

THE NIKKEI CALLED IT GON ISLAND¹

A Story of Settlement and Dispossession on Mayne Island²

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“We worked really hard for what we had. Then we had to start all over again.”³

EARLY ONE EVENING in June 2010, at a music festival organized by my twenty-something children on our Mayne Island property, I watched a dark-haired young woman sing and play guitar as she sat under the spreading boughs of an umeboshi plum tree. The tree had been planted years before by the Japanese Canadian farmer who built greenhouses on the property to raise hothouse tomatoes. Raised rectangles of dirt in our upper field indicate where the greenhouses had been. That evening, my daughter Meg introduced me to the young musician – Kesia Nagata – who was interested in knowing more about the history of the greenhouses. Her grandfather, John Nagata, had been born on Mayne Island and, with her great-grandfather, Kumazo Nagata, had bought land and had tomato greenhouse farms at Miners Bay and at Campbell Bay until 1942, when they were forcibly removed

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¹ “Nikkei” is the name for people of Japanese ancestry who settle away from Japan. It was called “Gon Island” by Japanese pioneers to commemorate Gontaro Kadonaga, the first settler and land-owner of Japanese ancestry on Mayne Island. Tottori Ken Jin Doshikai, ed., *A Brief History of Tottori-Kenjū Doshikai and Its Members, 1900–2002* (Mississauga, ON: 4-Print, 2002), 47.

² The history related in this article takes place on the territories of Straits Salish people, on the island called *SKTAK* in SENĆOŦEN and later called Mayne in English. On the island is Tsartlip Reserve #6 – the location of a reef-net fishing site known as SKELAMEKS, which gives the island a deep relationship with the Tsartlip (WJOLELP) community, one of the five communities that are part of the WSÁNEĆ First Nation. I extend my thanks and gratitude to them for the privilege of living and working in their territory. The WSÁNEĆ were signatories to the 1852 North and South Saanich Douglas Treaties which are relevant to the island.

³ Ei Kadonaga and Toshiye Kadonaga (née Adachi), 27 June 1989, Japanese Canadian Oral History Collection (hereafter JCOHC) 94174.025, Nikkei National Museum, <https://digital.lib.sfu.ca/johc-66/interview-mr-and-mrs-ei-kadonaga>.

and dispossessed of their property. Now we knew whose broken glass we were always picking out of the dirt in our garden and sheep field.

This information and the connection to our property led me to inquire more deeply into Mayne Island's Japanese Canadian community and its removal and dispossession in 1942.⁴ Like recent community research and scholarly analysis,⁵ this article aims to open new doors in our understanding of the Japanese Canadian experience in Canada by focusing on the experiences of two Mayne Island families, Kadonaga and Nagata, both from Agarimichi village, Tottori prefecture. Gontaro Kadonaga was the first Japanese pioneer on Mayne; Kumazo Nagata had greenhouses at Campbell Bay where my family now lives. This microhistory of two Mayne Island families, their pioneering experience and consequent dispossession, reveals details and truths that are lost when looking at the big picture.⁶ Dispossession did not just affect Japanese Canadian families and their descendants but also their white settler neighbours and subsequent generations. Reclaiming this history and how it relates to my family property on Mayne Island has been a way for me to confront and acknowledge the racism and white supremacy woven into the fabric of British Columbia. That so little remains today of all the hard work and dreams of these pioneering Japanese Canadian families is very sad, and the loss still reverberates in the island's very white, monocultural community.

⁴ In 1958, my grandparents and parents purchased our property from the estate of John Hart.

⁵ See recent community research at the University of Victoria by scholars involved in the multiyear projects *Landscapes of Injustice*, and *Asian Canadians on Vancouver Island: Race, Indigeneity, and the Transpacific*, which resulted in new research and publications, including but not limited to: "(Un)Settling the Islands: Race, Indigeneity and the Transpacific," co-edited by Christine O'Bonsawin and John Price (*BC Studies* 204, Winter 2020); *Challenging Racist "British Columbia": 150 Years and Counting* (University of Victoria and the Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2021) by Nicholas XEMFOLTW Claxton, Denise Fong, Fran Morrison, Christine O'Bonsawin, Maryka Omatsu, John Price, and Sharanjit Kaur Sandhra,; Kaitlin Findlay, "The Bird Commission, Japanese Canadians, and the Challenge of Reparations in the Wake of State Violence" (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2017); John Price, *Orienteering Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Brian Smallshaw, *As If They Were the Enemy: The Dispossession of Japanese Canadians on Saltspring Island* (University of Victoria, 2020); Jordan Stanger-Ross and Pamela Sugiman, eds., *Witness to Loss: Race, Culpability and Memory in the Dispossession of Japanese Canadians* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2017).

⁶ Smallshaw, *As If They Were the Enemy*, 2–3.

THE JAPANESE SETTLE ON MAYNE ISLAND

In the 1890s, Japanese workers from the fish canneries on the Fraser River made their way to Mayne and other Gulf Islands in sloops and skiffs (flat-bottom rowboats) to cut cord wood to fuel the cannery boilers.⁷ Mayne Island, with its mild weather and resources of seaweed, “and abundant fishing for lingcod, rock cod, sole, herring and perch during the off season (for salmon) on the Fraser River,”⁸ attracted men from Tottori prefecture. They emigrated from Agarimichi, a fishing and farming village in the northwest between an inland waterway – Nakumi Lagoon – and facing the Sea of Japan.

In 1899, eighty-two Japanese men residing on Mayne Island were naturalized as British subjects in order to qualify for fishing licences.⁹ Representing one-third of the Island’s population, they lived in three camps on the south side of the island. Each camp had a Japanese “boss”¹⁰ who negotiated and earned a commission on their work with the canneries and salteries on the Fraser River and the Gulf Islands.¹¹ To supplement their diets of fish and rice, they hunted deer and wild fowl.¹²

THE KADONAGA FAMILY

In 1903, Gontaro Kadonaga, who lived in one of the camps, purchased acreage at Horton Bay from John Campbell and became the first Japanese settler on Mayne Island. In his honour, Japanese Canadians referred to the entire island as Gon Island. White settlers had named his specific

⁷ John Nagata, “The Japanese People,” in *Centennial Year Mayne Island Fall Fair: Saturday 14 August 1971* booklet (Mayne Island, BC: Mayne Island Agricultural Society, 1971 [1997]), 23.

⁸ Lynne Nagata, “Descendants of Kumazo Nagata,” in *Tracing Our Heritage to Tottori Ken Japan*, ed. Ontario Tottori Ken Jin Kai (Mississauga, ON: 4-Print, 2010), 173.

⁹ British Columbia, County Court (Victoria), Register of Certificates and Naturalization of Aliens, 1863–4; 1874–1900, GR-1865.2, British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/register-of-certificates-and-naturalization-of-aliens-with-index>.

¹⁰ See 1901 Census, BC, Vancouver District, Victoria North Sub-District, division 4, pp. 5–6, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC). The bosses of the three Mayne Island camps were Ade Matsuo (20), Foukawa Nakita (43), and Matunaga San (55).

¹¹ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 31; Masako Fukawa with Stanley Fukawa and the Nikkei Fishermen’s History Book Committee, “Fishing Bosses,” in *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet: BC’s Japanese Canadian Fishermen* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2009), 49–52.

¹² “Investigated Smuggling,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 26 February 1901.



Figure 1. Yuso Adachi and Gontaro Kadonaga (with his second wife and baby son Ei), c. 1909. *Source:* Image 2017.I.283 courtesy Mayne Island Museum, John Aitken Photo Collection.

location St. John Point;¹³ the *WSÁNEĆ* people, who used it as a reef-net fishing site, knew it as *FÁWEN*, meaning Coho.¹⁴

Kadonaga was born about 1868 in the village of Agarimichi in Tottori prefecture, Japan, the hometown of most of the Japanese settlers on Mayne Island. Following a pattern common to immigrants, the men established themselves before sending for their wives and creating Canadian-born families. Kadonaga and his cousin Kinzo Sasaki also sponsored members of their extended families, including the Kawashiri, Teramoto, Saga, Adachi, and Koyama families, who came to live on their property at Horton Bay.¹⁵ Some *hakujin* (white people) claimed about eighty to one hundred Japanese resided at Horton Bay (*katanaka ju*), but the number may have seemed larger because Japanese Canadian fishers

¹³ Helen O'Brian and John O'Brian, "Why Does Protecting St. John Point Matter?," Mayne Island Conservancy website, 23 November 2016, <https://mayneconservancy.ca/why-does-protecting-st-john-point-matter/>.

¹⁴ Dave Elliott and Jane Poth, eds., *Saltwater People* (Saanich, BC: School District 63, 1983), 34–35.

¹⁵ Joyce Hattori, Louvaine Kadonaga, Ellen Kadonaga to Alan Cheek, 21 November 2002, "Some History of Japanese Families on Mayne Island," Mayne Island Museum Files.

visited the Kadonaga home for shelter, baths, and fresh vegetables.¹⁶ By 1921, ten Japanese Canadian families had settled on Mayne. Collectively, they formed approximately one-third of the island's population.¹⁷

At first, the economy was based on wood cutting, clearing land for white farmers, fishing and harvesting of a small fish called *ikanago*, and gathering and dehydrating seaweed for export to Japan. However, following Kadonaga's lead, the settlers cleared the land, grew strawberries, and, until after the First World War, raised chickens in what was recalled as a "golden age of poultry farming." In addition, they built piers and improved the roads.¹⁸ Diversification continued with the advent of hothouse tomatoes and the construction of two sawmills to provide lumber for the tomato crates.¹⁹ And, of course, some families continued to live from the sea by fishing, making cork for nets, gathering seaweed for export, and making charcoal in their own pit kilns to sell to the canneries.²⁰

To succeed, they had to be adaptable, as is shown by the career of Gontaro's son Ei Kadonaga. He was born on Mayne Island on 16 February 1908, the eldest child of Gontaro's second wife, thirty-year-old Natsu Kinoshita who had been brought over from Japan. Ei was raised in a large extended family with siblings, half siblings, and other relatives.²¹ Children contributed to the family economy, working hard before and after school. In compliance with his father's admonition that "money doesn't grow on maple leaf" and demonstrating the importance of children to the family economy, Ei milked three cows before going to school in the morning and five after school. He also separated the cream from the milk and cleaned the chicken house. Ei left school after Grade 7 to work at the reduction plant on Pender Island where, he recalled, he "cook the fish, squeeze all the water, grind it for meal – for fertilizer, or someone packs it to eat."²² In 1926, he returned to Mayne

¹⁶ Kadonaga and Kadonaga, JCOHC.

¹⁷ They were the Sasaki, Hiramatonson, Radoyama, Koyama, Kosumi, Kowaskiri, and three Adachi households. The Minimide family was from Wakayama prefecture (Mayne Island Museum files).

¹⁸ Pat Adachi, "Family of Tsunekichi Kawashiri," in *Tracing Our Heritage*, 97.

¹⁹ Margaret Bennett, "Japanese Story," *Centennial Year Mayne Island Fall Fair*.

²⁰ One of the five charcoal pit kilns on the island has been reconstructed at the Mayne Island Japanese gardens.

²¹ The 1921 census lists nine people in the Gontare [*sic*] Kadonaga (53) household, including sons Ei (13), Yoshi (11), and Setsu (9). Tora Kadonaga (35) is listed as another male head along with his wife Natsu (30), and a daughter Miya (6), and sons Keitore (3) and Takishi (1). See LAC, 1921 Census, BC, District Nanaimo, Sub-District Cowichan, family number 20, page 2, line 25, PDF (Image No.: e002872352).

²² Kadonaga and Kadonaga, JCOHC.

Island to work the new tomato-growing greenhouse that another Tottori settler, Kumazo Nagata, had established.²³ When he was twenty he bought a boat and fished around the Gulf Islands and supplied the Fraser River canneries. Then the Depression hit, jobs dried up, and Ei returned to Mayne Island.

Following Nagata's successful experiment with tomato growing, Ei's brother Setsu and older half-brother Toro constructed a greenhouse at Horton Bay where Ei now worked. In 1935, his family arranged his marriage to Toshiye Adachi, whose parents had come from Agarimichi to Vancouver. As was the pattern with extended family households, the couple lived in the Kadonaga household with Ei's fifty-year-old half-brother Toro, his wife Miya, and their children. Gontaro Kadonaga had divided his 190-acre (76.89 hectares) property between his brother's eldest son Kwanichi Sasaki and his own eldest son Toro Kadonaga. Toro received 123 acres (49.77 hectares) with a "safe anchorage for small vessels and a serviceable sea wall and boat landing pier" near the house, extensive greenhouses, and an orchard.²⁴

THE NAGATA FAMILY

Kumazo Nagata, the pioneer tomato grower and senior member of the Nagata family on Mayne Island, was born in Agaramichi prefecture on 18 February 1885,²⁵ emigrated in 1900,²⁶ and became a naturalized British subject in 1906. Before coming to Mayne Island in 1920, Kumazo travelled between British Columbia and California, fishing for salmon when he could and working other jobs between times – café dishwasher, houseboy, fruit picker, and even bottle washer on the railway.²⁷ On 2 May 1912, he

²³ Adachi, "Family of Tsunekichi Kawashiri," 97.

²⁴ Royal Commission to Investigate Complaints of Canadian Citizens of Japanese Origin Who Resided in British Columbia in 1941, *That Their Real and Personal Property Had Been Disposed of by the Custodian of Enemy Property at Prices Less Than the Fair Market Value* (hereafter Bird Commission), RG 33/69, vol. 30, file 0620, Kadonaga, Keitaro, LAC. Accessed through the Landscapes of Injustice Archives Digital Database <https://loi.uvic.ca/archive/> (hereafter LOI).

²⁵ Nagata, "Descendants of Kumazo Nagata," 173.

²⁶ Wayne Nagata, e-mail message to author, 13 April 2020.

²⁷ Nagata, "Descendants of Kumazo Nagata," 173.

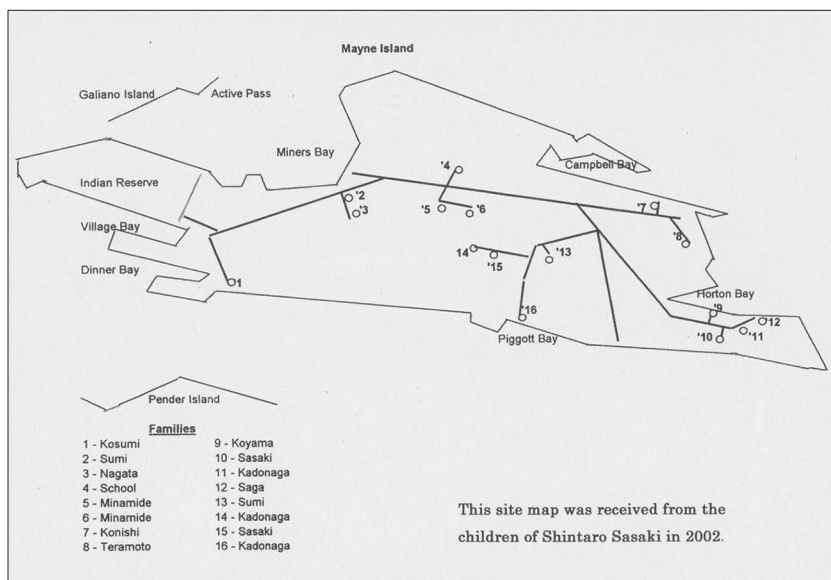


Figure 2. Map of Japanese Canadian farms on Mayne Island, c. 1940. Prepared by Sasaki family descendants, 2002. Source: Map courtesy Mayne Island Museum.

married Kiyono Konishi in Victoria.²⁸ He chose this twenty-year-old “picture bride” from Tottori²⁹ because she was strong and hardworking.³⁰

Kumazo worked as a fish packer at the Terra Nova Cannery, and the couple lived near Eburne (Sea Island), a suburb of Vancouver, in a close-knit community of families with ties to Tottori prefecture.³¹ Kumazo was ambitious, hardworking, and “loved new technology.” While working as a fish packer at Eburne in 1917, he bought and converted a Model T automobile into a panel truck to haul fish and firewood and, with the help of friends, built a gasoline-powered packer boat. The boat allowed him to become a fish collector and broker, as had some other Tottori fellows.³² Children were born: daughter Fumiko (1913), son Ken (1914), son

²⁸ British Columbia, Marriage Index, 1872–1935 (no. 1912-09-023699), Ancestry.com; Michael Kluckner, “Mayne Mast Restaurant, Mayne Island (and Other Historic Japanese Canadian Sites),” Vanishing British Columbia website, last modified 22 July 2017, <https://www-michaelkluckner.com/bciw7mayne.html>.

²⁹ Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935, Department of Immigration Records, RG 76, reel C4865, LAC.

³⁰ Personal communication to author from Kesia Nagata.

³¹ Family names commemorated on the “Celtic Cannery” page of “Places That Matter” are a roll call of Mayne Island family names: Kadonaga, Sasaki, and Adachi. Vancouver Heritage Society, “Celtic Cannery,” Places That Matter website, <https://www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org/place-that-matters/celtic-cannery/>.

³² Nagata, “Descendants of Kumazo Nagata,” 175.



Figure 3. Mayne Island schoolchildren, 29 June 1923 with Miss Milne. Families spoke Japanese at home, and their children learned English at school. Ei Kadonaga left school in Grade 7 to go to work, so he is not pictured. John Nagata is in the front row, second from the left. *Source:* With permission from Marie Elliott.

Shuji (1917), and daughter Toshiko (1920). Following a common custom, Kumazo took his eldest children, Fumiko and Ken, to Agarimichi, Japan, to live with relatives and be educated there.³³ He shared the voyage home in April 1918 with Gontaro Kadonaga (50) and two immigrants from his home village: Kenejiro Ikebuchi (41), a merchant, and Tsuichi Adachi (17), a farmer.³⁴ All were destined for Mayne Island.³⁵

Strong community and family ties, and perhaps the opportunity to farm rather than fish,³⁶ led Kumazo to move to Mayne Island. The family recalled “the trip over on the packer boat with the car sitting crosswise on the bow. The panel truck was driven on to the island on wooden gangplanks.”³⁷ On 8 December 1920, Kumazo bought Lots 1, 2, 3, 20, 21, and 22, South East Quarter of Section Twelve.³⁸ This gave the

³³ Fumiko and Ken returned to Mayne Island in 1927.

³⁴ These may have been their real occupations or were chosen to conform to the Gentlemen’s Agreement which regulated emigration from Japan to Canada.

³⁵ Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935.

³⁶ The federal policy that reduced the number of fishing licences issued to citizens of Japanese ancestry may have inspired his decision to turn to farming as a livelihood.

³⁷ Nagata, “Descendants of Kumazo Nagata,” 173.

³⁸ Copy of the Certificate of Indefeasible Title, Mayne Island Museum, Surveyor General of the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia, Victoria, BC. Collected by Marie Elliott.



Figure 4. Schoolgirls in costume. *Source:* Image 1996-152-1-1 Irene May Hawes Case collection, 1932-1938, Mayne Island, BC. With permission from the Nikkei National Museum.

Nagatas enough land at Miners Bay to start a farm and house a family, which by then included his wife and two small children: Shuji (John) and Toshiko (Margaret).³⁹ A cousin, Sato Kadonaga (31), and brother-in-law Kumagoro (or Kumazoro) Nagata (21), both recent immigrants, also lived with them in 1921, providing plenty of family labour to work on the new farm operation.

The school was well integrated on the island. The *Vancouver Daily Province* of 2 December 1928 reported on a Mayne Island School Christmas concert at the Mayne Island Hall in which Toshiko and Shiuji Nagata and Takeski Kadonaga had “special numbers,” along with the Bennett, Coates, Foster, and Robson children.

Kumazo’s technical bent and mechanical ingenuity quickly came into play when he joined a cooperative of poultry farmers. There was no electricity on the island, so Kumazo bought a Delco-Light plant, a gasoline-powered generator, and put electric lights in the chicken coop to increase productivity by encouraging night feeding.

Kiyono was a key participant in the family economy. She started the Delco at 4:00 a.m. to power the incubation house, chicken house,

³⁹ See LAC, 1921 Census, BC, District Nanaimo, Sub-District Cowichan, Nanaimo, Family number 56, page 5, line 13, Image No.: E002872355.



Figure 5. Active Pass Growers' Association label, c. 1935. *Source:* Courtesy Mayne Island Museum.

and greenhouses,⁴⁰ collected the eggs, cleaned the chicken coops, and gathered manure to fertilize the soil. Modest returns from the poultry farm did not seem commensurate with the hard work it entailed. In 1927, Nagata turned to another business – growing tomatoes in greenhouses. He was able to buy a small greenhouse built of cedar poles and, with help from the Kadonaga family, he dismantled it, moved it to Miners Bay, and re-erected it. The following spring, they sold hothouse tomatoes in the Mainland market.⁴¹ Impressed by better returns from tomatoes than from poultry, the Kadonaga family and other Japanese Canadians began growing tomatoes.⁴²

The Nagatas and others prospered as tomato farmers, leading them to establish a farming cooperative in 1935 – the Active Pass Growers' Association – to market their tomatoes collectively. The association negotiated a freight rate with the CPR steamships that allowed for the economical shipping of produce to Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. In the summer, the Miners Bay dock was busy every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, when the *Princess Mary* delivered supplies and picked up hundreds of boxes of tomatoes destined for the Mainland markets.⁴³ The enterprise grew steadily, and, by 1941, twelve families, with eight acres (3.24 hectares) under glass, produced fifty tons of high-quality tomatoes.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Nagata, "Descendants of Kumazo Nagata," 175.

⁴¹ Nagata, "Japanese People," 23.

⁴² So Kumazo said to my brother, "Why don't you get a greenhouse – more money than poultry!" See Kadonaga and Kadonaga, JCOHC.

⁴³ Marie Elliott, *Mayne Island & the Outer Gulf Islands, A History* (Mayne Island, BC: Gulf Islands Press, 1984), 65.

⁴⁴ Nagata, "Japanese People," 23.

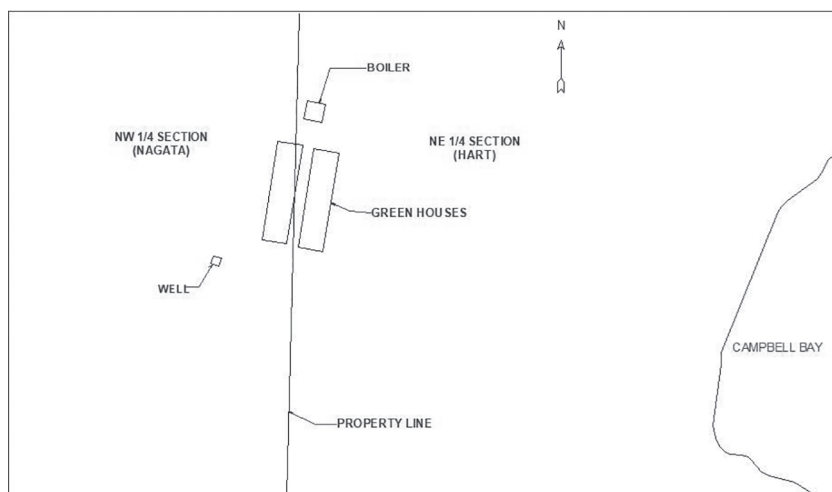


Figure 6. Map showing property line between Nagata and Hart property and location of greenhouses on property line. Map drawn by T. Iredale.

In the 1930s, Kumazo was doing well. He renovated the family home, volunteered at the island community hall (Maple Leaf Hall),⁴⁵ and, according to family stories, enjoyed playing golf at the course on Hardscrabble farm. His children – Fumiko and Ken – had returned from Japan in 1927 and John had completed his high school education in Vancouver.⁴⁶ All the children contributed to the family economy by working in the greenhouses, which occupied almost half an acre.

The family business was ready to expand. In 1938, Kumazo Nagata registered title to the North West Quarter of Section 11, a quarter-section (64.7 hectares) of inland property between Miners Bay and Campbell Bay⁴⁷ that had had five previous owners.⁴⁸ Although the arable land on the Campbell Bay side was flat, much work was required to prepare it for the greenhouses, which were purchased from Richard Hall in Miners

⁴⁵ A 1930s photo of a community work bee at the Maple Leaf Hall on Mayne Island shows Kumazo with other Islanders. See Jennifer Iredale, “The Agricultural Hall on Mayne Island,” *British Columbia History* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2016).

⁴⁶ Nagata, “Descendants of Kumazo Nagata,” 174.

⁴⁷ The Certificate of Indefeasible Title certifies that Kumazo Nagata of Mayne Island, BC, is “entitled in fee-simple” to property described as “The North West Quarter of Section Eleven (11), Mayne Island, Cowichan District.” Surveyor General of the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia, from certificate 36476-1, no. 107993-1, 7 January 1938 register, vol. 418.

⁴⁸ Owners of NW ¼ Section 1 prior to Nagata began in 1890 with Quebec pioneer F.L. David; 1914, Abbott and Heck; 1916, Baker; 1919, Helmcken; 1920, His Majesty the King – Soldier Settlement Board from whom Nagata purchased it. Included with permission from: Surveyor General of the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia.

Bay and dragged through the valley to the new farm. Three pigs were enlisted for a few weeks to dig roots and devour the six-foot-high bracken. Kumazo and John set up a gravity-fed water system, which ran from the wells to storage tanks from where the water siphoned down to the greenhouses to be heated in a boiler brought from the old coal mine at Tumbo Island. The hot water circulated through the greenhouses kept the tomato plants warm and encouraged early growth and fruiting.⁴⁹ To heat the greenhouses, John Nagata felled trees and cut about 150 cords of wood per year. The family also bought wood from the sawmills at Sproat Lake and the McLean Mill in Port Alberni.

Eldest son Ken had moved to Port Alberni with his wife Kay (née Sumi) to start another greenhouse operation. Using the family's panel truck, John brought them building supplies and then helped clear their land. The glass for the new greenhouse was imported from Japan and was likely the last shipment to arrive before the war. On 7 December, John Nagata was in Port Alberni working with Ken when news of Pearl Harbor led to a town hall meeting of the Japanese Canadian community. The family decided to "suspend the Nagata greenhouse expansion a few days before Christmas with the future outlook so grim." As John loaded his truck with firewood to take back to Mayne Island, millworkers showed their antipathy to Japanese Canadians by pelting him with a "wood rain" of sticks.⁵⁰

At Campbell Bay on Mayne Island, the property line was not clear and the Nagatas unintentionally built their greenhouses on land owned by their neighbour, Finance Minister John Hart.⁵¹ On 9 December 1941, two days after Pearl Harbor, after an inconclusive general election, Hart became premier of a government formed of a coalition of Liberal and Conservative members of the legislature. The subsequent actions of Hart and his political colleagues contributed to the federal measures that drastically affected the Nagatas and other Mayne Island Japanese Canadian families among the twenty-two thousand Japanese Canadians who called coastal British Columbia home.

⁴⁹ Nagata, "Descendants of Kumazo Nagata," 177.

⁵⁰ Nagata, 179.

⁵¹ Hart's property at Campbell Bay was the "North East Quarter of Section 11 in the Cowichan District, Mayne Island." Hart's wife, Harriet Mackay, inherited it through her grandfather, William Mackay, who purchased it as a Crown grant in 1881. This is the property my family now owns and lives on.

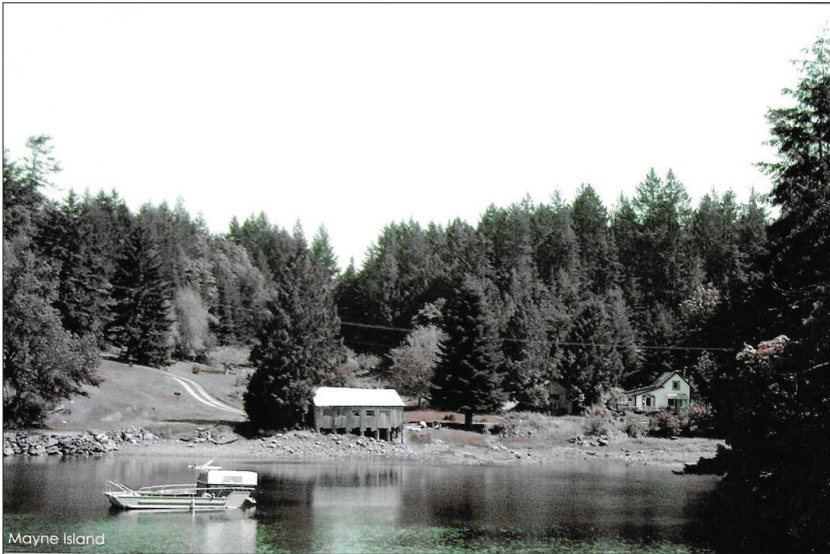


Figure 7. Kadonaga house with boathouse and stone wall. Postcard, c. 2009. *Source:* Image 2020.05.001.1 Evan Mitchell Postcard Collection, courtesy Mayne Island Museum.

RISING RACISM

Such hostility was not surprising. “In those days, too much discrimination, all over. In everything, hiring practices, name calling, work, pay” is how Ei Kadonaga recalled his early life on the BC coast.⁵² Between 1935 and 1941, anti-Japanese sentiment in British Columbia increased as politicians and the press warned of a “Japanese invasion.”⁵³ The Gulf Islands were no exception. In fact, MacGregor Macintosh, their MLA from 1937 to 1941, campaigned for the removal of all Japanese from the coast. Using Mayne Island as an example, he claimed that the island was being “overrun by Japanese” and that “more Japanese than white children” attended its school. He argued that a “Japanese invasion” threatened the fishing and farming jobs that belonged to white men, and he called for “a census of Japanese living in the Province.”⁵⁴ One member of the British expat community on Mayne, pensioned First World War and Boer War veteran Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Flick,⁵⁵ who employed Fumiye

⁵² Kadonaga and Kadonaga, JCOHC.

⁵³ Patricia E. Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914–41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 189–92.

⁵⁴ “Expresses Alarm at Japanese ‘Invasion’ Into BC Industries,” *Daily Colonist*, 19 January 1938.

⁵⁵ Elliott, *Mayne Island*, 54; and “Col. Flick,” in *Centennial Year Mayne Island Fall Fair*, 5.



Figure 8. Postcard of Japanese fishing boats at Miners Bay dock, c. 1940. *Source:* Image 2020.05.001.30 courtesy Mayne Island Museum.

Minemade to do housework,⁵⁶ rebutted Macintosh’s scaremongering as being “gravely in error” and decried “idle and untrue utterances by politicians concerning Japan and the local Japanese that can do nothing other than breed ill feeling.” Flick asserted:

The Japanese homes here are neat and scrupulously clean; and the inmates at once courteous, civil, hospitable and of excellent community spirit toward their fellow citizens. True, they own a few acres of poor land on which they erect greenhouses to produce early tomatoes etc, and they rent other acres of better land from some of Captain Macintosh’s political supporters who seem quite willing to take money from the Japanese. The fishing plants, owned by Japanese, employ many white men during the season and thus contribute to the prosperity of Pender and Galiano Islands. Mayne Island Japanese tax themselves over and above the legal school tax to help keep the Mayne Island school running, and I do not think that the term “delinquent” is ever on a Japanese tax notice.⁵⁷

Macintosh was a member of a special federal committee concerned with the “general problem of the Japanese” that was instrumental in requiring all Japanese Canadians to register with the RCMP between

⁵⁶ Fumiye Minamide, LAC, accessed through LOI.

⁵⁷ “Letters to the Editor, Japanese on Mayne Island,” *Daily Colonist*, 25 January 1938, 4.



Figure 9. Sumi greenhouses, c. 1940. *Source:* Image 2020.07.001.6 O'Brien collection, courtesy Mayne Island Museum.

March and August 1941.⁵⁸ Kumazo Nagata is registered as number 5166; Kiyono, 8364; and John (Shuji), 5337.⁵⁹ This was yet one more example of how the government treated Japanese Canadians as aliens even though most were Canadians by birth or naturalization. The war brought more drastic restrictions on the lives of Japanese Canadians.

On the night of Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941, the Provincial Police deputized Mayne Islander Fred Bennett and ordered him to help find and arrest five Japanese nationals who were immediately removed from their families and the island.⁶⁰ In the next few days, under orders from the federal government, the Royal Canadian Navy rounded up more than eleven hundred Japanese Canadian-owned fishing vessels as a “defence” measure.⁶¹ Ei Kadonaga’s boats were impounded: “Gone, no money, we

⁵⁸ Adachi, *The Enemy*, 192.

⁵⁹ Images 4520, 4521, 4549, file C9302, Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property, Vancouver Office, office files, Canadiana Heritage (hereafter Custodian’s Files).

⁶⁰ The men arrested as “enemy aliens” just before midnight on 7 December 1942 were Etsuji and Shoji Teramoto, Mineichi Minamide, Kumajiro Konishi, and Shintaro Sasaki. See Marie Elliott, “Gulf Island Iniquity,” *Ormsby Review*, 14 April 2021. For Bennett, this was a terrible experience, one he never got over, because the men he helped arrest were good neighbours and friends. See Elliott, *Mayne Island*, 68.

⁶¹ “Some 2,090 licenses issued to 1,265 Nikkei fishermen ... were cancelled, and 1,137 vessels owned and operated by them were impounded.” See Fukawa, with Fukawa and committee, *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet*, 119.

lost a lot. Navy people came and rounded up the boats. Rounded up every fisherman.”⁶²

During the tumultuous months after Pearl Harbor, newspapers, municipal councils, service clubs, boards of trade, and individuals expressed panic about local Japanese Canadians with fifth columnist leanings who might be engaging in espionage or sabotage. Early in January, Hart and his Conservative attorney general, R.L. Maitland, demanded that the federal government remove “the menace of Fifth Column activity.”⁶³ The federal government announced it would soon move all Japanese male enemy aliens of military age inland but appeared to do nothing. In mid-February, the provincial legislature called Ottawa’s attention to “the immediate necessity of completing the strongest and fullest measures of defence against our enemies.”⁶⁴ If the federal government failed to act, Hart promised to go to Ottawa himself to press the matter.⁶⁵ As well, Hart spoke by telephone with Ian Mackenzie, British Columbia’s representative in the federal cabinet and a longstanding opponent of the Japanese.⁶⁶ As Japanese forces gained more victories in the Pacific and there was little evidence of Ottawa doing anything about the situation, pressure to remove all Japanese mounted. On 23 February, Harold Winch, the leader of the CCF opposition in the legislature, consulted Hart and phoned Mackenzie to demand the removal of Japanese Canadians from strategic areas on the coast. Winch reported that Hart was “doing his best” to pressure Ottawa to remove the Japanese.⁶⁷ The next day, 24 February 1942, Prime Minister Mackenzie King, acting on this and other pressures,⁶⁸ ordered all Japanese Canadians to move at least one hundred miles (one hundred and sixty kilometers) inland, leading to the largest mass removal and detention in Canadian history.

Did Hart know of the Nagata’s farm operation on his Mayne Island property? In *Maclean’s* magazine, Bruce Hutchison refers to Hart’s

⁶² Kadonaga and Kadonaga, JCOHC.

⁶³ “Pearson Off for Ottawa,” *Province*, 5 January 1942, 1.

⁶⁴ British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, 12 February 1942.

⁶⁵ “On Japanese Issues, BC Officials Off to Ottawa,” *Province*, 14 February 1942, 2.

⁶⁶ Mackenzie had a key role in the government’s decision to intern Japanese Canadians and later called for their permanent removal from the province. See Patricia E. Roy and Peter Neary, “MACKENZIE (McKenzie), IAN ALISTAIR,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 17, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mackenzie_ian_alistair_17E.html.

⁶⁷ “Claims Japanese at Vital Spots,” *Province*, 23 February 1942, 2.

⁶⁸ “The federal government was responsible for most of the laws behind this tragedy, but the real perpetrators were those in BC who manipulated war fears to demand the uprooting and pushed for the permanent expulsion of Japanese Canadians from the province, as well as those who let it happen. For too long, silence has shrouded the fact that thousands took advantage of the dispossession for personal gain.” See Claxton et al., *Challenging Racist British Columbia*,

“country place on the Gulf Islands.”⁶⁹ It is doubtful John and his wife Harriet regularly visited their property at Campbell Bay, but if they had come in the spring of 1942, they would have seen the Nagatas preparing tomato seedlings in their greenhouse operation that straddled the property line between their properties.

After the federal decree of 24 February 1942 ordered all Japanese Canadians to leave the coast, Nagata and the Active Pass Growers, rather than deprive Mainland consumers of fruit and vegetables, planted spring crops. On 1 April 1942, Kumazo, as secretary, asked the BC Security Commission, the federal agency responsible for moving Japanese Canadians, about the protection of their crops and farms after their removal.⁷⁰ A week later, on 21 April 1942, the *Princess Mary* docked at Miners Bay to remove, not tomatoes, but the more than fifty Mayne Islanders of Japanese ancestry.⁷¹ Many of these passengers were second-generation Nisei, born on Mayne Island, who had never known any other home. The island’s population fell by one-third.

As they prepared to board the *Princess Mary*, the members of the Active Pass Growers’ Association unwillingly signed an agreement with Gavin Mouat of Saltspring Island, the agent for the Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property. That agreement vested their land with the custodian:

We, the undersigned registered Growers of the ACTIVE PASS GROWERS’ ASSN. of MAYNE ISLAND, B.C., finally agree to accept the attached agreement with the opinion that we are forced to accept said agreement at a heavy loss to ourselves and that we are doing so with the outstanding opinion that our crops would have perished and not reach the public of the DOMINION OF CANADA if we had refused.⁷²

Shuji John Nagata recalled: “In the spring of 1942 all the Japanese people on Mayne Island reluctantly left their crops and homes upon orders from the Federal Government.”⁷³ The Mayne Island families were taken to the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) grounds at Hastings

⁶⁹ Bruce Hutchison, “Right versus Left,” *Maclean’s*, 1 February 1942, <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/1942/2/1/right-vs-left>.

⁷⁰ Elliott, *Mayne Island*, 138. In footnote 63, Elliott cites “Kumazo Nagata to BC Security Commission, April 15, 1942, RG 36/27, 9, file 208 (British Columbia Security Commission Records) LAC. This file is restricted, and Mr. John Nagata has given permission for the reproduction of his father’s letter. Nagata to author, December 1981.”

⁷¹ Elliott, *Mayne Island*, 69.

⁷² Joint Declaration by and on behalf of Active Pass Growers’ Association, 21 April 1942, Mayne Island, BC. Image 2574, C9469, Custodian’s files, https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c9469/2574?r=0&s=1.

⁷³ Nagata, “Japanese People,” 23.

Park in Vancouver, where they were housed in the livestock buildings until they were could be resettled inland.⁷⁴

The members of the Nagata family, along with some of their Tottori relatives, the Konishis and Sumis, were among the more prosperous families who relocated to the self-supporting settlements where the Security Commission provided minimal supervision or support. In their case, it was Turtle Valley near Salmon Arm, BC. The men took on temporary farm work. Expecting a short-term stay, they “erected rough shacks of green lumber,” which did not serve well in the cold winter of 1942. Within a few years the Nagatas and Konishis moved nearer to Salmon Arm, and other of the former Mayne Islanders went to Kamloops and Toronto.⁷⁵ The families of Toro and Ei Kadonaga and Bungaro Minimade relocated to Alberta sugar beet farms. Ei recalled that they went to “Diamond City to work on 50 acres (20.23 hectares) of privately-owned land.”⁷⁶

While members of the Active Pass Growers’ Association were in Vancouver, the agent for the Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property required them to sign documents allowing him to lease their successful greenhouse operations despite their preference to work their farms themselves. The custodian leased all fifteen of the Active Pass Growers’ Association properties to Jack Ratcliffe and Richard Mayers from 9 May 1942 to 15 September 1945 in return for defined payment and a list of the activities that could be carried out on them.⁷⁷

Little more than a year after signing the lease, Mayers advised the custodian that “the present set up is not suitable for crop production and ... cannot be operated on a profitable basis.”⁷⁸ After noting the amount of work needed to produce a crop, Mayers recommended that a few farms could make a small income if farmed by families who did not pay wages.⁷⁹ Mayers’s experience highlights the importance of the family farming system and the dedication and hard work of the Japanese Canadians. Correspondence from Nagata and the Active Pass Growers’ Association to the custodian for 1942–44 has been lost, but the custodian’s reply to Nagata shows that the lease system failed and that his office

⁷⁴ Adachi, *The Enemy*, 218.

⁷⁵ Elliott, *Mayne Island*, 70.

⁷⁶ Kadonaga and Kadonaga, JCOHC.

⁷⁷ “Mayne Island Agreement,” Image 2565, C9469 and Images 2565–2572, C9469, Custodian’s files.

⁷⁸ Memorandum from Wright to Shears, 4 August 1943, p. 3, Image 2551, C9469, Custodian’s files. The choice of end date, two weeks after Japan’s official surrender, is coincidental.

⁷⁹ N. Mayers, Recommendations Re Mayne Island Greenhouses, 31 July 1943, p. 2, Image 2556, C9469, Custodian’s files.

was overwhelmed by the difficulty of managing Japanese Canadian properties.⁸⁰ In response to Nagata's concern about his crops in 1944, the custodian reported on the "urgent need of finding tenants," particularly since war-time labour shortages meant that tenants, not landlords, set the terms for rentals. He cited Nagata's "out-lying property at Campbell Bay" as a "practical illustration, for after months of trying, not only locally but in Victoria and Vancouver, no tenant [could] be found to operate the place at any price."⁸¹

Since the custodian was unable to care for the properties that his office had promised to keep for their Japanese Canadian owners, on 19 January 1943 he secured Order in Council 469, which gave him the "power to liquidate, sell or otherwise dispose of such property ... [through] the Consolidated Regulations Respecting Trading with the Enemy ... as if the property belonged to an enemy." This allowed the forced sale of Japanese Canadian property. In the fall of 1943, K.W. Wright of the custodian's staff recommended: "liquidation with the least possible delay if we are to avoid serious loss in respect to all these greenhouses, due to the condition they are in." He noted that the Soldier Settlement Board had appraised the Mayne Island properties and urged that the board members "make their plans known to us with the least possible delay for the reason that if they are not interested, we should be free to offer these properties for sale."⁸² So began the forced sale and dispossession of Japanese Canadian properties on Mayne Island, many of which were expropriated by the government and provided to returning veterans.⁸³ On 1 December 1943, at an auction organized by Gavin Mouat and held on Bungaro Minimade's farm on Fernhill Road, household goods, tools, machinery, vehicles, and lumber from Japanese Canadian-owned properties were sold.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ A joint declaration was signed on behalf of the Active Pass Growers' Association by K. Sumi (chairman), K. Nagata (secretary), T. Kadonaga, K. Konishi, J. Sumi, Y. Kadonaga, B. Minamide, M. Minamide, Mrs. E. Taramoto, and Mrs. S. Sasaki, and it was received for the Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property by Gavin. C. Mouat on 21 April 1942. A "Mayne Island Agreement," dated 17 August 1942, was signed by the custodian and Jack Ratcliffe and Richard J.N. Mayers (agriculturists). It outlined the terms of a lease of the Active Pass Growers' Association properties.

⁸¹ Letter to Kumazo Nagata in Chase, BC, 24 March 1944, Image 2561, C9469, Custodian's files.

⁸² K.W. Wright to F.G. Shears, 4 August 1943, Image 2551, C9469, Custodian's files.

⁸³ Most of the Japanese Canadian property on Mayne was taken up by returning veterans. The two that were not are noted in "The Position of Mayne Island Agreement Properties as at the End of October 1943," Image 2560, C9469, Custodians files, and included in "NW ¼ Section 13 vacant land and our property NE ¼ Section 11 greenhouses."

⁸⁴ For Mouat's role as the agent for the Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property, see Smallshaw, *As If They Were the Enemy*, 57–62.



Figure 10. Iredale family photograph of ruined Nagata greenhouses at Campbell Bay, c. 1960.

Tracing the dispossession of the Nagata property at Campbell Bay is painful. The property and greenhouses are number 550 in the custodian's 25 March 1946 "List of Unsold Japanese Properties" offered for sale for \$5,500.⁸⁵ On 3 December 1946, at 10:00 a.m., the custodian transferred

⁸⁵ "List of Unsold Japanese Properties," LAC, Accessed through LOI.

the property from the Nagatas to William Wilks⁸⁶ and William Henry Morson,⁸⁷ from North Vancouver. The new owners soon “found the greenhouses were too much.”⁸⁸

Over the next years the Nagatas disputed the forced sale of their properties. In 1946, Ken Nagata wrote from his Toronto home to the Office of the Custodian in Vancouver: “I am not at all satisfied with the sum received [for] my assets.” And he registered “a most emphatic protest against the way this entire transaction was handled.” Specifically, he complained that the custodian “sacrificed the green house glass at an extremely low price,” namely, half of its true value. He also pointed “out that my tools, which in your opinion were worth \$150.00 for insurance purposes, were given to some person for \$8.50.” He concluded his letter: “I have already cashed your cheque in my favour for \$1,256.62 but I have accepted it merely on account of your indebtedness to me, and I am looking to you for a further payment of some more reasonable sum for the realization of my assets.”⁸⁹

When the Royal Commission on Japanese Claims (Bird Commission) was struck in 1947, Kumazo and his sons all submitted claims, as did the Kadonagas and others from Mayne Island. With just two months to submit their claims before a deadline of 30 November 1947, Kumazo and John Nagata presented their case at a hearing in Kamloops on 11 May 1948.⁹⁰ Their forty-six-page list of assets included statements of real estate, itemized estimates for boiler room materials and greenhouses, an appraisal done on 9 October 1946, a farm appraisal report, itemized lists of personal chattels, two photographs, an unspecified licence no. 6510, a survey report for “Edith Point,” and an analysis of their

⁸⁶ The Wilks and Morsons moved to Mayne from North Vancouver in 1945, hearing there was opportunity to “grow tomatoes in the Japanese Greenhouses which were becoming over grown and in disrepair. They wanted to keep the industry for when the Japanese returned to their land.” Barb Ross to Mayne Island History Facebook page, 19 April 2020.

⁸⁷ The Certificate of Indefeasible Title certifies that William Wilks and William Henry Morson are “entitled in fee-simple” to property described as “The North West Quarter of Section Eleven (11), Mayne Island, Cowichan District.” Included with permission from: Surveyor General of the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia, from Certificate 169981-1 to no. 169982-1, 3 December 1946, Register, vol. 666.

⁸⁸ Wilks and Morson bought the land looking for “something larger for a decent livelihood.” Bill Morson, “Mayne Island Esso,” *Centennial Year Mayne Island Fall Fair*, 8.

⁸⁹ K. Nagata to Custodian, file 1362 (reel C-9476, image 1676, s.v. Ken Nagata), 21 November 1946, Custodian’s files.

⁹⁰ Bird Commission, RG 33/69, microfilm C-9352, Volume 6 File number 1, File no. (creator) 106 - 107, 1948, LAC.

personal property claim.⁹¹ Kumazo Nagata received only slightly more than one-third of his claim; Kumajiro Konishi less than one-sixth of his.⁹²

The Kadonaga family fared no better at the hands of the custodian and the Bird Commission. The Horton Bay farm, house, and greenhouses owned by Toro Kadonaga had, in 1942, been leased to Mayers and Ratcliffe as part of the Agreement with the Active Pass Growers. Mayers and Racliffe had in turn rented the Kadonaga house and pasture to Lyn Kirkland for \$110.00, the Greenhouses to A. Horton for \$100.00 for the year.⁹³ It was one of the finer farms on the island, well located by a road on a safe harbour with a boat pier, three dwellings, five greenhouses, a barn, garage, chicken coops, and cleared arable land.⁹⁴ In 1944, the custodian sold the farm and home for \$1,655.⁹⁵ Toro had died by 1948 and so it was his son, thirty-year-old Keitaro Kadonaga, a sansei (third-generation Japanese Canadian), who pursued the claim with the Bird Commission from McGrath, Alberta. At the hearing on 26 August 1948 in Lethbridge, Keitaro submitted evidence that the value of the farm and buildings was closer to \$6,000. The commission awarded them another \$3,114.

Ei Kadonaga recalled with bitterness:

Before we were moved, the BC Security Commission said they were going to keep our property and safeguard it for us. That's what everybody signed for. I think that is why everybody is so bitter about it! We worked really hard for what we had. Then we had to start all over again.⁹⁶

Today, the cleared land, an orchard, and the remains of a stone wall, a pier, and a house are still evident on the property, the home of three generations of Kadonagas and where Gontaro's children were born and raised, and where he buried two wives.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Bird Commission, case files: Nagata, Kumazo, file 106; and, Nagata, John Shiuji, file 107, 11 May 1948, 16, LAC (finding aid: http://data2.archives.ca/pdf/pdf002/33-62_188_vols_1-79.pdf).

⁹² Elliott, *Mayne Island*, 138.

⁹³ Position of Mayne Island Agreement Properties as at the End of October, 1943, Image 2560, C9469, Custodian's files.

⁹⁴ Bird Commission, RG 33/69, vol. 30, file 620, Kadonaga, Keitaro, LAC. Accessed through LOI.

⁹⁵ "Some History of Japanese Families on Mayne Island," Mayne Island Museum Files. Most Mayne Island Japanese Canadian properties were sold through the Soldier Settlement Board, but further research is needed. Recently the Capital Regional District acquired part of the former Kadonaga land for park.

⁹⁶ Kadonaga and Kadonaga, Japanese Canadian Oral History Collection.

⁹⁷ Funo Kadonaga in January 1905 and Natsu Kinoshita Kadonaga on 30 May 1915.

POSTWAR RELATIONS

Though local histories claim that relations between non-Japanese and Japanese farmers on Mayne were friendly,⁹⁸ and Pat Adachi writes that after the war “there remained a strong bond between the Japanese and the Islanders,”⁹⁹ a strong anti-Asian element remained on the Gulf Islands.¹⁰⁰ In 1946, G.R. Pearkes MP (Nanaimo and the Islands) told Parliament that “the people of the Gulf Islands do not want to see the Japanese move back.” To support his case, he claimed to have received many letters “all containing this plea: ‘Do not let the Japanese come back to this territory after the war.’”¹⁰¹ Other BC MPs also put forward such arguments, and not until 1 April 1949, four years after the end of the war, could Japanese Canadian freely return to the coast. On Mayne Island their homes were occupied by others; their farms were transferred to non-Japanese war veterans or sold. There was no reason to return.

Today, descendants visit Mayne occasionally to tend the graves at the ancestral Kadonaga property at Horton Bay, where a smaller cove has been renamed Kadonaga Bay. Friends and relatives often join them to revisit the island where their ancestors first homesteaded in Canada and to enjoy a day of picnicking, collecting seaweed, and perhaps visiting the Japanese Gardens at Dinner Bay where all their families are commemorated.

Not until the 1960s did John Nagata return to Mayne on a visit with his son Wayne on a Boy Scout camping trip. Soon thereafter John purchased a lot and built a house – on a lot that looks east towards Active Pass and the Miners Bay dock, and south to where he could catch glimpses of the house and land he was raised on. His grandson, Kai Nagata, when reflecting on his family history on Mayne Island, is justifiably angry at the impact of racism and dispossession on his family. “My family has an interesting relationship on Mayne Island with the descendants of one of the families that obtained some of that land ... The Campbell Bay Music Festival takes place on a farm property that, at one time, was [farmed] by my family.¹⁰² My grandfather is the guy who cleared that land.”¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Elliott, *Mayne Island*, 69.

⁹⁹ Adachi, “Mayne Island,” in *Tracing Our Heritage*, xxv.

¹⁰⁰ Smallshaw, *As If They Were the Enemy*, 8–9 and 39–41.

¹⁰¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 9 April 1946.

¹⁰² Kai used the term “owned”; however, as this is incorrect, I substitute “farmed.”

¹⁰³ Travis Lupick, “History Shows Racism Has Always Been a Part of Vancouver Real Estate,” *Georgia Straight*, 11 July 2016, <https://www.straight.com/news/734491/history-shows-racism-has-always-been-part-vancouver-real-estate>.

Kesia Nagata spent two years living on Mayne Island in the house her grandfather John Shiuji Nagata had built in the 1960s at Miners Bay. During that time, her horses were pastured in our field at Campbell Bay, on the land her grandfather had cleared and where he had built greenhouses, and where today my daughter Meg lives in a cabin inherited from her grandparents. Kesia and Meg became good friends, and we had many conversations about her ancestors' uprooting and dispossession; about racism and its impact on individuals, community, and society; about my family's owning the land from which hers had been forcibly dispossessed.

CONCLUSION

The removal of Japanese Canadians from Mayne Island and the dispossession of their property injured not only those directly affected but also the rest of the community. Recently I was working on a project with other Caucasian islanders who decided not to talk about racism, to essentially "whitewash" the history of the Japanese Canadian expulsion because it was "too harsh." However, it is important to confront this harsh history; to include it in Canada's historical narrative; to acknowledge the wrongs done; and not to ignore or to justify the injustice.¹⁰⁴ Racism must be made explicit in the telling of our history so that we will stand up to similar injustice when we see it today. Only by acknowledging these truths will we become the fair Canada we would like to believe we are.

I give the last word to Kesia, with thanks for sending me on this journey:

I am moved by seeing my family's words in the context of the story and imagining the different stages of hustle, bustle, outrage, loss, and rebuild. The time I spent with my beloved horses on the land your family now stewards, on the very footprint of a greenhouse my family built, was precious to me. My grandfather's spirit was very present during that time, and I'd feel him shadowing me wordlessly while I walked between that land, the house he grew up in, and the house he built. I felt he and I were processing our complex relationships to those places ... Now I farm with my family on unceded Gitxsan territory and hold myself open to that reality every day ... And on it goes, acts of love on stolen land. What more can I say? These things don't get solved, we just get bigger so that we can hold it all, stay with the truth, and try something new.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ See Claxton et al., *Challenging Racist "British Columbia,"* 65–70.

¹⁰⁵ Personal e-mail communication from Kesia Nagata to author, 18 November 2020.