree of tolerance and cohesiveness achieved between the Japanese Canadian and White populations in the Fraser Valley appears to have exceeded that achieved between their counterparts in coastal and urban areas. This, in large part, was due to a shared economic base and a network of cooperative associations. And it was supported by newspaper articles related to Japanese Canadians, the community experiences shared by Whites and Japanese Canadians, and the testimony of both pre-Second World War scholars and individuals who resided in the Fraser Valley.

Many questions have yet to be addressed. A closer look at the experience of the Fraser Valley *Nisei* is needed, as is a greater understanding of the degree of acceptance and cohesiveness between the Japanese Canadian and White communities. This may be feasible if more attention can be given to the voices of those who lived in the Fraser Valley during the first half of the twentieth century. Memoirs, family histories, and other personal documents remain tucked away in the nation's attics and archives awaiting discovery and, in many cases, translation. Such documents provide the past with a human face and heartbeat.