

CHINESE AND JAPANESE MARKET GARDENING IN THE NORTH AND CENTRAL OKANAGAN VALLEY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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INTRODUCTION

Chinese and Japanese market gardeners operated farms of various sizes throughout the north and central Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, in the traditional territory of the Syilx and Secwepemc First Nations. This industry appeared as early as the 1860s and persists in small ways in the present. It served both local and distant markets, with distribution ranging from door-to-door sales through to wholesalers serving larger urban centres on the coast and Prairies. Despite both official and unofficial attempts at suppression, this industry endured for many decades. Over time, most of the market gardens closed, farmers retired or died, and the visible presence of this industry on the landscape was reduced to a few isolated instances.

The lives and livelihoods of Chinese and Japanese market gardeners – such as where they could farm, to whom they could sell their product, or how widely they could distribute – were largely dictated by systemic constraints reflecting the racial ideologies of the day.¹ Over time, the relationship between the participants in this market gardening industry and the dominant (white) society varied dramatically. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both Chinese and Japanese migrants were viewed as unassimilable as they did not fit with the image of a “White Canada.” Occupational opportunities for many minority groups, including Chinese, Japanese, and Indigenous workers, were strictly limited by the whims of the dominant society. They were typically paid less than white workers and were assigned to menial or dangerous tasks.²

¹ See Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875–1980* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991) for a detailed examination of processes of racialization in British Columbia.

² W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Jason Edwards and Lindsay Calhoun, “Redress for Old Wounds: Canadian Prime Minister

Political conditions outside of the industry, outside of the valley, and even well beyond Canada's borders frequently contributed to the tumultuous nature of the local market gardening industry. Fuelled by widespread racist attitudes and a belief that Chinese and Japanese market gardeners presented unfair competition due to their lower standard of living and strong work ethic, various government entities, civic groups, and trade organizations took action to impede the success of their communities.

Market gardens, small farm operations that are usually located close to an urban community but that can also serve markets farther away if transportation and distribution systems exist, are typically five to twenty acres in size and grow a variety of vegetable crops for market.³ I extend this definition to include intercropping (the growing of vegetable crops or berries between rows of orchard trees) as this was a common practice throughout the region and was often the job of sharecroppers. Market gardening in the region could be as small as a single crop in a backyard garden or as large as many acres of multiple crops marketed to the packing houses or grocery stores.⁴

While the existence of Chinese market gardens has been frequently noted,⁵ the factors that affected their success and failure have not been critically examined. The research presented here is the first to look specifically at Chinese and Japanese market gardeners in the Okanagan and to consider their role in establishing the Okanagan as the agricultural centre it is today. It has been noted that race-based legislation and systemic racist ideologies denied both Chinese and Japanese immigrants "their place in the historical narrative of Canada."⁶

Stephen Harper's Apology for the Chinese Head Tax," *Chinese Journal of Communication* 4, 1 (2011): 73–89. Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia, 1858–1930* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1996).

³ W. Ferguson, *Vegetable Growing*, Publication 816, Farmers' Bulletin 154 (Ottawa: Dominion Department of Agriculture, 1948).

⁴ Unaccessioned Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Fonds, Kelowna Public Archives; Interviews, July and August 2014; Community Mapping Event, Armstrong, September 2014. Names of all interview participants are withheld as per UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board-approved researched ethics application.

⁵ Patrick Dunae, John Lutz, Donald Lafreniere, and Jason Gilliland, "Making the Inscrutable, Scrutable: Race and Space in Victoria's Chinatown, 1891–2011," *BC Studies* 169 (2011): 51–80. Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants 1858–1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989); Ward, *White Canada Forever*.

⁶ Edwards and Calhoun, "Redress for Old Wounds," 77; Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991). A handful of articles have been published focusing on the local Chinese populations in Kelowna: Tun Wong, "Sue Lee Ping Wong," *Okanagan History* 63 (1999): 156–60; Albert Mann, "Kelowna's Chinatown," *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 46 (1982): 20–28; and in Armstrong: Peter Critchley, "The Chinese in Armstrong," *Okanagan History* 63 (1999): 8–19. Three books have collected the memories of Japanese in the valley (Bill Hoshizaki, ed., *The Vision Fulfilled*:

Similar to their experiences in British Columbia and California, many Chinese sojourners in Australia turned to agricultural work, and market gardening in particular, as mining opportunities dried up. An excavation and historical review of a Chinese market garden in the Palmer goldfield in North Queensland revealed that improvisation was a hallmark of market gardening life.⁷ Focusing on the 1860s through the 1880s, Chan examined market gardening as one aspect of Chinese livelihood in California immediately following the decline of the mining industry. Japanese participation in the floriculture and market gardening industries in California was the subject of a doctoral dissertation, which noted that co-operativism, identified by the author as a traditional cultural trait of Japanese agriculturalists, was key to their long-term success in dealing with change over time.⁸

Using archival research, interviews, and close examination of first-person accounts, I elucidate the complicated relationship that existed between four factors that precipitated the demise of the Chinese and Japanese market gardening industry in the north and central Okanagan Valley: (1) governance, (2) technological innovation, (3) infrastructure development, and (4) a changing population demographic. I consider how each factor, combined with the lack of a stable land base, contributed to the demise of the market gardening industry and the subsequent erasure from the visible landscape of these market gardening communities.

I understand “governance” as “all processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government, market or network, whether over a family, tribe, formal or informal organization or territory and whether through laws, norms, power or language.”⁹ It also concerns “the processes of

1894–1994 (Kelowna, BC: Kelowna and District Association of Japanese Canadians, 1995); Ed Ouchi, ed., *Til We See the Light of Hope* (Vernon, BC: Vernon Japanese Senior Citizens' Association, 1981); Lake Country Museum and Archives (hereafter LCMA), ed. *A Century of Community* (Lake Country, BC: Lake Country Heritage and Cultural Society, 2013). These are valuable contributions to the effort to document the history of non-whites in the valley, but they exist only as isolated examples known mainly to those directly involved in producing them.

⁷ Ian Jack, Kate Holmes, and Ruth Kerr, “Ah Toy’s Garden: A Chinese Market-Garden on the Palmer River Goldfield, North Queensland,” *Australian Historical Archaeology* 2 (1984): 51–58; Kevin Rains, “Intersections: The Overseas Chinese Social Landscape of Cooktown, 1873–1935” (PhD. diss., University of Queensland, 2005); Joanna Boileau, “Researching Chinese Market Gardening: Insights from Archaeology and Material Culture,” *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 6 (2013): 134–43.

⁸ Sucheng Chan, “Chinese Livelihood in Rural California: The Impact of Economic Change, 1860–1880,” *Pacific Historical Review* 53, 3 (1984): 273–307; Noritaka Yagasaki, “Ethnic Cooperativism and Immigrant Agriculture: A Study of Japanese Floriculture and Truck Farming in California” (PhD. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1982). Numerous other examples are available examining Chinese market gardening experiences, in particular as ethnic minority populations in different global contexts.

⁹ Mark Bevir, *Governance: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1.

goal-orientated coordination and management involving governmental and non-governmental actors.”¹⁰ There are multiple “goals” that can be identified in this case, such as the desire to foment the idea of a “White Canada Forever!”¹¹ and to develop the Okanagan as a major centre of agricultural productivity.¹² Government actors included those from the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government, and non-government actors included the various marketing boards, inspection agents, and organizers that worked to control all aspects of the agricultural industry.

Technological innovation refers to the wide-scale development of irrigation systems,¹³ the mechanization of various aspects of the agricultural industry, the overall increased complexity in the organization of the industry, and the development of refrigeration technology that enabled the shipping of perishable products. Infrastructure development refers primarily to the construction of faster and more reliable transportation systems that improved access to other markets, particularly rail and road networks.¹⁴ Population demographics refers not only to changes to the overall numbers and structure of the market gardening population but also to population changes, especially growth, in the wider community as this affected the potential market for produce and created added pressures on the land.

I begin with the arrival and early establishment of both the Chinese and Japanese communities in British Columbia and their subsequent appearance in the Okanagan. I then discuss the development of the market gardening industry, focusing specifically on the Okanagan, before examining land tenure and distribution in the study area. I conclude with a discussion of the factors precipitating the industry’s demise.

¹⁰ Noel Castree, Rob Kitchin, and Alisdair Rogers, “Governance,” in *A Dictionary of Human Geography*, ed. Noel Castree, Rob Kitchin, and Alisdair Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 195.

¹¹ Ward, *White Canada Forever*.

¹² Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Margaret Ormsby, “Fruit Marketing in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia,” *Agricultural History* 9, 2 (1935): 80–97.

¹³ Wayne Wilson has written multiple reports detailing the irrigation history of the Okanagan. See Kenneth Wayne Wilson, “Irrigating the Okanagan: 1860–1920” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1989).

¹⁴ For a detailed examination of the history of infrastructure development in the interior, see Cole Harris, “Moving Amid the Mountains, 1870–1930,” *BC Studies* 58 (1983): 3–39.

METHODS

Data collection involved archival research, interviews, a community mapping event, and careful examinations of written reminiscences and local histories. I used libraries and archives throughout the Okanagan Valley as well as other parts of the province either in person or digitally. Local written histories – some formally published, some self-published, and others unpublished – were another important source of data. I conducted thirteen semi-structured, open-ended interviews with fourteen participants who were either surviving market gardeners, descendants of market gardeners, or descended from agricultural families and had regular interactions with market gardening communities in the area. Further to this, I led one community mapping event that involved members of a local historical society collaboratively identifying locations important to the market gardening industry.

A qualitative historical GIS approach provided the structure for organizing and analyzing information by linking it to a digitally recreated historical cadastre (i.e., property lines). Visualizations were created and patterns began to emerge that were then analyzed in wider contexts. The maps and visualizations provided geographical context to the experiences of the market gardeners.¹⁵

A COMMUNITY IS BORN

The first documented presence of Chinese in British Columbia dates to 1788; however, the first major influx of Chinese to the province did not occur until the Fraser River gold rush of 1858.¹⁶ Most came seeking opportunities to support families back home. For some, these opportunities came in the form of placer mining; for others they came in the form of the service and supply industry. Many started businesses that supplied both Chinese and white miners. Growing vegetables quickly became a speciality of the Chinese,¹⁷ who began arriving in the Okanagan as the 1858 gold rush was coming to an end in other parts of the province.

¹⁵ Detailed explanation of the GIS results are reported elsewhere. Catherine Kyle, “Lost Landscapes of the Market Gardeners: A Qualitative Historical GIS Examination of the Demise of the Chinese and Japanese Market Gardening Industries in the North and Central Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, 1910s–1950s” (PhD diss., UBC, 2017).

¹⁶ Anthony B. Chan, *Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the New World* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983).

¹⁷ Roy, *White Man's Province*; Chan, *Gold Mountain*; Ward, *White Canada Forever*.

By 1872, “the Chinese had penetrated the country.”¹⁸ During the colonial settler period, Chinese were among Kelowna’s earliest arrivals, appearing in the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁹ A decade and a half later, there was a small but growing community of Chinese in a number of locations throughout the valley. In Armstrong, a large Chinese community developed in earnest in the early part of the twentieth century following the experimental planting of celery in 1903. Some accounts indicate that by 1914 there were over four hundred in the tiny community.²⁰ In the Spallumcheen area at least some market gardening on leased land occurred as early as 1898.

In the 1880s, Canada’s desire for a sea-to-sea railway brought the second major wave of Chinese to the interior of British Columbia. Despite strong anti-Asian sentiment and a concerted effort among politicians and merchants to end immigration, it was quickly acknowledged that Chinese labour was necessary to complete the railway.²¹ As their involvement in railway construction declined, many took refuge in the various Chinatowns in the Okanagan and sought other opportunities. Others continued to work on road crews as well as on the construction of the Kettle Valley Railway in the south part of the Okanagan in 1914–15.²² Indigenous labourers were also seeking opportunities in agriculture and other industries as railway construction ceased to be a viable option.²³

The earliest documented arrival of a Japanese person in British Columbia occurred in 1854; however, no systematic records were kept until 1896.²⁴ Through the 1890s, the Japanese population in British Columbia remained very small. The 1891 Census of Canada does not include Japan as a place of origin in its summary tables. By 1901, Japanese persons were reported along with Chinese.²⁵ Following the turn of the century, the population rose relatively quickly. In the 1901 Census of Canada,

¹⁸ Eighteen seventy-two is a notable year as it marked the opening of the first post office in the Okanagan Mission area, now part of Kelowna. See Frank Morgan Buckland, “Settlement at L’Anse au Sables,” *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 1 (1926): 9–12.

¹⁹ Ettie Adam, “Kelowna’s Chinese,” *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 31 (1967): 45–7.

²⁰ Robert Rupert Heal, “Farms and Enterprises in the North Okanagan,” *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 16 (1952): 121–27. Interviews, 23 and 24 July 2014.

²¹ Canada, *Chinese Immigration*; House of Commons Debates, 12 May 1882, 1476–78 (The Right Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald), 1477. See also Chan, *Gold Mountain*.

²² Chuen-Yan David Lai, “Chinese Immigrants into BC and Their Distribution, 1858–1970,” *Pacific Viewpoint* 14 (1973): 102–8; Harris, “Moving Amid the Mountains.”

²³ Knight, *Indians at Work*.

²⁴ Barman, *West beyond the West*; Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*.

²⁵ Department of Agriculture, Census Branch, *Third Census of Canada* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, Census Branch, 1891); Census Office, *Fourth Census of Canada* (Ottawa: Census Office, 1901).

TABLE 1

Detailed population information for census districts/divisions and selected sub-districts in the study area

	District/ Division	Total Pop. (District)	Chinese (District)	Japanese (District)	Sub-district	Total Pop.	Chinese (Sub- district)	Japanese (Sub- district)
1881	Yale	9,200	1,156	NR	Nicola & Okanagan	1,199	20	NR
1891	Yale	13,661	1,377	NR	Okanagan Mission	348	NR	NR
					Priest's Valley	739	NR	NR
					Spallumcheen	1,342	NR	NR
1901	Yale & Cariboo	61,889	3,744	282	Yale, East	4,930	221	
					Yale, North	3,837	361	
					Yale, West	7,155	566	
1911	Yale & Cariboo	56,382	2,287	314	Okanagan	11,275	248	94
					Enderby	835	25	23
					Kelowna	1,663	109	9
					Vernon	2,671	162	0
1921	Yale	35,698	1,074	588	Okanagan	13,621	327	216
					Armstrong	983	70	0
					Enderby	783	14	56
					Kelowna	2,520	114	7
					Vernon	3,685	166	7
1931	District 3	40,523	1,032	553	Unorganized	8,826	809	
					Coldstream	867	78	
					Glenmore	303	14	
					Spallumcheen	1,629	52	
					Armstrong	989	107	
					Enderby	555	8	
					Kelowna	4,655	322	
					Vernon	3,937	218	
1941	District 3	61,605	692	778	Unorganized	12,182	184	552
					Coldstream	867	32	18
					Glenmore	404	2	26
					Spallumcheen	1,805	26	5
					Armstrong	977	64	0
					Enderby	538	7	0
					Kelowna	5,118	71	25
					Vernon	5,209	112	1
					IRs	673	11	5
1951	Division 3	77,476	443	2,188	Unorganized	18,625	NR	NR
					Coldstream	1,402	NR	NR
					Glenmore	1,119	NR	NR
					Spallumcheen	1,936	NR	NR
					Armstrong	1,126	NR	NR
					Enderby	877	NR	NR
					Kelowna	8,517	NR	NR
					Vernon	7,811	NR	NR
					IRs	821	NR	NR

Source: Data from Censuses of Canada, 1881 through 1951. NR = not reported.

there were 4,514 Japanese persons in British Columbia based on place of birth. Twenty years later this number had risen to 15,006.²⁶ Drivers of emigration from Japan included overpopulation and difficult economic conditions. Many of the earliest immigrants from Japan hailed from the poorest working and agricultural classes, the members of which were often subject to harsh conditions due to greedy landlords and, later, as Japan attempted to force modernization on its mostly agrarian population, heavy land taxes.²⁷

Prior to the First World War, the Japanese population increased primarily through immigration. This began to change starting about 1908 with the arrival of numerous picture brides, so named because they were selected by their future husbands through the circulation of photographs.²⁸ During the interwar years, the Japanese population of British Columbia grew rapidly as a result of a rate of natural increase that was as much as ten times higher than that of the general population.²⁹ For example, of the 15,006 persons identified as being of Japanese origin in the 1921 Census of Canada, 9,863 were Japanese-born, indicating that slightly more than one-third of the Japanese population were Canadian-born.³⁰ This marked the birth of the Nissei generation, Canadian-born Japanese who continued the efforts of their parents to build businesses and lives in Canada and who succeeded in integrating with the wider community.³¹

While it is reported that there was a Japanese work gang of about eight men in the orchards of the Coldstream Ranch in 1900,³² Japanese diffusion throughout the Okanagan did not begin in earnest until a few years later, when a number of factors coalesced, resulting in the Japanese penetrating the interior of British Columbia. These factors included the growing population in the Fraser Valley and the subsequent reduction of available farmland, the changing labour market, and ongoing racial tensions. While Chinese, Japanese, and Indigenous workers had developed and distributed their labour within British Columbia's canneries,³³ automation changed this across the board. The "Iron Chink,"

²⁶ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Sixth Census of Canada* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1921).

²⁷ Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ward, *White Canada Forever*.

³⁰ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Sixth Census of Canada*.

³¹ Ward, *White Canada Forever*; Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*; Interview, 21 August 2014.

³² Reuben Randall, "Memoirs of the Early 1900's," *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 33 (1969): 106–12.

³³ Knight, *Indians at Work*, 190.

an automated canning and fish-processing machine introduced in 1908, was a major factor in shifting occupational roles among all cannery workers. It reduced their number by about 75 percent, which, indeed, was the desired effect.³⁴ In 1909, two Japanese farmers reportedly began market gardening operations in the Kelowna area, growing tomatoes and onions on a sharecropping basis.³⁵ By the 1910s, Japanese vegetable farmers were moving into the Mission area of Kelowna. So many families moved to the area that, by 1922, a second classroom was added to the Mission Creek School to accommodate the additional children.³⁶

It was agriculture, and in particular the Coldstream Ranch, that first brought many early Japanese to the Okanagan.³⁷ Many new arrivals were simply encouraged to take up agriculture because it was more enjoyable than road or rail work gangs.³⁸ A correspondent from the Okanagan Mission area reported in 1891 that it was being “proposed to introduce Japanese labour for fruit picking.”³⁹ However, no further mention of Japanese labour in the Okanagan is made until the year 1900. In that report the provincial government began to ask about the use of Japanese labour in agriculture throughout British Columbia. This suggests that, in less than half a decade, the number of Japanese involved in agriculture in British Columbia had increased to the point at which the government wanted to keep statistics. In addressing a question about Japanese labour, a correspondent from the Okanagan responded: “not many yet.”⁴⁰ There were many opportunities for labourers in the growing agricultural industry of the Okanagan. The involvement of Indigenous labourers in farm operations throughout the study area varied dramatically over time and across space. In 1891, it was reported in the Okanagan that “Indians cannot be relied upon.” At the same time, in both Spallumcheen and neighbouring Shuswap, Indigenous labourers

³⁴ Barman, *West beyond the West*, 186.

³⁵ Canadian Japanese Association, “The Japanese Contribution to Canada: A Summary of the Role Played by the Japanese in the Development of the Canadian Commonwealth.” 1940, FC106.JS C35, Wallace B. Chung and Madeline H. Chung Collection, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia, doi: 10.14288/1.0114625.

³⁶ Joan Chamberlain, “Mission Creek School.” *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 48 (1984): 162–9.

³⁷ Hoshizaki, ed., *The Vision Fulfilled*; Ouchi, ed., *Til We See the Light of Hope*.

³⁸ Interview, 29 July 2014; Hoshizaki, *Vision Fulfilled*; Ouchi, *Til We See the Light of Hope*;

³⁹ Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, *First Annual Report* (Victoria: Queen’s Printer, 1897).

⁴⁰ Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, *Sixth Annual Report* (Victoria: Queen’s Printer, 1901), 16.

were earning the same wages as white labourers.⁴¹ Only a year later it was reported that Indigenous labourers were regularly employed as day labour in the Okanagan Mission.⁴² In 1896, wages for both Chinese and Indigenous labourers varied somewhat across the study area but were consistently less than what was paid to white labour.⁴³

MARKET GARDENING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA AND THE OKANAGAN

In British Columbia, the Chinese first entered the market gardening industry in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁴ By the 1920s, Chinese market gardeners were supplying over 90 percent of vegetables to the Vancouver market and over 55 percent of the potato crop to the provincial market.⁴⁵ Because of their monopoly in frontier communities, Chinese market gardeners were able to control prices.⁴⁶

The potential for agricultural development in the Okanagan Valley was noted by colonial authorities as early as 1860.⁴⁷ Cattle ranching and stock farming were the first industrial-scale agriculture practices in the valley and were undertaken by both Indigenous and white ranchers; before European settlement, Indigenous ranchers owned both cattle and horses. Despite certain disadvantages mainly related to land tenure, Indigenous ranchers persisted for many generations.⁴⁸ By the 1890s, the agricultural focus of the Okanagan began to shift from cattle ranching to orcharding and other food-growing enterprises.⁴⁹ In 1891, the Yale census

⁴¹ Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, *First Annual Report*, 743, 747, and 750.

⁴² Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, *Second Annual Report* (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1892), 738.

⁴³ Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, *Fifth Annual Report* (Victoria, Queen's Printer, 1897), 1173). It is difficult to compare directly because Indigenous labour rates are typically reported as day rates and Chinese labour rates as monthly rates but there is no indication of how many days in a month or months in a year that either category of workers may have been employed.

⁴⁴ James Morton, *In the Sea of Sterile Mountains: The Chinese in British Columbia* (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1974).

⁴⁵ Morton, *Sea of Sterile Mountains*.

⁴⁶ Roy, *White Man's Province*.

⁴⁷ Barman, *West beyond the West*.

⁴⁸ Eliza Jane Swalwell, "Girlhood Days in the Okanagan," *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 8 (1939): 34–40; Margaret A. Ormsby, "Successful Pre-emptors," *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 4 (1930): 19–20; Duncan Duane Thomson, "A History of the Okanagan: Indians and Whites in the Settlement Era, 1860–1920" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1985).

⁴⁹ Paul M. Koroscil, *The British Garden of Eden: Settlement History of the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia* (Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University, 2003).

TABLE 2

Select agricultural statistics for field crops from Table II – Field Products in the Third Census of Canada (1891)

	Human Pop.	Peas (Bushels)	Beans (Bushels)	Corn (Bushels)	Potatoes (Acres)	Potatoes (Bushels)	Turnips (Acres)	Turnips (Bushels)
Okanagan Mission	348	3	112	346	39	7,922	13	6,149
Spallumcheen	1,342	858	66	79	145	18,305	46	10,645

district had thirty-two acres of vegetable-producing market gardens and ten acres of small fruit-producing market gardens. Twelve thousand five hundred and three bushels of orchard fruit were also produced at that time, including apples, peaches, pears, plums, and cherries.⁵⁰

By 1900, the development of irrigation was well under way, with fifteen to twenty irrigation companies in existence by about 1910.⁵¹ Responding to the increased labour requirements of orcharding, many Chinese labourers, and later Japanese as well as Indigenous labourers, began to move in from outlying areas as mining claims were tapped out or other occupations became closed to them. While market gardening on a small scale existed from the beginning, many initially found work as agricultural labourers. By 1891, there were 116 persons of Chinese descent who were engaged in some form of agricultural work in the Yale District. This represented 16 percent of all persons engaged in the agricultural industry at the time, yet the Chinese population only accounted for approximately 9 percent of the population in the area, indicating that the Chinese were disproportionately engaged in agriculture.⁵²

The first three *Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture for British Columbia*, issued between 1891 and 1893, document very few instances of Chinese involvement in agriculture in the Okanagan. One correspondent in the *Second Annual Report* noted: “Chinese not employed, except when

⁵⁰ Department of Agriculture, Census Branch, *Third Census of Canada*, Table IV – Various Farm Products, 224–25.

⁵¹ J.W. Clark, *Irrigation Districts in the Okanagan Valley: Economic Survey* (Victoria: British Columbia Department of Lands, Water Rights Branch, 1927).

⁵² Department of Agriculture, Census Branch, *Third Census of Canada*. Figures reported calculated by author based on analysis of census nominal data.

there is no possibility of getting along without them.”⁵³ This changed rapidly, and, by the *Fourth Annual Report*, Chinese were a regular component of the agricultural labour force and their wages were often close to that of whites.⁵⁴ Adam recollected seeing the lines of Chinese men walking to the fields from Kelowna’s Chinatown during her childhood at the turn of the last century.⁵⁵ Labour bosses, who would contract directly with local farmers and then recruit the necessary number of men, oversaw much of the hiring. Advertisements in local papers were a regular occurrence, particularly during the early months of the season.⁵⁶

Very early in the colonial settler period Chinese market gardeners were building a strong reputation. An early newspaper correspondent to the area noted in one of his transmissions to the *British Daily Colonist* in 1888 that every year since 1861 about twenty men of Chinese descent had been working placer diggings between Head of the Lake and Cherry Creek, east of Lumby.⁵⁷ The first documented Chinese persons in the central Okanagan were in the Mission Creek area in the 1870s. This was noted in a report of the Gold Commissioner, which advised that a number of Chinese were in the area of Mission Creek and Cherry Creek and that, in addition to engaging in placer mining, they all had neat and tidy gardens.⁵⁸ While there is little documentary evidence that definitively places Chinese in the Okanagan from the 1860s through the 1880s, it is likely that at least some remained during that time. The 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration reports that twenty-five Chinese persons were living in the Okanagan, including one merchant and twenty-four miners.⁵⁹

Among Japanese farmers’ first agricultural pursuits was berry farming in the Fraser Valley. From its beginning in about 1903, the industry grew substantially and its success was widely advertised in Japanese newspapers as a reason to settle in Canada.⁶⁰ Around 1910, when the first canneries

⁵³ Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, *Second Annual Report* (Victoria: Queen’s Printer, 1893), 738.

⁵⁴ Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, *Fourth Annual Report* (Victoria: Queen’s Printer, 1894), 851, 867, 872.

⁵⁵ Adam, “Kelowna’s Chinese.”

⁵⁶ Albert H. Mann, “Kelowna’s Chinatown,” *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 46 (1982): 20–28. Numerous examples exist in editions of the *Kelowna Record*, the *Orchard City Record*, and the *Kelowna Courier*.

⁵⁷ Michael Hagan, *British Daily Colonist*, 26 September 1888.

⁵⁸ Charles A. Vernon, *Report of the Gold Commissioner: Okanagan* (Victoria: Queen’s Printer, 1876), 423.

⁵⁹ Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau and John Hamilton Gray, *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration: Report and Evidence* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1885), 365.

⁶⁰ Ward, *White Canada Forever*; Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*.

began operating in Kelowna, it was Japanese farmers who responded to the call for growers to take on the task of providing them with tomatoes.⁶¹ Intercropping was a common practice among Japanese in the Okanagan, where they grew crops to satisfy the needs of the packing houses and canneries.⁶² By the 1930s, agriculture was considered to be an important occupation for the Japanese. However, a detailed examination of Japanese occupations in British Columbia only mentions a handful of examples of market gardening among other types of agricultural activities.⁶³

In 1922, Chinese market gardeners operated close to ten thousand acres throughout British Columbia.⁶⁴ Elsewhere, it was noted that, “in British Columbia the Chinese are the great market gardeners and supply the majority of the vegetables grown in the province.”⁶⁵ However, their success was not universally celebrated. Concerns over the ability of white agriculturalists to compete with Chinese market gardeners were frequently raised in newspapers as well as in such government documents such as the Department of Agriculture’s annual reports. This was especially evident during times of high unemployment.⁶⁶

Over the next several decades, the role of Chinese and Japanese farmers in the agricultural industry in the Okanagan changed dramatically. While working as labourers was still common, many also had market gardens, greenhouses, orchards, or mixed-farming operations. It is estimated that, by the late 1930s, Chinese market gardeners in British Columbia controlled three-quarters of the vegetable production and that around half the population was engaged in this industry.⁶⁷ For the Japanese community, vegetable farming was typically a family affair.⁶⁸

The Interior Vegetable Marketing Board’s List of Registered Producers for the 1941 season shows a multicultural farming community in Kelowna and Lake Country. Of the 183 names of individuals or businesses on the

⁶¹ Leopold Hayes, “Trials and Tribulations in the Okanagan Fruit and Vegetable Canning Industry, 1910–39,” *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 25 (1961): 47–56.

⁶² Unaccessioned Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Fonds, Kelowna Public Archives.

⁶³ Rigenda Sumida, “The Japanese in British Columbia” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1935).

⁶⁴ Department of Agriculture, *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture* (Victoria: King’s Printer, 1922), 147.

⁶⁵ Stanford University, *Tentative Findings of the Survey of Race Relations: A Canadian-American Study of the Oriental on the Pacific Coast* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1925), 14.

⁶⁶ Paul Yee, *Saltwater City: An Illustrated History of the Chinese in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1988), 50–51; Department of Agriculture, *Tenth Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture* (Victoria: King’s Printer, 1916), 3, 72.

⁶⁷ Don Mason and J.G. Scully, “John Chinaman, Gardener: The Chinese Market Gardens of British Columbia Are Lessons in Science and Symmetry,” *Country Life in B.C.* 23 (February 1939), n.p.

⁶⁸ Hoshizaki, *Vision Fulfilled*; Interviews, 12 August and 8 September 2014.

list for the Kelowna area, fourteen (7.6 percent) were Chinese and thirty (16.4 percent) were Japanese. A further eleven (6 percent) were South Asian, all operating in the Rutland area, and seventeen (9.3 percent) were Italian.⁶⁹ In 1941, over 40 percent of registered farms in the Kelowna area directly involved Japanese. This number probably increased in the following years due to a shortage of white labourers during the war years.

In the 1940s in Vernon, Chinese market gardeners were growing “Chinese vegetables” as well as more common crops, like tomatoes, carrots, and potatoes, for the white market. This was happening much earlier in Vernon than in other markets, such as those in the Lower Mainland, where reports don’t note the practice of market gardening until the 1970s.⁷⁰ In the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of the vegetable production in the Vernon area was undertaken by Japanese farmers; in Armstrong, this continued to be the domain of Chinese farmers.⁷¹

PATTERNS OF LAND TENURE

Market gardeners in the Okanagan practised many types of land tenure, including owning, renting, and leasing. Also common were employment or sharecropping arrangements that provided housing. There were many examples of wives and children operating small market gardens near the residence provided to them by the landowner while the husbands/fathers worked in a prominent or managerial role in the orchard.⁷² The typical sharecropping arrangement was “half-share,” whereby the owner and cropper would split the costs and the profits equally.⁷³

By the time that most Chinese and Japanese market gardeners were moving to the area the dispossession of Indigenous lands through the establishment of reserves was complete. In 1913, within the study area 2,135.65 acres of reserve land was cut off as a result of the McKenna-McBride report, leaving 35,513.86 acres of reserve land intact.⁷⁴ For many years, Chinese and Japanese market gardeners rented or leased reserve lands. This could be regarded as an ongoing dispossession of

⁶⁹ Unaccessioned Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Fonds, Kelowna Public Archives.

⁷⁰ Ibid.; Natalie Gibb and Hannah Wittman, “Parallel Alternatives: Chinese Canadian Farmers and the Metro Vancouver Local Food Movement,” *Local Environment* 18, 1: 1–19.

⁷¹ Michael Oswell, “Memoirs of a District Horticulturalist,” *Okanagan History* 61 (1997): 52–72.

⁷² Hoshizaki, *Vision Fulfilled*; LCMA, *Century of Community*.

⁷³ Unaccessioned Ramponne Family Papers, Kelowna Public Archives; Unaccessioned Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Fonds, Kelowna Public Archives; Hoshizaki, *Vision Fulfilled*; Interviews, 29 July and 23 August 2014.

⁷⁴ “Reductions and Cut-Offs of Reserves – Okanagan Agency,” in *Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia*, ed. J.A. McKenna and Richard McBride (Victoria: King’s Printer, 1916), 713.

Indigenous lands, particularly as the financial relationship, as indicated by the issuing of receipts, was typically between the Indian agent and the renter on behalf of the band or individual to whom the lands were attributed. Furthermore, that lands were being rented out rather than farmed by community members suggests a lack of support for Indigenous entrepreneurship. The volume and proportion of Indigenous-controlled agricultural land in wheat and cultivated hay grew considerably between 1921 and 1938, whereas acreage in peas and beans and in potatoes increased only slightly in total and declined steadily in proportion to total acreage. During this time, peas and beans accounted for between 1 and 2 percent of cultivated acreage and potatoes for between 3 and 5 percent, whereas wheat grew from about 10 percent to close to 30 percent and the cultivation of hay increased from the low 30s to 46 percent in 1938.⁷⁵

Analysis of archival records indicates that there were higher rates of landownership among Japanese farmers than there were among Chinese farmers.⁷⁶ This pattern has been noted in other regions, such as California.⁷⁷ In many communities it was frowned upon to rent or lease land to Chinese or Japanese farmers; many trade organizations and veterans' associations voted to ban the practice. As a result, in order to avoid the scorn of these associations, rental arrangements were often made in secret. Some instances of the city of Kelowna renting vacant lots for market gardening are recorded in City Council minutes; in Vernon, city records kept a separate list of city-owned lots rented to Chinese.⁷⁸ Because ownership results in paperwork, it is disproportionately represented in the historical record when compared to, for example, renting or leasing.

As Chinese populations in the area declined as a result of aging and a lack of immigrants due to the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, the proportion of Chinese who owned properties also declined steadily. This reached its low towards the end of the Chinese exclusion period and did not rise again until much later, when immigration resumed. In comparison,

⁷⁵ Based on review of Department of Indian Affairs annual reports' "Table No. 2 – Grain, Vegetable and Root Production" for the years 1921 through 1938 for the Okanagan Agency. However, by definition this includes all crops grown on Indian reserves. Peas and beans, potatoes, and other crops were commonly grown by tenant (Chinese or Japanese) farmers in the study area, and these figures do appear to include that acreage (i.e., the table does not separate out by producer).

⁷⁶ Kyle, "Lost Landscapes."

⁷⁷ Noted from comparing results in Yagasaki "Ethnic Cooperativism and Immigrant Agriculture"; and Chan "Chinese Livelihood in Rural California."

⁷⁸ City of Kelowna Council Minutes, vols. 4, 12, and 13, City of Kelowna Office of the City Clerk; Legal documents, indexes of indefeasible titles 1946–48, file 3, subseries 2, 11/1, Vernon Archives.

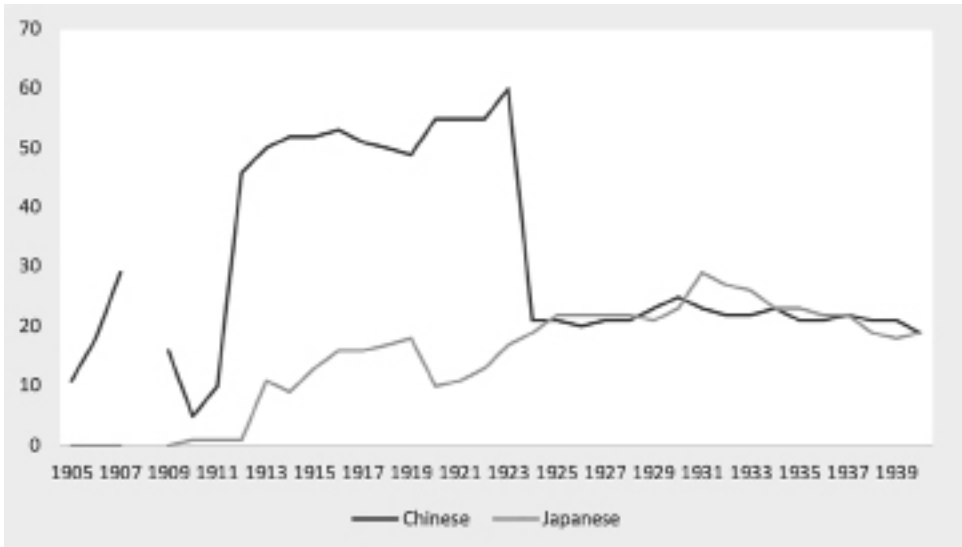


Figure 1. Comparing Chinese and Japanese land ownership in Kelowna based on city tax records for the years 1905 through 1939. Values on the left indicate the number of individual properties. Records for 1908 are not available, but the trends can be inferred from comparing 1907 and 1909 values.

Japanese rates of land ownership fluctuated but remained consistently high.⁷⁹

Some differences in rates of ownership between the two communities can be attributed to government policy. The most striking example is the steep decline in the number of properties owned by Chinese recorded in the 1922 and then in the 1923 Kelowna tax rolls.⁸⁰ Between 1922 and 1923, approximately two-thirds of properties owned by Chinese were sold. This rapid sell-off appears to have been precipitated by news of the *Chinese Immigration Act*, which came into force in 1923. During this same period, Japanese land ownership rose steadily as Japanese immigration continued and as families grew through natural increase. Figure 1 compares Chinese and Japanese landownership in Kelowna as recorded in the city tax rolls. In 1923, the steep decline in landownership on the part of the Chinese is evident, whereas Japanese ownership continues to rise steadily.

The Chinese tendency to lease or rent rather than own was not unique to the Okanagan, and this further supports the notion that this was a result of the head tax and the *Chinese Immigration Act*, which of course

⁷⁹ See "Table 1: Detailed population information for Census districts/divisions and sub-districts in the study area," above, and "Figure 1: Comparing Chinese and Japanese land ownership," this page.

⁸⁰ City of Kelowna Fonds, Assessment Roll Series, Kelowna Public Archives.

TABLE 3

Showing land ownership, lease, and rentals, adapted from 1922 British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture Annual Report, Appendix No. 28, p. U 147, British Columbia Legislature Sessional Papers

	No. of Owners	Total acreage	Orchards (Acres)	Small fruit growing (Acres)	Truck-farming (Acres)	Dairy Farming (Acres)	Mixed Farming (Acres)
Land Owned by Japanese	492	8385.78	176	2096.21	281.3	80	631.28
Land Owned by Chinese	116	5664.61	14.5	25.81	1632.93	-	1228
Totals	608	14050.39	190.5	2122.02	1914.43	80	1839.28
Land Leased by Japanese	103	1781.26	139	155	560.23	435	236.75
Land Leased by Chinese	369	11087.12	375	64	8184.55	-	1381
Totals	472	12868.38	176.5	219	8744.8	435	1817.73
Grand totals, lands owned and leased	1080	26918.77	367	2341.02	10639.23	515	3677.03

adversely affected their ability to own land. Table 3 compares Japanese and Chinese land ownership, leasing, and rentals throughout the province for 1922. The lower rates of ownership among Chinese as opposed to Japanese during this time are evident.⁸¹

It is difficult to know precisely how these values can be interpreted as percentages among the population. The 1921 Census of Canada does not break down Chinese or Japanese populations by age or occupation; therefore, while the 1921 Japanese population of British Columbia was 15,006, it is not possible to know how many of these individuals were of an age to own land and how many were engaged in agriculture.⁸² However, using a comparable value for each group demonstrates that there are disparities between them. Provincewide, 4.5 percent of Japanese owned land versus 0.5 percent of Chinese.⁸³ Furthermore, values reported

⁸¹ Department of Agriculture, *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture*, 147.

⁸² Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Sixth Census of Canada*.

⁸³ Calculated value based on using the number of immigrants in each ethnic group as reported in the *Sixth Census of Canada* and the total acreage owned as reported in the 1922 British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture's *Seventeenth Annual Report*. Values denoting the number of immigrants are more useful for this purpose than are the total population values because of

in the 1922 agricultural report also show that the Japanese were engaged in a variety of agricultural activities whereas the Chinese were mainly focused on market gardening.

The *Report on Oriental Activities within the Province* claimed that Chinese tended to rent their properties rather than own them: “the reason for this is, of course, the well-known fact that Chinese methods of cultivation exhaust the soil, rendering it necessary for them to move on periodically to fresh acreage.”⁸⁴ This implies that investing in land was a poor use of funds; however, no other sources support this racially biased notion, and numerous examples show that similar farming practices were used by both Chinese and Japanese market gardeners in the Okanagan and that not one of these was typically destructive. Furthermore, Chinese market gardeners were highly regarded for their tidy and well-maintained farms.⁸⁵ In fact, the report reflects broader societal attitudes of the day. From the earliest days of anti-Asian sentiment, many denigrated the Chinese practice of using human and animal waste to fertilize gardens (believing this to be unsanitary).⁸⁶ Human waste as fertilizer has been a central aspect of both urban waste management and urban agricultural practices in China for many centuries.⁸⁷

Interior Vegetable Marketing Board “Owner/Producer Registration Forms” for 1943 document the producer, the owner, and the tenure arrangement pertaining to all instances of the sale of vegetables for profit.⁸⁸ These records provide some idea of the frequency of different types of land tenure for that year. In the Kelowna area, twelve of fifty-one registered producers (23.5 percent) were operating on leased or rented land. In Armstrong-Spallumcheen, north to Salmon Arm, thirty-seven of 143 registered producers (26 percent) were on leased or rented land. In Vernon, it was forty-four of 199 (22 percent). In all three areas, the leasers were predominantly Chinese or Japanese, and the owners of leased or rented land were frequently white. While a single year’s data is not enough to make definitive assertions about ongoing rates of leasing versus other forms of land tenure, it does provide a useful snapshot.

the high rate of natural increase among the Japanese – assuming that, in 1921, most Canadian-born Japanese would be children and unlikely to own land.

⁸⁴ British Columbia, *Report on Oriental Activities within the Province* (Victoria: King’s Printer, 1927), 10.

⁸⁵ Peter Critchley, “The Chinese in Armstrong,” *Okanagan History* 63 (1999): 8–19. Interview, 24 July 2014.

⁸⁶ Ward, *White Canada Forever*; Roy, *White Man’s Province*; R.C. Clute, *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1902).

⁸⁷ Nathan McClintock, “Why Farm the City? Theorizing Urban Agriculture through a Lens of Metabolic Rift,” *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 3, 2 (2010): 191–207.

⁸⁸ Unaccessioned Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Fonds, Kelowna Public Archives.

Many sharecropping families lived on sharecropped properties year-round. This was not only a benefit to the families but also to the landowner as the sharecroppers needed to maintain a good relationship in order to continue. Accordingly, they worked diligently to produce a good crop, not just to earn an income but to secure a home for the following year. Another benefit for the landowners was that this ensured that rural properties had a human presence year-round. Land ownership was a goal for many Japanese who settled here. Experiences with racism were worse for sharecroppers than for independent farmers as the former were expected to work for less money than the latter. Consequently, many sharecroppers focused on becoming independent.⁸⁹

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF MARKET GARDENING WITHIN THE VALLEY

Market gardens were located throughout the Okanagan Valley and were located in both urban and rural fringe areas, although this varied over time. Some gardens were as small as a single city lot; however, this was more typical in the early part of the twentieth century when newly formed towns were not yet densely populated. By the middle of the twentieth century, most market gardens operated on larger lots in the rural fringe.⁹⁰ Urban development, which ensured that formerly vacant lots in the urban core began to fill up, is likely the main reason that market gardens were pushed outwards. There is no direct evidence that racism was a specific factor in this outward migration; however, some transactions recorded in the council minutes for the city of Kelowna show that city council could decide who could and could not have access to land. In 1936, the city acquired some lots formerly owned by a member of the Chinese community who had used them for market gardening. These lots were adjacent to the city's Chinatown. At first it was proposed that they be added to Kelowna's celebrated City Park, but then a decision was made to sell. A Chinese man's application to purchase the lots was denied, as were his later applications to rent. However, at the same time, the city rented nearby lots to a Chinese man for the purposes of market gardening, so it is difficult to determine the council's motivations.⁹¹

In Kelowna during the 1910s and 1920s, small-scale market gardening was located on standard city lots or groupings of two or three city lots

⁸⁹ Interview, 23 August 2014; Hoshizaki, *Vision Fulfilled*.

⁹⁰ Kyle, "Lost Landscapes."

⁹¹ City of Kelowna Council Minutes, vols. 4 and 6, 1936–37, City of Kelowna Office of the City Clerk.

to the north and east of the central business district. Both Chinese and Japanese farmers participated in this type of gardening. Large-scale vegetable farming, typically the growing of onions by sharecroppers on a half-share basis or under the employment of a white landowner, tended to be located on larger properties more removed from the town centre, especially to the south and east. This is also reflected in the census records. For example, in the 1921 census, only seven Japanese are reported in “Kelowna”; however, a further 216 are reported in the “Okanagan.” Most of the area around Kelowna would have been reported as “Okanagan.” A similar division is seen in the 1930s, with 222 Japanese in Kelowna and 809 in unorganized areas.⁹²

Starting in the 1920s and 1930s, most market gardening in Kelowna was concentrated in the area that is now occupied by Orchard Park Shopping Centre and the adjacent commercial and light industrial district that runs along Harvey Avenue/Hwy 97, a provincial highway that runs through the middle of Kelowna. A number of Chinese and Japanese families owned or leased property in this area, with some continuing to farm there until the early 1970s. Furthermore, market gardening tended to be located in flat, low-lying areas. Intercropping was practised in orcharding areas throughout the city.⁹³ In 1943, the average size a vegetable production operation was seven acres.⁹⁴

In Lake Country, the main agricultural undertaking was orcharding; market gardening was often a secondary activity. Japanese orchardists were the majority landowners in the area and owned hundreds of acres of orchards by the 1940s and 1950s.⁹⁵ Market gardens in Lake Country were located in the flatlands and valley bottom between Wood Lake to the north and Duck (Ellison) Lake to the south.⁹⁶ Both Chinese and Japanese rented land on the Duck Lake Indian Reserve. In the 1940s, at least three Chinese market gardeners were also renting on First Nations reserves in the Vernon area. Rental receipts indicate that this practice was ongoing in a number of locations.⁹⁷ This may indicate an extension of relationships that developed between Chinese and local Indigenous people as a result of shared experiences of racism and segregation; however, I found no direct evidence to either support or refute this notion.

⁹² Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Sixth Census of Canada*.

⁹³ Kyle, “Lost Landscapes.”

⁹⁴ Unaccessioned Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Fonds, Kelowna Public Archives.

⁹⁵ Interviews, 29 July and 21 August 2014.

⁹⁶ Kyle, “Lost Landscapes.”

⁹⁷ Unaccessioned Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Fonds, Kelowna Public Archives; Chinese community collection, assessment notices, tax notices, tax receipts, income tax return folder, Kelowna Public Archives.

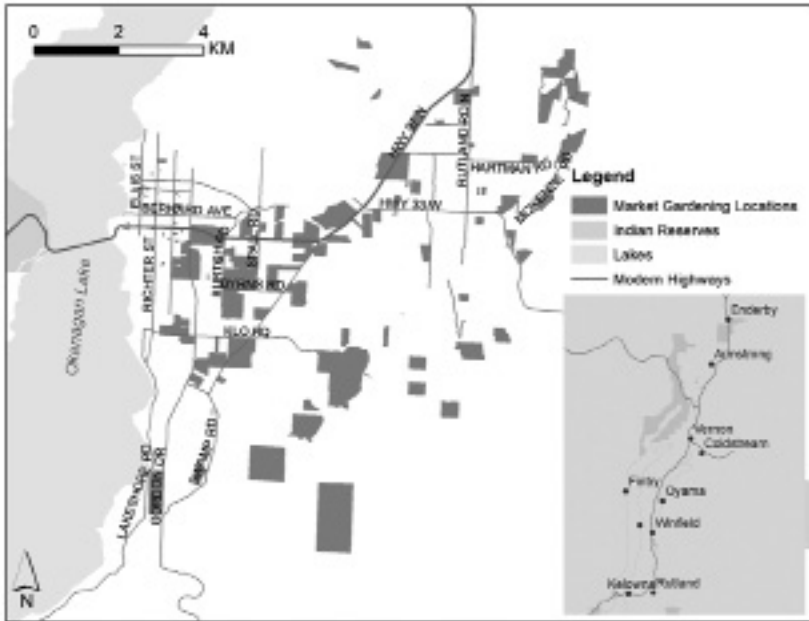


Figure 2. Map of Kelowna showing main roads and market gardening locations. Note Harvey Avenue, running east-west through town. Cartography by author. Map created in ESRI ArcGIS 10.2. NAD 1983 UTM Zone 11N. Data acquired from BC Data Distribution Warehouse and Natural Resources Canada.

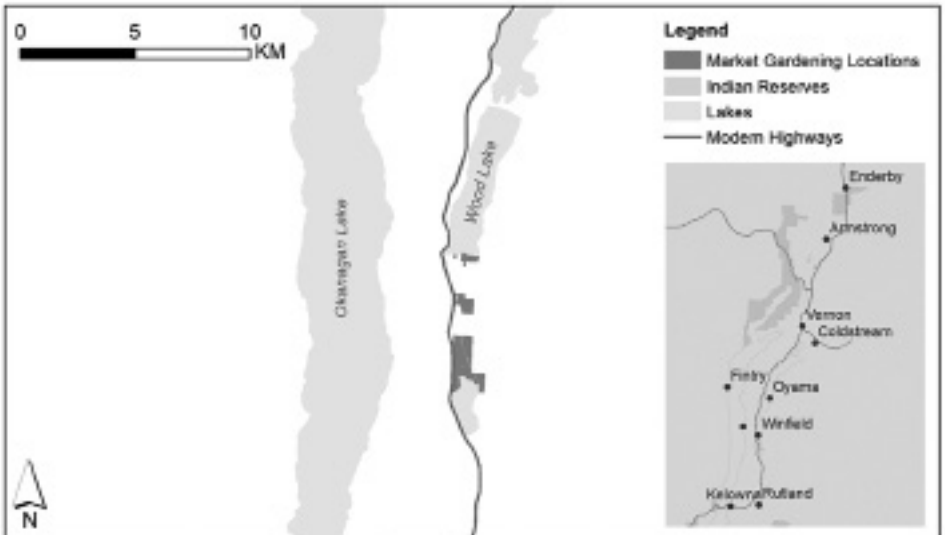


Figure 3. Map of Lake Country area. Cartography by author. Map created in ESRI ArcGIS 10.2. NAD 1983 UTM Zone 11N. Data acquired from BC Data Distribution Warehouse and Natural Resources Canada. Note that, due to data limitations, the entire extent of Duck Lake IR No. 7 is shaded. However, only a portion of the reserve was used for market gardening.

In the Vernon area, with the exception of two properties along the west side of Swan Lake, there was very little overlap between areas where Chinese practised market gardening and areas where Japanese practised market gardening. Japanese market gardens were primarily located in the Bella Vista area of Vernon, to the south and west of the city centre. Chinese market gardens were concentrated along the west side of Swan Lake, northwest of the city centre, and also out towards Lavington and Coldstream, a rural area to the southeast of Vernon.

Another concentration of Chinese market gardens occurred in the Coldstream area, southeast of Vernon. It is notable that Chinese market gardens were concentrated in this area because the Coldstream Ranch, the main employer and land holder in the area, had, in the first decades of the twentieth century, predominantly (indeed, almost exclusively) employed Japanese. It is well documented as the main recruiter and training ground for Japanese farmers in the area, many of whom later purchased their own farms after learning the trade at the ranch.⁹⁸ In 1943 alone, fourteen separate agreements between the Coldstream Ranch and Chinese market gardeners are indicated in the Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Registration Records, including one 150-acre plot for potatoes that was leased to “Various Chinamen.”⁹⁹

Japanese in the Vernon area were primarily landowners. There were only a few instances of leasing, and this property was typically leased from other Japanese. Chinese primarily rented or leased; however, they did own some large tracts of land to the south and east of town, in the Lavington area, and also to the north of town. The land to the west of Swan Lake provided good growing conditions despite being hilly and having an eastern aspect. The diversity of slope and soil conditions allowed the market gardeners to grow a variety of crop types.¹⁰⁰

There is no clear evidence to indicate why these specific concentrations occurred in the Vernon area and not in other regions. It is likely due in part to business relationships formed over time as well as to a tendency to settle near kin or neighbours from back home. For both Chinese and Japanese, personal relationships – specifically kin or village connections from the home country – were important factors in securing employment, finding opportunities to purchase or otherwise acquire land, and other aspects of daily life.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Hoshizaki, *Vision Fulfilled*; Ouchi, *Til We See the Light of Hope*.

⁹⁹ Unaccessioned Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Fonds, Kelowna Public Archives.

¹⁰⁰ Interview. 23 July 2014.

¹⁰¹ Chuen-Yan David Lai, “Chinese Immigrants into BC and Their Distribution, 1858–1970,” *Pacific Viewpoint* 14 (1973): 102–8; Chuen-Yan David Lai, “Home Country and Clan Origins

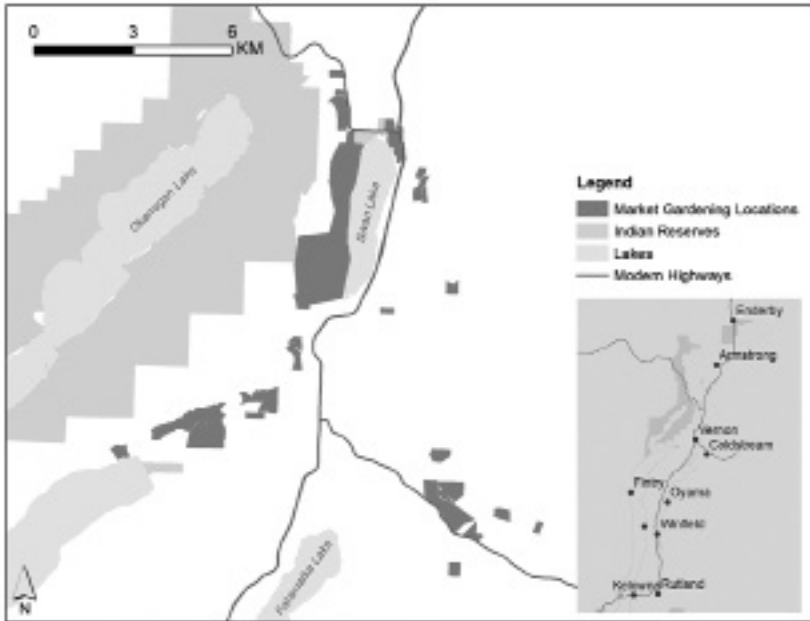


Figure 4. Map of Vernon area. City centre is identifiable by densification of modern roads. Lavington and Coldstream are located southeast of the city. Cartography by author. Map created in ESRI ArcGIS 10.2. NAD 1983 UTM Zone 11N. Data acquired from BC Data Distribution Warehouse and Natural Resources Canada.

There were very few Japanese farmers in Armstrong-Spallumcheen, including the area north to the town of Enderby. The Japanese population in Enderby were all engaged in the sawmill and logging industry. While Chinese farmers owned a large amount of land in the Armstrong-Spallumcheen area, they also rented and leased additional land for market gardening. The main landowners who rented or leased land to Chinese market gardeners were railway companies or other Chinese landowners.¹⁰²

The land around Armstrong is very boggy and the area is not conducive to orcharding. Market gardening was concentrated in the town centre as well as along some of the main roads into town – namely, Otter Lake Road to the southwest and Stepney Road heading north towards Enderby. By the 1970s, most of the market gardening was concentrated in

of Overseas Chinese in Canada in the early 1880s,” *BC Studies* 27 (1975): 3–29. Interviews, 12 August and 8 September 2014.

¹⁰² Interview, 24 July 2014.

one small area of town and out along the highway northeast of town.¹⁰³ A small amount of market gardening continues today in Armstrong.

LEGISLATED CONSTRAINTS

Opposition to Chinese market gardeners was strong throughout the province, with support for anti-Chinese legislation coming from many trade organizations, including the British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association and local boards of trade.¹⁰⁴ Hostility towards Japanese farmers occurred throughout the province but amplified later than did hostility towards Chinese farmers.¹⁰⁵ As late as 1927, there were efforts to stifle Chinese and Japanese competition through proposed provincial legislation to ban Chinese and Japanese from owning, renting, or leasing land.¹⁰⁶

A defining feature in the lives of Chinese was the control imposed by federal and provincial legislation. From the 1880s through the 1940s, Canada had numerous policies that “excluded and harassed Chinese immigrants.”¹⁰⁷ From 1886 through 1923, a head tax was applied to all new Chinese immigrants entering Canada. Initially introduced at a rate of fifty dollars per person effective 1 January 1886, by 1901 the head tax was increased to five hundred dollars – an amount far beyond what most Chinese could pay.¹⁰⁸ Chinese were the only ethnic group in Canada ever to be controlled by a head tax.¹⁰⁹ Although there were attempts to include Japanese in the head tax in the 1890s, this never came to pass.¹¹⁰ The Chinese head tax registry contains detailed information for 97,123 persons who paid the head tax between 1886 and 1923. In 2006, the federal government issued an apology to the descendants of those who paid this tax.¹¹¹ Between 1872 and 1948, the government of British Columbia passed 157 acts that have since been deemed to be discriminatory against Chinese persons. Beginning in 1895, many but not all of these acts applied to Japanese as well.¹¹²

¹⁰³ Interviews, July and August 2014; Community Mapping Event, 9 September 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Roy, *White Man's Province*; Ward, *White Canada Forever*.

¹⁰⁵ Adachi, *Enemy That Never Was*.

¹⁰⁶ British Columbia, *Report on Oriental Activities*, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Lisa Rose Mar, *Brokering Belonging: Chinese in Canada's Exclusion Era, 1885–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁸ Roy, *White Man's Province*.

¹⁰⁹ Chan, *Gold Mountain*.

¹¹⁰ Roy, *White Man's Province*.

¹¹¹ Sally Hermansen and Henry Yu, “The Irony of Discrimination: Mapping Historical Migration using Chinese Head Tax Data,” in *Historical GIS Research in Canada*, ed. Jennifer Bonnell and Marcel Fortin, 225–38 (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2014).

¹¹² British Columbia, “Discriminatory Legislation in British Columbia, 1872–1948,” n.d. [circa 2014], available from <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/about-bc/arts-culture/historic-places/>.

Although similarly reviled by the general population, Chinese and Japanese in Canada were subjected to different immigration laws, and this provides an opportunity to compare their situations and to consider the long-term effects of restrictive government legislation.¹¹³ While both groups were subject to racially motivated immigration legislation as well as to controls put in place by both the Canadian government and their own governments, only the Chinese were subject to the head tax and a near-complete ban on immigration from 1923 to 1948.

It is well documented that the head tax and the *Chinese Immigration Act, 1923*, resulted in a predominantly male Chinese population in Canada.¹¹⁴ Because of this, there was little opportunity for natural increase, except in cases of marriage with local Indigenous women.¹¹⁵ Japanese, on the other hand, were able to bring wives over, often through an arranged marriage with picture brides. This allowed the Japanese community to grow through natural increase. By the 1930s, one-third of Japanese in British Columbia were Canadian-born. Even though new regulations were imposed on Japanese in 1928, limiting the number of new immigrants, by this time many families were established.¹¹⁶

It is important to consider how different immigration policies affected the birthrates of Chinese as opposed to Japanese communities. Market gardening families with large numbers of children were able to last longest in the industry, with some branching into orcharding and some remaining engaged in market gardening to the present day. This was possible because such families were able to invest in land and to make improvements to their farms, making them more competitive and better able to endure challenges and seasonal fluctuations such as crop losses or poor market prices. Furthermore, because their children were living with them and not overseas, these farmers had the impetus to make improvements and investments. They did not have to pay for outside labour or divide income with partners as their labour was conducted mainly by dependent children. Because they were not required to send most of their earnings abroad or save for a family member's head tax,

documents/heritage/chinese-legacy/discriminatory_legislation_in_bc_1872_1948.pdf.

¹¹³ Harry Con, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg, and William E. Wilmott, *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 138, describe it as “politically impossible” to apply stringent immigration policy due to Britain’s existing trade relationship with Japan.

¹¹⁴ Ward, *White Canada Forever*; Roy, *White Man’s Province*; Chan, *Gold Mountain*.

¹¹⁵ Jean Barman, “Beyond Chinatown: Chinese Men and Indigenous Women in Early British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 177 (2013): 39–64.

¹¹⁶ Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914–41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 133.

Japanese farmers (and a handful of Chinese farmers) were in a better position to purchase land than were the majority of Chinese. This led to higher rates of landownership and to an enhanced ability to make capital investments, such as purchasing farm equipment to make their farms more competitive. More cash on hand to cover annual startup costs could also improve competition.¹¹⁷

Although Japanese in the Okanagan were not evacuated or dispossessed as were Japanese on the coast, local governments did attempt to control them. City of Kelowna council minutes demonstrate these wartime attitudes, noting: “these Japanese are steadily seeping into the Okanagan Valley seeking to purchase land, residences and to settle, many of them coming in new automobiles and acting in a very truculent and insolent manner.” Members of council, in response to “public indignation ... being roused to such an extent that violence against this infiltration may easily breakout,” resolved that all Japanese men of military age should be interned by the federal government; that land sales, lease, or rental should be prohibited during the “present crisis”; and that police should supervise any further evacuations. A letter detailing these resolutions was sent to the Prime Minister’s Office, but no direct action followed.¹¹⁸

AN INDUSTRY IN TRANSITION

Many Japanese and some Chinese transitioned from market gardening to orcharding. Japanese farmers were in a stronger position to make long-term investments, such as purchasing and improving land, because they had more disposable income than did Chinese farmers. Having a family also contributed to the desire to build a life in Canada, the idea being that their children and grandchildren could benefit directly from their investing in land. The transition to orcharding was spurred by the notion that an orchard was likely more profitable than market gardening.¹¹⁹

Technological innovation and infrastructure development contributed to changes in the agricultural industry, with repercussions for all aspects of farming, including market gardening. The greatest changes to market gardening spurred by infrastructure development were the extension of the railway and the growth in truck traffic due to highway construction. While this made it much easier for local farmers to get their produce to larger markets, such as Vancouver or the Prairies, it also made it much

¹¹⁷ Interviews, 4 July, 23 July, 6 August, 8 August, 23 August 2014; Hoshizaki, *Vision Fulfilled*.

¹¹⁸ City of Kelowna Council Minutes, vol. 15, 16 February 1942, City of Kelowna Office of the City Clerk.

¹¹⁹ Interviews, 21 and 23 August 2014; Hoshizaki, *Vision Fulfilled*.

easier to bring in competitors' produce. A long-time market gardening family from Armstrong points to competition from the California vegetable market as a major factor in the industry's decline.¹²⁰ Similar observations are made by Con et al., who note that, by the 1940s, market gardeners in British Columbia could not compete with producers in Idaho and California.¹²¹ Years later, in the 1990s, it was ongoing competition from the United States and new competition from China that drove many market gardeners-turned-orchardists out of agriculture altogether.¹²²

Transportation and delivery improved throughout the early part of the twentieth century, first with ice cars and then later with the refrigerated truck, invented in the 1940s.¹²³ This coincided with the rapid development of British Columbia's highway system, leading to major changes in the ebb and flow of products between the Okanagan and elsewhere.¹²⁴ Many new cold storage facilities were constructed throughout the Okanagan Valley in the late 1930s and 1940s.¹²⁵ With the addition of cold storage, produce could be stored longer and the imperative to move product as quickly as possible to prevent spoilage, along with the need for the "just-in-time" harvesting that market gardeners had practised in order to serve their clientele the freshest product possible, was reduced.

This period of development was immediately followed by the post-Second World War era. Throughout North America, a massive shift in patterns of consumption occurred, including trends towards pre-packaged food (e.g., canned and frozen).¹²⁶ Refrigerators in homes were also an important factor in changing patterns of consumption. As refrigerators became more affordable and more households converted to electricity it became commonplace to have one, especially as they were seen as a "mark of affluence."¹²⁷ By this time, a few major grocery store chains had become established. Safeway stores had been operating in the area since the late 1920s, having purchased a local company called McDonald's, and Overwaitea also had a long history in the area. These stores were well situated to change with the times: they constructed ever larger supermarkets to meet the demands of a modern city and

¹²⁰ Critchley, "Chinese in Armstrong"; Interview, 8 July 2014.

¹²¹ Con et al., *From China to Canada*, 218.

¹²² Interview, 23 August 2014.

¹²³ David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹²⁴ Harris, "Moving amid the Mountains."

¹²⁵ F.W. Andrew, "The Soft Fruit Industry," *Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society* 14 (1950): 143–50.

¹²⁶ Susanne Friedberg, *Fresh: A Perishable History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009).

¹²⁷ Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old*, 169.

increasingly competed with local farmers.¹²⁸ Local vegetable farmers often sold directly to supermarkets, which prolonged their involvement in the industry as other mechanisms of distribution declined.¹²⁹

Innovation in farming techniques was recognized as critical to the continued existence of a local market gardening industry. In the Okanagan, Japanese farmers were at the forefront of this. One Vernon-area farmer allowed new techniques to be tried on his tomato farm in an experiment supported by the Ministry of Agriculture.¹³⁰ Although initially successful in improving crop conditions, this did not in fact save the local industry. Many market gardeners transitioned from direct-to-consumer sales to strictly wholesale distribution. In one case, this transition was partly fuelled by increased access to markets via the railway and through technological improvements that allowed for easier shipping of perishable products.¹³¹ The members of this family invested in land as early as possible after their arrival in Armstrong. Their success supports the idea that land ownership provided security and was a crucial factor in long-term success. Another family opened a restaurant and continued to grow vegetables for sale as well as to service the restaurant, which also provided more stable, year-round employment opportunities for the children as they completed school.¹³²

Population growth led to increased density in the urban centres, thus reducing the amount of land available in the town centres for market gardening purposes. The locations of farms gradually moved out from the city centre as the population grew and urban density increased; by the 1950s, there were no market gardens remaining in what today is Kelowna's downtown. By the 1960s, the number of market gardens had been drastically reduced in urban areas. Kelowna's population more than doubled between 1921 and 1941.¹³³ During this time, the majority of market garden operations moved out of the city centre. Later, absent the influx of labour from China during the exclusion period, it was difficult for some aging market gardeners to continue their trade because no new labourers were entering the valley to take on the requisite physical work.

The 1921 Census of Canada for the Coldstream-Swan Lake area makes it very clear that Chinese market gardeners needed either to acquire labour or to work in partnerships whereas Japanese market gardeners

¹²⁸ Chinese Community Collection, Business Receipts Folder, Kelowna Public Archives.

¹²⁹ Interviews, 6 and 8 August 2014.

¹³⁰ Oswell, "Memoirs of a District Horticulturalist," 64.

¹³¹ Interview, 23 July 2014.

¹³² Interview, 4 July 2014. Similar findings were noted in Con et al., *From China to Canada*, 218.

¹³³ BC Stats, *British Columbia Municipal Census Populations, 1921 to 2011* (Victoria: BC Stats, 2012).

TABLE 4

Residential arrangements for Chinese and Japanese persons in Sub-District 5, Coldstream, including Swan Lake, in the 1921 Census of Canada

Lodger/employee in white household		Lodger/employee in household of same ethnicity		Living with family	
Chinese	Japanese	Chinese	Japanese	Chinese	Japanese
28	1	152	8	0	19
15.5%	3%	84.5%	28.5%	0%	68.5%

lived and worked mostly in family units. This supports the notion that the ability to reproduce and thus to provide a reliable source of farm labour was key to continued success.¹³⁴

Cooperative marketing, centralized selling, and increased government controls expanded throughout the 1920s and 1930s. These effectively increased the complexity of the market gardening industry, which hastened the formalization of the industry and eventually resulted in the establishment of the Interior Vegetable Marketing Board (IVMB). Most market gardeners in the valley had at least some interaction with the IVMB, especially after amendments were introduced in 1936 requiring all producers who wanted to sell their products commercially to register every season regardless of the size of their operation. Those farmers who sold directly from field or farm stand had only occasional interaction with the IVMB, but this was a rare situation as many market gardeners also grew large crops to sell on to the wider market and these products were subject to strict IVMB regulations.¹³⁵

In the years immediately following the implementation of the *Natural Products Marketing Act, 1934*, and other related legislation, Chinese, Japanese, and white growers in the valley cooperated with one another. Over time, many of the Chinese and Japanese growers became concerned, specifically noting that the restrictions of controlled marketing were forcing them to lower their prices. Due to the large number of them in the Okanagan, at a provincial meeting of marketing boards they were

¹³⁴ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Sixth Census of Canada*.

¹³⁵ *The Natural Products Marketing Act, 1934*, Public Law 17th Parliament, Acts of the Parliament of Canada (1934 [Assented 3 July 1934]): 1335–45; *An Act to Amend the "Natural Products Marketing (British Columbia) Act,"* Public Law 18th Parliament, British Columbia Sessional Papers (1936 [Assented 20 November 1936]): 99–104.

able to secure representation in the form of both a Chinese and a Japanese grower.¹³⁶

Provincially, there was a substantial suspicion that the marketing boards were put in place specifically to control Asian, especially Chinese, competition.¹³⁷ While there is no direct evidence to either refute or support these claims for the Okanagan, it appears that stemming the tide of Asian competition underlies much of the work of the marketing boards. IVMB records reveal the complicated relationship between producers and landowners and, more critically, between producers and the board.¹³⁸ Crops that were particularly affected by the IVMB's regulations on geographic distribution limits (such as cabbage and celery) were primarily grown by Chinese, suggesting that there may be some truth to the suspicions.¹³⁹ In many instances, perishable produce had to be disposed of after being seized by marketing board inspectors rather than returned to the grower because it often rotted during the seizure. Seized potatoes and other root crops were often returned to the grower who was then allowed to purchase the approved bag tags and sell the product legally.¹⁴⁰

The rising influence of the IVMB in the late 1930s and through the 1940s corresponds with the decline of the market gardening industry in the north and central Okanagan Valley. In some areas of the valley the IVMB was more influential than in others. For example, market gardeners in Armstrong felt the "heavy hand" of the IVMB more frequently than did those in Kelowna. This is likely because vegetable farming in Kelowna (which mainly depended on tree fruits) accounted for only a small percentage of agricultural production, whereas in Armstrong it accounted for most of it.¹⁴¹

Other factors that influenced the decline of the market gardening industry include the aging population of Chinese and the lack of new recruits to succeed those who died or returned to China when they were near death, both of which were effects of the *Chinese Immigration Act*, 1923, and the head tax. Furthermore, the agricultural industry's increased complexity throughout the middle part of the twentieth century is reflective of changes in global political and economic systems, which

¹³⁶ *An Act to Provide for the Marketing of Natural Products*, Public Law 18th Parliament, British Columbia Sessional Papers (1934 [assented 29 March 1934]): 121–24; Roy, *Oriental Question*.

¹³⁷ Roy, *Oriental Question*; Interviews, 4 and 23 July, 2014.

¹³⁸ Interviews, 8 and 23 July, 16 and 12 August 2014.

¹³⁹ Critchley, "Chinese in Armstrong"; Interview, 8 July 2014.

¹⁴⁰ Unaccessioned Interior Vegetable Marketing Board Fonds, Kelowna Public Archives; Interviews, 4 and 23 July 2014.

¹⁴¹ Interviews, 4 and 23 July, and 6 and 12 August 2014.

were moving towards more international trade and greater interconnectedness. Retired district horticulturist Michael Oswell points directly at globalization and competition as the death blow to the local tomato industry.¹⁴² Like so many other places, the Okanagan apparently had little room for a local economy.

CONCLUSION

Provincial and federal legislation and its implementation at the local level affected the ability of some market gardeners to survive and thrive in the Okanagan despite an increasing population and good growing conditions. In particular, the long-term effects of the Chinese head tax (1885–1923) and the *Chinese Immigration Act, 1923*, which resulted in the Chinese exclusion period (1923–48), were particularly detrimental to Chinese market gardeners. During this period, as market forces made market gardening less and less profitable, many Japanese families transitioned to orcharding. These factors were similar to those that drove many Indigenous farmers to seek work in other occupations.¹⁴³ Elsewhere in British Columbia, and to a limited extent locally, some of the Chinese who arrived after the end of the exclusion period did take up farming. While the long history of Chinese involvement in the vegetable distribution and greengrocer business has been studied, in the Okanagan there is also a deep Chinese connection with the farmers' market movement.¹⁴⁴

Until recently, the contributions of both the Chinese and Japanese market gardening communities, as well as those of other ethnic minority populations, have rarely been acknowledged outside of publications produced from within their own ethnic communities.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, local Indigenous farmers also played a significant and under-acknowledged role. For example, between the 1920s and 1930s, the amount of acreage in agricultural production controlled by Indigenous groups more than doubled – yet rarely have their experiences and contributions been examined.¹⁴⁶ Throughout British Columbia's history, Chinese and

¹⁴² Oswell, "Memoirs of a District Horticulturist."

¹⁴³ Knight, *Indians at Work*, chap. 8.

¹⁴⁴ Interview, 4 July 2014; Morton, *Sea of Sterile Mountains*; Gibb and Wittman, "Parallel Alternatives."

¹⁴⁵ Gibb and Wittman, "Parallel Alternatives."

¹⁴⁶ Examination of Department of Indian Affairs annual reports for 1921 through 1938 reveal that the total acres in agricultural production within the Okanagan Agency increased steadily from 6,990 in 1921 to 13,257 in 1938. While specific crops may have declined, overall acreage increased.

Japanese experiences are often framed by white experiences. This results in a limited acceptance of their role as agricultural labourers. But it is important to realize that the market gardeners of the past were not merely labourers, they were entrepreneurs and independent business owners.

Current Okanagan agricultural narratives focus on orcharding and the wine industry. The celebrated stories of agricultural development in the valley tend to place Chinese and Japanese into the stereotypical role of transient labourers. Only recently, fuelled in part by the specific actions of the provincial government's Chinese Historical Places Recognition Project, the Canada 150 project, and other similar programs, a number of initiatives in the valley are moving towards recognizing the contributions of all settlers, not just Europeans. In October 2017, a large monument was unveiled in Kelowna adjacent to the site of the former Chinatown. In 2014, signs were erected on the sides of two buildings important to the history of Chinese in Vernon.¹⁴⁷ Also in Vernon, an exhibition at the local museum in the fall of 2017 documented the experiences of Chinese during the gold rush era.¹⁴⁸ Similar projects dedicated to early Japanese communities can be expected in the coming years in response to the 2012 provincial apology for the Japanese internment in the 1940s. In April 2017, the provincial government announced successful nominations for the Japanese Historical Places Recognition Project. An interactive map of all nominated locations is available through Heritage BC.¹⁴⁹ These actions are a positive sign that we are on our way to recognizing a more complete and inclusive history of British Columbia.

There are many exciting areas of future research related to Chinese and Japanese market gardeners in the Okanagan. A close examination of a smaller geographic area, such as Kelowna, could provide a more nuanced interpretation of patterns of land tenure and distribution in response to urban development. The relationship between Chinese and Japanese farmers, Indigenous farmers, the broader agricultural community, and, especially, the use of Farmers' Institutes, is another area in need of further research. Finally, as my doctoral research was coming to a close, a large cache of previously undiscovered IVMB records was located in an old office attic. A small selection of these records has been examined, but many hundreds more await.

¹⁴⁷ "Welcoming Communities Program," <http://www.johnhowardbc.ca/regions/north-okanagan/services/public-safety/>.

¹⁴⁸ Darren Handschuh, "Chinese Gold Rush History," *Castanet* (13 October 2017), <https://www.castanet.net/news/Vernon/209083/Chinese-gold-rush-history>.

¹⁴⁹ Map of "Nominated and Provincially Recognized Historic Places in British Columbia, as Identified through the Japanese Canadian Historic Places Recognition Project," <https://heritagebc.ca/japanese-canadian-map/>.