



Saturday, September 7, 2019

Dear NEB and B.C. Redress Steering Committee members,

**We write on behalf of those who fell through the cracks**, whose life stories will rarely, or never be told. It is our hope that some of what B.C. Redress achieves will in a small way go towards acknowledging the damage to the mind, body and spirit of these individuals and to those surviving and directly affected by the injustices of incarceration, forced displacement, dispossession and exile. To the Issei woman who arrived at the Kaslo train station on the shore of Kootenay Lake exhausted, without friends or relatives and who “simply went berserk”, this is for you and all the others who were unable to *simply* carry on with their lives. (Adachi p. 256)

To large measure, the negative impacts of these injustices, instances of suicides, breakdowns, violence, abuse, alcoholism, withdrawal and self-isolation suffered by families within our community has emerged anecdotally in private conversations among friends and relatives. These histories are often sometimes characterized by words like *black sheep* and internalized as shameful for a family. That the thoughts of the young man reflecting on his time at Hastings Park were documented, “*My first night in there was the only time in my life where I thought. 'Jesus, this is a good time to commit suicide' is rare.* (Broadfoot p. 94)

Even those who later in life, excelled and were propelled onto a world stage were not immune to the trauma. “*As an adult, I ended up in psychoanalysis and was shocked to discover that virtually every psychological problem I had, traced right back to the evacuation*” (David Suzuki, JCCA Redress Committee 1984)

Our desire is that a priority of B.C. Redress initiatives be a **focus on funding to benefit all survivors of these injustices** with an emphasis on eldercare, mental health services, transportation services with attention paid to families struggling to support those with Alzheimer’s or dementia. It is well established that trauma can cause early-onset-Alzheimer’s. That post-traumatic stress syndrome occurred in many forms, there can be no doubt. That trauma of this magnitude has inter-generational impact, is accepted as fact. Little time remains to make our elderly feel singled out, not by racism but to be targeted for loving community care. We ask that our elders who are living their final days without property or meaningful pensions be identified and supported.

We agree that JC properties which were confiscated and are now owned by the city of Vancouver and the province of British Columbia be given to the JC community. We concur with the consensus uses for such a facility that came out of the two consultations held in Toronto.

We support **Commemoration** in the form of a centrally located monument like the magnificent memorial to “Japanese American Patriotism” near Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. As well we ask for the commemoration of “*Freedom Day*”, to acknowledge April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, as the day when JCs could move freely and return to the “protected zone”. We ask that B.C. lead the way in this regard and then ask other provinces and the Federal government to follow suit. We envision this day as one which will embrace the enfranchisement histories of Indigenous peoples and all Asians in Canada.

The Toronto NAJC celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Freedom Day on April 1<sup>st</sup> this year and is committed to make this an annual celebration. (Freedom Day video by Yosh Inouye)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVRKqAT-JWU&feature=youtu.be>

Most of Japanese Canadian literature and history has been the work of the small press with limited copies available. Of benefit to all Canadians would be the **creation of a digital library**, to be accessible world-wide with the most important works translated. Very important to this endeavour would be the translation and digitization of books, reports, community newsletters, written in Japanese by Issei and Japanese nationals from the late 1890s up to the beginning of WWII. The destruction of nearly 60 language schools in B.C. has deprived succeeding generations of ready access to the histories and stories of their pioneering ancestors in Canada.

The blatant racism and decades of discriminatory legislation which destroyed the JC community in B.C. was not only a hate crime but deprived all people of B.C. of an enormous cultural and economic resource which would have been of great benefit to the founding days of the province. The wording of the B.C. Government apology should include the acknowledgement that due to the success of cultural genocide, **60% of Japanese Canadians now live outside the province while in 1942 over 95% lived in British Columbia.**

The number of Japanese Canadians in Toronto is close to that of Vancouver and with a lower percentage of new immigrants in eastern Canada than in B.C. a greater percentage of those in the east have lived experience of these injustices. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Toronto community be included in next steps towards B.C. Redress to ensure that those who were refugees, exiles in their own country are not forgotten by the Japanese Canadian community in B.C. **To do otherwise, would be an unfortunate echo of our scattering.**

It is important that the NAJC's official request for redress from the B.C. Government reinforce the reality that no amount of redress or an apology can change the outcomes for our community of the gross wrongdoings and **hypocrisy** of politicians. In 1945 Canada was a signatory to the UN Charter, which three years later became the UN Declaration of Human Rights, whilst violating those said values. In 1986 prior to Federal apology and redress, and in response to the welcoming of Vietnamese refugees, Canada became the first nation to receive the Nansen medal from the U.N. *"in recognition of the major and sustained contribution made to the cause of refugees in their country and throughout the world over the years,"*. **It now rests with B.C. to help our nation be truly deserving of its current status and global reputation as peacekeeper and human rights leader.**

It is said that hope and optimism can be a form of resistance, and truly we know, that for many, this was a way forward and they thrived for it. But we must honour and remember those who never recovered from the poison inflicted by the hatred and political tools used to enable a racist agenda. To those who died in the east, having never returned to their ancestral home in Canada, to those who never heard the words of a government apology or who, like Tommei Homma died while incarcerated, this is for you.

Sincerely,

Lynn Deutscher Kobayashi President  
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Ron Shimizu, Secretary  
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