

# A Japanese Canadian Teenage Exile: The Life History of Kazuko Makihara

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## Abstract

この論文は日系カナダ人女子（Katy）榎原のライフヒストリーに関するケーススタディである。彼女は広島出身であった日系カナダ移民の第一世代の両親に生まれ、カナダのブリティッシュコロンビア州ヴァンクーヴァーに近いシー・アイランドで幼少期を過ごした。この論文の中ではまず彼女の戦前の子供時代、そして第二次大戦中に西海岸でカナダ政府が行った日系カナダ人強制退去や強制収容所（？）での彼女の思い出と、大戦終了時に約四千人もの日系カナダ人が日本へ追放された際の経験に触れる。次にティーンエイジャーや二十代女性として終戦後の日本で過ごした人生、1958年のカナダへの帰国とその後の人生や多様な活動について述べる。最後に彼女の人生の回想を他のカナダから追放された日系カナダ人の回想と比較しながら考察する。

*This paper presents a life history case study of Kazuko Makihara, a second-generation Japanese Canadian who was born near Vancouver to immigrants from Hiroshima. It first narrates her memories of her childhood until the beginning of World War II, the subsequent forced uprooting of her family from their home and dispossession of all their property, their incarceration in an internment camp, and their exile to Japan at the end of the war. Next it describes her life in postwar Japan, her eventual return to Vancouver, her successful struggle against the odds to rebuild a life and career in Canada, and her various volunteer and recreational activities during her retirement. Finally, it discusses how her memories corroborate, complement, and contrast with the experiences reported by other Japanese Canadian exiles.*

**Key words:** Japanese Canadian, World War II, uprooting, dispossession, internment camp, exile, life history

## Introduction

During the last 40 or so years, there has been an increasing amount of scholarship and literature about the history of Japanese Canadians, especially regarding their

uprooting, dispossession and internment during the war, their dispersal to eastern Canada following the war, and related human rights issues. However, although the events leading up to the exile to Japan of almost 4000 Japanese Canadians to Japan after the war are often discussed in the literature, there has been a dearth of research into what became of these exiles after they were sent to Japan.

This began to change thanks mainly to Tatsuo Kage, who met many of the exiles still living there in his role as a member of a Canadian delegation that went to Japan explain to them the terms of the official apology and redress compensation offered by the Canadian government for the injustices it had perpetrated on the Japanese Canadian community during the war. Kage later interviewed quite a number of them and then summarized and discussed the interviews in his pioneering book, *Nikkei Kanadajin no Tsuiho [The Banishment of Japanese Canadians]* (1998). This book was later translated into English and titled *Uprooted Again* (2012). A more recent work, *Japanese Canadian Stories from Japan*, compiled by Nobuko Nakayama and Jean Maeda, was published in 2011 and contains the stories told by exiles living in Japan. Presently a more recent group research project on exiles still living in Japan is being led by Masako Iino and has so far surveyed more than 30 subjects and recently issued a very positive interim report. So, it appears that there has recently been a new and growing interest in this topic.

This paper, inspired mainly by Kage's pioneering work, is a detailed case study of the life history of a Japanese Canadian named Kazuko Makihara (hereafter referred to as 'Kazuko'), who was born of first generation immigrants from Hiroshima. When she was 9 years old, her family was forcibly uprooted from their life as successful fishermen, dispossessed of all their property and livelihood, and separated from their father who was sent to a POW camp in eastern Canada. Kazuko, her mother and siblings were subsequently incarcerated in Bay Farm, one of several internment camps located near Lake Slocan in the eastern interior of British Columbia, and then exiled to Japan after the war. After spending several difficult years in postwar Japan, she eventually returned to Canada as a young wife and mother where she overcame various obstacles in order to build a new life. This paper narrates her memories of these various events in her life and then briefly discusses how her story corroborates and contrasts with the recollections of other Japanese Canadian exiles.

The gathering of the personal data for this case study mainly utilized questionnaires followed up with semi-structured and unstructured oral interviews.

First, a questionnaire consisting of open-answer questions was given to Kazuko and she had several days to consider and jot down her answers in note form. Then a semi-structured oral interview, based mainly on the written questions but also utilizing spontaneous follow-up questions, was conducted and audio-recorded. Next, a follow-up open-answer questionnaire (based on her answers in the first interview) was given to her, followed in turn by a second follow-up semi-structured oral interview, also audio-recorded. Using the data gathered in this way, a narrative of her life history was composed. Drafts of the narrative were then sent to her twice for fact-checking and adding any further details. This was followed by a final interview (unrecorded) in order to confirm the factual corrections and added details.

### **Birth and Family**

Kazuko (Katy) Makihara (childhood family name was Fukuhara) was born on September 26, 1933 in her parents' home near Vancouver Cannery which was located on Sea Island (now the location of Vancouver International Airport). Her birth was assisted by a Japanese midwife, Miss Watanabe. She had one older sister, Hisaye (whose birthday she does not know but does recall that she was about two years older), one younger sister, Judy, who was born on October 28, 1935 and died of breast cancer at age 39, and a younger brother, Akio, who was born on November 30, 1938 and now lives near Kazuko in Vancouver. Presently, only Kazuko and the younger brother are still alive.

Kazuko's parents were both born and raised in Onomichi, Hiroshima. Kazuko's father first came to Canada because he was adopted by a childless aunt and uncle who were fishermen near Vancouver; hence he came to live with them (Kazuko does not know when). His adoptive parents apparently were quite prosperous as they were lending money to several other fishermen. Like his adoptive father, Kazuko's father worked as a fisherman. Later his adoptive parents advised him to go back to Japan to find a wife, which he did, following the Japanese tradition of arranged marriages (*omiai*), and then returned with his new wife to Canada. Kazuko is not sure which year her father and mother came back to Canada. Her older sister was born in 1931, so she thinks they must have come back a couple years before that. After Kazuko's older sister was born, her grandparents (father's adoptive parents) decided to move back to Japan in order to take care of their aging parents, and they ran a small restaurant in Onomichi.

While in Canada, Kazuko's parents always lived on Sea Island. Her father, in

contrast to many Japanese migrants who labored in various seasonal jobs, was always a fisherman. He had his own boat which he had been given by his adoptive father. The fishing business went well for him, so he never changed jobs or moved like many others did, and he intended to stay permanently in Canada. Due to his own success, he was able to lend money to other fisherman who wanted to buy their own boats.

Kazuko thinks that her parents enjoyed their life in Canada despite the fact that they worked very hard. She remembers their living room was very big, her mother was always having people over for meals, and she used to cook for a lot of people at a time. Economically they were well established because Kazuko's grandparents had been in Canada for a relatively long time and were successful at fishing. Unlike many other Japanese Canadian fishermen, her father never lost his fishing license when the government was reducing the number of licenses to Japanese Canadian fishermen, and he kept working as a fisherman right up to the time of the uprooting and incarceration. Kazuko remembers him as very hardworking but quiet and not particularly outgoing or friendly. He was quite a heavy drinker, and her mother used to brew a lot of rice liquor for him at home. In contrast to her father, Kazuko's mother was more friendly and outgoing but spoke her opinions frankly, which occasionally led to quarreling with family members.

Like many other Japanese Canadians of their generation, Kazuko's parents were too busy working to have any time for study, and everybody around them was Japanese, so they didn't learn English well. They had four kids at about two-year intervals, so had little time for anything besides working and raising children. They were Buddhists but not particularly religious.

### **Kazuko's Life Before the Uprooting**

Kazuko attended a Canadian public kindergarten on Sea Island. There were quite a lot of Doukhabors (a Russian religious sect) living in that area, so, in addition to the Japanese Canadian and other children, there were also some Doukhabor children among her classmates. She can't remember in detail who her teachers were, but thinks they were mostly white Canadians as there were not many educated Japanese who could teach then. Kazuko can't recall many of the names of her childhood friends, but does remember going on her father's boat to visit some friends who lived in the Marpole area of Vancouver. She also remembers some of the merchant shops of Powell Street delivering goods to her home on Sea Island.

Her elementary school on Sea Island was also public. She enjoyed school, and

her ambition was to be a kindergarten teacher as she liked helping people. Some of her friends wanted to become nurses, but were discouraged from pursuing their ambitions as Japanese Canadians were excluded from almost all professions including teaching and nursing.

Although she herself doesn't remember, some of her friends have told her that she was a real tomboy. When she came back to Canada from Japan in 1958, a friend who is about five years older than her recounted to her that as a child she usually played with the boys, and sometimes pushed them around. The same friend recalled that Kazuko used to push her (friend's) brother into the water and often made him cry. Although Kazuko cannot remember these details, she does recall that they didn't have many toys and used to play a lot in the mud puddles.

Unlike many other kids of her age group, Kazuko did not go to a Japanese language school, and only learned Japanese because her parents spoke it at home. Her parents were too busy to teach her how to read and write in Japanese, so she only learned how to speak. She thinks that at that time her first language was probably Japanese as her family and all her good friends were Japanese, but she also spoke English well because she had to speak it in the public school.

### **Uprooting, Dispossession, and Internment**

After the government order for all Japanese Canadians to evacuate the coast, Kazuko's family were given only twenty-four hours to leave their home, and were allowed only one suitcase per person. Kazuko remembers her mother telling her to quickly pack her own clothes. The police were at the door waiting for them to leave, so there was no time to waste. Things happened so quickly they had no chance to ask friends to take care of any of the things they left behind, so they lost everything. She says, "All our property and goods were confiscated: house, boat, everything. The RCMP were there, so although father was shocked at what was happening to us, there was nothing he could do." Kazuko's father was taken away from the family to a POW camp in Ontario. Kazuko remembers the moment he was taken away by the RCMP. The police gave them the impression that it was just a temporary separation, but the family never saw him again until they had boarded the boat to be exiled to Japan after the war. Kazuko doesn't know why he was sent to the POW camp as later he never talked to her about it. Apparently several other of his male relatives were also sent there.

At first, Kazuko, her mother, and her siblings were held at the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) grounds, at Hastings Park. The conditions were awful. She says,

“If you became sick, there was no doctor. It was fenced all around and guards were standing outside so we couldn’t go out, and people could not come in to visit. The food was terrible, but if you didn’t eat what you were given and didn’t go to the common eating area at the scheduled time, you couldn’t eat.”

They spent two or three months at the PNE as the houses were still being prepared at the internment camps at Bay Farm, Slocan and Lemon Creek. Some families with fathers present or which consisted of mainly older boys were allowed to go to the camps earlier and lived in tents. Because Kazuko’s family had only small kids with no father present, they were kept longer at the PNE.

Finally, they were sent by train to the Bay Farm internment camp. Kazuko was quite frail as a child and recalls getting sick on the train from Vancouver to Slocan City. It was not a real passenger train, but consisted of freight or livestock cars with seats put in, and moved very slowly. When they finally arrived at Bay Farm, they first lived in an old apartment while the houses were being constructed. Eventually they moved to a house on Sixth Avenue. It consisted of only two bedrooms and a kitchen. The houses were built in rows, and each house had an outhouse (a no-flush outside toilet in a small shack built over a hole in the ground).

There was a rule in the camp that, if you had at least seven family members, you were allowed to live together in one house, whereas if you had less, you had to share a house with another family. Kazuko’s family at the time consisted of the mother and four children, so, in order to qualify for their own house, they borrowed the names of two children from a larger family, the Kamitakaharas. Actually, the “borrowed children” continued to live with their own family, so it was nothing more than a convenient arrangement on paper that enabled Kazuko’s family to have their own little house. It seems that Kazuko’s family had quite a strong relationship with the Kamitakahara family, and she remembers that after the war the Kamitakaharas moved to Alberta to work in the sugar beet industry where they did quite well economically. One of the sons later moved back to Vancouver and started a prominent insurance company.

There was no running water inside the buildings in the camp. The water tap, like the toilet, was outside. During the cold winter season they would put a bucket of water on the stove at night to keep it from freezing. They used some of this water to make breakfast in the morning. The rest they used as a toilet during the night, and then took it outside for disposal in the morning. Kazuko remembers there was lots of snow, but they were just kids so didn’t mind as much as the adults. However, it was a much colder climate than what they were used to in

Vancouver.

It was hard to eat properly, especially at the beginning, although they could buy some basic foods at the government-run grocery store. It was necessary for the internees to share their various skills and improvise in order to live. For example, carpenters would lend their skills to families who needed to repair or renovate their houses. "We had to make everything ourselves," says Kazuko. During the first summer they started raising their own vegetables. Later the internees were able to set up a machine for making tofu, and also start a bakery. Eventually they even built their own sento (public bath). Kazuko is still amazed at what they became able to do. Many housewives took classes on how to sew, among whom was Kazuko's mother.

Kazuko does not recall seeing white people in the camps, except for a few teachers and police. Some teachers were Japanese Canadian, and some were white Canadian church teachers. The camp had a simple school building, and one teacher would teach two grades combined together in one classroom. She recalls, "The school building was cold, but we were kids so it didn't matter to us."

### **Exile to Japan**

Kazuko was thirteen years old when her family was exiled to Japan. Her parents made the difficult choice of exile to Japan because their kids were still small and her father felt a strong responsibility to take care of his adoptive mother who was still alive and living in Onomichi. After her father's adoptive parents had moved back to Onomichi, they bought a house and ran a small restaurant there. His adoptive father had already died during the war, and his adoptive mother was managing the restaurant by herself. Kazuko's father also thought there was no use in staying in Canada with small kids. She says, "He had lost everything in Canada, so what could he do there?"

The family went to Japan on the General Meigs. Kazuko doesn't remember much about the journey. They landed at Yokosuka which, she remembers, was fenced around so they couldn't get out. She can't remember exactly what food they received there, but does recall that they were not fed properly and had to boil and eat dandelion greens as a vegetable.

Then arrangements were made for them to go to Onomichi by train. The conditions on the train were terrible. Kazuko recalls that it was extremely crowded with members of the army and expats who were also returning from the colonies to Japan, so there were no open seats, and the soldiers did not give up

their seats for the civilian passengers. It was difficult to even move. Soldiers would just jump on the train and showed no regard for the children like Kazuko. Kazuko jokes that her future husband could have been one of those rude soldiers as he was nine years older than her and was returning from China about this same time. He later told Kazuko that there was no ship to pick him and other Japanese soldiers up from China. If Chinese people knew he was Japanese he would have been killed, so he quickly had to get rid of his Japanese army uniform and change to Chinese clothes.

Kazuko recalls the strong anger they were feeling about being deported to Japan just like foreigners even though they had been born in Canada. She says, "We were all very upset at Canada, and we kept saying that we were Canadian, but that didn't matter to the government officials because our parents were not Canadian-born." During the journey, Kazuko's brother kept crying all the time and refusing the food, and saying he wanted to return to Canada. This behavior continued even after arriving in Onomichi.

### **Life in Japan**

Because the Japanese Canadian exiles could not speak or even clearly understand the local dialect of Onomichi, they were excluded and called enemies by many of the people there. Perhaps because they had been better nourished (in spite of living in internment camps) than the local people who were practically starving, they were even told that since their faces didn't look Japanese they could not possibly be real Japanese.

Kazuko's younger brother started school in grade one, and her younger sister in grade two. Kazuko was supposed to go to high school, but couldn't understand what the teachers were saying, so was moved back to grade 5, but still could not understand. There was also a severe lack of textbooks. She quit school after about a year and a half. Her older sister never even tried to go to school but immediately went to work for the American occupation forces at Kure, and she recommended that Kazuko do the same.

About that time they learned that a Japanese Canadian family in Montreal (a city in the eastern Canadian province of Quebec) wanted to adopt both Kazuko and her older sister. Her parents thought it was ok for the older sister, with whom they had difficulty getting along, to go to Montreal, but wanted Kazuko to stay and help them in Japan because they thought she would be better at taking care of them. Consequently, the older sister was adopted and went to Montreal after only

a short time in Japan, while Kazuko continued to live in Onomichi with her parents. The older sister eventually broke off contact with the family and they never met or heard from her again although Kazuko once did hear some information about her from a mutual acquaintance.

Soon Kazuko briefly did go to work for the American forces in Kure. Perhaps because she was only 15 years old, her mother didn't like it, so she quit and returned to Onomichi after about a year. She didn't know what to do next. Fortunately, her younger cousins all wanted to learn English from her, so she started to go regularly by bus to their home to teach them. They paid her for it, and also provided her dinner on the days she taught. She continued teaching them English for about three hours per day, two or three days per week, for three or four years, until she got married at age 19. This teaching work helped her keep up her own English skill. Kazuko was later told by her uncle that her good teaching also enabled one of her younger cousins get a good job in Tokyo largely due to his above average English ability.

Kazuko's parents were also eventually able to find work after they went back to Japan. Her mother had learned to sew western clothes while in Canada, so was able to work at home as a seamstress in Onomichi making western style clothes which were becoming popular in Japan then. She was very outgoing and liked to both knit and sew clothes for those around her. Kazuko's father worked delivering ice cube boxes to various restaurants. Kazuko isn't sure but thinks that he never wanted to return to Canada because of his limited English, and also because he had been dispossessed of all his property (including his fishing boat) in Canada—so he had nothing in Canada to go back to.

Sadly, they later divorced. Before the uprooting and incarceration in the internment camp, they had been a prospering family and even a kind of social and economic hub for other families in the community, so Kazuko believes the long separation and trauma her parents endured during the interment was a major reason for the eventual breakdown of their marriage. She notes that after the incarceration and return to Japan, their relationship was never the same, and they no longer got along. Her father eventually remarried with a lady from Onomichi and spent the rest of his life there. He passed away from diabetes complications at the age of 72. After the divorce, Kazuko and her siblings, except for her older sister, all gravitated to their mother and even changed their family name from Fukuhara to their mother's maiden name, Momotani.

At age 19 Kazuko married Takeshi Makihara, a former soldier who was nine

years older than her. He had worked as a blueprint designer for the Japanese navy and was based in Taiwan during the war. After coming back to Onomichi, he began working for a company and apparently saw Kazuko several times as he passed her house on his way to and from work. Eventually they became acquainted and decided to marry. She says, "He was a typical ishii-atama (stubborn) young Japanese man. I later told him, 'If I were in my 20s and smarter, I would never have married you.'" They had their first child, a boy named George, in 1952.

They moved to Kobe in 1954 because Takeshi's friend and brother were already living there and invited them to come as there were more jobs there at that time. They lived in Nagata ward and Takeshi worked for a pearl company, utilizing his excellent Japanese writing skill. Kazuko started working in a big luggage store in Kobe's famous Motomachi shopping street. Apparently she was hired because she could speak fluently in English. A lot of Americans came through Kobe then and shopped there, and her English skill really helped her increase the shop's business. She continued this job until she returned to Canada in 1958.

### **Return to Canada**

Both Kazuko and her husband continued working in Kobe and financially supported the education of Kazuko's younger brother and sister till they finished high school. After graduating, Kazuko's younger brother and sister returned to Canada around 1955. First the younger brother worked for a lumber company and then for Nelson Chocolate in Vancouver. The sister did housework. Eventually, Kazuko's husband lost his job in Kobe. He was the second son, and by that time his parents had already passed away so he no longer had any family obligations in Japan. In 1958, Kazuko's younger brother and sister invited Kazuko and her husband to join them in Canada. Kazuko's husband also wanted to move to Canada at that time, but Kazuko had to move there first and do full time work for a year in order to qualify to sponsor him as an immigrant.

### **Life in Canada**

Almost all of Kazuko's female Japanese Canadian friends in Vancouver were employed as house-workers because it was very difficult for them to find other kinds of employment at that time. She also did so at first, but wanted a better job, so used her rare days off to search for work at the various department stores such as Eatons, Woodwards and the Hudson's Bay Company. The effort paid off and within a couple months of her arrival she was able to get a job at the Hudson's

Bay Company, which was a great surprise to both her and her friends who couldn't believe it was possible for a Japanese Canadian to get such a job. First, she started part time as a seasonal worker for the Christmas shopping season, but her manager was impressed by her work and after Christmas hired her fulltime. He told her she was so efficient she could do the work of two people. She never experienced being laid off, even for one day, and continued working for the Bay at various locations around Vancouver for thirty-four years. Her first job was invoicing new merchandise that had just come in, and then machine work making price tags, tickets, etc. At that time she still felt that her English wasn't good enough, so she really studied hard, and in addition could practice speaking English all day at work. Next, she worked at pricing items for the drugs section. She had to go to work very early in the morning to price the special medicines and drug items before the store opened. She recalls, "It was very hard work, but I did it. I'm a person who hates to lose."

She successfully sponsored her husband to immigrate to Canada in 1959, a year after her own arrival. She wanted to also sponsor her mother, but due to immigration laws she was unable to do so until three years later when her mother turned 55. Her mother did not want to be in Japan by herself, so they left Kazuko's first son, who was 6 years old, with her. When he was 9 years old, he arrived in Canada together with his grandmother and the family was reunited.

Kazuko had a second child, a daughter named Janet, in Canada in 1962, ten years after the birth of her first son. She recalls feeling very sick every day but didn't know she was pregnant until her doctor told her. She continued to feel sick almost all the time and had to go to the hospital emergency ward often. Her doctor warned her that if she continued to work so hard she might suffer a miscarriage, and she began to occasionally miss work due to illness. At one point, the assistant manager of her department threatened to fire her if she was absent one more time. Perhaps because she felt confident that she was well liked by the senior manager, she stood up to the assistant manager and told him that he wasn't her real boss, and that she would talk directly to the senior manager. When she went to the senior manager, he told her that if she was sick it was fine to take time off and come back whenever she wanted. Fortunately, after that she no longer needed to take any more days off, so it never became a problem again.

Next she was transferred to the Accounts Payable section at the Hudson's Bay branch at Lake City in Burnaby (suburb of Vancouver) where there was a big warehouse. As there was no bus route there at that time and she was the only one

who could drive, she used to give other employees a ride to work. She worked at Lake City for quite a long time. Then the Bay built several other branches, including one near her home, and she was transferred there. She worked in the office there until they closed that branch and opened a new one at the Metrotown Shopping Center in Burnaby. Soon after that she became very ill and was diagnosed with genetic diabetes and polymyalgia, so retired at the age of 58. Due to her illness, she started to exercise seriously, eventually became very healthy and strong, and went on to lead a very active life in retirement.

### **Husband's Career in Canada**

As a young man in Onomichi, Kazuko's husband Takeshi had gotten experience writing for a religious sect called Nanmyo Horen Gekkyou, which helped him become a very skilled writer in Japanese. Soon after moving to Canada his writing talent was discovered by his friend Gordon Kadota who was the founder of the *Geppo* (a monthly magazine of the Vancouver Japanese Canadian community called *The Bulletin* in English), so for many years he wrote the Japanese section of the *Geppo* every month as a volunteer and was very busy with this 3 or 4 late nights each month.

Then a gardening job opened at the Japanese Consul General. At first, it was for only three days per week, and it was only seasonal, but eventually he got hired fulltime. When his writing ability was discovered, he became the main speech writer for the Consul General who also utilized his artistic talents and got him to make PR posters for various events. He really enjoyed this job and through it made many friends in Vancouver. He also put his numerous skills to work at home, doing all the house renovations and creating a beautiful garden in the yard. He continued working for the Japanese Consul until age 65, retiring in 1990.

By then their five-bedroom house was too big for them as their children had grown up and Kazuko's mother had passed way, so they sold it and moved to a townhouse. He spent much of his time in retirement playing golf. Kazuko remembers him as a person with a good sense of humor who would think carefully before speaking, was considerate of others, and did his best to serve them. In 1996 he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun (旭日章) by the Japanese government for his years of service in the Japanese Consulate. He passed away in 2014.

### **Kazuko's Life Since Retirement**

At about the time of Kazuko's retirement, her mother, for whom she had been

caring, passed away from breast cancer. As mentioned above, Kazuko herself became very ill from diabetes and polymyalgia, but gradually exercised her way back to good health. Her husband was “golf-crazy”, and he made her learn golf. She says, “I cried but I learned how, and later came to enjoy it.” Her first private golf teacher said she would never be a golfer, but her second teacher was good and helped her improve her golf skills a lot.

Her son George lives nearby with his wife in the Vancouver suburb of Richmond where he works as president of GJM Consulting. Her daughter Janet graduated from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver but now lives in Japan where she is in charge of Human Resources at Tokyo Disneyland.

Now Kazuko goes to exercise classes near her home twice a week “with young people, not seniors” and also does line dancing at the Bonsor Recreation Center in Burnaby on Wednesdays. She keeps a very full schedule and notes that she is rarely home during the day. She also helps with Bingo for two hours on Saturday mornings at a nearby senior home. In the evenings she walks a lot with her friends. She also volunteers at the Nikkei Center (the Iki Iki program for seniors fighting dementia) on Fridays. She was originally taking her husband to this program until he passed away in December of 2014. Following her daughter’s advice that she needed to get out and do some volunteer work in order to stay active after her husband’s passing, she first worked at *Tonarigumi* (a Japanese Canadian volunteer organization) on Mondays for over a year until her volunteer work there conflicted with her line dance schedule. Then she met the leader of Iki Iki who asked her to volunteer there all day on Fridays. Because she is so active and energetic, many of the people in her apartment building and the people she volunteers with think she is still in her 70s.

Presently she lives in an *independent living* seniors’ apartment. She decided to move there soon after husband passed away. He had told her that if anything were to happen to him, she should sell their condominium and move into a smaller apartment. She loves her present apartment as she is well treated by the staff and those around her, and she really enjoys talking with the other residents.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Kazuko’s recollections of her pre-war childhood near Vancouver, the uprooting and dispossession of her family after the war began, their subsequent incarceration in the internment camp and exile to Japan, her life in postwar Japan, her eventual return to Vancouver, and the life she has led there provide both some interesting

parallels and unique contrasts with the experiences reported by other Japanese Canadian exiles. This concluding chapter will briefly discuss some of the main events she experienced and how they corroborate, complement with additional details, and contrast with how other exiles reported experiencing these events and feeling about them.

Like others who were still children at the time of the uprooting, Kazuko's memories of her childhood are somewhat vague, but her general recollections regarding her family and home, school and classmates, and playing with friends leave quite a strong impression of what it felt like to be a Japanese Canadian child in Canada at that time. Particularly noteworthy is her memory of her friends' ambition to become nurses and her own wish to become a teacher, especially as Japanese Canadians were excluded from both of these professions by law.

Her memories of the uprooting and incarceration are more detailed. Her narration of the details of the uprooting are so vivid that one cannot help but picture the scene as if it were a movie and share the trauma the young girl was feeling at the sudden arrival of the police, her father's helpless shock at the confiscation of their property, the order to pack up immediately, and her father being taken away from the family—a separation which would stretch into years.

Her memories of the appalling conditions at the PNE Center and the painfully slow and uncomfortable train trip to the internment camp also add vivid personal detail to these stages of the uprooting. Likewise, her recollections of living conditions in the internment camp provide not only details of how the internees cooperated and creatively improvised to make the best of their harsh reality, but also a clear sense of how it felt for a pre-teenage girl to experience life in these conditions.

It is clear from Kazuko's comments that her family was one of the many families whose decision to accept exile to Japan over dispersion to eastern Canada was primarily motivated by concern for and the need to take care of family members in Japan. The secondary reason she gives, namely the complete loss of all her family's property and livelihood in Canada, was also a common factor in the decision of many others to accept exile to Japan over dispersal to eastern Canada.

Her recollection of having to eat dandelions as a vegetable at the Yokosuka repatriation center adds an interesting detail to the accounts of other exiles about the extremely poor quality of the food there. Her more detailed recollections of the extreme conditions on the train to Hiroshima, including the rude behavior of the returning soldiers, her brother's continuous crying and refusal to eat, and the

strong sense of betrayal and anger she herself felt towards the Canadian government during this experience strongly corroborate and add detail to what others reported experiencing and feeling, and, like her memories of the uprooting, are narrated so vividly as to be a scene in a movie.

Kazuko's comments about the language barrier, as well as her family being excluded by the people of Onomichi and treated with hostility as foreigners, corroborate what many other exiles reported, as does her experience of finding it impossible as a young teenager to adjust to the Japanese educational system and thus eventually dropping out. Conversely, her short-lived employment for the US armed forces and subsequent change to privately teaching English to the children of relatives sets her apart from the many young exiles who worked several years for the US forces and depended on that employment until the bases closed down or they found employment with private companies in the improving Japanese economy.

The sad break-up of her family—a family that had once been a thriving part of their community on Sea Island—seems typical of what happened to a significant number of other exile families that succumbed to the long-term trauma of the uprooting, internment and exile. In this case there is little doubt that this trauma was further exacerbated by the lengthy forced separation from their father who was taken from them and incarcerated in eastern Canada.<sup>1</sup>

A rather unique aspect of Kazuko's exile story is that, although Kazuko herself did not have a strong intention to return to Canada, she was led to do so by circumstances such as her younger family members moving to Canada, the loss of her husband's job in Kobe, and his wish to move to Canada. This is a somewhat ironic contrast with those exiles who intended to return to Canada but ended up staying in Japan due to life circumstances such as a successful career in Japan or marriage to a Japanese national<sup>2</sup>.

Yet another aspect that makes her story unique was as her success in finding work in a department store after her return to Canada. This set her apart from the majority of other female exile returnees who resigned themselves to housecleaning work. Her refusal to be denied and her determination to build a successful business career in Canada parallels the efforts of many exiles (both those who

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<sup>1</sup> For a similar story of the break-up of a once happy family after being exiled, see the story of Basil Izumi and his family (Kirk, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Compare with the story of Mikio Ibuki (Kirk, 2017), who fully intended to return to Canada but ended up staying in Japan due to a good career and marriage to a Japanese national.

stayed in Japan and those who returned to Canada) who similarly rose above the odds to establish successful careers. This proactive never-give-up attitude was also reflected in her exercising her own way back to vigorous health after being diagnosed with diabetes and polymyalgia, her determination to learn golf, and her present regimen of exercise and volunteer work.

Her age at the time of the exile also explains why she had a much stronger awareness of and anger against the injustice of what was happening. This is in contrast to Basil Izumi (Kirk 2018) and Mikio Ibuki (Kirk 2017) who were small children at the time and hence have little recollection of the harsh details of the uprooting and experienced the subsequent incarceration as a fun adventure surrounded by beautiful nature.

When Kazuko was first approached as a possible subject of this research, she herself was quite surprised that someone would be interested in researching her story. Yet, her story overall is particularly important because it gives a much-needed female perspective of what it was like to experience the uprooting, internment, and exile. Accounts of women exiles are relatively few, perhaps due to the fact that most of the male exiles had their own careers whereas most of the female exiles led lives as housewives or domestic workers. Thus she is an especially important and fascinating witness of this period in Japanese Canadian history.



A house in Bay Farm internment camp  
(TD1298-1a Nikkei National Museum)



Pine Crescent School at Bay Farm  
(TD1298-2a Nikkei National Museum)



The Bay Farm Buddhist Church  
(TD1298-3a Nikkei National Museum)



Kazuko (back right) with her mother and siblings  
(TD1298-4 Nikkei National Museum)



Kazuko's two children  
(TD1298-8 Nikkei National Museum)



The Makiharas in 1994  
(TD1298-6a Nikkei National Museum)



Kazuko volunteering at seniors day-program at the Tonarigumi in Vancouver  
(photos are courtesy of Tonarigumi)

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