A Meeting of Many –
The Joan Gillis Fonds at the University of British Columbia and Collaborative Programming in 2022

CEAL Annual Meeting - Committee on Japanese Materials Session
Tomoko Kitayama Yen
March 16, 2023
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UBC Asian Library is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people.
The Joan Gillis Fonds at the University of British Columbia

Title: Joan Gillis fonds

Reference code: RBSC-ARC-1786

Date: 1941 - 1988

Contains 149 letters and 10 small b/w photographs

Link to the finding aid: https://rbscarchives.library.ubc.ca/Joan-Gillis-fonds
Agenda

1. Present the Joan Gillis Fonds to the Asian Studies and Japanese Studies Community

2. Discuss the collaborative programming efforts carried out with partners from within the Library, the University, and the Japanese Canadian community
Detention Centre in Vancouver, B.C., circa 1942

"Where Japs Must Move Out"
(newspaper article)


Japanese children being escorted across Pender Street by a Vancouver police officer, 1942 (photograph)

Cited in Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. “1939 to 1945 - World War II and the Japanese Internment.”
## Differences between the U.S. and Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family kept together in camps</td>
<td>Family separated; men forced to do road work and other physical labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed to serve in armed forces</td>
<td>Not allowed to serve in Canadian Forces 1942 - Jan. 1945</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allowed return to West Coast in the immediate aftermath of WWII</td>
<td>Not allowed to return to West Coast until after April 1, 1949. Canadian Gov’t tried to “repatriate” 4,000 Japanese Canadians to Japan though many had never lived in Japan before.</td>
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</table>
“Repatriation” to Japan, Slocan, B.C. circa 1946
Afterlife of the forced dispersal and dispossessions

[The] lingering effects of wartime injustice – its afterlife – tended to defy expression for a very long time…. The burden of history rests heavily both on Nikkei North Americans who endured wartime incarceration and on their families.

Karen Inouye, The Long Afterlife of Nikkei Wartime Incarceration, 2016

Niwatsukino family working on farm in Turin, Alberta, 1942. UBC Library https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0049061
Dearest Joan,

Just a sheet with few lines to say "hello" and "how are you?" It's been quite a long time since I've heard from you last, and I hope you are all well as we are also. I imagine you're going to school every day and enjoying your everyday life. That's swell! Life is very dull out here... no school, no play.

Think of us in the field pulling and topping beets while you are doing your geometry, social studies, etc., will you, Joan? And I'll think of you having a wonderful time while I work.

— Sumi Mototsune, Raymond, Alberta
September 19, 1945

I, like hundreds of other Canadian born boys, am officially a citizen of Canada for which I was willing to serve as she wanted me to. I have done nothing bad, yet I am treated as I am. I am hoping that some day, justice and true democracy will come to me.

— Yoshio Nakamura, Magrath, Alberta
DEPORTATION AND EXILE OF JAPANESE CANADIANS

Thousands of Japanese Canadians are deported to Japan after being forced to choose between signing “repatriation” forms or relocating to Eastern provinces where neither homes nor jobs have been secured.
I Know We'll Meet Again
Correspondence and the forced dispersal of Japanese Canadians

Even though we are apart, I know we'll meet again – and I hope it'll be soon. I'll always remember you matter when & where. I'm just itching for the time to come, when we're all together and happy once more.

— Sumi Mototsune in Letter to Joan Gillis, July 31, 1942

Introduction

Between December 1941 and March 1942, the Canadian Federal Government passed numerous Orders in Council that reduced the freedom of Japanese Canadians to live on the Pacific coast. These included orders that required evacuation and the removal of Japanese Canadians from eastern Canadian provinces.
Introduction

Between December 1941 and March 1942, the Canadian Federal Government passed numerous Orders in Council that reduced the freedom of Japanese Canadians.
Colour-coded Subject Visualization

Click on a color below to toggle visualization to show just that color. Hover over section to see text, and click to go to that portion of the interview.

- Belonging
- Communication
- Education
- Recreation
- Homesickness
- WWII
- Labour-condi
- Photographs
- Gender-dynar
- Living-condit
- Joan
- Optimism

Ikeda
Ikeda19430214
Ikeda19430510
Mototsune
Panel from the Japanese Canadian Community

Laura Ishiguro
Associate Professor
History, UBC

Angela May
Artist
PhD Student
McMaster University

Carolyn Nakagawa
Poet, Playwright
Education Program Developer
Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre

Lisa Uyeda
Archivist
Collections Manager
Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre

Nicole Yakashiro
PhD Student
History, UBC

Carolyn Nakagawa
Poet, Playwright
Education Program Developer
Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre

Lisa Uyeda
Archivist
Collections Manager
Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre

Nicole Yakashiro
PhD Student
History, UBC
Public Panel Event

I Know We’ll Meet Again: Correspondence and the Forced Dispersal of Japanese Canadians

MARCH 1 | 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Join us as a panel of artists, scholars, and archivists share responses to a remarkable collection of letters by young Japanese Canadians.
Public Panel Event

I Know We’ll Meet Again:
Correspondence and the Forced Dispersal of Japanese Canadians

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION

JOAN GILLIS FONDS

Link to Event Recording:
https://learning.video.ubc.ca/media/%22I+Know+We%E2%80%99ll+Meet+Again%22+Online+Panel+EventA+Presentations+%26+Discussion/0_ne3i86zp
Oral History Project at UBC School of Information

LIBR 588 - Theory and Practice of Oral History with Professor Hannah Turner of the School of Information

- The history, theory, and practical implementation of oral history projects in memory institutions
- 5 student project groups interviewed families in the spring of 2022
June 8, 1942

Dearest Joan,

Thanks a million for your letter. I received it on Saturday. Gee, I was disappointed when you said that the Blues won, but oh well, a person can't do anything now I suppose but to laugh it by.

Did the Q.E. school put out a paper or an annual of some sort? If they have, if you happen to have an extra copy, I wonder if you could send me one.

What's on the Hit Parade this week? I guess I wouldn’t know the song, but anyway, I like to know.

— Setsuko Fujii, Kaslo, B.C.
Public Event Organizing Team

Library
- Allan Cho, Community Engagement Librarian
- Phoebe Chow, Asian Library Program Assistant
- Bianca Chui, Asian Library Graduate Academic Assistant
- Tomoko Kitayama Yen, Japanese Studies Librarian
- Krisztina Laszlo, Rare Books & Special Collections Archivist
- Chelsea Shriver, Rare Books & Special Collections Librarian

History
- Professor Laura Ishiguro

Asian Canadian & Asian Migration Program
- Professor JP Catungal, Interim Head
- Szu Shen, Program Manager
Resources Relating to the Joan Gillis Fonds

- Joan Gillis fonds finding aid: https://rbscarchives.library.ubc.ca/joan-gillis-fonds
- Online exhibit (select letters): https://ubc-library-rbsc.github.io/gillis-2021/
- Panel event recording: https://learning.video.ubc.ca/media/%22I+Know+We%E2%80%99ll+Meet+Again%22+Online+Panel+EventA+Presentations+%26+Discussion/0_ne3i86zp
- Angela May’s video art featured at the event: https://youtu.be/kH_5mqo4dBw

For more resources, please see A Selected Bibliography on the History and Legacy of Japanese Canadian Internment, UBC Day of Learning – October 10, 2017