

**SOUTHERN ALBERTA OKINAWAN DIASPORA (1907-PRESENT):
THE *KIKA NISEI* JOURNEY OF NAOKO SHIMABUKURO**

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A thesis submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

HISTORY

Department of History
University of Lethbridge
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, CANADA

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Date of Defence: December 4, 2020

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Dedication

to my daughter Taylor

to Mom and Dad

to my family and friends
*munchuu*¹

¹ *Munchuu* means extended family or clan in the Okinawan language.

Abstract

In 1907 a group of 152 Okinawans came to Canada as a labour diaspora marked for the Canadian Pacific Railway. This would be the largest group from Okinawa to enter the country for in 1908 the Hayashi-Lemieux Agreement would restrict immigration from Japan. This thesis examines the *kika nisei* journey of Naoko Shimabukuro whose grandfather was one of those Okinawan migrants who came to settle in southern Alberta. Through Naoko's lens the research will address this lesser-studied experience within Okinawan diasporic scholarship and fill a lacuna that exists in the experiential representation specific to this prairie region of Canada. I investigate and contribute to Okinawan Canadian research through: 1) connection between the geographies of southern Alberta and Hamahiga Island; 2) Naoko's eye witness account of the Battle of Okinawa during the prewar, wartime, and postwar periods; and 3) Canadian *sansei* self-reflexive exploration of generational cultural transference and related critical thought.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my supervisor Dr. Gideon Fujiwara for encouraging me to investigate the Okinawan Canadian diaspora in southern Alberta which led to the study of my mother's *kika nisei* journey. I sincerely appreciate his unwavering support, patience, kindness, and brilliant candour. Thank you to Dr. Carly Adams who has forever changed the way I look at and listen to voice in history, and to Dr. Darren Aoki whose vision fires the imagination of the creative researcher. I would also like to recognize and thank fellow graduate students and friends Elaine Toth and Madison Allen.

I am privileged and humbled to be part of a close-knit and supportive community of family, friends, and colleagues. I am grateful to each for—coulee walks; great conversations over coffee, green tea, and wine; our common addiction to life-long learning; shared laughter and tears; mischief-making; and above all, treasured friendship.

Finally, in conducting this research I came to recognize the sacrifice, loss, struggle, and courage of all those young immigrants who came to southern Alberta in the early 1900s. Here, I acknowledge some of the villages and towns of the Okinawan *issei* who made their way from the scatter of Ryukyuan islands to the Canadian prairies to work on the railroads, coalmines, and farmlands: Nago, Yomitan, Yonashiro, Kin, Katsuren, Onaka, Higa, Haneji, Chatan, Motobu, Tomishiro, Heianna, Ogimi, Urasoe, Nakagusuku ...

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Introduction

You like the ocean don't you, mom?

*Yeah, I do—more than mountains.*²

Saturday, September 21, 2019. The sun is bright. The air is still. I'm working on transcribing one of the interviews related to my master's study. My mother has come over from the seniors' lodge. She has volunteered to chop up vegetables for a chow mein dinner planned for Sunday. The Savoy cabbage leaf is much more tender than that of the dense thick-leafed winter cabbage. The cabbage is quartered, cored, and chopped in 1/8" widths. Next, the celery, green pepper, and onion sliced almost paper thin, garlic is minced. Then she attends to the pork like she would semi-frozen sashimi³. Make sure to choose a proper knife, one that has weight, is sharp, and able to confidently meet the board. A good pot makes a big difference. Food is a symbol of touchstone, comfort, reference, reverence—ashitibichi, rafuti, goya champuru, sata andagi⁴.

Naben Ruthnum suggests that food and literature are part of the vehicle used to look at how we eat, read, and think of ourselves as a miniature mass-culture within the greater West and—just as fake and as real as a great novel, as a sense of identity.⁵ Curry can, and often does tell a similarly loaded story, he says, but one that goes beyond emphasizing aspects of a single persona: it carries a weight of meaning across the

² Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *NaokoAugust25*, 30:15, Lethbridge, 2019.

³ *Sashimi* is a Japanese dish of sliced fresh raw fish or meat.

⁴ *These are foods had at special occasions: ashitibichi* is a soup made with pork hocks as the broth base; *rafuti* is pork simmered in soya sauce, sugar, and *awamori* or other alcohol; *goya champuru* is a stir-fry using bitter melon, egg, and *tofu*; *sata andaagi* is a deep-fried donut.

⁵ Naben Ruthnum, *Curry: Eating, Reading and Race*. Toronto: Coach House Books, 2018, 13.

immense and indefinable South Asian diasporic culture.⁶ Similarly, for me as a sansei⁷ Okinawa has over time become metaphor for diasporic sanctuary—trope packaged with hybridic identity, misinterpreted idyllic imaginings, and oceanic beauty. It is the heart of Ryukyu shaped in my mind beginning from childhood that has, with academic research, also been characterized with concepts such as colonization, war, civilian caves, military occupation, land appropriation, diaspora, and spiritual resilience amid complex geopolitics and powers that go beyond the East China Sea.

This thesis is about one of those lesser-heard voices in war scholarship: civilian, female, child, elderly, a “double-minority in a double diaspora”⁸. It is a voice that can often slip quietly through the interstices of history—whose evidence remains unearthed and testimony unheard—perhaps caught in-between countries as a casualty, off the record, silent, and as anonymous as number 25.⁹

Scholarly contributions of the Okinawan diasporic experiences have come from various parts of the globe most notably from Hawaii and South America. There is an absence, however, of the representation of the Okinawan Canadian experience, particularly from the southern Alberta region where a significant community has resided since the early 1900s. This thesis presents research that differs from previous Okinawan diasporic global scholarship in order to fill the lacuna that exists in the experiential

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ *Sansei* means third generation in the Japanese language.

⁸ Robert K. Arakaki, “Theorizing on the Okinawan Diaspora,” in *Okinawan Diaspora*, edited by Ronald Y. Nakasone, Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, (2002), 29.

⁹ During the American occupation of Okinawa Naoko worked as a waitress and was known simply as number 25.

representation specific to the southern Alberta prairie region of Canada where a significant community settled. In this thesis I investigate and contribute to the understudied Okinawan Canadian diaspora experience through: 1) the connection, beginning in 1907, between the geographies of southern Alberta and Hamahiga Island; 2) eye witness account of the Battle of Okinawa during the prewar, wartime, and postwar periods through the lens of Naoko Shimabukuro; and 3) my own Canadian *sansei* exploration through self-reflexive poems on generational transference of Okinawan culture and related critical thought.

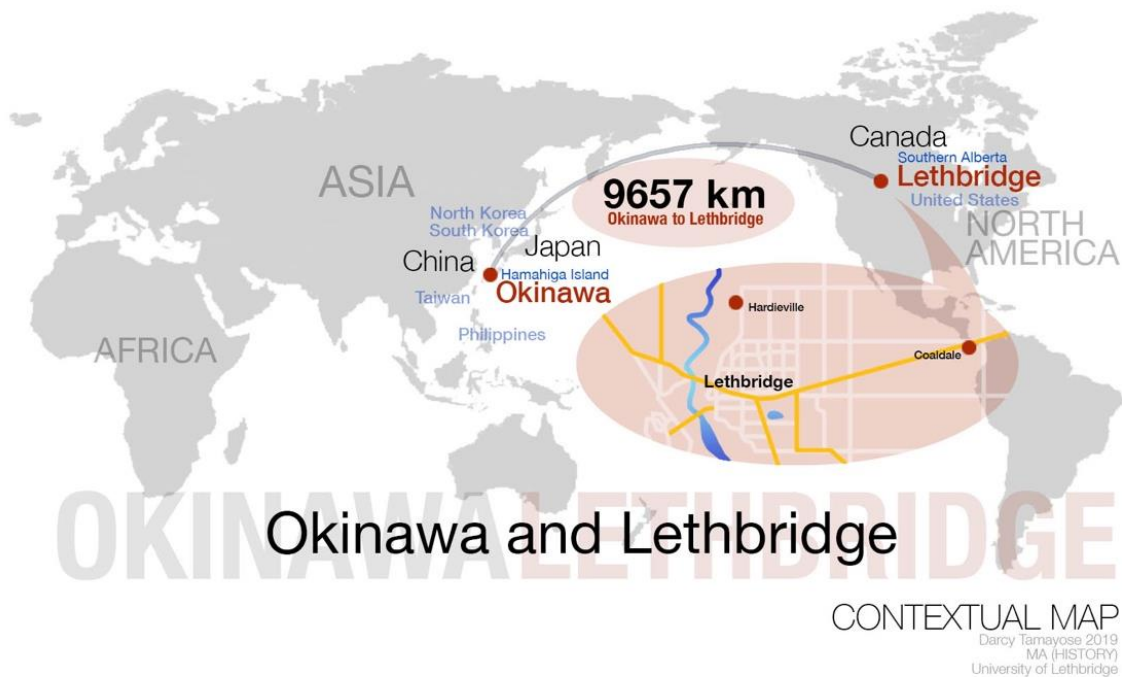


Figure 1. Contextual map of Hamahiga Island and southern Alberta.

Within the context of a broader study of Okinawa and the Ryukyus, I investigate the accounts of my singular interviewee, Naoko Shimabukuro whose life story spans from southern Alberta prairie to a small island that is part of the Okinawa Prefecture called Hamahiga and even more distinctly, the village of Higa. The oral history

component focuses on Naoko's childhood experience of the last campaign of the Second World War known as the Battle of Okinawa. Her trilingual voice of *uchinaaguchi*¹⁰, Japanese, and English infused alongside her 86-year journey will thread throughout my thesis. This study recognizes that Naoko falls into a specific sub-cultural *nisei* category known as *kika nisei* defined as Japanese born in Canada who travel to Japan and then return to Canada.

In the following introductory quotation, Naoko reflects back sixty-eight years to her experiences as an 18-year-old returning to Canada with her sister, Miyoko, after having lived in the village of Higa since the age of two. The journey *home* took them from Hamahiga Island to Naha to Yokohama then to Hawaii and to San Francisco, then north along the west coast to the Canadian province of British Columbia. After first arriving in Okinawa in 1937, they returned to Canada in June of 1953 as *kika nisei*.

Canada had for so many years held untold promise for Naoko. In this quotation, the return unfolds:

Dress and watch, Auntie Nobu gave. Mine was silver and Miyo's was gold. I had the shoes. Auntie Yoshi bought the shoes. You know shoes was something else.¹¹

Different food we had on the big Wilson. *Hakujin*¹² food. Toast in the morning stuff like that. It was different food. Altogether different food. They had dancing certain evenings, shuffleboard. Different musics. We didn't go out too much, mostly stayed in [the cabin]. Well you're so terrified, you don't know where you're going. Can you imagine from poor country girl all of a sudden something like that, completely different? Seemed like jumped from one to a hundred or something.

We were so homesick. I was just standing there on the deck and thinking of Okinawa. You know? Then all of a sudden, my watch fell off [into the ocean].

¹⁰ *Uchinaaguchi* means the Okinawan language.

¹¹ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *Naoko4*, 1:03:42, Lethbridge, 2019.

¹² *Hakujin* means Caucasian in the Japanese language.

We got to San Francisco and got really excited. So that's where Mom and Dad lives. I had no idea what America is. Tall buildings and things like that which you never seen before. Not too many people going to Canada. Even on the boat they says where you girls going? We says Canada. They says Canada? You gonna be a farmer? I says, "What that means?" I was excited to go to school. What that means? Farmer? Didn't sound that good.¹³

This comment from a fellow passenger travelling from China, and not destined for Canada, unsettled Naoko as all her life as an Okinawan Canadian living in a small village she had anticipated a southern Alberta that was full of hope and education. This short exchange planted a harbinger of doubt in the vision of her imagined Canada.

History and Context

The island of Okinawa is the largest in a chain of islands once known as the ancient Ryukyu Kingdom. This scatter of islands was an active central port in oceanic trade during the latter 14th century up to the 16th century at a time when the archipelago was under a tributary arrangement with China, ruled at the time by the Ming dynasty. The Ryukyans embarked upon extensive trade voyages to southeast Asian countries and would return with rare items that they would exchange with China, Japan, and Korea. In 1609, Satsuma warriors invaded the Ryukyu Kingdom, and the collective islands became a vassal state of Japan ruled overarchingly by the Tokugawa shogunate. In 1879, Okinawa officially became a Japanese prefecture following annexation by the Japanese empire. Through colonial policy which encompassed politics, society, and education, the Ryukyans were made Japanese subjects of the empire.

¹³ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview, by Darcy Tamayose, *NaokoJune2*, 10:09, Lethbridge, 2019.

The stepping stone islands that make up what is today known as the Okinawa Prefecture and its outlying smaller islands proved useful to expansionist Japan. As George Kerr writes in his monograph *Okinawa: The History of an Island People*, “From a militarist’s point of view the Ryukyu Islands formed useful links in the line of communications leading to Formosa and the south.”¹⁴ The islands of the Ryukyus historically became a territorial concern due to its approachable location amid the great southeastern nations of Asia. Increasingly over time, the main Ryukyuan island of Okinawa became a matter of military negotiation. The people of the Ryukyus had always maintained a peaceable stance—Okinawans were less groomed in the psychology of fervent nationalism. With the Second World War looming, the civilians on Okinawa were left ill-prepared and vulnerable.

The Battle of Okinawa took place between March and September of 1945 and as Matthew Allen explains, “was among the bloodiest and most savage battles of World War II.”¹⁵ It took the lives of approximately 77,000 Japanese forces, 14,000 American soldiers, and 150,000 Okinawan civilians.¹⁶ The latter analytic represents between a

¹⁴ George H. Kerr, *Okinawa: The History of an Island People* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 2000), 459.

¹⁵ Matthew Allen, “Wolves at the Back Door: Remembering the Kumejima Massacres”, in *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, eds. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 46.

¹⁶ Numbers vary on the reports of casualties. The number of 140,000 civilian casualties is documented by both Masahide Ota and Jon Mitchell. There are 149,456 inscriptions on the Cornerstone of Peace Memorial to reflect those who died in the Battle of Okinawa within the prefecture from the time of the American army landing on the Kerama Islands on March 26, 1945 to the signature of the capitulation on September 7, 1945. Masahide Ota, *Essays on Okinawa Problems* (Okinawa: Yui Publishing, 2000), 7. Jon Mitchell, “The Battle of Okinawa: America's Good War Gone Bad,” in *The Japan Times*, accessed November 19, 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2015/03/30/issues/battle-okinawa-americas-good-war-gone-bad/>. 沖縄県 *The Cornerstone of Peace*, accessed November 19, 2017, <http://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/kankyo/heiwadanjo/heiwa/7792.html>.

quarter to a third of the island population of civilians at the time. Former governor of Okinawa, Masahide Ota states that Okinawan civilians “found themselves in a situation where they were attacked by tigers at the front gate (the enemy troops) and wolves at the back gate (their own troops).”¹⁷ Ota referred to the American soldiers as the “tigers” and the Imperial Japanese Army forces as the “wolves.” Furthermore, Kerr submits that no provision had been made by the Japanese high command to protect or segregate the noncombatants.¹⁸ He encapsulates: “Okinawans had no part in formulating Japan’s military policies which led to the Battle of Okinawa ... nevertheless the Okinawan people were forced to make a hideous sacrifice on Japan’s behalf.”¹⁹ The heavy artillery fire constant throughout the 82 days known as the Battle of Okinawa was tantamount to pouring rain and became known as *tetsu no bōfū* or the violent wind of steel. The battle was the largest synchronized amphibious, air, and land conflict of WWII, and although the American and allied forces had succeeded in taking Okinawa, they were depleted. A shift in military calculation; the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki took place two months later.

In *Living Spirit: Literature and Resurgence in Okinawa*, Katsunori Yamazato presents translations from Ryukyuan literary works, and in his editor’s notes writes:

The Battle of Okinawa is regarded as one of the cruelest conflicts ever fought; after eighty-two days of horrendous fighting, nearly one hundred thousand civilians perished, the great majority of them trapped between the armies of Japan

¹⁷ Ota, *Essays on Okinawa*, 7.

¹⁸ Kerr, *Okinawa: The History of an Island People*, 469.

¹⁹ Ota, *Essays on Okinawa*, 7-8.

and the United States. The battle had a traumatic and lasting effect on the Okinawan imagination—we see this reflected in the literature.²⁰

The Battle of Okinawa had been reported by *New York Times* military historian, Hanson W. Baldwin as “dwarfing the Battle of Britain in size, scope, and ferocity.” Baldwin adds that there had “never been in any three months of land fighting had so much American blood been shed in so short a time in so small an area.”²¹ Ota on the human loss during the battle: “In this vicious battle, it was the Okinawan people who suffered the most. Indeed, in the Battle of Okinawa, the Okinawan people endured one of “the fiercest and ugliest campaigns” of modern times.²²

During the war, at the age of nine, Naoko with her sister Miyoko went down from the mountain cave to their house in the village of Higa on Hamahiga Island to feed the pigs. She explains the chickens and the goats had run away during the course of the war, but the pigs were still alive. It seems the chore of feeding the pigs was her aunt Nobuko’s responsibility prior to the war. Naoko explains: Auntie Nobu was a young lady so she couldn’t go out because scared that the soldiers might do something, bad thing.²³ One of her most fearful moments was an encounter with some American soldiers as she recalls here:

They comes in.
I still remember the flashlight. They got a canteen, and the rifle in hand.
They poked us with the rifle. Yeah, the end of the rifle—just pokes.
We can’t communicate.
So, he clears all the pebbles. He writes [draws in the dirt] a Japanese flag.

²⁰ Frank Stewart and Katsunori Yamazato, *Living Spirit: Literature and Resurgence in Okinawa* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), ix.

²¹ Ota, *Essays on Okinawa Problems*, 6.

²² *Ibid.*, 7.

²³ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *Nov18c_01*, 40:54, Lethbridge, 2019.

They were looking for a Japanese flag.

How can I explain to them that this house is all cleared off and everything taken out and burnt? You know, you can't communicate. I just have to say, you know, we don't have it. Then, they cleared that [they erased the flag drawing in the dirt] and they were looking for eggs. A picture of a chicken, and then eggs. They wanted to eat, I guess. We didn't have any chickens. Gee, I thought if we say *no* they are going to kill us. I was thinking of that.

We didn't have a flag. Shima's didn't have a flag.²⁴

This moment is a surreal event that demonstrates through a child's eyes the adaptation of daily chores during wartime, and the confrontation with foreign soldiers. As Naoko mentioned several times in the interviews, she had never seen Americans prior to the war. She recalled how amazed she was to see people of dark and light skin colours, and to see such "big people." The context of a child's perception of communication and symbolism are also articulated in the quotation above. The drawings of the flag, chicken, and egg had a clear impression that remained for seventy-five years. Even during the interviews, it was evident that drawing with a pen on paper or napkin in order to explain her message, or use of gestures, or even to sing alongside speech was a form of multi-communication delivery that she was comfortable with, and evidently felt was overwhelmingly the most effective manner of expression. It is important to note that *uchinaaguchi* was primarily a spoken language as she remembers and perhaps the overlap of other forms of communication were an effective collective. Alessandro Portelli explains that "written and oral sources are not mutually exclusive. They have common as well as autonomous characteristics, and specific functions which only either

²⁴ Naoko Shimabukuro interview by Darcy Tamayose, *NaokoSeptember1*, 26:50, Lethbridge, 2019.

one can fill.”²⁵ It seems as a nine-year-old the oral and other forms of communication would naturally be stronger than the written—especially in an oral culture and especially when the education has been fundamentally impacted in postwar with, for example, the lack of writing tools, paper products, and textbooks. There are other significant assumptions in this quotation including the American soldiers’ search for a Japanese flag—they may have been searching for spies or wanting a Japanese flag as a souvenir. The quotation also serves to demonstrate scarcity of food for not only civilians but the American soldiers. Naoko uses the name Shima in this quotation when actually this part of the family that lived in Okinawa had not abbreviated their name, it was still Shimabukuro. This quotation reminds that she has always lived somewhat in hyphen: in between being Canadian and Okinawan, Canadian and Japanese, in between the Japanese and Okinawan identity, in between the Okinawan, English and Japanese languages, in between Shima and Shimabukuro, in between the mountains, prairie, and ocean, and in between forms of communication whether oral, written, *odori*²⁶, or song.

As mentioned, the series of interviews with Naoko encompasses oral and written languages, other forms of co-developed material such as drawings, photographs, and videos. This research is through the lens of an Okinawan Canadian who is in her mid 80s, and while there may be diverse opinions, the history presented is her lived experience as she remembers, understands, and communicates it. In addition to the series of interviews with Naoko, this master’s study includes a diverse investigation of

²⁵ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (State University of New York Press, 1990), 46.

²⁶ *Odori* is a dance performance.

Ryukyuan, Okinawan, and diasporic literature; and implements mixed methods that include qualitative and quantitative research methodology techniques learned from my studies. The paper is informed and inspired by supervisors, instructors, and Ryukyuan and Okinawan scholars.

Thesis Chapter Outline

My study aims to explore the relationships and experiences of Okinawans that came to settle in southern Alberta in the early 1900s, with diverse global experiences in mind. Through oral history interviews with Naoko Shimabukuro, I hope to contribute to the existing Okinawan diasporic experience scholarship. As outlined earlier, I open each chapter as I did with the Introduction with a self-reflective proem. This voice serves as a subjective actor within this history. This “story within a story”²⁷ intends to serve as a segue to a more objective view in my critical analysis of this material as a historian. Naoko’s quotations and my analysis of them will weave throughout the paper where it relates. This will not only establish a common thread and rhythm throughout the paper but will continue to inform through first-hand testimony. The quotation analyses from Naoko’s interviews are integrated throughout the thesis and serve to give her a voice from beginning to end. These analyses are more intentional in Chapter 2: prewar Higa Village, Chapter 3: the Battle of Okinawa, and in Chapter 4: postwar and return to southern Alberta. The paper will end at the Conclusion with Naoko’s coda passage, “counting stars”.

²⁷ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 1.

A more detailed outline of my thesis is as follows: The Introduction gives an overview of the key points of my paper, presents my thesis statement, provides a brief historical background, and shows the reader that the Okinawan Canadian experience is understudied and that this thesis will contribute to the existing global Okinawan Canadian scholarship. Chapter 1 is comprised of a literature review which provides further context to the thesis framework by focusing on two categories of key texts. The first includes a growing body of scholarship on the Ryukyus, Okinawa, and Okinawan diaspora—encompassing history, politics, identity, and ideology. This chapter will also include readings on methodological texts that include qualitative interview techniques, self-reflection, and oral history. Chapter 2 begins by chronicling the 1907 Okinawan diasporic arrival in Canada amid the Pacific Northwest anti-Asian riots and followed by the settlement of Okinawans in southern Alberta. Focus then turns to the story of Naoko Shimabukuro who, in 1937 at the age of two, was sent from southern Alberta to live in Okinawa with her grandparents, Canadian citizens who had residence in both Canada and in Higa Village. The chapter looks at Naoko's prewar experience and examines family life, education, spiritualism, and early childhood including play. Chapter 3 recounts Naoko's experience and memory of the Battle of Okinawa. Her interview sheds light on several key wartime incidents through Naoko's child lens including the bombardment of Naha, which signified the beginning of the Battle of Okinawa; preparing for wartime in the schools; the Imperial Japanese Army training near Naoko's Hamahiga village home; the impact of seeing warships covering the ocean; and running through the mountains, and living in the caves during wartime. Chapter 4 looks at postwar Okinawa and Naoko's return to southern Alberta. In 1953, Naoko returned to

Canada as a *kika nisei* (Canadian born Japanese returning from Okinawa to Canada after The War Measures Act eased). This chapter will follow the journey back to farm in Coaldale, Alberta with limited English language; fears of a new world and a new life; and the generational transference of Okinawan culture into Canadian life. In the conclusion I clearly restate my thesis and synthesize the main points. I offer this study combined with Naoko Shimabukuro's voice as an Okinawan Canadian contribution to the existing Okinawan diaspora scholarship.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Did you ever go to the library?

Didn't have time for anything. I stayed home and that was my teacher.

Dictionary?

*Yeah. That saved my life.*²⁸

February 12, 2020. The view from the kitchen window: pock-marked birch rises arching limbs up and out to the winter sky. Large flakes begin a gentle descent amid a northside suspiciously absent of wind. My mother is in her place at the sink with necessary utensils at arm's length—making quick work of the boiled octopus legs. She quickly slips a thin coin-shaped piece of tako²⁹ into my mouth before I can decline.

Since 1959 the year my parents married, my mother has faithfully celebrated Japanese New Year as a spectacle of food. To us these various New Year's dishes reappeared at special occasions, or simply time and again if a relative from Okinawa was visiting. Maybe the foods prepared for New Year's dinner could be defined as part of a food narrative—different from the day to day humble offering of cabbage and weiner okazu³⁰ or pickles with rice. Now as adults, New Year's dinner is an affair that we contribute to with dishes such as shoyu-drizzled kazunoko³¹; spam musubi³²; kombu

²⁸ Naoko Shimaburkuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, NaokoFeb14-Book3, 14:02, Lethbridge, 2020.

²⁹ *Tako* is prepared octopus.

³⁰ *Okazu* is a stir fry often made of leftovers such as cabbage, carrots, onion and a meat.

³¹ *Kazunoko* is marinated herring roe.

³² *Musubi* is a sushi that integrates seasoned and grilled spam.

maki³³ tied with kampyo³⁴; teriyaki chicken, beef and salmon; tempura-ed shrimp, cod, and assorted vegetables; tobiko or masago³⁵ atop sushi; yokan, potato mochi, manju³⁶; and the ashitibichi for good fortune. Food is a lived experience that comes strongly to mind either through community, performance, orality, or documented in the form of recipe written on a stained paper scrap and tucked within the old Ellison Milling cookbook.

So how does this relate to a literature review? In studying generational cultural transference, can recipes—a collection of printed matter stemmed to kitchen work—be a literature review of sorts, references to the transmission of Okinawan and Japanese culture through kitchen teachings? In The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia, Assyriologist Jean Bottéro addresses the matter of the recipe:

Although we are only discussing cooking recipes here, there were other recipes known in that land involving other products: the fabrication of perfumes and unguents; dyes; coloured glass to replace semi-precious stones; beer; the raising and training of horses. Infrequently and sometimes inadequately studied, these documents constitute a true literary genre.³⁷

For me, the Okinawan Canadian experience is connected to food memory, performance in the kitchen where hands-on oral transference through apprenticeship occurs, and the act of documenting, sometimes a scribble of recipes, reflect review of cultural testimony.

³³ *Kombu maki* is rolled kelp sometimes wrapped around pork or salmon and tied with *kampyō* strips.

³⁴ *Kampyō* strips are derived from gourd.

³⁵ *Tobiko* and *masago* are fish roe.

³⁶ *Yokan*, *mochi* and *manjū* are Japanese desserts.

³⁷ As quoted in Ioan Milićă and Sorin Guia, “Culinary Recipes: Orality and Scripturalità (I),” *Diacronia*, No. 5 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.17684/i5a71en>.

Growing up I was always in search of a book about Okinawa, any book, but could never find one—therefore Okinawa in theory was a place mostly shrouded in mystery. For me, as a sansei, Okinawan culture was not learned from books, but from stories often heard in trilingual conversation around the kitchen table with relatives who were visiting from Okinawa; or peripherally during late night huddles of aunties and uncles laughing, gossiping, and slapping down gaji³⁸ cards as nickels and dimes were exchanged; at close-knit quartered picnics where food was shared from blanket to blanket; and odori practices held in the Miyagi³⁹ basement, the back room of Kelly's Confectionery⁴⁰, or our home. Food was always an underlying thread to all southern Alberta Okinawan gatherings. Cooking and baking were learned through mentorship, word of mouth, and through experimentation with recipes that were revised over and over with taste memory as reference—a recipe historiography of sorts. As Ioan Miličă and Sorin Guia explain in their article, “Culinary Recipes: Orality and Scripturality (I)”, recipes “are passed down both orally and in writing, and the peculiarities of the communicative channel determine the presence or the absence of certain structural components in the making of recipes.”⁴¹ What defines literature review? For my mother it seems, the spoken and written aspects of cooking is her literature. The kitchen: her lab.⁴²

³⁸ *Gaji* is the card game also known as *hanafuda*.

³⁹ Jack Miyagi was a member of the Okinawan Culture Society executive.

⁴⁰ Jim and Minako Kanashiro owned Kelly's Confectionary near the corner of 13th St. and 8th Ave., North Lethbridge. For many years the back room of the store was offered as a practise area for Naoko to teach *odori* dance to students. They would perform at the annual *keirokai*, a celebration for the elderly.

⁴¹ Miličă, “Culinary Recipes,” 1.

⁴² César Vega, Job Ubbink, and Erik van der Linden, *The Kitchen as Laboratory: Reflections on the Science of Food and Cooking* (New York: Columbia University Press 2012).

Ryukyu, Okinawa, and Diasporic Literature

My thesis literature review encompasses Ryukyu, Okinawa, and diasporic literature; and methodological literature. Written material from southern Alberta was difficult to find; however, there were two written sources on Okinawan Canadians that contributed to my research on the history of Okinawan Canadians in southern Alberta. The first is the *Commemorating 25 Years of Canada Okinawa-ken Yuaikai* published by The Vancouver Okinawa-ken Yuaikai which provided quantitative data related to Okinawans in Canada, along with a chronological narrative that begins with the first known Okinawan who came to Canada in 1900, Anno Makishi. The second is Shucho Higa's memoir, *History of Okinawan Kenjinkai in Alberta, Canada* that glimpses the Okinawan Canadian experience as seen through the minutes of the first southern Alberta prefectural association, which is known as a *kenjinkai*.⁴³

In studying the Okinawan and Ryukyuan literature I have learned that what is considered understood history over the course of time and further interrogation can be (and should be) open to scrutiny, further research, and to potential revision. In *Okinawa: The History of an Island People*, George H. Kerr presents an initial reference of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands from legend up to 1314⁴⁴. He explains the gradual loss of independence to the Satsuma beginning in 1609, assimilation and cultural erosion during the 19th century, particularly following annexation by Japan, through to the 20th century,

⁴³ Shucho Higa, "History of Okinawan Kenjinkai in Alberta, Canada." Memoir edited by Roy Urasaki, translated by Chiye Kinjo, (unpublished memoir, June 1985).

⁴⁴ George H. Kerr, *Okinawa: The History of an Island People* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 2000), 60. Kerr explains that Eiji, the paramount chief or king among the territorial lords on Okinawa died in 1314. Soon after the succession of his son Tamagusuku, open rebellion occurred. The timeframe of 1314 to 1398 signified a century of conflict.

and details history leading up to the Battle of Okinawa. Kerr notes that the bibliography for this book is unconventional, as the archives of the Ryukyu Kingdom were lost when Shuri Castle was destroyed in 1945 during the Battle of Okinawa.⁴⁵ The book effectively introduces to the broader lay audience and researchers alike, the background of the island from prehistoric Ryukyuan legendary past to the beginnings of American occupation after the Second World War. It is significant to make note of the Afterword by Mitsugu Sakihara in the 2000 revised edition. It reads as follows:

George H. Kerr (1911-1992) wrote *Okinawa: The History of an Island People* in 1958. It evolved out of his 1953 work, *Ryukyu: Kingdom and Province Before 1945*. His other major work is *Formosa Betrayed* (1965). In these works, he was consistently a friend of the weak and oppressed; however, in his zeal to right wrongs, he was sometimes less than impartial.⁴⁶

Sakihara adds that since the original publication, data that was incorporated in Kerr's book has since been reinterpreted. Sakihara's Afterword endeavours to "update the story." One of the critical revisions in the Afterword refers to the matter of disarmament and the interpretation of one of King Sho Shin's (1477-1526) achievements which is inscribed upon the Momourasoe Balustrade monument which was erected in 1509. Kerr referenced an interpretation by Fuyu Ifa, who is known as the father of Okinawan studies, and in doing so presented a story of a pacifist kingdom that, quoting Ifa, "turned all iron arms into useful tools and utensils."⁴⁷ Because "peace-loving" has been a common historiographical descriptive in Okinawa's narrative this correction is significant.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 491.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 543.

⁴⁷ Fuyu Ifa, "Ko Ryukyu no bubu o kôsetsu shite, karate no hatten ni oyobu," 1932, reprinted in *Ifa Fuyu senshu*, I:1961, 405-425.

Sakihara notes that in 1955, Zenchû Nakahara “pointed out a serious error in Ifa’s interpretation”⁴⁸ and that Article Four is now translated as:

Fourth, brocade and embroidered silk are used for garments, and gold and silver are used for utensils. Swords, bows, and arrows are exclusively accumulated as weapons in the protection of the country. In matters of finance and armament, this country excels other countries.⁴⁹

The revised translation of the inscription changes Kerr’s statement within the book that “Private ownership and use of arms were done away with.”⁵⁰ Nakahara’s translation indicates that “weapons” and “armament” were evident in the Ryukyus and contradicts Ifa’s previous translation that Ryukyu was a pacifist kingdom.

Ronald Y. Nakasone’s *Okinawan Diaspora* essay collection commemorates the event of the first Okinawan immigrants that left for Hawaii in 1899, and is dedicated to all ancestors of past, present, and future. The articles include the telling of diasporic experiences in Micronesia, the Philippines, Latin America, and Hawaii. To clarify the nomenclature that often arises in Ryukyuan and Okinawan studies, Nakasone explains that the term *Okinawan* is used inclusively to reference those who live on islands outward of Okinawa.⁵¹ Nakasone understands that the readers of this book or the ancestors of the audience may have other islandic origins besides Okinawa between the stretch of Kyushu and Taiwan including the larger Osumi, Tokara, Amami, Miyako, Yaeyama, and the Yonaguni, along with many smaller islands. In an essay within the collection, “Theorizing on the Okinawan Diaspora”, Robert K. Arakaki further explains

⁴⁸ Zenchû Nakahara, “Ryukyu ogoko no seikaku to buki,” in *Nakahara Zenchû senshu*, I: 1969, 585-594.

⁴⁹ Kerr, *Okinawa*, 544. See Sakihara “Notes to Part A” on the Nakahara translation, 548, reference: Seisaku Tsukada, *Ryukyu’koku himonki*, 1970, 23, 82.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 543.

⁵¹ Ronald Y. Nakasone, *Okinawan Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), x.

that Nakasone's effort with this collection is intended to be a "critical and reflective work of scholarship" whose intended audience are the descendants of Okinawan immigrants and other immigrant groups. Arakaki hopes that the essays within *Okinawan Diaspora* "will be of interest to the scholarly community, in particular members of the academy studying the fields of modernity, identity politics, ethnicity, nationalism, and Asia-Pacific history."⁵² Despite the absence of the Okinawan Canadian experience in many of the textbooks including this collection, the transnational diaspora exhibited experiential commonalities such as their deep connection to the homeland, and various identity and discrimination struggles within the destination country that seemed similar to the southern Alberta Okinawan Canadian account. Nakasone's collection revealed that Okinawan diasporic communities were tightly knit and would form *kenjinkai* or community clubs; sometimes sent family members back to villages in Okinawa to be raised by other family members; sent earnings back to their families in Okinawa; were impacted by the Battle of Okinawa in distinct ways; and practised generational transference of Ryukyuan and Okinawan culture. This book succeeded in expanding knowledge through its critical and reflective material and contributed to my further understanding of the interdisciplinary and transnational facets related to the Okinawan global diaspora.

Nakasone is not alone in scholarship to address careful consideration related to conventions of Okinawan and Ryukyuan identity and language. Gregory Smits also makes reference to the matter of Okinawan, Ryukyuan, and Japanese identity in his book, *Visions of Ryukyu: Identity and Ideology in Early Modern Thought and Politics*,

⁵² Arakaki, "Theorizing," 15.

stating, “I do not intend to suggest that all, most, or even many contemporary Okinawans necessarily derive a strong sense of identity as Ryukyuan or Okinawans.”⁵³ He further explains that those who live in Okinawa consider the Ryukyuan and Okinawan in ways different from one another. Identity politics, however, do clearly exist when broader Japanese identity is concerned, and has long existed even before Kyuzo Toyama led the first diasporic labour group from Naha to Honolulu, arriving in January 1900.⁵⁴ Smits explains, “One need not listen long or hard, however, to be reminded that the categories “Okinawa” and “Japan”, whatever they may be, do not always coexist without tension.”⁵⁵ This notion is eloquently supported in Baku Yamanokuchi’s poem of veiled identity, “A Conversation,” where what is articulated to Japanese acquaintances about his homeland is different than are his thoughts.⁵⁶ Moreover, Smits shares a story about Okinawan identity by way of a mailing label from a used book store in Okinawa that at one time claimed to be located in *Okinawa-ken Ginowan* (Ginowan City, Okinawan Prefecture), and in the new re-designed mailing label it read *Ryukyu-koku Ginowan*

⁵³ Gregory Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu: Identity and Ideology in Early-Modern Thought and Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017), 1.

⁵⁴ Scott Matsumoto, “Okinawa Migrants to Hawaii.” *Hawaiian Journal of History*, vol. 16, (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 1982): 125-133. Matsumoto writes that Kyuzo Toyama (1868-1910) was considered the “Father of Okinawan overseas emigration.” Matsumoto explains that Toyama had learned of the emigration program to Hawaii while studying in Tokyo from 1896 to 1898. In 1885 the governments of Japan and Hawaii agreed on a three-year contract that exported Japanese labourers to work on the sugar cane plantations in Hawaii. Toyama formed a group of 30 Okinawan men in age from 21 to 35. After effort of appeals and with permissions granted, they became the first contract labour group to Hawaii from Okinawa. Matsumoto details that “these men sailed from Naha aboard the SS Satsuma-maru on December 5, 1899.” Matsumoto’s article adds to the sociological and historical scholarship with contribution from an international health perspective with regards to the history of Okinawan migrants to Hawaii.

⁵⁵ Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 1.

⁵⁶ Baku Yamanokuchi, “A Conversation,” In *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 47–48.

(Ginowan City, Country of the Ryukyu).⁵⁷ The used book store owner is expressing not a change in physical location but asserting identity as a member of the Ryukyu society over the prefectural membership to the country of Japan. Smits does not claim that all or even many Okinawans and Ryukyuan possess a similar sense about their identity in relation to Japan, but he recognizes the cavity. This anecdote successfully foreshadows the very crux of his book that circle the frontlines of nation, culture, and politics of identity, and the tenuous relationship that exists between Okinawa and Japan. Smits addresses through echoes of the Ryukyu past, issues that persist today primarily in the existence of a political and diplomatic core that demonstrates affiliation with both Japan and China known as *nitchū ryōzoku* (dual attachment to both Japan and China)—thus questioning the success of assimilation.

In the article, “New Cultures, New Identities: Becoming Okinawan and Japanese in 19th Century Ryukyu”, Smits traces historical moments in Ryukyuan history where identity was impacted. In late 18th century Ryukyu, the hereditary elite (*yukkatchu*, *shizoku*, and others), the commoner class (*hyakushō* and others), and the many gradations of groupings in between expressed various levels of Ryukyuan identity and kingdom preservation. The elite *yukkatchu* had more interest in broader Ryukyuan identity while “the horizons of ordinary people were much more limited” to concerns of the localized rural and urban communities.⁵⁸ He argues that the conflict about Okinawan identity began during the timeframe surrounding Meiji Japan’s 1879 annexation and renaming of

⁵⁷ Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 2.

⁵⁸ Gregory Smits, “Becoming Okinawan and Japanese in Ryukyu,” in *Values, Identity, and Equality in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Japan*, edited by Peter Nosco, James E. Ketelaar, and Yasunori Kojima (Netherlands: Brill, 2015), 160-161.

the Ryukyuan Kingdom to the Okinawa Prefecture. In addition, Smits posits that between 1880 and 1910, “circumstances thrust two new identities onto the residents of the Ryukyu Islands. They simultaneously became both Ryukyuan and Japanese.”⁵⁹ The complexities of islandic identity was also apparent at the time of the first Sino-Japanese War that began in 1894 when anti-Japanese groups in Okinawa were identified by the government—the *kuro-tō* “black faction” supported affiliation with China, while the *ganko-tō* “stubborn faction” advocated for the re-establishment of the previous relationship held simultaneously with both China and Japan. Smits further states that the government report “points out that the image of China in Ryukyuan eyes has always been positive, while that of Kagoshima⁶⁰ has long been negative.” Smits’ works serve to inform my studies and ongoing understanding of the complex historical nature of the Okinawan/Ryukyuan identity, political figures that influenced during the 18th century, and manner by which interdisciplinary studies have been implemented in his works.

While listening to Naoko’s testimony about the Battle of Okinawa in particular, it became evident to me that the Okinawan experience was sometimes inconsistently represented in the readings, often subsumed by the overarching and dominating mainland Japan narrative, and even misrepresented. As Laura Hein and Mark Selden explain in their essay collection, *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, “Okinawans have never accepted the view that the battle was either unavoidable or ennobling.” The readings and interviews with Naoko began to reveal to

⁵⁹ Ibid., 159–178.

⁶⁰ Okinawa had been conquered by Satsuma warriors in 1609. The Satsuma were from southern Kyūshū whose capital was Kagoshima.

me that Okinawans have struggled to bring voice to their own history. The Okinawan establishment of the Cornerstone of Peace that commemorates the dead without “endorsing the wartime Japanese government’s priorities” is one expression of Okinawan critical rejection of the national agenda and narrative related to the Battle of Okinawa—in other words, a rejection of the “orthodox Japanese interpretations of the battle.”⁶¹

Hein and Selden further explain that:

Such internationalism in commemorative sites is rare. War memorials virtually everywhere not only explicitly pay homage to the state’s wartime goals but also suggest that the sacrifice of the lives of its nationals, mainly those in uniform, was a worthy exchange for defending those goals.⁶²

The Cornerstone of Peace has a less nationalistic intention and demonstrates this by honouring “the names of the military dead on each side, Allied forces as well as Japanese, Okinawans, Koreans, and Taiwanese. Second, the memorial names civilians as well as military victims.”⁶³

Another manner by which the Okinawan narrative is being revised in its expression is through the education system alongside oral history methodology. Matthew Allen’s “Wolves at the Back Door: Remembering the Kumejima Massacres” examines the execution of twenty civilians (which included six children and two women) by the Japanese army sworn to protect the islanders⁶⁴—an incident that appears to have

⁶¹ Laura Hein and Mark Selden, “Culture, Power, and Identity in Contemporary Okinawa,” in *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, edited by Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 14.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁴ Naoko explains that prior to the known start of the war Japanese soldiers often training in a field near their home. NaokoSeptember1, 18:49.

occurred after the official June 25, 1945 surrender of the Japanese armed forces on Okinawa⁶⁵. This community effort endeavours to “empower itself through control of the narrative of history at the local level.”⁶⁶ Facilitation of a “living history” program was established by which the elderly share their personal stories of Kumejima during the Battle of Okinawa with junior high school students. Allen explains that the program is significant in that the stories articulated by the elders, *local* memories of a time in Kumejima’s history, had not been part of the formal education system.⁶⁷ My primary interviewee, Naoko, was in elementary school prior to and during the Battle of Okinawa so this article was especially interesting to study for two reasons. First, the living history program was endorsed by an education system in Okinawa but does not follow the previously adopted curriculum. Second, the key methodology that I am applying in this thesis is oral history. This is an example to study in that, like Naoko, elders in their seventies and eighties⁶⁸ are presenting their experience of an outlying Okinawan island during the Battle of Okinawa; theirs Kumejima and Naoko’s Hamahiga. This article gave me more of a thesis-direct methodological exemplar to explore.

From an Okinawan cultural context, Frank Stewart and Katsunori Yamazato present a portfolio of historical and contemporary prose, poetry, and photographs by Okinawans in *Living Spirit: Literature and Resurgence in Okinawa*. Yamazato shares

⁶⁵ Matthew Allen, “Wolves at the Back Door: Remembering the Kumejima Massacres,” in *Islands of Discontent*, edited by Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 39.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

that most of these writings have never been translated into English prior to this publication.⁶⁹ I have learned in my Indigenous Studies courses that artistic works—such as the stories and photographs in *Living Spirit* that are created by peoples who first inhabited their respective (is)lands—have a deep connection to the historical narrative. Oral history, storytelling, and diverse arts as presented in *Living Spirit* are important to the Okinawan historical narrative as a way of “hearing their side of the story” in their terms says Winona Stevenson in “Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories, Part I: The Othering of Indigenous History.”⁷⁰ For example the United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Article 13—alongside supporting Articles 15 and 16—recognizes the value in producing, reproducing, and revitalizing knowledge, through various means:

Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.⁷¹

As the excerpt from the UNDRIP declaration articulates, these transmissions may come in diverse forms. Often times they may have been handed down from one generation to another as treasures, sacred items—they may be through dance, song, words, or image.

⁶⁹ Frank Stewart and Katsunori Yamazato, *Living Spirit: Literature and Resurgence in Okinawa* (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), vii.

⁷⁰ Winona Wheeler (Stevenson), “Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories, Part I: The Othering of Indigenous History,” *Saskatchewan History* (Fall 1988), 24. This is cited within the context of Brian Calliou’s, “Methodology for Recording Oral Histories in the Aboriginal Community,” in *The Canadian Oral History Reader*, editors Kristina R. Llewellyn, Alexander Freund, and Nolan Reilly (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 28.

⁷¹ United Nations, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, September 13 2007), accessed June 3 2020, https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf, 12-13.

Katsunori Yamazato and Frank Stewart's collaborative work, *Living Spirit*, presents an opportunity to learn about Ryukyuan history and culture through the form of Ryukyuan and Okinawan literature.

One example of this is through "Round Trip over the Ocean", by Iriomote-born writer, Tami Sakiyama.⁷² This story offers insight into the Ryukyuan world through an oceanic journey to retrieve a mortuary tablet. Ailing Kinzo accompanied by his daughter, Akiko, charter a small fishing boat guided by the mysterious Old Man Kare. Taken as an example from the collection, what research can be gathered about the Ryukyus and Okinawa from this short story? Within Sakiyama's short story we learn both from her narrative and through her characters about a moment in time in their lives: the manner of travel from one island to another and how the ocean, the beach, and nightfall shapes how they go about their day-to-day lives; the existence of social mores they are expected (and sometimes pressured) to abide by; a complex kinship system that extends beyond biological; ancient rituals tied to familial responsibilities with regard to ancestors; gender roles; the fallout from the Battle of Okinawa; and insight into Okinawan identity.

"Mabuiigumi" by Shun Medoruma is another short story within *Living Spirit* that imparts the unique spiritual belief system of the Okinawan village life, the collision of the ancient and modern (economic development possibility being impacted by the optics of ancient ritual); and like Sakiyama refers to the tremendous impact the Battle of Okinawa has generationally had on the families and the world around them. Elder and village *noro* priestess, Uta, has been called upon, by the wife of the fisherman Kōtarō, to

⁷² Tami Sakiyama, "Round-trip Over the Ocean," in *Living Spirit: Literature and Resurgence in Okinawa*, edited by Frank Stewart and Katsunori Yamazato (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 1-20.

return his spirit through a ritual known as *mabuigumi*. One evening after supper he has gone down to the seashore to play his *sanshin*⁷³ and sing Okinawan folk songs. This is where his *mabui*⁷⁴ left him. The story is interspersed with vivid descriptions of the natural world—Okinawan words are used often to identify trees, a hermit crab—evidently a large part of the way of islandic life. But, the heart of the story lies with how the effects of the war have shaped this particular moment in time as the old woman tries desperately to convince Kōtarō’s spirit to return to the body and grapples with the past experience of the Second World War and the loss of her husband, Seiei, and Kōtarō’s father (Yuichi) and his mother, too.

Only the women and children were left in the cave. Japanese soldiers had come and taken all of the men away—Seiei, Yuichi, and the others, including the elderly. They were never heard from again.

Furthermore, she never learned where the men who had been taken away—under suspicion of spying—were buried. All that was left were stories that they were executed, and the location of their bodies remained a mystery.⁷⁵

Reading about the caves being used as shelter during the Battle of Okinawa are of particular interest. Medoruma’s literature about this aspect of the war allows me to compare and contrast with Naoko’s similar accounts of the cave shelters on Hamahiga Island. In addition, the photographs interspersed throughout this collection contribute to a broader understanding of the Ryukyuan history and culture. Juxtaposed alongside the

⁷³ *Sanshin* is an Okinawan musical instrument that has three strings.

⁷⁴ *Mabui* is the vital life-sustaining human spirit; a soul; a spirit (usually, of a living person). Mitsugu Sakihara, *Okinawan-English Wordbook*, edited by Stewart Curry, Shigehisa Karimata, Leon A. Serafim, and Moriyo Shimabukuro, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 107.

⁷⁵ Shun Medoruma, “Mabuigumi,” in *Living Spirit: Literature and Resurgence in Okinawa*, edited by Frank Stewart and Katsunori Yamazato (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 128.

literature are Yasuo Higa's black and white photographs which reveal rare images of the reverence to a matriarchal tradition. One photo is captioned, "People of Compassion: Old woman showing *hajichi*⁷⁶ marks." This image presents an aspect of the ancient Ryukyuan custom of tattooing—an elderly woman kneeling with her hands on her lap showing *hajichi* tattoos that adorn the topside of her wrists, hands, knuckles, and fingers.

My thesis and further understanding of the impact of the Battle of Okinawa has been enriched by the study of the literature and photos within *Living Spirit*. Like the interviews with Naoko, these literary works and photographs presented by writers from various Ryukyuan islands augment, support, and in some ways transcend some of the academic texts within my bibliography.

Moreover, in *Uchinaanchu Diaspora: Memories, Continuities, and Constructions*, editor Joyce Chinen explains that this collection of articles is a community endeavour, mainly reflecting the Okinawan Hawaiian connection to the homeland and to other diasporic groups, as well.

It considers the social and cultural elements that Okinawan emigrants carried with them from their homeland of *Uchinaa*, the traditions and customs they maintained or continued to perpetuate, and the new patterns, practices and organizations they constructed.⁷⁷

The articles within Chinen's volume contribute to my investigation of the Okinawan Canadian diaspora through global scholarship on Okinawa that serve as models for oral history methodology, and methods of continuity. Few prefectures in Japan emphasize the

⁷⁶ *Hajichi* was tattooing especially on the backs of women's hands. Sakihara et al., *Okinawan-English Wordbook*, 54.

⁷⁷ Joyce Chinen, *Uchinaanchu Diaspora: Memories, Continuities, and Constructions. Social Process in Hawaii* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), ix

concept of peace in the way that Okinawa does says Shinji Kojima in “Remembering the Battle of Okinawa: The Reversion Movement.” In June, schools engage in *Heiwa Gakushū Shūkan* or Peace Education Week in ways that include presentations by elders who experienced the Battle of Okinawa. As part of the recognition, cities produce oral history publications, and filmmakers interview the elderly about the war as they speak in their own native tongue. The Battle is remembered and used as a vehicle of peace.⁷⁸

Kojima proposes that the memory of the war is perpetuated by the postwar occupation of the U.S. bases and the myriad problematic political, economic, societal, and cultural issues that arise from this canvas. Chinen’s collection includes an article that was of great significance to my research—Kinuko Maehara Yamazato’s “To Okinawa and Back Again: Life Stories of Okinawan *Kibei Nisei* in Hawai’i.” She defines the term, *kibei nisei* as follows: “Kibei” refers to Japanese individuals returning to America: it often refers to a subset of “Nisei”, or second generation Japanese, who were born in the United States but educated in Japan.”⁷⁹ Maehara Yamazato submits that the experience of the *kibei nisei* of Hawaii are distinct from the Okinawan experience and from the *kibei nisei* Japanese experience. She explains that “their little-known life stories are more complex and marginalized not only because of being Kibei, a sub-group of Nisei, but also because of being Okinawans in Hawaii.”⁸⁰ Yukiko Kimura further defines them as “[a] minority

⁷⁸ Shinji Kojima, “Remembering the Battle of Okinawa: The Reversion Movement,” in *Uchinaanchu Diaspora: Memories, Continuities, and Constructions. Social Process in Hawaii*, edited by Joyce Chinen (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2007), 137-168.

⁷⁹ Maehara Yamazato, “To Okinawa and Back Again,” 83.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

group within the Japanese community.”⁸¹ Maehara Yamazato’s research has introduced a term that I now understand refers to the Shimabukuro family members who left Canada and returned—*kika nisei*. Her research delves into Hawaiian *kibe nisei* as “active agents in the society” and the reasons behind why they were sent back to Okinawa. In another related article, “The Gift: An Interview with June Hiroko Arakawa”, With regards to sending children to Japan or Okinawa for *nihon ryūgaku* or “studying in Japan”, Maehara Yamazato further explains:

It was also not unusual for many first-generation Okinawan immigrants to send their children for *kuchiberashi*; that is to “reduce the number of mouths to feed.” In Okinawa, children could live with grandparents inexpensively; parents could remain in Hawai’i meanwhile, working to earn money for their own return.⁸²

Although Naoko is unaware of the exact reasons that lead to her parents sending her from Canada to Hamahiga to live with her grandparents, these findings offer possible explanations.

Understanding global Okinawan diaspora helps to contextualize my southern Alberta study. In “Transculturation and Adaptation: A Brief History of Japanese and Okinawan Cubans,” Ryan Yokota explains that many Japanese and Okinawans travelled to Cuba to work in the sugar industry. Yokota indicates that Okinawans were the largest group to migrate to Cuba between 1900 and 1925. He goes on to further explain that contributing factors that led to Okinawans leaving their homeland for Cuba included demands of rapid modernization, the 1894-95 Sino-Japanese and 1904-05 Russo-Japanese Wars, similarities in climate, and the existence of vibrant sugar industries on

⁸¹ As cited by Maehara Yamazato, “To Okinawa and Back Again,” 83, from Yukiko Kimura, *Issei: Japanese Immigrants in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1998), 74.

⁸² Maehara Yamazato, “The Gift,” 149.

both islands.⁸³ In comparing the Okinawan Cuban with the Okinawan Canadian prairie experience, immigrants that came to southern Alberta during the early 1900s may have left their island for similar socio-economic reasons but the climate and agricultural opportunities they faced in Canada were different from those in Cuba. Since farming and fishing may have been key sources of income on Okinawa and the surrounding Ryukyu Islands, the matter of water is a significant difference. Unlike Cuba, Hawaii or Okinawa, the southern Alberta landscape is vast and arid—large bodies of water are not nearby, there is no rainy season, and the fields rely considerably on irrigation. Therefore, islander adaptation to climate-driven labour and ability to diversify labour skills impacted the Okinawan immigrants' ability to support a family and impacted the remittances sent back to their families in Okinawa. The Okinawan diaspora led some of the islanders to countries that demanded varying forms of adaptation.

Methodological Literature

Having reviewed literature on Ryukyuan, Okinawan history including diasporic history, I established my methodological framework for oral history. In “(Writing Myself into) Betty White’s Stories: (De)constructing Narratives of/through Feminist Sport History Research”, Carly Adams suggests that a growing number of researchers who employ historical methods are locating themselves in their work. Adams delves even further by encouraging the researcher to share the research process itself.⁸⁴ As I

⁸³ Ryan Masaaki Yokota, “Transculturation and Adaptation: A Brief History of Japanese and Okinawan Cubans,” *Afro-Hispanic Review*, Vol. 27, No. 1, *Afro-Asia* (Spring 2008): 92.

⁸⁴ Carly Adams, “(Writing Myself into) Betty White’s Stories: (De)constructing Narratives of/through Feminist Sport History Research,” *Journal of Sport History* 39, no. 3 (2012): 395.

interviewed Naoko it became apparent, as Adams had alluded, that the research process in itself was also part of the study. The process and experiential nature that is involved with co-constructing Naoko's voice was yet another way to investigate this Okinawan Canadian history. So influenced by Adams, it is through the self-reflexive poems where some of these "ruminations" are presented.

Adams' article coupled with Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* have influenced the beginnings of each chapter of my thesis through the self-reflexive poetic chapter pattern. Through his chapter poems, Trouillot offers insight into Haitian culture and history through his own generational and researcher lens. In other words, while he was analyzing the evolving power, production, and silences of the four moments in history he was also introspectively moving through his Haitian grassroots world listening to conversational, misguided, and unheard voices of its history. Trouillot finds himself at the epilogue down by the shore where "Port-au-Prince exposed its wounds to the sun ... how history takes shape in a country with the lowest literacy rate on this side of the Atlantic." The texts of Adams and Trouillot are my scaffold in the thesis construction of combining the qualitative self-reflection poems with the more traditional formal aspect in this paper.

In "Methodology for Recording Oral Histories in the Aboriginal Community" Brian Caillou focuses on the Indigenous Canadian Elders, an esteemed group within the diverse communities across Canada. He references both in the article's introduction and conclusion, an African proverb: "Every time an Elder dies, it's like a library has burned down." The author's use of an African proverb signifies to me a global recognition of the concept of "Elder" that goes beyond the Indigenous Canadian community. I found his

advice on oral history techniques and consideration with Elders to be transferable to my thesis research with my mother, who is 85-years-old. Calliou writes that the “recordings of the Elder’s personal reminiscences provide material that personalizes broader historical events by relating personal experiences and feelings to them.”⁸⁵ The knowledge that an Elder possesses, says Calliou, can contribute to the rewriting of history to include an absent Indigenous perspective. In arguing for the need for oral histories Calliou explains that “Elder knowledge can supplement, complement, or contrast with written history.” Reflecting upon my interview process with my mother, and through the transcription, I recognize that I am acquiring an intimate form of knowledge, intellectual property, and something that is inherent to her alone. Calliou here is also considering existing stereotypes and misconceptions that some interviewees may be part of. These thoughts have arisen as part of my self-reflexivity in interviewing my mother and I feel the reflection of these matters important to my ongoing research of the Okinawan diaspora. Calliou’s article is valuable for providing guidelines on interviewing someone who is an elderly person, articulating the growing acceptance of oral histories as a credible source of information⁸⁶, and also bringing about an awareness to researchers about the importance of cultural sensitivity.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Brian Calliou, “Methodology for Recording Oral Histories in the Aboriginal Community,” 25-52.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁸⁷ Brian Calliou, email correspondence, Alberta, July 15, 2020.

Out of respect for this author and for the Canadian Indigenous reference to “elder” I reached out. His response: “I wrote that article for doing oral histories with Indigenous peoples, but the methodology to doing an oral history project works for any group or culture in my opinion. I say go ahead and use my article and methodology if it works for you.”

Kathleen Borland presents in her paper, “That’s Not What I Said: Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research”, an example of a breakdown within multiple aspects of the qualitative interview process. Borland’s grandmother, Beatrice Hanson, expressed strong disagreement in a 14-page letter that challenged her grand-daughter’s conclusions and feminist theory confines.⁸⁸ In her article, Borland proceeds to share the breakdown of the interview from the process of intergenerational transmission, the variability of meaning in personal narrative performances, and as to why this qualitative interview experience proved so memorable.⁸⁹ There is also an academic lesson that Borland concludes with: “Lest we, as feminist scholars, unreflectively appropriate the words of our mothers for our own uses, we must attend to the multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings generated by our own framing or contextualizing of their oral narratives in new ways.”⁹⁰ In this paper Borland demonstrates an academic’s pitfall in sometimes presuming to see their own theories in the stories of their interviewees, but the reality is that the researcher’s academic intention can be nonexistent (or unintended) in the interviewee narrative. Borland’s experience teaches me that the art of qualitative interview, particularly when you become the steward and producer of an elder’s life story, requires diligence in terms of clarity of procedure and intent, and the humility to know that you are only the witness. Building on the above review of scholarship on Ryukyu, Okinawa, and Okinawan diaspora and framed by the methods of qualitative

⁸⁸ Kathleen Borland, “That’s Not What I Said: Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research,” in *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*, edited by S. N. Hesse-Biber and P. Leavy, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 528.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 522.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 522.

interview techniques, self-reflection, and oral history, the following chapter examines Okinawan diaspora to southern Alberta and begins to track the journeys of Naoko Shimabukuro as a *kika nisei*.

Chapter 2: Diaspora and Prewar

This is worse than the war.

This coronavirus.

Beginning in March 2020, my mom began to compare COVID-19 to the war. As springtime passed, she was convinced that the pandemic was more threatening than the war as it had the potential to affect every individual. Amid this unprecedented time of

self-isolation and physical distancing to avoid becoming infected by or spreading the deadly disease called COVID-19, people around the world untangled from interconnectedness and communities, took flight and returned to their homelands, and many migrated from their offices to working remotely where they were essentially exiled in their own homes. The novel coronavirus makes history as it takes a different kind of diasporic journey that is forcing different levels of personal and even national isolation.

My oral history interview technique has changed due to COVID-19. In March the interviews with my mom transitioned from face-to-face in the seniors' lodge kitchenette-down-the-hall, to interviews and recordings by way of cellphone. In July we had our first face-to-face interview at the seniors' lodge premises; we were outdoors in one of the designated areas, two metres apart and wearing the mandatory masks. I had concern that the integrity of the audio file output due to wearing masks would be compromised—but that was not so, the recording had clarity regardless.

As I interview my mother about her grandfather, Kana, and his initial voyage from Okinawa to Canada in 1907, I wonder not only about the fundamental reasons that drove Okinawans to seek out opportunities in far-flung lands, but the underlying rationale that would cause my great-grandfather to travel back-and-forth from their newfound Canadian prairie homeland to Hamahiga Island. After all, this was an arduous trip that included train travel through the Rocky Mountains, and oceanic voyage, and then additional trips by boat to Okinawa's Yakena Beach and from there a yet smaller boat to Hamahiga Island. To clarify the situation, from what I learn from the interviews with my mother, her grandfather had firmly established a home in the village of Higa and an enterprise of diversified fields with crops ranging from rice to potatoes;

azuki, soy, and broad beans to silkworms; and raising chickens and pigs. He also had an oceanic way of life that included fishing and an island-to-island boat taxi service. It appeared that my great-grandpa Kana Shimabukuro was in essence, intertwined with the island.

This chapter begins by examining the Okinawan diaspora more extensively, then transitions to the 1907 migration of Kana Shimabukuro to Canada and the racial tensions that surrounded South and East Asian immigrants to the Pacific Northwest region at this time. The study then begins to chronicle Naoko Shimabukuro who, in 1937 at the age of two, was sent from southern Alberta to live on the island of Hamahiga in Okinawa with her grandfather Kana and the extended Shimabukuro family who were Canadian citizens. Further, this chapter not only considers Naoko's prewar experience of family life, education, and early childhood, but serves as an observation of her grandfather during this prewar moment in time.

Okinawan Diaspora to Southern Alberta

Okinawan diaspora may have retained some of the ancient seminal definitions of exile and severance in some instances in a way that Edward W. Said articulates in his essay, "The Mind of Winter": "Exile is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home."⁹¹ While there may be evidence of unhealable rift between human and true home whether that be war or forced diaspora, perhaps the rift is a temporary separation. Perhaps it is possible to heal rift over time or

⁹¹ Edward W. Said, "The Mind of Winter," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 2006), 438-442.

over generations, and return home. For some Okinawan diasporic communities or individuals there seems an indefatigable effort to straddle the ancient homeland with the new homeland and a resolve to heal the island of origin of the scars that forced migration. Robert Arakaki recognized this form of exile diaspora, but clarifies that for the purposes of his essay, “Theorizing on the Okinawan Diaspora,” the focus is on the broader definition of diaspora: as the dispersal of significant numbers of people that results in the formation of a minority culture in a different social context. To clarify ambiguity surrounding his research and the complex sub-definitions of diasporic study, Arakaki further differentiates diasporic terms by stating that *diasporic flow* (structural and political in focus, objective) refers to the social and institutional factors that facilitate migrancy, and *diasporic experience* (subjective and reflective) is the formation of social identity within the dialectics of the ancestral homeland and the current host society.⁹²

In trying to rationalize the back and forth travel of Kana Shimabukuro between 1907 to the 1960s it is important to know that he was simultaneously supporting a home in the village of Higa and also trying to establish a form of settlement in southern Alberta. According to the Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii database, Kana Shimabukuro first arrived in Canada on August 21, 1907 at the age of 21. His documented travel purpose is recorded as “Railroad Engineer.” His second trip, at the age of 32, took place on May 24, 1918. At this time, the documented travel purpose was “Repeat Trip.” On August 25 in 1934, Naoko’s grandfather took another trip back to

⁹² Arakaki, “Theorizing,” 29.

Higa Village in Okinawa and the travel purpose was “Repeat Trip, Farming.”⁹³ Naoko recalls, “*Jiisan* could have went about two or three times back and forth. *Baasan* maybe twice. And then they, he came back in 1959—both of them.”⁹⁴ After the Battle of Okinawa, the Shimabukuro family eventually made their way back to Canada. Naoko remembers her grandparents on the Broder farm in southern Alberta, working into old age in the beet fields after they had worked so hard to establish their land and marine endeavours on Hamahiga Island. Naoko meanwhile had returned to living with her parents and her siblings. She explains her feelings as she saw her grandparents working so hard in their designated rows:

They came to farm here—Broder’s farm. They worked. Grandma and Grandpa⁹⁵ did. And they used to live in the little rental house. This is Broder’s farm, the two of them. And then, we were next door to the Grandpa and Grandma’s. My mom and dad lived with all the kids next door to *baasan* and *jiisan*. Then, I think they were already 70-years-old. They have to do the beets thinning and stuff like that and when I see that I still kind of really hurts. [They were] so old, and doing the beets thinning.

Whether in Canada or Okinawa, Naoko’s recollections of her grandfather Kana usually revolved around a working life.

She describes her perception of her grandfather while living in prewar Higa village:

He was quite strict man.
He was a hard-working man.

⁹³ Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii, *Okinawan Genealogical Resources Databases and Websites: Okinawan Emigrants’ Emigration Records 1900-1928*. Kana Shimabukuro, Canada entries 10, 11, and 12. Accessed September 20, 2020. (Honolulu: Hawaii United Okinawa Association, 2020). https://lewchew.warubozo.com/opl/opl_results.php

⁹⁴ *Baasan* and *jiisan* is in reference to Naoko’s grandparents Nabe and Kana Shimabukuro. Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *Naoko-Silkworms-Apr5-2020*, 16:55, Lethbridge, 2020.

⁹⁵ Grandma and Grandpa also refers to Naoko’s grandparents Nabe and Kana Shimabukuro.

He had all kinds of, you mention it, vegetables. Come to the field—he owned it. Rice fields, potato fields, vegetable fields. Everything he had, honestly. He used to get up early in the— I don't think he knew how to sleep.

Because all I could see of *jiisan* is the torn-up straw hat and pants are one side is up and one side is down, rolled up. [laughter] And he had hoe on his shoulder. Always had a white dirty shirt. Yeah, he went to work every day. He worked so hard to really raise all us kids, too, you know. Mind you, *baasan* was really a workaholic, too.

But then when he had the fields, I could remember that my job was coming from summer time—he had a crops comes up from the rice fields twice a year. Yeah, he owned a lot of rice fields. Not only one spot, here and there, here and there. So, when I come home my job was to chase the birds because they eats the rice, eh. So, he had all with little posts in every corner and put rope around it and hang the tin cans. Then if you shake the one side of the corner of the tin cans then everything makes noise and chase the birds away. That was my job. When I come straight from school, I was sent straight to the field to shake the little things. Each can had to make noise and touch each other.
... chase the birds away.

Also, I had a torn-up straw hat, too—looked like a scarecrow. Before the war so I was still small, six, seven, eight, I guess.

... you mention any kind of vegetables. He had.⁹⁶

In this part of the interview above, Naoko explains that in travelling back-and-forth from southern Alberta to Hamahiga Island her grandparents were essentially maintaining their way of life in the village of Higa and also trying to establish a new settlement and working the land in the other. This may not seem that unusual in modern times of flight, but in the early 1900s taking the train from southern Alberta, across the Rocky Mountains, and then a ship—from Vancouver across the Pacific Ocean to Hamahiga Island—was an odyssey. Although his connection to Hamahiga Island was very strong, Kana's commitment to life in southern Alberta in terms of family and building community was resolute and this allegiance is partially reflected in his active

⁹⁶ Shimabukuro, *Naoko-Silkworms-Apr5-2020*, 23:21.

participation in the Hardieville Doshikai⁹⁷ along with the other Okinawan men who came to Canada in 1907.⁹⁸

Figure 2 below indicates that in 1907, 152 Okinawans immigrated to Canada:

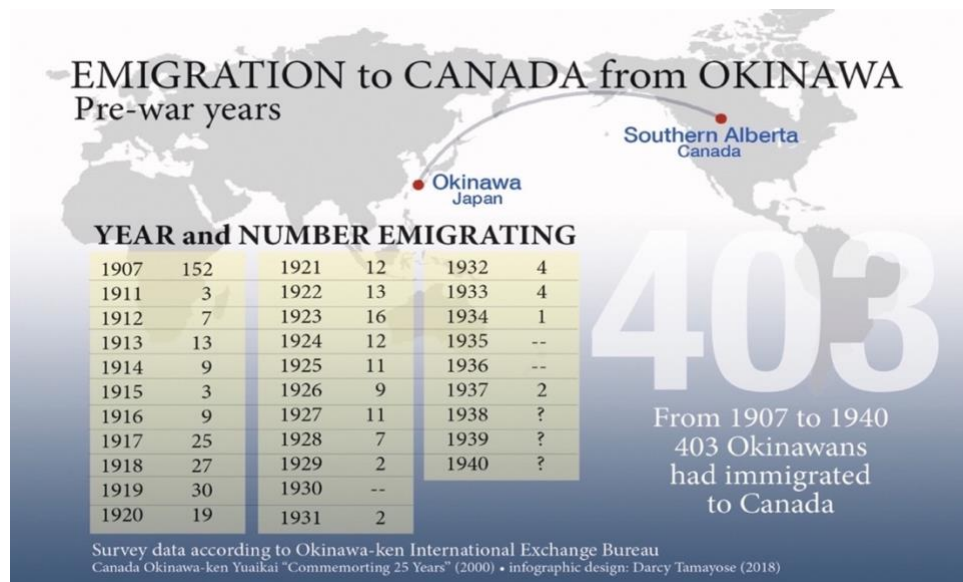


Figure 2. Emigration from Canada to Okinawa. Survey data according to Okinawa-ken International Exchange Bureau.⁹⁹

From that point in time onward, the numbers declined. *Commemorating 25 Years of Canada Okinawa-ken* presents the myriad reasons that may have caused Okinawans to leave the prefecture “hoping to find solutions” during this time in history:

... a tremendous drought in Okinawa had occurred resulting in economic crisis affecting especially the sugar cane industry. As a result, farmers were put into serious conditions. The damage was so severe that their yearly income from sugar

⁹⁷ The *kenjinkai* developed into an agricultural association and social organization years later and called the Hardieville Doshikai, 2.

⁹⁸ Despite the development of the two homelands, Kana was committed to establishing an Okinawan community in southern Alberta. Over the years after the 1907 group immigration through to the post-WWII period, Kana Shimabukuro and his son, Seisho, along with granddaughter, Naoko remained involved as active members in executive and artistic roles for the Okinawan community as documented in *History of Okinawan Kenjinkai in Alberta*.

⁹⁹ Data for infographic obtained from Canada Okinawa-ken Yuaikai, 157.

cane farming was not enough to cover the costs of the seeds. People became desperate in their livelihood. They could not feed their families by farming alone, yet they could not find any jobs on the Island. Still they had to pay both the national and indirect taxes. They were looking for ways to save themselves from extreme poverty.¹⁰⁰

Okinawans migrated to such destinations as Canada to seek out labour opportunities that would allow them to provide for their families, and in some cases establish new settlement beyond what they perceived as a complex and desperate situation in their homeland.

There were other factors that may have contributed in promoting an Okinawan diasporic flow to Canada at this time:

In 1899, the land system of Okinawa, which had been in effect ever since the monarchy era¹⁰¹, was now discontinued resulting in privatization. Under such circumstances, more land could be sold or put up as collateral, which resulted in the possibility of raising funds to cover expensive travel costs. They were also able to accept solicitations from companies dealing in emigration matters.¹⁰²

Through 1907 and 1908, the Nikka Chandler Co. arranged for a thousand contract workers for railroad jobs that were available in Canada. A document from the Tokyo Emigration Co., which is housed in the Japanese Government Ministry of Foreign Affairs Library “List of Overseas Travellers Arranged Through Emigration Agencies,” reads as follows:¹⁰³

... the number of those railroad workers who immigrated to Canada from Okinawa was 30 in June, 87 in August, and 33 in September, totaling 150. Although there is a report that a part of the second phase of emigrants, who had

¹⁰⁰ The Vancouver Okinawa-ken Yuaikai, *Commemorating 25 Years*, 62-63.

¹⁰¹ Prior to Japan’s annexation of Okinawa as a prefecture it was a monarchy. The stretch of islands—of which Okinawa was the largest—was known as the Ryukyu Kingdom and was self-governing between the 14th and 19th centuries.

¹⁰² The Vancouver Okinawa-ken Yuaikai, *Commemorating 25 Years*, 63.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

left Japan in August, actually landed in Victoria in September, there are no official records of all emigrants, who landed in Canada. Regarding the number of Okinawans who emigrated as contract workers for railroad jobs, presently we have 153 in the historical document written by a Canadian Okinawa kenjin and 152 in the historical document preserved in the Okinawa Prefectural Office International Exchange Department.¹⁰⁴

Many southern Alberta Okinawan pioneers, including Kana Shimabukuro, Naoko's grandfather, were part of the diasporic group mentioned above. He is documented as part of the "Second Group (totaling 87) Departing Japan in August 1907"¹⁰⁵: Nakagami-gun: ("Gun" means district or country)¹⁰⁶ 53. Shimabukuro, Kana, Katsuren Village Higa [Hamahiga], Passport #86023¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, at the turn of the 20th century there was an aggressive anti-Asian movement well underway. Labour organizations, along with newspapers, and the church¹⁰⁸ fueled the labour concept of what Kornel Chang identifies in *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* as a "unified white racial identity." Chang further articulates that whiteness was characterized primarily in opposition to the overseas labour and migration of such groups as the Chinese, Japanese,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 64.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 67. This information cited by the editorial committee of *Commemorating 25 Years of Canada Okinawa-ken Yuaikai*, is derived from the Japanese Foreign Affairs, "List of Overseas Travellers Whose Travel Was Arranged by The Emigration Agents" (Filing Number 3:8:2:38) and "Recording of Issuing Overseas Travel Passport" which were issued by the Okinawa Prefectural Government from April to December 1907 (Filing Number 3:8:5:8). The original list, it is further explained, indicated "Majiri", but is consolidated to "Mura" or village.

¹⁰⁸ Kornel S. Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 93.

and South Asians.¹⁰⁹ In *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change*, Cole Harris explains that growing racism and the ensuing “boundary operations affixing spaces for insiders and outsiders” were comprised predominantly of immigrants converging within an emerging settler society:

... the polyglot assemblage of Euro-Americans, Canadians, and Anglos, united by a shared sense of dislocation and uncertainty regarding their new environment, responded to the dizzying heterogeneity and flux by “reconceptualizing themselves; fixing on their whiteness, intensifying their racism,” and “abstracting their ethnicity”¹¹⁰

Immigrants arriving to Canada from South and East Asia during 1907 were met with this aggressive movement towards establishing an “ethnoracial order” that had spread along the Pacific Northwest from cities in the United States and into the Canadian province of British Columbia along its coastal centres of Victoria, Vancouver, and Nanaimo.

At the same time, an “anti-Asiatic parade” demonstration in Vancouver attracted “twenty-five thousand participants including officials from fifty-eight labour organizations” and a well-represented U.S. labour movement contingent.¹¹¹ Chang documents that many of the marchers carried anti-Asian signage through the Vancouver streets “affirming white supremacy.” A transnational white working class movement had emerged out of “labor mobility, border crossings, and organizing against Asian immigrants.”¹¹² These were the circumstances by which this wave of Okinawan

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 93.

¹¹⁰ Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2003), 160. Cited in Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 92.

¹¹¹ Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 108.

¹¹² Ibid., 116.

immigrants, along with others from the southern and eastern parts of Asia arrived on the Canadian west coast.

The organization of the first documented Okinawan *kenjinkai* in the province of Alberta was established in 1921. According to Shucho Higa, the association was formed initially by Okinawan residents of Hardieville and officially documented in Article 1 of the regulations under the category of Name and Organization as the Hardieville Doshikai.¹¹³ These residents were employed by the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railroad) Galt Coalmine. Higa indicates that initially the coal company was integrated into the regulations and later the *kenjinkai* developed into an agricultural association. Eventually the *kenjinkai* emerged as the *doshikai* social organization. There were similar organizations formed by Okinawan diasporic communities throughout the world.

In the 1930s, children were sent to Okinawa with the intent of having them return to Canada several years later. This occurred in Hawaii, as well. Kinuko Maehara

Yamazato describes the Okinawan Hawaiian *kibei nisei* experience:

Since the Okinawan immigration took place almost two decades later than the Japanese immigration, Okinawan wages were much lower than those of other Japanese immigrants. Second, members of extended families raising their family members' children was a common practice in Okinawan society. By sending their children to Okinawa, where the children could live with grandparents inexpensively, parents could remain in Hawai'i to save up money for their own return to Okinawa.¹¹⁴

In his documentation of the *kenjinkai*, Higa notes on July 17, 1937 a regular general meeting was held regarding a Japanese language school issue. He states, "As a parent, for their children to receive language education, they had to ask their relatives in Japan to

¹¹³ Higa, *History of Okinawan*, 2.

¹¹⁴ Yamazato, "To Okinawa and Back Again," 85.

take in their children which was difficult for many families to do.”¹¹⁵ As we shall see in the next section, life in the small village of Higa would introduce Naoko to a childhood largely impacted by the natural world, and to a way of life that in many ways was different than the arid Canadian prairies where she was born.

Life in the Village of Higa During Peacetime, Prewar, and on the Precipice of War

As mentioned earlier, while many Okinawans emigrated to warmer locations such as Hawaii or South America at the turn of the century, in 1907, Kana Shimabukuro along with 152 fellow Okinawans¹¹⁶ travelled to Canada.¹¹⁷ At this point, it is important to further understand how the extended Shimabukuro family, who were Canadian citizens, found themselves in the heart of the Battle of Okinawa later in 1945. Naoko was told by her grandmother (whom she referred to throughout the interviews as *baasan*) Nabe Shimabukuro, that since the 1907 immigration, her husband (Naoko’s grandfather who is also referred to as *jiisan*), Kana Shimabukuro, had saved enough money to buy a small parcel of land in Coaldale. Naoko said that Kana had worked in southern Alberta in the coal mine industry. *Commemorating 25 Years of Canada Okinawa-ken* reports that the 1907 wages were approximately \$1.45 to \$1.60 per day and was paid indirectly by

¹¹⁵ Higa, *History of Okinawan*, 15.

¹¹⁶ Refer to Figure 2, “Emigration to Canada from Okinawa.”

¹¹⁷ The Vancouver Okinawa-ken Yuukai, *Commemorating 25 Years*, 67.

Excerpted from the Japanese Foreign Affairs office files, “List of Overseas Travellers Whose Travel Was Arranged by the Emigration Agents” (Filing Number 3:8:2:38) and “Record of Issuing Overseas Travel Passport” which were issued by the Okinawa Prefectural Government from April to December 1907 (Filing Number 3:8:5:8), #53. Kana Shimabukuro—Katsuren Village Higa (Hamahiga)—Passport No. 86023.

the railroad representatives and was subject to more reduction by the middlemen.¹¹⁸

There was much drinking and gambling on paydays and there were cases of losing most of one's wages on these days. It should be noted that in Shucho Higa's *History of Okinawan Kenjinkai in Alberta, Canada*, on February 12, 1925 the *doshikai* introduced a resolution that articulated the prohibition of "any kind of gambling done by fellow Association members and their families. If there is a violation, Doshikai members will provide warnings when they can and the Gambling Surveillance Committee (賭博取締委員会) will be convened as a last resort."¹¹⁹

Naoko explains that her grandfather didn't drink or smoke—she seemed to believe, from what she knew of him and what her grandmother had told her, that abstinence was in part how her grandfather had saved money. Throughout the prewar and postwar periods up until his death in 1965, it seems Kana went back and forth from southern Alberta to his home in Hamahiga¹²⁰ while his son, Naoko's father, Seisho Shimabukuro (Shima)¹²¹ along with his wife, Matsuko, and the family settled in places throughout southern Alberta including Hardieville, Broder farm, Wilson Hutterite Colony, Kasner farm in Coaldale, and then eventually in Lethbridge.

In March 1937, at the age of two Naoko was sent from southern Alberta by her parents, Seisho and Matsuko (Toyama) Shimabukuro (Shima) to Hamahiga Island along with her sister, Miyoko, to be raised by their grandparents, Kana and Nabe Shimabukuro. Their

¹¹⁸ The Vancouver Okinawa-ken Yuaikai, *Commemorating 25 Years*, 64.

¹¹⁹ Higa, *History of Okinawan*, 5.

¹²⁰ Shimabukuro, *Naoko*, 49:16.

¹²¹ Seisho and Matsuko Shimabukuro had changed the family name to Shima.

older brother, Seiyei had been sent earlier. There was always the intent of bringing the children back home to Canada. However, the Second World War was a factor in prolonging their time in Okinawa. Naoko had no memory of the trip as she was only two years old—her sister, Miyoko was five. Matsuko accompanied her daughters on a voyage that began in the southern Alberta hamlet of Hardieville. They had a stopover in Hawaii where some of Matsuko’s family lived. The major destination for Okinawan emigrants between 1923 and 1940 was Hawaii where Matsuko’s Toyama side of the family had settled.¹²² After the stopover in Hawaii, Naoko and her sister, Miyoko, carried on to the large island of Okinawa, then to the village of Higa where their grandparents, Kana and Nabe, lived along with other members of the Shimabukuro family.

The village of Higa was located on an island east of the main Okinawa Prefecture on a small island that was known only after the war to her, as Hamahiga Island. Naoko recalls the day-to-day island life of her early childhood before the war. After Hawaii, it was the village of Higa that was the destination for two-year-old Naoko, her sister, and mother. Matsuko would eventually return to Canada. Naoko lived in Higa until she was 18 years old.

The view of what Naoko remembers of the village and island—that she came to know postwar as Hamahiga—surroundings of the 1940s is given an interesting context and contrast for the reader when seen today through the lens of tourism. The small islet of Hamahigashima¹²³, a modern-day resort referred to in Robert Walker’s 2014

¹²² Moriteru Arasaki, *Okinawa no sugao: waei ryōbun 100 Q&A = Profile of Okinawa: 100 questions and answers*. (Tokyo: Techno Marketing Center, 2000), 69.

¹²³ In reference to the Hotel Hamahigashima Resort on Hamahiga Island.

guidebook, *Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands: The First Comprehensive Guide to the Entire Ryukyu Island Chain*, is shaped “roughly triangular.” It stretches 1.5 kilometres at its widest and from north to south it measures 2 kilometres. Walker describes the Hama side of the island as having a long beach of “clean white sand.” The Higa side of the island still has “a small fishing village” but does not have a beach of its own. However, there is a “mini-luxury resort” on Higa that does have a beach that overlooks the ocean. Walker further explains that the “designer” property is “modern, clean, and stylish.” Southward there is a hamlet of two dozen homes. Walker points out that “it’s about as laid back and charming an island as you will find.”¹²⁴ Ocean and beach, fields and trees, along with the mountainous landscapes were prominent aspects of Naoko’s memory of Hamahiga village life before the war and before modernization.

In the following series of quotations, Naoko recollects the early 1940s prior to the war and gives account of mostly domestic matters such as a cooking pot, the potato, the adan tree firewood, rice and beans, the food-gathering process, the fields, the rooster, and what she generally perceived as an abundant life:

Kitchen was like this; you had to sit like this to cook [she is gesturing] and then there’s made with the rock, stove, and big pot. So, you think of the [stones] like that, and then this pot was sittin’ on top of it, then the fire. Big fire from here. Those fire wood isn’t the wood, either. It was *adanba*. Do you know *adanba*?¹²⁵ It always grows by the ocean, all twiggy. That’s the one that produces like pineapple thing, look like that. We used to cut that and burn and make potatoes. Just thinking of it, took a long time. Sit here until potato gets done. Feed the fire. Then you have to open the cover [that] was made with straw. The cover for pot. Just like a Chinese hat that’s made from the straw. When the steam comes up that

¹²⁴ Robert Walker, *Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands: The First Comprehensive Guide to the Entire Ryukyu Island Chain* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2014), 140-141.

¹²⁵ *Adanba* is the adan tree also known as the Screw Pine.

means it's boiling, eh? That's how we used to make them. How long it took. You keep opening it and see if it's soft. Everyday morning, noon, supper—potato.¹²⁶

[The *adanba* tree] look like cactus. It's not too firm ...
It turned out to be a tree, you know? But, it's not really hard. When they get too old, they all dries up. *Baasan*, me, and Miyoko used to the mountains—by the shore or mountains—cut that thing up, then tie them up as much as you could carry. Then you put them on your head and then bring it in the house. You don't have to go every day, every day. When you have time, you pile these up in one of those shed. It's just like firewood here.¹²⁷

Precious—that rice you were not supposed to eat it. Because he wants to make money out of that. Grandpa saved the money. He knew, I think they all knew the war is coming. They thought they'd need the money. But, never did.¹²⁸ I could remember that on New Year's and occasions we had rice. And most of the time we made the *jiushi*¹²⁹ and then *okayu*¹³⁰ with *azuki* beans. Grandma had *azuki* bean and *mung* bean in the field—she had all kinds of beans in the field. Okinawa never did have sushi, you know. It was always rice balls with *abura miso*. That's how the soldiers ate. Not only small ones. Big and then just fill that in. Grandma made [miso]. She had wheat and she had broad beans. Oh, that woman used to work so hard. Well, everybody did in Okinawa. That's how we had to survive. Broad beans or soy beans.

[Baasan] grew her own little field. Grandpa had a lot of fields. Grandpa had a field in this district. You go a little further, he's got another field. You climb up a little more further on a hill and there's another. He had lots of fields. So he had potato field, rice field, vegetable field, beans field. He had a lot of stuff. So. Really a lot of work.¹³¹

Grandpa, Grandma had all kinds of vegetables. Lettuce, carrots, sweet potato, taro. Taro, Grandma always had it in water, in a wet part.

You go to mountains and you don't have sweets, but we had a sugar cane. Grandpa didn't have sugar cane. We used to just steal from somebody's and

¹²⁶ U.S. Navy. *Civil Affairs Handbook: Ryukyu*, 89. Notes in their report that in the Ryukyu Islands the sweet potato is the staple food for all classes and for all meals, with rice as a substitute or additional dish.

¹²⁷ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *NaokoJuly26b_01*, 27:49, Lethbridge, 2019.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 34:07.

¹²⁹ *Jiushi* is steamed rice with vegetables and meat.

¹³⁰ *Okayu* is rice porridge.

¹³¹ Shimabukuro, *NaokoJuly26b_01*, 37:35.

break it, peel it, and just eat that. Then they had mulberries. You climb up and pick all those mulberries.

Who woke me up? Rooster.¹³²

According to this series of recollections from Naoko, the day-to-day life in the Shimabukuro kitchen—set in the village of Higa and in the outlying landscape of Hamahiga Island prior to the war—was connected to production, harvest, and preparation in bringing food to the table. Naoko’s description of food and preparation not only demonstrates the knowledge that children possessed about the world around them but how they were taught at a young age to contribute to the family needs. It is evident that she knew the value of plants and how to use them both responsibly and resourcefully. Naoko understood that the potato was central to the island diet “... morning, noon, supper”, that rice was “precious”, and that the *adanba* or adan tree was used not only as a food source, but as firewood. As Stephen Mansfield writes in the article, “Food For Thought: A Traditional Okinawan Diet May Help Prolong Life”, the Okinawan diet is partially comprised of foods that are derived out of necessity, from times of “extreme poverty.” He explains that during times of scarcity “Okinawans resorted to famine foods such as cycad nuts and the pineapple-like fruit of the panadanus, or adan tree. Both required toxins to be carefully leached out before they could be consumed.”¹³³

¹³² Ibid., 40:34.

¹³³ Stephen Mansfield, “Food for Thought: A Traditional Okinawan Diet May Help Prolong Life,” *The Japan Times*, December 12, 2015, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2015/12/12/lifestyle/food-thought-traditional-okinawan-diet-may-help-prolong-life/>.

The United States naval publication, *The Civil Affairs Handbook: Ryukyu (Loochoo) Islands* presents a report of Ryukyu prior to November 15, 1944¹³⁴. The study explains that settlement farmsteads are sometimes isolated and assembled in small villages. The report describes the streets as “narrow and torturous but are sometimes broad and lined with trees” with the residences set at a distance from the street.¹³⁵ The study was conducted and then published prior to the battle. It serves as context and also as a comparative prewar perspective of what Naoko remembers of village life and what is documented in the American military 460-page handbook.¹³⁶

Naoko’s account of food, preparation, and consumption during this timeframe is prominent in the above quotation. It is important to note that this kind of detailed account of food gathering and kitchen matters seldom arose in my readings of the existing scholarship. In “Memory and the Practice of Oral History”, Michal Bosworth writes about his oral history experience with elderly Italian women who had migrated to the west coast of Australia. He articulates that women’s names seldom appeared in rate books and they were even overlooked on ships’ passenger lists. These immigrant women left no letters or diaries, and as a result much of their personal histories remain unknown. This account is similar to the immigrant Okinawan women of southern Alberta. Because English was usually a third language for Okinawans, preceded by the Japanese language and whichever Okinawan island dialect they were raised with, there are little journal

¹³⁴ U.S. Navy. *Civil Affairs Handbook: Ryukyu*, II.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹³⁶ The U.S. Navy *Civil Affairs Handbook* states that more than 95 percent of the information is “derived from publications in the Japanese language, ranging mainly in date from 1934 to 1940”, IV.

accounts or written history about their day-to-day lives. “Housework has suffered from the blindness of historians,” Bosworth writes, “but is a legitimate area of research for those interested in social history.”¹³⁷ It seems, the child’s voice, in many aspects also falls into the category of unheard and undocumented voices that could potentially describe household life in Higa Village. In the quotation above, Naoko shares a glimpse into her prewar childhood experience in relation to home life and related domestic affairs and behaviours.

Before the age of nine and the bombing raid of Naha in 1944, Naoko had some distinct recollections of her daily life and elementary school education. She has often mentioned that the time before the war was idyllic and part of that joy came from the natural environment, playing barefoot with her friends, and from the school days. She remembers the chores, as well, but with less joy. The day-to-day life as she saw it—even with managing chores, high tide, or the cave ghost—was simple. She explains what a typical school day might look like:

Before the war we was just going to school with a no shoes.
With the school uniforms; summer is a white sailor uniform, you know skirt with sailor collar. And there’s a light blue outfit in a winter time—no white and then blue. And then winter time there’s a black outfit and then a dark navy-blue outfit. Two each of uniform we used to have. And no shoes. [laughter]

One set of book. Yeah one set of book. We have to share the books, even before the war.

So, there was a subject was uh, it’s a different name now: used to be *sansu* for Math; *yomikata* for English ... and *rika* [Science]. What is ocean, fishing stuff—that subject? Fish and all these vegetables—what do you call that? Okay, Science and then History we used to have. [History that was learned included] countries most in Asia, like uh we knew the name Ameh-rhica, Cah-nah-da. But not much

¹³⁷ Michal Bosworth, “Let Me Tell You ...’ Memory and the Practice of Oral History,” in *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject*. Edited by Joan Tumblety. (London: Routledge, 2014), 19-33.

in Chinese. It's a funny thing, they never did have Okinawa history in those days. It just depends the teacher, I guess. How they teach, select the subject.

Being barefoot as a child did not seem to be a deprivation to Naoko even when walking through the mountains to attend school in uniform. Later on, when she came to Canada she did at one point—out of frustration for having to work so hard, out of the need for comfort, and a yearning for Hamahiga—throw her shoes into the irrigation ditch after a day's work in the field. As a child, the subjects taught were accepted without question, and as mentioned she had no idea of why they were chosen or who chose them.

With regards to the education program, the *Civil Affairs Handbook* gives some context in stating that “the Japanese system has as its single unified goal the production of loyal citizens. School books and courses are all designed to inculcate national ideals.”¹³⁸ Naoko continues:

Then just before the noon hour we washed ... in winter time it was dry towel and summer time, wet towel, and you go to the tap. Not a tap but that little water pond they used to have. And get the wet towel and wipe yourself.

Then you have lunch. Lunch was potatoes. Everyone had potatoes. My teacher sitting there like—eating the eggs, and rice. So, everybody was wants to take the teacher's lunchbox. Carry it home and see if anything left. Always just potatoes. This is before the war. Always potatoes. We had to make our own. The potato that you made in the field yourself. That's what you take. And then sometimes you could take, one of those little fish pickles, and potatoes.¹³⁹

Personal hygiene was of importance in the school. Naoko explains that each student brought a towel to school. The students would wash before their lunch of potatoes.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ U.S. Navy. *Civil Affairs Handbook: Ryukyu*, 216.

¹³⁹ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose *NaokoJuly26c_2020_01*, 8:31, Lethbridge, 2019.

¹⁴⁰ The potato was a staple in the Ryukyu Islands “for both men and animals.” Potatoes were boiled and often eaten when cold, as would have been the case for the student at lunchtime. U.S. Navy. *Civil Affairs Handbook: Ryukyu*, 299.

Cleanliness was only part of the role of the Education System, another part was the teaching of *shushin*¹⁴¹. *Shushin* is defined as morals. According to the *Civil Affairs Handbook* here was a focus for the Education System in the teaching of *shushin* which the handbook describes as being “designed to produce Japanese subjects of unquestioning loyalty to the Emperor, conscious of their duties of citizenship and their obligations to one another, frugal, virtuous and obedient and sufficiently informed to be able to fulfill their functions in a modern civilized State.”¹⁴²

However, the daily washing seemed so important that Naoko would have to walk through the mountains and home again to retrieve the towel if she had forgotten it:

The only time I was scared, when you forget something—towel, or notebook, or something. Important things you forget for school. Then you had to go home and get it. That’s the only time I was scared. All by yourself walking on mountains. When you forget the towel, you have to go home to get the towel. So, you gotta run. That’s the only time I was scared of that cave. Cave is way down there, but you could see the mouth open. In Okinawa they says *shichi* is seven. *Shichi* is the worst, bad. *Shichi* means evil. And when you walk over there you call it, “You’re *shichi*, I’m *hachi*. *Hachi* is a eight. So, better than *shichi*. Yu *shichi*, wun *hachi*. Wun, it’s me. Yu *shichi*, wun *hachi*. [laughter] Until you pass the cave.”¹⁴³

As we will see later on in Chapter 3 in reference to the Battle of Okinawa, the caves played a major role in the survival of the civilian population in Higa village and throughout the prefecture. Naoko and the other children feared this cave during the prewar time period. In her quotation there is suggestion of the Ryukyuan “other world”—that world of sacred groves, deities, and spirits, *noro* priestesses on the island of

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 216-217.

¹⁴² Ibid., 216.

¹⁴³ Shimabukuro, *NaokoJuly26c_2020_01*, 8:50.

Kudaka, or in the “distant blue green channels of the *nirai kanai*”¹⁴⁴. Besides Katsunori Yamazato’s *Living Spirit*, this belief system is found more in the fiction writing of such Okinawan authors as Ben Takara, and Yamanokuchi. Naoko also makes indirect reference of these “ways as strange as ornamental designs” and “that place shrouded in misconceptions”¹⁴⁵ now and then throughout the interviews such as here when describing her fear of evil in this particular cave.

Not only were there mountains to contend with on the way to school, but coming home there was the ocean and high tide:

About a half an hour walk.

The school was located in Hama, not on the Higa.

So, when it’s time—about 4:00 time to come home—too hot so you don’t want to go the way you came to school, then you take ocean side. If you don’t really walk fast—it just depends on the day, tide comes at different times. Sometimes if you have time, you just fool around. Throw the rocks, you know, at the ocean and stuff like that. But then the water comes in fast, you know. Tide comes in faster than going out. You always had this rope or string or something with you. So, you tie the books up and put it on your head and then you just hold it. Then you walk [in the ocean]. So, we were actually most of the time in the water ... come home and then jump into the ocean.

I was in the ocean to play. You know sometimes you don’t play with friends and you just go in ocean trying to get this little shells so you could play. Sometimes it’s hard to get them and if you go early in the morning the wave brings in some kind of different of shells from the ocean. So, if you go early in the morning there always is different kind of shells. There’s tunnel ... and you go through that

¹⁴⁴ Ben Takara, “Dream Revelations,” in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2000), 51-55.

The *nirai kanai* is, as Molasky and Rabson footnote, often thought of as “the home of beneficent deities, it is also the dwelling place of malevolent spirits.” *Nirai kanai* could be located “beyond the ocean horizon ... on the ocean floor, or underground.”

¹⁴⁵ Baku Yamanokuchi. “A Conversation in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2000), 47.

thing. Sometimes there's a little crab. Wave brings everything in and out, in and out.¹⁴⁶

Through the lens of an elementary student, the mountains and ocean commanded respect and fear and were seen as a natural playground. From a military perspective the landscape of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands were to make the looming Battle of Okinawa one of the bloodiest campaigns of the Second World War. The mountain escarpments and serpentine caves; the ocean and elaborate coral reef system; and the scrambling civilians amid the warfare—the nature of the Ryukyus and Okinawa islands would pose a military challenge.

A memory that Naoko has of her grandfather taking time out of his work in Higa to visit relatives in Hama, and crossing the mountains that separated the two villages:

He [*jiisan*] was temperamental, but he actually took good care of me. Occasionally they go to some kind of ceremony they had in different villages. They go to the Hama and they got relatives there. I was always Grandpa's pet carrying things for Grandpa. Go to the relative's house in Hama and I could still remember coming home it was a little bit late and me and Grandpa is walking on the field to going home. By the mountain part he used to sing the funny Okinawa song. "*Sai-oooh ...*" That kind of song [she sings the first extended words of an Okinawan song and then laughs]. That kind of song when it's dark in the evenings is kind of lonely. Whenever there is occasion he would sing that song. You know, humming all the time.¹⁴⁷

In my research it is often through the Okinawan voice in casual conversation¹⁴⁸ such as the one above where Naoko reminisces about island life—outside of the Interview Guide

¹⁴⁶ Shimabukuro, *NaokoJuly26b_01*, 46:31

¹⁴⁷ Shimabukuro, *Naoko-Silkworms-Apr5-2020*, 29:11.

¹⁴⁸ Over the course of the interviews, there were three instances where we were momentarily joined by other Okinawan Canadians who happened to visit the seniors' lodge on an "interview day." The recording stopped. Once realizing the context of the conversation, the visitors contributed their own perspectives and experiences. One visitor was my brother, Blake Tamayose, who reflected upon growing up in southern Alberta as an Okinawan Canadian; one a friend of the family, Morohito Kinjo, fluent in both English and the Okinawan language; and the

and outside of the academic structure—where a glimpse of the more genuine and visceral experience of island culture is granted. For the most part she remembers her grandfather working. But when he relaxed it was either visiting family and friends over the mountains and in the village of Hama or having people over to their house for a celebration that always involved food. *Sai-oooh*, Naoko said was a declaration that signified something was about to begin—and in this situation, it was a song. She added that as they walked at night over the mountains back to their village, his songs were kind of scary and somber to her.

In addition to the school day structure, there were particular incidents about language, books, and song in the school setting that stand out in Naoko’s mind:

Even before the war before you went to school, I never did spoke Japanese before I went to school. Grade One. Grade One, that’s when they really started speaking Japanese because you cannot—book is no such thing is written in Okinawan language. So, if you wanted educated, you must read the Japanese words.

When you start school, you must speak Japanese to be able to read a book.

... singing was Japanese. Like, you know, Momotarō-san.¹⁴⁹

Here Naoko sheds further light on her own experience of receiving a Japanese colonial education in Okinawa, whereby she learned Japanese literacy through the formal elementary curriculum. Klaus Antoni explains that popular folk stories were used in school texts as nationalistic propaganda. This fairy tale, Antoni further informs, is the core of “Japanese nationalistic ideology and the war propaganda of the 1930s and

other, a friend of the family, Roy Urusaki, and resident of the seniors’ lodge who was born in Yomitan, Okinawa. These conversations were insightful, personal, and contributed to my knowledge of the diversity of the Okinawan Canadian journey.

¹⁴⁹ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose *Naoko26a-2019*, 7:58, Lethbridge, 2019.

1940s.¹⁵⁰ Legendary heroes such as Momotarō or “Peach Boy” presented ideal motifs by which to achieve state agendas in “education, military, and war propaganda.”¹⁵¹ Because Naoko arrived in the Japanese prefecture of Okinawa in 1937, it is reasonable to assume that the school curriculum on Hamahiga was influenced by this dominant doctrine.¹⁵²

The standardization of the school system began in earnest after 1868 when modern unification of all of Japan became a primary initiative for the Meiji Government. In 1872, the Ministry of Education promulgated the Fundamental Code of Education which decreed compulsory education for all children in Japan, and this included those in the Okinawa Prefecture. A standardized language was imposed and *kokugo*, a national language based on the Tokyo dialect was taught with the intent of eradicating local dialects.¹⁵³ According to Shinji Sanada language education aimed at linguistic unification of Japan continued until Japan’s defeat in the Second World War in 1945.¹⁵⁴ As Gregory Smits explains, cultural improvement (*kaizen*) became intrinsic in terms of becoming Japanese in Okinawa and for Okinawans that were living in Japan. There had

¹⁵⁰ Klaus Antoni, “Momotarō (The Peach Boy) and the Spirit of Japan: Concerning the Function of a Fairy Tale in Japanese Nationalism of the Early Shōwa Age.” *Asian Folklore Studies* 50, no. 1 (1991), https://www.jstor.org/stable/1178189?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents, 165.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁵² A section entitled “Propaganda in the Schools” from the U.S. Navy *Civil Affairs Handbook* states that the program in the elementary schools is particularly successful since the students are young and impressionable and since the curriculum is practically monopolized by subjects which lend themselves directly to propaganda emphasis, 243.

¹⁵³ Masahide Ishihara, “Linguistic Cultural Identity of Okinawans in the U.S.,” in *Uchinaanchu Diaspora: Memories, Continuities, and Constructions* 32, edited by Joyce N. Chinen and Kiyoshi Ikeda (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2007), 232.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 232.

Refer to: Shinji Sanada, *Linguistic Cultural Identity*, Datsu Hyoujungo-no jidai [Post-Standard Language Era], (Tokyo: Shougakukan-bunko, 2000).

been an existing prejudice since the annexation of Ryukyu was formalized in 1879 with the Okinawan language of *uchinaaguchi* being a primary indicator of difference between the mainland Japanese and the Okinawan. In the 1920s the discrimination against Okinawans heightened with the plummet of sugar prices and the Okinawan movement to places like Osaka on the mainland. It became evident to Japanese mainlanders and Okinawans alike that in order for Okinawans to prosper fluency in “standard” Japanese language (*hyojungo*) was essential.¹⁵⁵

Naoko remembered further when she and her friends were discouraged from speaking *uchinaaguchi*:

Just like when you play games, eh? You see somebody speaking Okinawan language. You must catch this guy and put this big board on, hang on your neck till you catch somebody speaking Okinawa language again.¹⁵⁶

You’re so stressed out, you know, trying not to speak your own language.¹⁵⁷

We’re supposed to speak Japanese all the time.
It was tough. You’re not supposed to speak Okinawan language among the friends. Oh, it was terrible.
You have to carry this big board on your back until you catch somebody speaking. I can still remember that.¹⁵⁸

In speaking with Naoko about language and education, establishing self-image in the context of the interview was seemingly inconsequential. When she spoke of school—whether being with other children or in the outdoor or indoor settings—through whatever

¹⁵⁵ Gregory Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu: Identity and Ideology in Early-modern Thought and Politics* (University of Hawaii Press, 2017), 152-153.

¹⁵⁶ Shimabukuro, *Naoko26a-2019*, 7:13.

¹⁵⁷ Shimabukuro, *Naoko26a-2019*, 8:35.

¹⁵⁸ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *Naoko2_01*, 12:27, Lethbridge, 2019. I asked her if she meant “We’re supposed to speak Japanese all the time” rather than “English.” She agreed this was the case. The audio interview reflects incorrectly.

struggles or challenges that arose peripherally there seemed an underlying appreciation of being a child on Hamahiga Island given an opportunity to be immersed in schooling. The quotation above was one of the only times she spoke negatively about school or described a lesson with a word such as “terrible.” The students were punished for speaking their local dialect by having to wear a board necklace known as *hōgen fuda*. Naomi Noiri supports Naoko’s memory of this initiative in stating that the government discouraged speaking their native Okinawan language and that students were indeed given a “dialect placard” to hang around their necks as a form of punishment.¹⁵⁹

Masahide Ishihara also makes note of the *hōgen fuda* in “Linguistic Cultural Identity of Okinawans in the U.S.” He explains that the board necklace “was a mechanism for peer enforcement of this policy of only speaking standard Japanese.”¹⁶⁰ Local dialects had been undesirable and hindered the efforts toward imperial unification reaching back to 1869. According to Ishihara, “[c]hildren were denied the right to speak their mother tongue.”¹⁶¹ In 1939 as part of Japan’s “extending spiritual mobilization campaign”, educational authorities installed the Standard Japanese Enforcement Movement (*hyojungo reiko undo*)—initiating a more forced process of assimilation.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Naomi Noiri, “Schooling and identity in Okinawa: Okinawans and Amerasians in Okinawa,” in *Minorities and Education in Multicultural Japan: An Interactive Perspective*, eds. Ryoko Tsuneyoshi, Kaori H. Okano, and Sarane Boocock (London: Routledge, 2010), 80. Refer to: Z. Yamashiro and S. Sakuda, *Okinawa koto hajime: Sesōshi jiten*, (Naha: Gekkan Okinawasha, 1983).

¹⁶⁰ Ishihara, “Linguistic Cultural Identity,” 241.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁶² Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu*, 153.

When examining the work life in the village of Higa for Kana Shimabukuro and his family—whether the labour was meant to put food on the table, to address ever-increasing Japanese government demands, or to plan for an uncertain future by straddling two continents and keeping options wide open due to unknown outcomes of an impending war—it is clear that they leveraged every means possible and exhaustively diversified their islandic micro-industries. Naoko provided an example of one such family endeavour during a discussion about silkworms:

Well you know, I didn't really understand until about the war ended why there was the silkworms. I think they were getting ready for the war and we didn't know that. No radio, no nothing.

Because when I come back from school, I think [I was] about six or seven years old. Then every household had been given some kind of tiny eggs-looking thing. On some kind of sheet—I could just see white. It wasn't paper, I don't think but some kind of plastic tray it was. I don't quite remember. There was gray-looking little tiny things something like poppy seed size. You know, all lined up nicely like you know—you feel like squishing it ... I squished it.

And then, gee whiz. [laughter] I really didn't know what that was. Whatever it was, I squished it, anyways. Then Grandma, I think it was, I could have gotten spanked, I'm not too sure. But then, how important it is, I didn't know that.

I think we got a second chance. They give it to us.

You know how mushroom grows in racks? It was like bunkbeds lined up. It was in the porch—you know how all around the house is a porch? Anyways, that's where these guys were actually.

So, when it's a baby. Go to pick up the mulberry. That was my job, too. I go pick up the young mulberries—young leaves. Then you chop that thing and put it on top of these eggs. And then pretty soon when they get bigger, when they're squirming around ... when they get older they can eat the mulberry leaves. And then the size of the thumb, must be three and a half inches. Then they was exactly like the caterpillar.

I don't know how many months, how many days but they sure grows fast. Then pretty soon that thing's crawling around the posts and stuff like that. Grandma would grab it and put it back. It was so big. Then when it's ready, they know ...

then you put that thing against the sun and you could see the silk right in the middle of the body.

Naoko explains that there is a process at this stage where, one by one, the silkworm is placed into a paper tube and left for a time until it cocoons. Regarding the business of silk, foreign trade was of direct importance to the rural areas of Japan, and that included those living in Higa Village. Mulberries, cocoons, and silk reeling provided an additional means of income. In this aspect of diverse farming, the Shimabukuro family felt the pressure as sericulturalists to improve, standardize, and produce, despite having to process in a handicraft manner rather than industrialized method in the home.¹⁶³ Naoko continues with the explanation of the processing of the silk:

Then what they did was boil the water. Grandma had some kind of machine there. They look like a weaving cloth, the tread[le]. You know when they makes into cloth? Have you ever seen that machine? Weaving machine. Anyways. That thing has to be boiled. Cocoon has to be boiled ... size of tiny little eggs. It's like [size of] Brazil nuts.

Then the machine takes that thing, rolls the wheels and the thread comes out nice—stretched out the cocoon.

... thread comes out of that little by little. It's boiling on one side and the machine going at it. Then you make a thread like wrap it around the little wheel. You have to spin with your hand. Then make it into the thread. I don't know after what they did. I think they had ball of these things and send it to ... somebody collects in the village.¹⁶⁴

In this account Naoko conveyed through a childlike wonder the domestic silkworm operation from beginning to end. Although the terminology is unknown to her, the visual memory, along with gestures and sketches as part of her communication conveyed a

¹⁶³ William W. Lockwood, *The Economic Development of Japan*, (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1954), 357.

¹⁶⁴ Shimabukuro, *Naoko-Silkworms-Apr5-2020*, 12:30.

clear understanding of the detail-oriented sericultural process that occurred within the Shimabukuro household. Lockwood explains that the practice of sericulture and the “lowly silkworm” played a critical role in Japan’s industrialization. From 1870 to 1930 raw silk was the country’s premier export.¹⁶⁵ Hamahiga Island had a natural resource essential for the harvest of silkworms, the mulberry.

In terms of the Second World War preparedness activities, Naoko felt there was a lack of information, training, and an overall neglect of the civilian population. “Naïve,” she says with a bit of sadness. In further conversation, she clarified that in reflecting upon her memories of the prewar, it seemed the civilians, the people around her, were naïve in understanding the gravity of this warfare. Naoko explained that she saw older people, both men and women, around the village practicing defence with long sticks that had been sharpened. As part of the prewar education in the school setting Naoko explains the rudimentary lessons: “We sat in our desks and were taught to cover our eyes and ears as part of our training for war.” While sharing this story, she put her hands on her eyes and her thumbs in her ears.

While the April 1, 1945 landing of American forces on Okinawa, is widely documented as the beginning of the Battle of Okinawa, Naoko always referred to October 10, 1944 signifying the beginning of the war by air.

October 10th I can’t forget.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Lockwood, *Economic Development*, 94.

¹⁶⁶ This date is also supported by Ronald Y. Nakasone in “An Impossible Possibility.” Ronald Y. Nakasone, *Okinawan Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 11. The following are three critical timelines regarding the beginning of the Battle of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands: 1). The air raid on Naha City on the main island of Okinawa was on October 10, 1944, 2). The first Americans ashore were soldiers from the 77th Infantry Division who landed on the Kerama island group located 24 kilometres west of Okinawa on March 26, 1945, 3). American Tenth Army combat unit landed on the Hagushi beaches in the Yomitan area of the

So teeny, you know? Almost covered the sky. It was just so many of them, I thought oh, they're just going to war. That's what we thought. You know you I see those little birds when they're so high up. Couldn't see them.

Now that I know how many came from which way. They said fifty from the south. Fifty from the north. Fifty from, you, know the east to west. That's how they used to announce it. That's how many airplanes was there because after when I found out that fifty at a time came. Cuz they announced it.¹⁶⁷

All these people from the village out.
“*Banzai, banzai,*” you know? Cheering for the soldiers.
But that wasn't Japanese, that was American airplanes.¹⁶⁸

The announcer on the hill was apparently responsible for communicating information related to the war to the villagers on the Higa side of Hamahiga Island. She remembers the number fifty—in relation to the number of planes—being called out and the directions that those fifty came from. Nationalism and the adoption of Japanese identity are expressed in this quotation by the collective use of the word, *banzai*. *Banzai* was a rallying term used by soldiers and civilians during the Second World War to support the Japanese war effort, specifically calling for the long life of the emperor.

This *kanshi* or “watchperson” eventually died while he announced on the hill as Naoko recalls:

That guy got killed.
They call it *kanshi*. *Kanshi* means watchpeople. He was married to an Okinawan girl and he moved to Okinawa. Okuda Iwao. I could just hear him say: Okuda Iwao *yara de o tsukete, o tsukete*.
Okuda Iwao got hurt so help me. You could hear this voice get weaker, weaker.
Nobody could go out. Airplanes shooting.¹⁶⁹
He died.

main island Okinawa on April 1, 1945. For further description of the landings, see Fisch, Arnold G. *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands, 1945-1950*. (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1987).

¹⁶⁷ Shimabukuro, *Naoko4*, 38:57.

¹⁶⁸ Shimabukuro, *Naoko2_01*, 2:47.

¹⁶⁹ Shimabukuro, *Nov18c*, 19:04.

At this time Naoko tried to further understand the announcer on the hill and remembered that her brother, Seiyei, had this duty at some point before leaving for service in the Imperial Japanese Navy after high school. Seiyei was Naoko's eldest brother, also an Okinawan Canadian, who left Hamahiga Island and the Shimabukuro home in Higa village for Imperial Japanese Navy duty in 1944. Many Okinawans were conscripted during the Second World War. She seemed to have been evaluating the watchman's role from what she remembered, and then explained to me the task of the *kanshi*. It seemed she was trying to pre-translate how best to explain the concept in English, how to shift from the lens of a child to an adult, or perhaps she was remembering Okuda's death on the hill. These are thought processes that remain unknown to me. She eventually said the word *kanshi* and as I did with other matters of fact—whether words, dates, or events—I researched the word, *kanshi*. A *kanshi* is a monitor or observer which is essentially equivalent to what Naoko describes as “watchpeople.”

Somewhere during the pre-landing wartime of fall 1944 up to the landing on April 1, 1945 Japanese soldiers trained in a field near the Shimabukuro home.¹⁷⁰ She remembered that they sang and remembered what their role was on the island:

I seen the soldiers before the war.

They come about thirty at a time. They were training. Those guys used to sing a song training with a cloth. They go to the shore early in the morning—sun comes up and they do exercise, and they're singing a song, a war song.

“*enjin no*”

The sound of an engine going.

“go, go, go *kamikaze* plane is going beyond the cloud”

And there was another song.

¹⁷⁰ Naoko Shimabukuro interview by Darcy Tamayose, *NaokoSeptember1*, 18:49, Lethbridge, 2019.

“When the white box arrives into the shrine, mother can you hold me? And then, bye, bye.” That kind of song they used to sing. Soldiers. “I’m not sad to die. I’m ready to go anytime. So, don’t worry. But when the white box arrives can you hold me?” White is bone, ashes. In case he dies this box comes around. It used to come in a white box.¹⁷¹ These soldiers used to sing that song.¹⁷²

They lived on Hamahiga Island every day every day, for months and months. They were the ones who were supposed to protect Higa Island.¹⁷³

Naoko explained that the soldiers trained near their home. She remembered what they wore, how they assembled, and the songs they sang during training—this song about the *kamikaze*. In *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History*, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney explains that the *tokkōtai* (kamikaze) operations involved “... use of powered airplanes, gliders, submarine torpedoes. None was equipped with a means of returning to base.”¹⁷⁴

It was an important story for her to share because she found it both ironic and frightening that a bomb fell exactly where the valuables had been hidden at a mound near where the soldiers trained. As the memory of the song came to her and she sang bits and pieces of it she remembers, now upon reflection, that the soldiers were young. War aside,

¹⁷¹ The box containing the bones of the soldier is returned to the family. In an article in *Japan Today* when remains of a soldier could not be found a box was still sent to the families. Mari Yamaguchi writes that “after Japan’s disastrous retreats in the Pacific in 1943, the military started sending back empty boxes with stones to bereaved families, without providing details about the deaths.” These are the kind of boxes that Naoko speaks of in her quote. Mari Yamaguchi, “75 Years Later, 1 Million Japanese War Dead Still Missing,” *Japan Today* (Associated Press, August 13, 2020), <https://japantoday.com/category/national/75-years-later-1-million-japanese-war-dead-still-missing>.

¹⁷² Japanese soldiers trained in a field next to the Shimabukuro home in Higa.

¹⁷³ Naoko remembers referring to Hamahiga Island as Higa Island when she was a child. In conversation she will often make reference to Higa Island. Similarly, prior to the Battle of Okinawa there were no official names for the ocean or beaches. It was simply overarchingly called *umi* (ocean) as she recalls.

¹⁷⁴ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 2-3.

she empathized with the plight of these young men. She was aware that they were assigned to defend the island. Japanese soldiers assigned to defend had strict directives from the government policymakers as Allen indicates in a 1945 comment made by chief of staff of the 32nd Army, Major-General Cho Isamu during the Battle of Okinawa that “The military’s important mission is to win the war. We are not allowed to lose the war in order to save civilians.” According to Ota, this statement from Cho supports the government’s “Article 5” of the *Absolute Rules to Be Observed in the Battle for the Mainland* which articulates: it is expected that the enemy will use non-combatants, women, children, and the elderly as their shields in order to destroy our fighting morale. In such a case have faith that our compatriots share our hope for our country’s victory rather than wanting to have their own lives saved, and do not hesitate to demolish the enemy.”¹⁷⁵ The memory of Japanese soldiers training near the Shimabukuro home is a strong image that signified the end of a way of life and the beginnings of the Battle of Okinawa.

The exploration of this chapter is two-fold. It first delved into diaspora and then introduced the connection between southern Alberta and Okinawa. The first group of Okinawan immigrants left their homeland on December 5, 1899 and arrived in Honolulu, Hawaii on January 8, 1900. What followed was further migration as other Okinawans travelled for work opportunities and also to settle in other locations in the continental United States, Canada, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Mexico, Cuba, Paraguay, New

¹⁷⁵ Allen, “Wolves at the Back Door,” 48-49.

Matthew Allen refers to: Yoshihama Tomokai, *Nikki: Kumejima sensōki* (Diary of Kumejima during the War) (Okinawa Prefecture Archives, 1945); Tomiyama, “Spy.”

Caledonia, and the islands of Micronesia.¹⁷⁶ My research shows that in 1907, there were 152 Okinawans that arrived on Canada's west coast to a strange new land. This was a land that Kornel Chang describes as embroiled in racial tensions and demands from a Pacific Northwest-organized white labour force which sought to eventually procure immigration restrictions.¹⁷⁷ The Okinawans eventually made their way to the southern Alberta prairies where they settled labouring in the coalmines and in the farm fields. Among the immigrants to arrive and set family roots in this wave of Okinawans was Kana Shimabukuro of the village of Higa in an island called Hamahiga, within the Japanese prefecture of Okinawa.

Secondly through selected quotations from Kana's granddaughter Naoko, this chapter introduces her *kika nisei* journey from Canada to Okinawa, and memories of her early life in the village of Higa. These passages break through the density of the present and take the reader back through the fresh lens of her childhood and often times through her observations of nature and how it permeated her world throughout the school day and home life. Naoko describes her walk home from school along the seashore of Hamahiga, her schoolbooks tied down atop her head, while she immersed herself in the oncoming waves. She recalled how the children were forced to wear a board necklace around their necks as punishment for speaking their local dialect of *uchinaaguchi*—evidence of their colonial education. While Naoko reflects back upon her childhood memories it is evident that as a more informed adult, she now has the perspective to recognize and contrast some of the ways the Battle of Okinawa impacted the prewar way of life on the island,

¹⁷⁶ Nakasone, *Okinawan Diaspora*, xi.

¹⁷⁷ Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 116.

and understands some of the incalculable losses seldom measured by statistics. With calmness she recounted that the “watchperson” making announcements from atop the hill got killed while fulfilling a duty that her eldest brother Seiyei had also done before he entered the Imperial Japanese Navy after high school. Along with Naoko’s journey from Canada and island life we are introduced to glimpses—jewels for me as a student of history—of her grandfather Kana’s experience. With laughter she recalled how her grandfather had his pant legs rolled up unevenly while working hard in the fields. The quotations present a prewar way of life and foreshadow the Battle of Okinawa with Naoko’s remembrance of the bombardment of Naha in the fall of 1944. In the source material I have found no similar voice that has articulated a Ryukyu Island experience from the Okinawan Canadian point of view, and in the English language. I argue that her childhood prewar stories of growing up in the village of Higa on Hamahiga Island as a *kika nisei* from the southern Alberta prairies offer an Okinawan Canadian oral history contribution not catalogued in the existing Okinawan diasporic scholarship.

Next, in Chapter 3 we will discover Naoko’s experience during the largest amphibious, land, and sky campaign of the Second World War, the Battle of Okinawa—an uncompromising conflict that took the lives of many, including one of every four islanders.

Chapter 3: The Battle of Okinawa

*History is the fruit of power,
but power itself is never so transparent
that its analysis becomes superfluous.
The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility;
the ultimate challenge,
the exposition of its roots.*

—Michel-Rolph Trouillot

*On September 25, 2020, a headline story delivered by The Hill reported that following the spring and summer of racial tensions, social movements, and global protests amid an already unimaginable pandemic year, dozens of Christopher Columbus effigies were removed in cities across America—statues symbolic of colonization, slavery, and systemic racial oppression.¹⁷⁸ Trouillot immediately came to mind. I was introduced to Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past* in the first semester of my master’s study in history. The quote above provoked critical thought and “forensic analysis” about what history is and what it can be with the inclusion of voices not yet heard intersecting with the existing scholarship. Trouillot’s book became a companion resource throughout my studies and research on Okinawan history. It made me wonder as a novice oral historian how voices silent or silenced, and excluded of opportunity to represent or communicate experience of their role impact the historical narrative of an event such as the Battle of Okinawa. How authentic or biased would history be if the narrative was written primarily by the winners, the conquerors who had power of production in any given*

¹⁷⁸ Alexandra Kelley, “At Least 33 Christopher Columbus Statues Removed Since Spring Protests: Report,” The Hill, September 25, 2020, <https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/518193-at-least-33-christopher-columbus-statues-removed-since>.

moment in time—and a narrative that excluded the oppressed, the marginalized, and those who didn't speak the dominant language such as civilians, children, the elderly, or an entire village such as those who reside on Hamahiga Island? The discovery of authentic voices and excavation of artifacts, archives, and truths at any point can challenge and alter known historicity and lingering biases no matter how established and generationally entrenched, and no matter how powerful or convincing the production of history was. What a revelation for a student. It turns out that histories, at any given moment in time, can be a matter of public discourse subject to scrutiny (or dismantling), and an exposition of truths and reconciliations. History can be impermanent. Through the power of production whether in print, digital iteration, demonstration, or a combination of platforms revised history can be introduced as a new history to students in the K-12 or post-secondary systems, academia, and the mainstream audience. In the fall of 2020, I found myself re-examining Trouillot's case study on Columbus.

This chapter examines the Battle of Okinawa through Naoko's remembrances, it offers a glimpse of her childhood during the Second World War campaign and an opportunity to learn from her lived experience. She says about the word, *war*: “War is war to us. I didn't even know what the name of war—what war does.”¹⁷⁹ The beginning of the war in terms of assault by air, as Naoko and as some civilians throughout Okinawa and the Ryukyus can attest to by memory, was the bombardment of Naha October 10, 1944. Meanwhile the American amphibious operation was also well underway and so

¹⁷⁹ Shimabukuro, *Naoko* September 1, 14:57.

was the mobilization of Okinawans for service. In this quote Naoko remembers the initial sightings of the warships, and her brother's departure for entry into the Imperial Japanese Navy:

Day after day after day. Sometimes disappears and comes back again.
And it's just like worms just covered all the ocean up, far as I could see.¹⁸⁰

Baasan went to say goodbye.
She said: What a sight. [Seiyei] is so small.
They all small 18-years-old. They all small. Looked like kids going to school or something like that.
They got into the big truck looked like cows in it. They had to get in with all this cows, animals or something.

That's the last time Grandma seen, say goodbye, to [Seiyei].

Young kids, just finished high school.¹⁸¹

For Naoko in this instance of memory retrieval, the first images of war were conveyed in ways that her nine-year-old self might have visualized them. She describes the assemblage of American and allied forces warships on the ocean as worms covering up the ocean. In further conversation about the early images of war, she also referred to the American and allied forces warships that began to surround Okinawa as a necklace and the foreign soldiers, that through the mouth of the cave, she saw poised in semi-circle formation on the nearby beach of Kaneku, as the bracelet. In this passage Naoko also reflects with great sadness upon her brother, Seiyei leaving the village of Higa to go to war. She mentions not understanding then that an Okinawan civilian, perhaps subject to conscription for military service, entering the Imperial Japanese Navy for submarine duty, was not a celebratory event as she had thought it was as a nine-year-old. She hadn't

¹⁸⁰ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *MomNov18c*, 0:41, Lethbridge, 2019.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 23:11.

realized then that “once he left home, that was it.” The departure of Seiyei, and the concept of entering the military as a young Okinawan Canadian man to defend Japan, was not static in Naoko’s mind as an archive to be dusted off.

According to Portelli, memory is not a passive depository of facts like archives might traditionally be thought of, rather memory is active in the creation of meanings.¹⁸²

Trouillot further explains that archives are held within “institutions that organize facts and sources” and that there is a distinction to be made related to fact-creation and fact-assemblage. In clarifying memory and archival boundaries Trouillot asserts that the kind of power used in the creation of sources is not necessarily the same that allows for the creation of archives.¹⁸³ With this study I am conscious of the aspects of memory, creation, facts, archival gatekeeping, and the powers of production in between. I am also aware that when Portelli’s *The Death of Luigi Trastulli* (1991) and Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past* (1992) were published at a time when online social networks, websites, blogs, and the scholarly discipline of digital studies were in their infancy. Therefore, these technological intersections have since had staggering impact upon memory, archive, and the power of history production. For me as a student of history doing research for this chapter about the Battle of Okinawa, the memory and archival assertions that both Portelli and Trouillot measure are of great interest at a fundamental level.

The following quote serves as example of the chaos and confusion of war for a child. It reveals the critical thought required in assessing and comprehending aspects of life and death during wartime. Months prior to the battle in early 1945 Naoko remembers

¹⁸² Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 52.

¹⁸³ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 52.

running back and forth on the mountain to the cave(s), and then back to her house as an ongoing pattern. Here is how she remembers events that involve home, death, and burial:

Nine-years-old—one happy thing is you could go home. But went in the home and there was nothing in the home. This house was just empty.¹⁸⁴

Was in the cave in January, I remember that. But we come out again—in and out, in and out. I remember Grandpa says well we might as well eat everything that we got. But there was nothing to cook in. You can't put a fire on it. I remember eating this raw potato, too. Mind you it's Okinawa potato is a good potato. I remember eating that.

Old *baasan*, *jiisan*'s mother. Great-grandmother. She died actually in the middle of the first part of the war. Otherwise, she would...she would make everybody die. I think she died of old age.¹⁸⁵ We couldn't carry her to the cave. She stayed a house nearby the cave—we had another cave at the top with Yoshiko, and the Goshinmon's and us were together. She stayed in the house about a half a block from there. A little house, Grandpa owned it. She was in there and he went to check often. She was dead. So, it's wartime so you can't do nothing about it. He had a box already made for her. Seizo and those two had carried that thing to Shima's cemetery. Shima's cemetery is a far away. All the climbing up the mountains.¹⁸⁶

In this passage, Naoko remembers wartime with basic symbols and timelines such as her exact age (her birthday in January) a home versus an empty house; the potato as a food staple; her great-grandmother's death amid wartime; and the carrying of the coffin over the mountains to a far-away cemetery demonstrating ancestral respect despite the obvious presented dangers. There are now clear concerns and curiosities about potatoes, freedom of movement and cramped quarters, life and death during wartime that never existed prior to the battle. A solid demarcation of life before war and during war existed through what was remembered and where those enduring memories were categorized in

¹⁸⁴ Shimabukuro, *NaokoSeptember1*, 4:13, 6:13.

¹⁸⁵ Naoko Shimabukuro interview by Darcy Tamayose, *NaokoAugust25*, 40:39, Lethbridge, 2019.

¹⁸⁶ Naoko Shimabukuro interview by Darcy Tamayose, *Nov18b*, 8:43, Lethbridge, 2019.

her timeline. This quotation also reveals the familial linkages and community ties that originate from the village of Higa and remained true. The Goshinmon family is mentioned as being in the same cave as the Shimabukuro family. It is significant to note the kinship that existed beyond the village and the Battle of Okinawa caves to the settlement in southern Alberta. Both Kana Shimabukuro and Jingyu Goshinmon are registered in the 1907 list of Okinawan immigrants to Canada¹⁸⁷. The report further details that both are from the district of Nakagami and from the village of Higa. After immigrating to Canada, both the Goshinmon and Shimabukuro families went on to settle in the southern Alberta hamlet known as Hardieville—which some *issei* colloquially referred to as Little Okinawa Village.

These are not typical of the childhood memories that most second-generation Okinawan Canadians have. At the age of nine, Naoko says she knew little about being Canadian. But Naoko, along with the other Shimabukuro family members, were in fact Canadian citizens who just happened to be caught up in the Battle of Okinawa where rather than wheat fields and coulee hills, it was mountains and caves that were landscape, and rather than stars in the night sky, an illuminated crosshatch of artillery fire. On Okinawa and the outlying islands, the sloping limestone ridges—that may stop abruptly at high sea cliffs¹⁸⁸—present numerous natural caves that offered protection for the civilians and concealment for Japanese soldiers primarily on the main island of Okinawa.

¹⁸⁷ The Vancouver Okinawa-ken Yuaikai, *Commemorating 25 Years*, 67.

¹⁸⁸ Allen H. Nicol, Delos E. Flint, and Raymond A. Saplis, *Military Geology of Okinawa-jima, Ryūkyū-rettō Volume 1 Introduction and Engineering Aspects*, (Washington, D.C.: Prepared under the direction of the Chief of Engineers U.S. Army by the Intelligence Division, Office of the Engineer Headquarters United States Army Japan with personnel of The United States Geological Survey, 1957).

The caves could be labyrinthian with multiple exits and tunnels connecting to other caves. Naoko describes life within the caves:

Of course, you can't sleep because some things are dripping from the ceiling. It's an old cave so it always drips water. That's how we slept.

In case something happens—the fire comes in, they shoot the fire—you have to look for the other exit. Cave is always big. But as you go to the other side, I don't know what it's leading to, a long, long row. It gets narrower and you can hardly breathe, no oxygen. You can't even put a candle on, not enough oxygen. It's terrifying. So, shaking.

Where are we going to go next day? I think that is what people were thinking, You dare move around during the day. They shoots.¹⁸⁹

To Naoko, the caves were seen conflictingly as a place of refuge but also as having the potential for danger. In “Cave Warfare on Okinawa,” Dale E. Floyd explains that the Japanese military, already known as “tenacious fighters, would maximize their capabilities by establishing a strongpoint defense utilizing cave warfare.”¹⁹⁰ To clarify, while regions of the Okinawan prefecture may have experienced the integration of Japanese soldiers in their caves, this is not part of Naoko's lived experience. This is only an aspect of the war that she understood later from the conversations with others during postwar American occupation while still living in Okinawa from 1945 to 1952, and later in Canada after 1953 with *kika nisei* contemporaries and others from the Okinawan Canadian community. However, during wartime the Shimabukuro family, alongside other civilians, scabbled along the mountainous island terrain and lived in the natural caves in a struggle to survive. For it was the dense foliage in the mountains and the

¹⁸⁹ Shimabukuro, *Nov18c*, 11:18.

¹⁹⁰ Dale E. Floyd, “Cave Warfare on Okinawa,” in *Army History* 34, (U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1995), 6-9.

fortified caves that offered more protection from the artillery fire than did their homes in the village of Higa. To further illustrate the ferocity of the campaign such terminology as typhoon of steel; *tetsu no ame* which means rain of steel; and as mentioned earlier in this paper, *tetsu no bōfū* have been used to refer to the Battle of Okinawa. Naoko also mentions the word “fire.” During the battle she remembered the American soldiers using a hose that emitted fire which she thought was to clear the mountain brush and the entrances to the caves.

The subject of soldier during wartime was a wonder and a fear to Naoko as a child. Interestingly, the perception of a mainland Japanese child and an Okinawan child of the Japanese soldier was not quite the same. Much of the English-language scholarship presumes the Okinawans had the same experience in history as the Japanese mainlanders, but this is simply not true. In his article “Reversing the Gaze: The Construction of ‘Adulthood’ in the Wartime Diaries of Japanese Children and Youth,” Aaron William Moore writes that in Japan during wartime “soldiers were perhaps the most important symbols of authority.” He writes about their idealized depiction through paper plays known as *kamishibai* for example and through media representations such as film, comics, and novels.¹⁹¹ But this idolization of the Japanese soldier was not necessarily Naoko’s experience as a nine-year-old during the Battle of Okinawa in Higa Village. The soldiers represented authority in different ways. The quote below signifies the confusion with regards to the meaning of war, and the American soldiers:

They landed April 1.

¹⁹¹ Aaron William Moore, “Reversing the Gaze: The Construction of ‘Adulthood’ in the Wartime Diaries of Japanese Children and Youth,” in *Child’s Play: Multi-Sensory Histories of Children and Childhood in Japan*, editors Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall, (California: University of California Press, 2017), 145.

War is war to us. I didn't even know what the name of war—what war does—you know? That was the worst one. We didn't know. We didn't want to get caught by them. We didn't know whether they are killing anybody? If you are an Okinawan? You don't know. Never seen an American before in my life.¹⁹²

In this passage Naoko explains that the word *war* was unknown to her. She “didn't even know what the name of war—what war does.” She understands seventy-six years later, that part of the fear and confusion during wartime was the unknown of basics such as the concept of war, and the not knowing if the Okinawans, who were civilians, were a target. Throughout the interviews for this thesis, the memories and emotions affiliated from seeing the American soldiers for the first time arose several times, and it was obvious that it filled her with wonder and fear. Part of the fear may have been the propaganda about what the Americans would do to civilians if captured, but part was curiosity and wonder. Her articulation of never having seen an American, or a person of another skin colour before is significant. Although she was born in Canada and into a country populated by cultural diversity, her life on Hamahiga Island did not include this immersive experience.

Over time and to some extent, it seems the American soldiers gained the trust of the children in particular. It is evident she went through a process of careful evaluation of the American soldiers in complex wartime scenarios:

Pretty soon there were little Jeeps going around on Higa Island and little kids running around with no shoes and all dirty. So, they threw the chocolate bar, gum, or something. That's when we found out how they were very good to the kids. They were sitting like this [she motions] caring and hugging the kids. If they were wounded would take to one of those—I don't know where they took them. They treat them.

¹⁹² Shimabukuro, *Naoko* September 1, 10:37.

Now that I kind of understand it, they weren't trying to scare the village people. They were trying to catch the [Japanese] soldiers. Because Americans knew that soldiers were hiding with families, you know? That's what they were doing.¹⁹³

We actually did see those American soldiers sitting on the ground, from at the top of mountains. After they landed, they all had khaki outfit on—like weeds, the colour of the soil. Lined up like a car lot. One knee down and one standing up and ready to shoot. Rifles. We see it from the mountains. That's why people didn't come out. How safe they are? Even so, "*detekoi*¹⁹⁴", they are not going to do anything bad. When you see those guys ready to shoot, who's going to go out? Right? We didn't know if we were going to be killed or treated okay. That's why everybody came, village people came out shortly after that. We found out, they not going to hurt you.¹⁹⁵

Her perception of American soldiers shifted slowly to becoming less fearful of them by some of their more positive actions she had witnessed such as the treatment of civilian injuries, the giving of chocolate bars and gum to the children. However, this was war and there were moments that were terrifying to her that involved American soldiers.

For example, in another incident American soldiers had shot the *shisa* lion statues in front of the Shimabukuro house and Kana yelled, swearing at them in English while the entire family watched. The *shisa* is a lion statue that protects homes in Okinawa. The Shimabukuro's had two in the front guarding their home. Here is what transpired according to Naoko:

Right away they grabbed Grandpa—was on his knees, hands on his back. They had grandpa you know with a rifle in his back.

You speak English. You're a spy. Then Auntie Nellie comes up. She said, "We're not spies, we used to live in Canada." She explained we were born in Canada. And then after they talk, they become friends.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 18:46.

¹⁹⁴ Here she refers to the act of cave flushing where American *nisei* soldiers urged Okinawans out by calling, "*detekoi, detekoi*", which in the Japanese language means "come out, come out."

¹⁹⁵ Shimabukuro, *Naoko* September 1, 14:57.

You know grandpa said that when the Americans come he was going to let all the snakes go. He had snakes in the *kakimochi* cans and nets. He had about five of those. The *habu*, you know the *habu* is big. Okinawa *habu*. Six footers. Those guys come and he's going to let it go, everything. That's what I thought.

They let it go those snakes and with the rifles—bang, bang, bang. They killed them. The one thing, I didn't care about the snakes, but I didn't want Grandpa to get killed.¹⁹⁶

The use of the Okinawan language and/or the English language was a serious matter that could result in dire repercussion or even execution by both sides of the campaign. If an American soldier heard an Okinawan speaking English, this could result in a quickly escalated and dangerous situation as the quote above reveals. The fear of Okinawan spies led the Japanese military to impose increasingly harsh restrictions. Included in the restrictions was a decree of April 1945 that prohibited the use of Okinawan dialects in public, a crime punishable by death.¹⁹⁷ The matter of a civilian or a group accused of being a spy could have led to a more tragic outcome.

As mentioned earlier, Allen investigated the violence enforced by a Japanese defence unit on Kumejima, a small island to the west of the main island of Okinawa. Twenty civilians, including women and children, were executed for charges that ranged from spying to profiteering by the Japanese soldiers appointed to defend the island—this occurred after the official June 25, 1945 surrender of Japan. To recognize this island history, the Nakazato Board of Education on Kumejima spearheaded a program that

¹⁹⁶ Shimabukuro, *Naoko* September 1, 27:40.

¹⁹⁷ Allen, “Wolves at the Back Door”, 48.

See: Ota Masahide, “Re-examining the History of the Battle of Okinawa,” in *Okinawa: Cold War Island*, editor C. Johnson (Cardiff, California: Japan Policy Research Institute, 1999). See: Ichiro Tomiyama, “‘Spy’: Mobilization and Identity in Wartime Okinawa,” in *Japanese Civilization in the Modern World XVI: Nation State and Empire*, eds. T. Umesao, T. Fujitani, and E. Kurimoto, Senri Ethnological Studies no. 51 (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000).

brought forth the oral histories of the elderly to present their stories of the Battle of Okinawa to the students. The board “recognized that as the people who experienced this particular history die, the opportunity to articulate these events from first-hand experience diminishes.”¹⁹⁸ Allen explains that by and large the massacre and the Battle of Okinawa has not been included in the historical record that is presented to schoolchildren. This “living history” program brings counternarrative knowledge in a new form outside of existing curriculum. This memory of the American soldiers shooting at the *shisa* lion statues—that ward off evil spirits in the Ryukyuan culture—is a clear recollection to Naoko. She remembers the accusation of her grandfather as being a spy and the assumptions and terrifying consequences that resulted in uttering wrong words, in a wrong language, and in this particular time and place.

Sometimes the interviews with Naoko included drawings in order to gain a better understanding of the conversation. After listening to an August 25, 2019 interview conducted as part of this study with Naoko, I found it difficult to formulate a clear picture of what she looked like at the age of nine during the Battle of Okinawa. There was no photograph of her as a child during wartime, and it seemed this visual was important in helping to understand how a child navigated through the mountainous terrain.

On the matter of being barefooted, I had posed this question many times over the course of the series of interviews. I could not grasp the aspect of her being barefooted for most of the time growing up on the island prewar, throughout the war, and for some time

¹⁹⁸ Allen, “Wolves at the Back Door”, 40. From an interview with Isamu Sakuda from the Nakazato Board of Education, 2000.

postwar—in fact, she didn't have a pair of shoes until around the time she returned to Canada at the age of seventeen. I understood that the finely sifted beaches and water would be comfortable while barefooted. But I wondered how she managed on the mountain ridges, cliffs, and caves without footwear, carrying a ten-month baby on her back throughout the war, and I wondered if her feet had hurt.¹⁹⁹ Here is the drawing we created together:

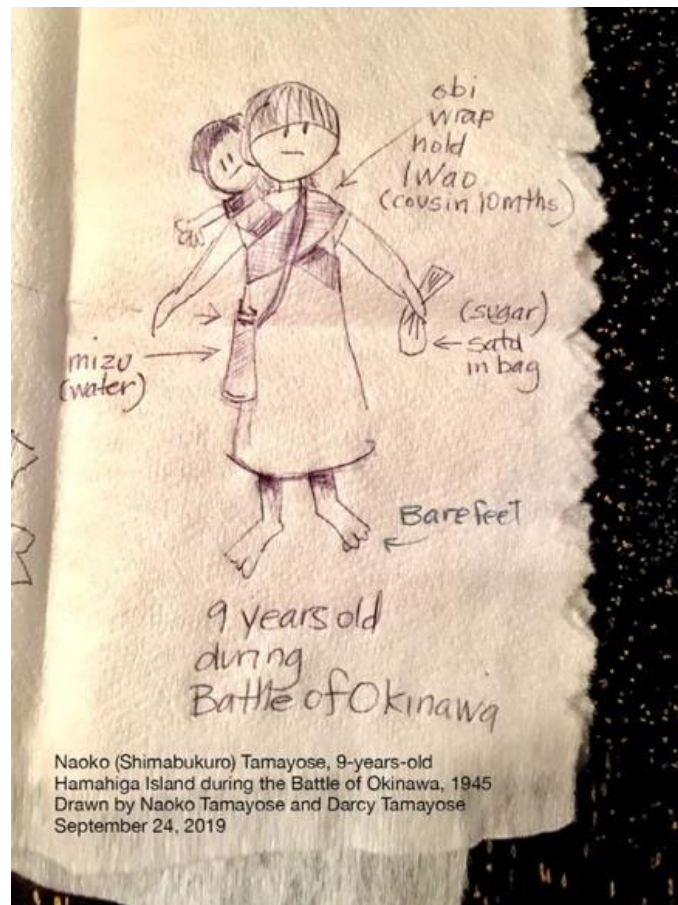


Figure 3. Illustration of Naoko at 9-years-old during the Battle of Okinawa, 1945.

Naoko mentioned that during wartime there was no apparent knowledge of how long you are going to be running around in the mountains, so the family members had

¹⁹⁹ U.S. Navy, *Civil Affairs Handbook*, 87. It is reported that “children usually go barefooted, and adults not infrequently do likewise.”

provisions. I illustrated with pen on an accessible paper towel as she described the following:

That's sugar. [We had a] bag. We didn't have pockets. On a rope we had just tied. And water just like carrying a purse. Canteen was flat with some kind of latch on it. Then um, think there was a rope around it. Corners were round. Like this, corners were round.

You can't all be stuck together, you're gonna be bombed. We heard [Americans] were putting gas in the cave. So, we got out of there looking for a different cave. You know they shoots like—but it's gas not a bullet. Into the caves. So we ran out looking for some kind of place. You know you can't describe how thick mountain is. You can't see the sky sometimes. It's just a rocks of course, lots of rocks. It's not only flat. It's just rocks.

Can you imagine? Everybody walked around with no shoes.²⁰⁰

The drawing above based upon Naoko's self-description shows her as a barefooted child during wartime. It helped form a better understanding about the conversation we had related to the circumstance and context of flight from cave to cave, running mostly scattered as a large family rather than grouped in order to avoid "being bombed"; and in imagining her pulling on the long grasses on her climb up the mountainous terrain with her cousin on her back. In the collaborative drawing we were able to edit the size of the water pouch and correct how and where it hung; determine how the bag of *sata* or sugar was held in her hand; how the obi was wrapped as an "X" across her chest; her size in relation to Iwao; and what her hair looked like. The size of items in context to her nine-year-old body supports the visual and leaves less to the reader's imagination. The drawing alongside Naoko's testimony serves a similar purpose to the visual support called upon for courtroom sketching used in judicial cases where a camera is not

²⁰⁰ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *NaokoSundayAug25-2019*, 37:80, Lethbridge, 2019.

permitted—allowing for the delivery of a better-supported multi-media news story for the audience.

Naoko remembers that the war had a time when it began and when it stopped during the day. When war was over for the day it was time when some of the islanders went to Kaneku to cook rice. Food-gathering throughout the war timeline was a challenge. The people of the island relied upon resourcefulness, tolerance, as well as being part of a larger sharing community as Naoko explains here:

But they cut off at four-o'clock. Yeah, it's strange. They stopped at four. That's why people always goes out to make some food. Some people makes a fire and made some rice. Mostly in Kaneku. Yeah and everybody go over there and make some food. They have to hurry up and cook it because otherwise people just waiting, you know? So many people, you gotta wait. Smart ones get there earlier and cook. Just rice. Nothing else. Just rice.

Then after the war ended there's hardly any food because everything destroyed. We eat a lots of snail. You just boil it, whole thing. It's awful. There's lots. Especially a rainy day in Okinawa there's lots. Then you boil and you gotta be washing the heck out of that and then you pick it out with anything.

Oh, I only seen it just a once. A whale. Just once.
The village people all took their boats out at once—whoever has it.
That was right after the war I remember eating the meat.
Because nothing to eat. Whale meat.
Village people all split the meat. Everybody.
These village mans [caught the whale]. They cleaned it up, given to everybody, every house. So, they could taste the meat.

Well Grandpa had some pigs but ... after the war I guess pigs got starved to death. All of them. Chickens and what not.²⁰¹

I don't know what kept us alive. Weeds. Anything you could get a hold of. *Jiisan* had lots of fields ... go over there later and it's all gone. The potatoes you gotta steal it. Any field you could get a hold of. To save a life, you gotta steal it. The immediate edible was the potato. You could eat raw, cook it.

²⁰¹ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *Naoko-May20-2019*, 25:47, Lethbridge, 2019.

Those days how people could survive?²⁰²

Prior to and over the course of the war the Shimabukuro household was diminished as their cherished possessions hidden near a mound were destroyed by bombing; their chickens and goats had run away; and their mixed farm practice of potato varieties, rice fields, beans that Kana and Nabe had worked so hard to grow ravaged. Food was a complex matter during wartime as it was scarce, and the time to gather and prepare it was limited. The need to find food was no different as the state of war drew to a close and such food sources as snails and even weeds were consumed at this time. But it was the community capture of a whale that was shared amongst the islanders that Naoko remembers vividly as a much-appreciated meal. During the interviews Naoko would shift from sharing memories of life during wartime and then would often step out of that nine-year-old experience and assess the situation with knowledge and perspective attained as an adult. Looking back with an older lens, she is astonished that people could have endured the Battle of Okinawa.

As mentioned, the Okinawan wartime experience was different than that of the Japanese mainland, and the diversity of war experience is important to understand. War experiences were distinct in their isolated pockets of island, region, cave, family, and individual. The Hamahiga Island experience for example was different from that of the Shuri region on the large island of Okinawa, where Naoko's brother-in-law, Walter, was also a *kika nisei*. With this in mind, memory retrieval of childhood experiences can also be different and reveal something about the adult lived experience of the time. There is something broad to be learned, as Peter Cave and Aaron Moore articulate in "Historical

²⁰² Shimabukuro, *Naoko Sunday Aug 25-2019*, 40:35.

Interrogations of Japanese Children amid Disaster and War, 1920-1945.” Thus examining Japanese children's lives in the midst of disaster not only tells us about the experiences of young people in terrible times, important though that is; it also reveals much about the aims and conflicts of adults.²⁰³ There have been times during the course of interviewing Naoko where it is evident that her memory of an event that occurred as a child has been cemented, but around that particular past event circles present and fluid adult analysis and the circling reassessments of the circumstances that the adults must have been experiencing during the war. She will sometimes say now I understand why that happened; or now I understand why *jiisan* or *baasan*, or the soldiers did that. It seems an important lesson for me as a novice oral historian that although the memory of the event has been documented for Naoko like a snapshot in time, the peripheral critical thought surrounding events continues to try to make sense of not only the compartmentalized remembered event itself but of the past, present, and future meaning of the world around it. Further, as Lynn Abrams explains in *Oral History Theory* both the examination of children (not limited to Japanese children and disaster) and adult lived experience through the process of oral history: “Memory is not just about the individual; it is about the community, the collective, and the nation. In this regard, memory—both individual and collective—exists in a symbiotic relationship with the public memorialization of the past, so we must always be aware that memory expressed

²⁰³ Peter Cave and Aaron William Moore, “Historical Interrogations of Japanese Children Amid Disaster and War, 1920–1945,” *Japanese Studies* 36, No. 3 (2016): 287-298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10371397.2016.1253003>.

in an interview exists within a field of memory work that is going on at many levels in our society.”²⁰⁴

Food seemed often to be at the heart of interviews. There would even be food conversation and eating before the interviews began. For one interview Naoko sliced up one of her favourite foods of the year of fall persimmons from Nakagama’s²⁰⁵; for another interview we had *ume boshi* pickled plums and rice with green tea; a snack like *kakimochi* rice crackers occupied us for the hour-long interview; and once it was Doritos. It is fitting that the last quote and analysis of this chapter about wartime be once again on the subject of food.

After the discovery that the Shimabukuro family were not in fact spies but Canadians caught up in the Battle of Okinawa, an unexpected friendship developed: the American soldiers brought gifts of food products. Meanwhile they had moved out of the caves and back into their house and Naoko explains the making of donuts with the ingredients that the soldiers had gifted. In the following passage she also explains the processing of the “life-saving” black sugar that was sprinkled atop the donuts:

After the war was almost over.
[The American soldiers] bring everything.
So of course, Grandma knew how to make the donut. So, when they brought the flour. I don’t know if eggs in it or not. I could still remember she was mixing it. She fried it and then put sugar on top of it.

Black sugar, that is. Not white sugar.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*. Abingdon, Oxon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, 79.

²⁰⁵ Nakagama's is a beloved southern Alberta food and giftware business established in 1947. Owner, Ken Nakagama says of this particular type of persimmon, “the variety of *kaki* is Hiyakume and I believe it was introduced into California in the early 1900s.”

²⁰⁶ Shimabukuro, *MomNov18c*, 46:56.

*Sata, doushite*²⁰⁷?

[*Grandpa*] didn't make the *sata*. Somebody from village—people made that. It's from the cane sugar, eh? They bring the cane sugar and all the people works. It's like bamboo you could only use bottom of sticks. It's just like a forest, those things are so big. And then, I don't know they tie it and water buffalo holds the ... I don't quite know.

Squeeze the juice and you boil it until it gets really black. It's natural sugar. What we ate was just chunks. What they have now is nice and cut, eh? But those days was just right from the pot it's just scorched like, you know? Black. I still remember the place where they're doing that, too. Close to Masako's house.

Grandpa didn't have any sugar cane. Somehow Grandpa had it.

Everybody carrying *sata* during the wartime in case.

It's a life-saving thing.

Sata, a must.

Water, a must.²⁰⁸

In this passage Naoko identifies a chronology of *sata* memories: processing of the sugar cane as a village effort; that *sata* was a “life-saving thing” during wartime; and that it was used as an ingredient in gifting baked goods to American soldiers near war's end. It is as though *sata*—like her narrative in this thesis—had a parallel prewar, wartime, postwar journey of its own. With the cessation of war, the matter of the relationship with the American soldiers continues to unfold—mid-war, after they shot at the vases filled with *habu* snakes, which she thought her grandfather intended to use as weapons, and at the *shisa* lion statues protecting their home from evil. In anger, her grandfather yelled “son-of-a-bitch” to them in English and was accused of being a spy. The relationship with the American soldiers, once they discover that the Shimabukuro's are Canadians turns into an unexpected friendship as they brought gifts of food items such as butter,

²⁰⁷ *Doushite* asks why or how something has happened in the Japanese language.

²⁰⁸ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *TransN-SataMakingSeptember24a-2019*, 4:11, Lethbridge, 2019.

flour, powdered ice cream, and milk candies to their home. Naoko recognizes that, along with being Canadian citizens, the exchange of food helped heal the rupture and build this unusual relationship. Much like the silkworm process quoted in Chapter 2, here Naoko discusses the *sata* process from harvest with the description of the sugar cane stalk to community production, and a brief recollection of a water buffalo. She then describes the use of the black sugar in cooking the donuts. In the end of this quote she circles back to basic survival during wartime and how *sata* and water, as Figure 5 illustrates, were distributed to each family member, and were “musts” throughout the war.

As evidenced in this chapter, Naoko presented a frontline civilian account of what she remembered of the Battle of Okinawa from the village of Higa—no less from the perspective of a child. She reflected upon imminent signs of war and what she saw as “naïve” and ineffective, which included the following: the school had taught students some rudimentary wartime safety procedures; she witnessed the Japanese soldiers training in martial arts in the field near her home; the family had planned for temporary shelter in the mountainous caves; a small hill near the house hid their valued possessions, but was later the target of bombing soon after the war commenced; the gathering and then burying of eggs; large *habu* snakes were collected in vases to be used as weapons; and so forth. It only became clear to her in experiencing the war and looking back on the level of warfare how powerless some of these prewar village efforts were. But the manner of warfare experienced during the Battle of Okinawa was difficult for even trained soldiers to navigate through, and obviously the civilians—who were caught in the crosshairs between the complex and chaotic political, military, and societal conditions—were left mostly relying upon their own defenses. As imparted in this chapter, the world

previously known to Naoko as a child had changed severely. Naoko's personal Hamahiga Island warzone testimony of the Battle of Okinawa vis-à-vis a child's lens during the war, and through her *kika nisei* position now offers not only credible oral history documentation, but exclusive contributions that neither existing Second World War experiential material nor Okinawan Canadian diasporic scholarship submits.

Next, the postwar years yet again required adaptation as Naoko and her family along with all Okinawans and Ryukyuan were immersed in a state of American military occupation. Though these intervening postwar years did not diminish the heightened anticipation of returning to Canada, as we shall see in Chapter 4, the reality of the return *home* did not initially live up to the dream.

Chapter 4: Postwar Experience of the American Occupation and Return to Canada

October 6, 2020

Cock fights.

Bull fights.

Barefooted children.

Ocean play.

Octopus hunting.

Blowing a conch shell—last call.

Broken ocean bits crashing against the coral reef as though night music.

Fireflies.

War.

Two years of interviews. Naoko's memories captured through the oral history process; in conversation; and in the research and study. Admittedly, I don't have the ability to put it all to words effectively. This thesis is merely a facsimile—a copy of the original testimony.

I am reminded of odori lessons.

There was an elusive quality to her dance. For years there were countless odori lessons leading up to annual keirokai²⁰⁹ celebrations. She would press the rewind/forward tabs on the old cassette tape player again and again. Sometimes the tape would twist, and she would untangle and splice. My sisters and I would follow her movements—nod of the head, press of the feet, pose of pine and bamboo, hands framing an imagined Sho Chiku Bai moon, and holding a point of gravity that resided low in the

²⁰⁹ *Keirokai* is a celebration for the elderly.

belly. She knew the meaning behind the music and intuitively how the strum of the sanshin would signal hand, fan, or yotsutake²¹⁰ movement. She knew how to improvise with paranku drum and contribute with the occasional i-ya sasa hai-ya chant. Chika Shiota writes in her article, “Eisaa Identities and Dances of Okinawan Diasporic Experience”, that performance arts such as music and dance offered an opportunity to assert identity, pay respect to ancestors, and reaffirm ties with Okinawans overseas all the while negotiating a place and space within postwar U.S. military occupation.²¹¹ We knew none of this as sansei.

Kanayo Amakawa.²¹²

Tanchame.²¹³

Nubui Kuduchi.²¹⁴

If the dancer hadn't experienced dripping caves, hadn't run barefoot over mountains and ocean shorelines, was unaware of the destruction of an islandic way of life and didn't grieve the decline, didn't feel the slow genocide of an ancient tradition and erosion of language, then generational transference of odori seems hollow. In a sense odori was a way of being that we would never know. Yet, all those years of performing on that fifth avenue northside Rainbow Hall stage I remember glimpsing the

²¹⁰ Yotsutake is a type of castanet.

²¹¹ Chika Shiota, “Eisaa Identities and Dances of Okinawan Diasporic Experiences,” in *Okinawan Diaspora* edited by Ronald Y. Nakasone, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 120-129.

²¹² Kanayo Amakawa is a dance about two lovers and their exchange of gifts.

²¹³ Tanchame is a fisherman's dance.

²¹⁴ Nubui Kuduchi is a dance about journeying to Kagoshima.

elderly issei in the front row and seeing them cry as they watched us dance. At some level facsimile matters.

In this chapter, Naoko describes the postwar state of elementary schooling in the village and the lack of rudimentary tools such as the paper and pen. As a teenager she journeys from the village of Higa to the main island of Okinawa in 1952 to be part of the civilian workforce helping in the American effort to revitalize the prefecture. She mentions that after her graduation she had “nothing to do” and her sister managed to find her odd jobs such as working with hardware as well as waitressing. The oral history then delivers account of her return as a *kika nisei* to the southern Alberta region of Canada.

After Japan’s defeat in the Second World War and after the battle that took place on Okinawa, the Americans secured a foothold on the Ryukyus. Many Okinawans were eager to resume their way of life, rebuild their homes, and return to farming their land. However, some of this farmland was “ideally suited for airfields, munitions dumps, and other military installations.”²¹⁵ During the time of occupation by the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands between 1945 to 1972, American armed forces expropriated land and expanded their bases. The Americans continued to build more as “Okinawa Island provided an ideal base of operations for the U.S. military presence in the Asian Pacific.”²¹⁶ During these years “while under complete U.S. military control” Okinawa and the prefectural islands were assigned a critical role in global war strategy.

²¹⁵ Arnold G. Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands, 1945-1950* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1987), 56.

²¹⁶ Nakasone, *Okinawan Diaspora*, 12.

This precipitated over time the steady and increasingly contentious militarization of Okinawa by the United States with Japan.²¹⁷

Meanwhile within the realm of education, the U.S. military government passed the Primary School Act in 1946 suggesting that “schools teach American and Okinawan culture and celebrate Okinawans’ achievements.” The emphasis on the unique nature of the Ryukyuan culture at this time was seen by locals as an American attempt to justify the separation of Okinawa from Japan.²¹⁸ While higher education received attention with such offerings as scholarships if studying in America and eventually establishing the University of the Ryukyus that leaned towards producing “American elites”, there was less attention paid to the primary and secondary levels and these schools were left to be rebuilt by local people. Fischer notes that by the fall of 1947, two years after the war, approximately 90 percent of the school-age children in the prefecture were receiving education of some kind in over 500 schools. He recognizes that the schools “were temporary structures of very rude construction.”²¹⁹

Noiri describes more descriptively in her writings that the schools had been destroyed by the war, leaving students and teachers to use the sand as a blackboard.²²⁰

My conversation with Naoko about her school day after the war supports the scholarship

²¹⁷ Gavan McCormack, “Irresistible Force (Japan) Versus Immovable Object (Okinawa): Struggle Without End?,” in *The Asia Pacific Journal, Japan Focus*, 17, Issue 23 No.1, December, 2019.

²¹⁸ Noiri, “Schooling and Identity in Okinawa,” 82.

²¹⁹ Fisch, *Military Government*, 105. See GHQ SCAP, Political, Social and Economic Report on Ryukyus [*sic*] Islands for the Secretary of War, II Oct 47, p. 6, File: SCAP, Government Section, Occupation Reports Japan and Ryukyus, RG 6, MacArthur Archives.

²²⁰ Noiri, “Schooling and Identity in Okinawa,” 83.

regarding the neglected state of postwar elementary education. In this quotation Naoko describes what the school experience was like on the island after the Battle of Okinawa:

Grade 4 was war. Grade 5 and 6 we didn't have anything.
There was two years, two and a half years missing.

We can't get a book, papers [just the tissue-type brown paper], or anything. There *was* school—using the dirt or the back of the rubber tree. One book and you have to share it with the whole class. I think there was a good 25 kids. So, you have to hurry up and copy that book before you give it to somebody. Some people didn't do it because you know when you are too behind, you don't want to do it anymore.²²¹

We started in Grade 5 or Grade 6.
But that wasn't really school.

You just sweep it nicely. Then you sharpen any twigs and you just write with that on the ground. Class. Then erase it again and then what teacher had to say. That's what we did.

Okinawa has a rubber tree. Any back of the leaves are different than inside of the leaves. You just write what the teacher have to say. There's no time or anything, just anybody who wants to study, I think it was. No, not really a teacher teacher. Anybody who was available. I think it was whoever was a little bit educated before. We didn't have anything. Desk was Grandpa made it any kind of wood. It wasn't a nice board or anything. Sometimes you get sliver. That's what they used.

The teachers didn't really teach you anything except they tell you the stories. They tell you story of the ghosts—of course Okinawa. Hanako Oikawa, I remember that teacher's name. She was good at it.²²²

Naoko remembered when school resumed. Basic references to a timeline in her quotations are of interest as they are not only stated with confidence but seem to suggest simplicity through the child's lens. For example, "Grade 4 was war" is articulated without flourish and with such certainty. There is no doubt in her mind that education and war could be described and edited down to such an impactful four-word testimony.

²²¹ Shimabukuro, *Naoko* September 1, 38:34.

²²² Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *Naoko* May 15, 2:30, Lethbridge, 2019.

This statement could be understood in two ways or in both ways: that the entire Grade 4 year of formal education was lost due to war, and/or that the Battle of Okinawa served as a fierce Grade 4 practicum. Her lack of even basic school supplies contrasted starkly with my own *sansei* Canadian K-12 back-to-school experience and the abundance of school supplies considered basics such as pencils, pens, paper, erasers, and textbooks. Her reality of postwar schooling, which included the drawing of lessons in the dirt on the ground or the back of a rubber plant leaf with a branch, is startling. The school looked like a little shed, she recalled. With nothing inside, and no windows. She said that “the Americans supplied milk for the school kids.” At about noon hour, they would stand in line with their tin cup and get the milk. During the time soon after the war, there was also the matter of the lack of school supplies. A simple writing utensil was scarce. “We had pencils before the war because I remember the first day of school they gave you. Regular light brown with eraser, no design. After the war you got one pencil and you have to use it wisely and then we didn’t have an eraser.”²²³

During the interviews with Naoko there were moments when her memory was tangentially provoked. For example, during discussion of the use of utensils and lessons learned in the postwar education setting she remembered at some point during the lessons when the students were taught to write their place of residence in “*kanji*,” or Chinese characters. She pulled some paper towels from the dispenser at the seniors’ lodge kitchenette area wanting to quickly write as if fearful the memory might be lost.

Here are two photographs of Naoko as she proceeds to write her home address. The quotation beneath the images reflects what she said as she wrote:

²²³ Shimabukuro, *Naoko* September 1, 36:14.



Figure 4. Naoko writing her address out as she was taught during postwar education.

Can you imagine little kids have to remember all that? — Okinawa-ken, Nakagami-gun, Katsuren-son, Aza Higa, Shimabukuro Naoko. That’s how I graduated with that.

Okinawa-ken ... oh, I know what’s missing, Aza Hamahiga.

Oh, it’s a long address. Eighty-eight²²⁴ house number. Banchi, house number, 88.

It’s funny, though. Never did forget that address.²²⁵

She was astonished that she could remember this lesson from childhood with such clarity. There was mention of the address and how the island was now known to her as Hamahiga Island whereas before the war she was not aware that the island even had a name. I wondered if with American occupation came an official naming process of some of the islands, beaches, and other geographical landmarks. As she wrote with earnest I watched as though witnessing something invisible such as memory retrieval become

²²⁴ The house number of 88 is also recognized in the Figure 8 documentation of Kana Shimabukuro’s travels from southern Alberta to Higa Village.

²²⁵ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *Naoko2Feb-2019*, 0:57, Lethbridge, 2019.

performance. She was thrilled that the *kanji* and the memory of the address had come back to her. She continued to joyfully write it out several times.

In the years approaching their return to Canada Naoko's older sister Miyoko had managed to find work for the both of them on the main island of Okinawa. In effort to reconstruct and reinvigorate Okinawa, the U.S. Department of the Army spearheaded military construction programs that considered the provision of employment and growth in the civilian sector. With this development "thousands of Okinawans, especially after November 1951, were hired to assist with the construction programs on the island."²²⁶

In this quotation Naoko describes the workplace in postwar Okinawa:

Miyoko was already working on the mainland—Futenma.²²⁷

Where the base was. There was a mess hall there. Soldiers' mess hall. Miyo was working there ... American soldiers. So, I had a little bit of time after I graduated and Miyoko got me a job before we go, till we go, come to Canada. And then, you know what? We lived in Koza.²²⁸ Miyo and I with other two more friend.

Come to think of it, I did go to places catching the bus early in the morning. Koza. Catching the bus to go to the American—all these washers and screwdrivers places. Americans are building.

Tool things, yeah. Uh, I worked there just for a while.

Miyoko said you gotta work until we leave here [until the return back to Canada]. So, I did work over there. Caught the bus early in the morning.

Seventeen.

And I remember sorting out the washer and the screwdriver like separating all. I think the Americans made a lot of houses. This wasn't Futenma. This one was close to Naha, it was. Come to think of it I remember that place. It was kind of scary, but anybody could do the separating of the washer and screwdriver. Which I did. Just a short time I did. All I remember is got into the truck and going to different buildings and separate all this tools and washers, what not stuff.

²²⁶ Fisch, *Military Government*, 165.

²²⁷ Marine Corps Air Station Futenma is a U.S. base located in Ginowan City on the prefecture of Okinawa. It was established in 1945 after the Battle of Okinawa.

²²⁸ Koza is a district that developed out of its close proximity to Kadena U.S. Air Force Base.

Anyways when I was working with Auntie Miyo²²⁹ [and she] got me the little bit job. For a short time, my number was 25. They don't call you by names. Twenty-five, your food is ready to serve. Waitress. I remember this girl's name was number 3. I still remember that girl. They were seniority, Miyoko and them. That's why I was working a little bit and called 25.

Futenma base where Miyoko was. Miyoko said we were going to Canada so it was a good place to learn English, she said. We caught the army truck. They take you home and they pick you up. Army truck was.

Auntie Nobu was away, she was working in PX. American, I think it's a store. Auntie Yoshi was working at the dry—, cleaning for Americans.²³⁰

This is a significant moment in time for Naoko, for within a year she would be returning to Canada. As the interviewer, I was also reminded of how much I appreciated her memory detail as she remembered her server number, "... my number was 25. They don't call you by names." With American military occupation came a boom in construction and the hiring of civilians. First Miyoko, and then Naoko had left Higa in order to gain work in jobs that supported the American transformation of Okinawa. Naoko also indicates that two of her aunts had also found work on the main island—Nobuko was working at a military base store, and Yoshiko was dry cleaning for the Americans. Neither Naoko, her sister Miyoko, nor her aunts would have known that this period was also considerably significant to the future of Okinawa. Naoko mentions living in Koza—this area eventually adapted more to meet the needs of the American Forces demographic from the nearby base of Kadena. It is important to underscore that immediately after the Battle of Okinawa during the postwar period, the United States proceeded to transform the islands into a military colony and extensively expanded

²²⁹ Here she is calling her sister, "Auntie Miyo" for my sake as that is how I referred to my aunt Miyoko.

²³⁰ Naoko Shimabukuro, interview by Darcy Tamayose, *Feb5-2019*, 5:47-11:51, Lethbridge, 2019.

military facilities.²³¹ In his 2012 *New York Times* article, “Amid Image of Ire Toward U.S. Bases, Okinawans’ True Views Vary”, Martin Fackler suggests that considerable “resentment over the large American military presence is focused on one base Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.” He further explains that Futenma base, one of many U.S. bases that occupy the Okinawan prefecture, “is a busy heliport that has come to symbolize the island’s burden because of its dangerous location” within the city of Ginowan.²³²

Meanwhile it was 1953, and the trip back to Canada was approaching. In 1937 Naoko had arrived in Okinawa at two years old and at the age of eighteen was leaving the Shimabukuro home in Higa. She had been gifted a dress from her Auntie Nobu along with a new wrist watch. After being barefooted on mountain, beach, and ocean for most of her youth she had received a new pair of shoes from her Auntie Yoshi. “You know shoes was something else.”²³³ She commented on the shoes in such a neutral manner I could not understand how she felt about them. For so many years, she had dreamed about going home to Canada, and had so many expectations about what it was like. Along with her older sister, Miyoko and her Uncle Seizo, Naoko was finally returning to Canada.

²³¹ Eiko Asato, “Okinawan Identity and Resistance to Militarization and Maldevelopment,” in *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, eds. Laura Hein and Mark Selden, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 229.

²³² Martin Fackler, “Amid Image of Ire Toward U.S. Bases, Okinawans’ True Views Vary.” *The New York Times*, February 14, 2012, sec. Asia Pacific.

²³³ Shimabukuro, *Naoko*, 1:03:42.

While awaiting a vital document that would allow for travel back to Canada, Naoko recounts an incident at the beginning of the trip and of being in a hotel in Yokohama for two weeks in June 1953. Naoko explains the phone conversation here:

I don't know how he got where we are.
Nineteen fifty-three of June, I think. We were in a hotel room.
And then uh, somebody says, Shimabukuro-san, Shimabukuro-san.
Somebody's calling us.
It was my brother—on the phone.

It was a long time since—eight? Ten years? I didn't see [him].
He says you know, Naoko, [it's] *niisan*²³⁴.
Niisan? I says, I thought you were dead.
He says, I'm in Nagasaki. When are you leaving?

... in about ten days.
Because I have to fix my birth certificate. That's why we are here.

He says, I'll be leaving here to meet you guys.
Just wants to see because haven't seen in so long. It was like a dream.
Am I dreaming? I said to him.
No, it's real," he says.

A few days later he phones. He can't make it.
What happened? I says.
It's a flood.
I guess, that's how it goes, eh? I says. But probably it's our luck, I said.
Just give us address and phone number and when we get to Lethbridge—if we ever get there—so can contact you.
Talk big, eh? Because I don't even know where Lethbridge was.
So can contact.

I don't think he wanted to come. I had a feeling that.²³⁵

This memory, and every memory about her oldest brother, Seiyei, seemed to sadden Naoko. During this interview she mentions that after they had made their way back to southern Alberta, and were living on Broder's farm, her brother, Seiyei came into some

²³⁴ *Niisan* is older brother in Japanese.

²³⁵ Shimabukuro, *MomNov18c*, 27:59

trouble. Her Uncle Seiji told her that he was going back to Japan, to Nagasaki where Seiyei was living. Apparently, he had been arrested.

She remembered part of the conversation about Seiyei's troubles with her Uncle

Seiji:

Well, he's got two citizens [citizenships]. One is Canadian and one is Japan. So, it was the navy. So, he's got big problems. Trouble. So, have to get him out of there.

So, he went to Nagasaki.
... went to the jail. Seiji did say they shaved his hair.
He's a prisoner, right?
So skinny and didn't recognize him.
Why he was in there? Was double citizen.
They thought he was the spy.

This is I hear from *niisan* [Seiyei, her brother], too.²³⁶

In the quotation above, Naoko explains that her Uncle Seiji left southern Alberta and travelled back to Japan to Nagasaki, and he managed to get Naoko's older brother, Seiyei out of prison. This postwar incident involving Naoko's brother Seiyei who served with the Imperial Japanese Navy along with the wartime situation of her grandfather Kana swearing in English at the American soldiers illustrate the life-threatening consequences of being an Okinawan Canadian and speaking the English language during this period in Japan's history.

In 1953 Naoko came back to a different Canada than the one she left in 1937.

David Iwaasa points out that Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 marked the "end of a whole way of life for some 23,224 Japanese in Canada."²³⁷ He

²³⁶ Shimabukuro, *MomNov18c*, 30:49

²³⁷ David Iwaasa, *Canadian Japanese in Alberta, 1905-1945*, Research project. (Lethbridge, AB: University of Lethbridge, 1972), viii.

further explains that “the Caucasian population of Southern Alberta never agitated for expulsion or other restrictions. They never looked upon their Japanese residents as potential subversives the same way as the residents of B.C. did.”²³⁸ However, this is not to say that controversy, prejudices, and discriminatory practices did not surface in southern Alberta during this time.

Japanese Canadians were not allowed to return to Canada until the statute was lifted in 1949—members of the Shimabukuro family, Naoko, Miyoko, and their Uncle Seizo, returned to Canada in 1953. They travelled by train from San Francisco to Vancouver, then through the Rocky Mountains and across the foothills to the southern Alberta prairies in search of a place called Coaldale.

Naoko recalls the frustrating situation at the Lethbridge train station:

Train station was here and nothing else.

Every station we were in trouble. We didn't know where we was going. Somebody supposed to meet us in Vancouver, they didn't come. So that's what everything got mixed up. We just jumped on the train and came here [Lethbridge train station]. Now what we going to do here? Uncle was so disgusted his eyes was closed.

Frustrated and worried. Sitting on the train.²³⁹

At this point in the trip, they lacked funds. They were not quite sure how to proceed with the banking transaction in San Francisco. They were lost, frustrated, and scared. There seemed to have been some miscommunication about their arrival in Vancouver where a family member was to have met them. They were at the Lethbridge Train Station;

This statistic was derived from: Canada, Department of Labour, report on Administration of Japanese in Canada 1942-1944, (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1945), 2.

²³⁸ Ibid., 56.

²³⁹ Shimabukuro, *NaokoMay15*, 11:42.

however, they had no idea that their intended final stop of Coaldale was nearby. Naoko recalls these critical moments in their last leg of the journey. The little English learned in Okinawa was important in this moment in time, as she was able to communicate with the taxi driver by spelling out the word Coaldale. Since, there was no address by which to find the Shima home, the taxi driver searched blindly and eventually found it.

Naoko describes the moment of seeing her parents for the first time:

Looked like we came to a strange house, strange people.
We got out of the car and Mom and Dad didn't recognize us. Until Uncle come out of the car. Uncle didn't want to come out of the car. And then my dad recognized Uncle's face. He had a big scar here when he left Canada. Oh, that's Miyoko and Naoko. That was it and then every corner was kids—six of them.

This was a Hutterite farm. Wilson Colony.

It must have been a shock when the taxi came *home*. The journey from Hamahiga Island to Okinawa was approximately a month long fraught with ever-emerging obstacles and challenges. Naoko had lived in the village of Higa since she was a two-year-old and arguably through the bloodiest ground battle of the Second World War. Yet, there was some ambivalence about the final destination—perhaps enough for her uncle to feel that he “didn't want to come out of the car” and cross the identity threshold from Okinawan to Canadian, from Shimabukuro to Shima. Throughout her life on the island she had imagined what her home in Canada would be like. Perhaps Canada over time became metaphor for diasporic sanctuary—trope packaged with hybridic identity. I can only speculate that it was at this moment of arrival to her home in Canada that she realized that her hopes and dreams began to shift into misinterpreted idyllic imaginings and sift away. The man on the passenger ship, enroute to China, was right. Farmers. The Shima's and other Okinawans, along with Japanese who had moved from the west coast, and

many European immigrants to the southern Alberta prairies were in fact farm labourers. Many worked as families lodged on land owned by Hutterite Colonies, and for farmers such as Pahara, Peck, Berg, Kasner, Blair, Nieboer, Dalgliesh, Koenen, and Michelson²⁴⁰. They worked in the fields harvesting sugar beets, potatoes, beans—and now, Naoko was a farmer, too.

The return of Okinawan Canadians at this time in history must have been recognized as eventful somehow as *Commemorating 25 Years of Canada Okinawa-ken* accounts the *kika nisei* return of the Shimabukuro family along with Wataru Tamayose and Yuko Oshiro. Here is an excerpt from the publication:

The Okinawan Kika-nisei returning to Canada in 1953 included Seizo Shimabukuro's family and Miyoko Shimabukuro and Naoko Shimabukuro Tamayose. Then the next year, in 1954, Wataru Tamayose, and around 1956, Yuko Oshiro, and in 1957, Seiji Shimabukuro returned.²⁴¹

For several years after her return from Okinawa, Naoko worked in the beet and bean fields. As a young adult, between 1953 and 1959 Naoko still yearned for formal education that she had always dreamed would be offered upon her return to Canada. In addition, she missed the life she once had on Hamahiga Island.

Here is a passage that conveys the frustration and discontent of her new life and of her longing for her old life in Okinawa:

²⁴⁰ For three days in the fall of 2020, my father, Art Tamayose drove me around southern Alberta to the places he and his family lived as farm labourers from Hardieville, Coaldale, Picture Butte, Iron Springs and Lethbridge area. Throughout the drives, he also pointed out the places the farm land where other Okinawan and Japanese families lived and worked.

²⁴¹ The Vancouver Okinawa-ken Yuuikai, *Commemorating 25 Years*, 118. On March 31, 1949, the order of moving beyond the 100-mile area for defense purposes was removed. Japanese Canadians regain full citizenship and once again free to move wherever they wish in Canada. *Kika nisei* began returning to Canada.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/japanese-canadians>

<https://japanesecanadianhistory.net/historical-overview/reference-timeline/>

Went to the field.

On purposely I didn't want to work anymore. My feet are corns all over the place and I couldn't wear shoes. I didn't have extra shoes. I just grabbed it [the shoes] and threw it in the ditch.

Next day, I have to wear big boots.²⁴²

Everything I missed.

House. Freedom. Friends. Grandma and Grandpa. Ocean.”²⁴³

Naoko expresses missing everything—including it seems being barefooted. Eventually her grandparents returned to Canada and came to live on the Broder farm. They worked the same land harvesting the beets and beans alongside Naoko's mother and father, and the rest of the Shima family. Naoko remembers a moment in the field, as mentioned in a passage in Chapter 2, when she saw her grandparents who were advancing now in years and working on hoeing the beets alongside her Canadian family. Kana and Nabe were falling behind with their rows. Naoko moved over to help them in their rows but was told to leave them to do their rows and return to her own row. This seemingly small memory remains with her. It seemed symbolic of a familial boundary and exclusiveness that was established in Canada that never existed in growing up in Hamahiga.

Kana and Nabe still had their home in Hamahiga. In 1959 they decided to permanently stay in Canada. However, Kana needed to make one more trip back to Okinawa to settle the property and the move. Here Naoko recalls:

Jiisan and *baasan* went back and forth. In 1959, they moved here. In 1965, *jiisan* went back to Hamahiga to clean the land. Because if you don't do that the government will automatically take everything. So, he went to clean up the things—I think he went back in October, I remember that, and he died in December, I think.

Christmas Eve when he died.

²⁴² Shimabukuro, *NaokoMay15*, 36:04.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24:43.

He went to shopping to Yakena, to get all this spare ribs. He was going to treat the neighbours for Christmas. And *jiisan* got off the boat. The boat left of course. He had lots of food, things on his shoulder. You know sand is really hard to walk on. Your foot sinks in. I think he had too much in his mind.²⁴⁴ I guess he just didn't make it home. Students were going home around 4:00 or 4:30, somebody found—oh look at *Shima no jiisan* on the shore. He was dead. If the students didn't find him, he would have been washed out somewhere.

But then when I went back for that class reunion that time? *Niisan*²⁴⁵ took me to show me where *jiisan* had died.

Naoko clearly recalls this timeframe and referred to a meal she made for her grandfather prior to leaving for Okinawa. She was pleased that she had planned a celebration before he left for Okinawa because unbeknownst to her, she would never see him again. She concluded that the formal event to say goodbye was her way of thanking him for everything he did for her as a child and in her youth while living in Okinawa. Naoko's narrative above of *jiisan* is an encapsulation of an Okinawan Canadian diasporic journey different than hers, different than mine or my daughter's. Ruthnum suggests that "there must be other stories that are lost or go unread because of the dominance of the story we've heard before."²⁴⁶ This may be true, but a legacy of Kana Shimabukuro is a generational link in the transference of culture to Naoko which in turn she has transferred on to her children.

In this chapter of postwar experience there were significant new beginnings and endings. There were lost years of education that Naoko craved and always longed for and leaving Higa for the main island where she became part of the civilian workforce enlisted

²⁴⁴ Shimabukuro, *Naoko June 2*, 41:59.

²⁴⁵ Here she refers to Seiyei. Rather than returning to Canada with her in 1953, Naoko's eldest brother Canadian-born Seiyei Shimabukuro remained in Okinawa permanently.

²⁴⁶ Ruthnum, *Curry*, 112.

to assist the American occupation building efforts. In 1953 at the age of eighteen, Naoko finally returned to the place of her birth, the prairies of western Canada. As she began a new life in southern Alberta, her *jiisan* went on the last of his countless ocean voyages between southern Alberta and Hamahiga Island. Kana had taken a boat taxi to purchase food for a feast, which Naoko believes was a Christmas or New Year's dinner, for the village before returning to Canada for good, Kana unexpectedly died on the Higa shore with the food on the sand where he lay.

This chapter of the thesis presented a constellation of Okinawan Canadian diasporic journeys, together a family of *kika nisei* that for the purpose of this thesis I have situated peripherally around the key actor and primary informant, Naoko Shimabukuro—each with an untold migratory story of their own. I assert that the eye witness testimony in this chapter enriches the existing Okinawan and Ryukyuan diasporic and postwar Battle of Okinawa scholarship, more pointedly through a Canadian frame of reference and a *kika nisei* continuum back to the southern Alberta prairies where an Okinawan Canadian presence has existed since the early 1900s. In summary, this chapter presented the Okinawan Canadian connection between southern Alberta and Okinawa; first-hand postwar accounts of the American occupation and the anxieties related to Naoko's return to Canada; and through the self-reflexive narrative considers the concept of facsimile, or generational loss, in both the transmission of Naoko's oral history for this thesis, and in a cultural context through *sansei odori* performance. This chapter contributes to the lesser-studied Okinawan Canadian diasporic experience while broadening the potential for further exploration of this subject particularly in the southern Alberta prairie regions of Canada.

Conclusion

October

Early morning in southern Alberta.

Still and dark.

The rain falls and turns to snow.

I sit at the kitchen table, thesis work before me. Behind me, I remember. Uncle Seiyei had cancer. She wanted to see him one last time. It took several days to fly to Okinawa—but not the month-long train and boat voyage that it was the first time she took the trip in 1937 or the multiple times her grandfather took the trip beginning in 1907. On that August night in 1989 as the small plane circled over Okinawa and the East China Sea, my mother looked out and down to the islands that were lit up with pricks of light. Upon descent she did something she rarely does, she wept. Memories and perceptions are fluid, revisionist theories of what we understand of the world around us in constant motion. Diasporic journeys span generations incited by different fundamental causes such as labour, learning, or defined as powerful flights of emotion and reasoning that lead to temporary or settlement sanctuary. Just like the wind, diaspora is (re)cursive in nature, sometimes imperceptible or deceptively dormant, and planting its seemingly invisible seeds as it migrates. Why did she cry upon approach to Okinawa in 1989? The reasons that I thought then are different than what I think now. Through this oral history process and the research, I understand a little more about the emotions she may have been feeling, thoughts that may have been flooding her mind on that August night looking down upon Okinawa. Childhood. War. Family.

Fast-forward to 2012. Another trip to Okinawa. This time April, this time with my 18-year-old daughter. Dr. Katsunori Yamazato of the University of the Ryukyus had

arranged a visit for us with former prefectural governor, Masahide Ota at the Okinawa International Peace Research Institute. We toured his upcoming exhibit that featured over 400 large format Battle of Okinawa photos from Washington, D.C. Some of the photos were explicit with images of dead bodies and destruction. As my studies and the oral history interviews with my mother revealed, “the war was devastating to both the environment and the people, depriving the survivors of all means of livelihood including home, property, tools, and food.”²⁴⁷ At day’s end back at our residence in the university dorm while we were winding down, my daughter circled back and referred to the photo exhibit we had seen at the beginning of the day and asked point blank: “Mom, don’t people like Okinawa?” It was an elegantly distilled, yet painfully obvious question that continues to haunt me. I realized that the three generations of Okinawan Canadians in our family see the Battle of Okinawa, and more broadly the concept of war and humanity itself, in completely different ways at any given moment in time.

In addressing generational knowledge of history, Mr. Ota commented in an interview with the Ryukyu Shimpo newspaper, “Many young people, particularly young Okinawans, do not know anything about the Battle of Okinawa.”²⁴⁸ My daughter’s fundamental question from her lens was the beginning of meaningful nisei, sansei, and yonsei²⁴⁹ dialogue, and served as a catalyst for investigating a strenuous history. In impacting this master’s study, my daughter’s cornerstone question contributes to

²⁴⁷ Asato, “Okinawan Identity and Resistance,” 228.

²⁴⁸ Ryukyu Shimpo, “Former Governor Ota Opens an Exhibition Hall on the Battle of Okinawa ‘War is Ugly’ is His Message.” Translation by English translation by T&CT, Mark Eale. Accessed September 25, 2019 <http://english.ryukyushimpo.jp/2012/03/08/5989/>.

²⁴⁹ *Yonsei* means fourth generation in Japanese.

framing the beginnings of formal academic investigation and excavation; furthers conversation and thesis; incites my analysis of her grandmother's kika nisei Okinawan Canadian journey and of the historicity that it offers. More broadly her question forced a deeper look at the stepping stone sprawl of islands involved in the Pacific War and all the islanders impacted by imperialism, colonization, class distinctions and racism, ground fighting, conscription, mass suicides, internments, rape of land and of women, genocide, land appropriation, military installation, countless deaths of both civilians and combatants, military occupation—and it forces the breathlessly over-informed to unlearn, refine, and return with childlike wonder to a simple question, “Why war?”

Beyond presentation of an Okinawan Canadian diasporic dynamic that oscillated between Hamahiga Island and Canada beginning in the early 1900s, in this thesis I have sought to simultaneously expand the understanding of the prewar, wartime, and the postwar Battle of Okinawa experience through the undocumented *kika nisei* voice of Naoko Shimabukuro. In doing so I additionally endeavour to recognize and illuminate the historical importance of the elder's journey and the documentation of it through the oral history process; encourage further interest of the Okinawan Canadian diaspora and its little known elder and familial stories; and perhaps “enter into dialogue”²⁵⁰ with an Okinawan Canadian voice from the southern Alberta prairies.

With focus on the *kika nisei* journey of Naoko, I set out to investigate Okinawan Canadian diasporic history and the tether between southern Alberta and Hamahiga Island. The Okinawan Canadian literature reveals that with arrangements made by the

²⁵⁰ Arakaki, “Theorizing,” 41.

Nikka Chandler Co. the diasporic wave of 152 Okinawan Canadians arrived in Victoria, British Columbia as contract labourers for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR).²⁵¹ This particular group of immigrants eventually made their way from the west coast, through the Rocky Mountains, and settled on the prairies of southern Alberta. Over a decade later in March 1921, some of these immigrants who were “Okinawan coalminers working in the CPR Galt Coalmine in the town of Hardieville” established the Alberta Okinawa Kenjinkai. Shucho Higa’s memoir documents the attendees’ home villages and towns in Okinawa—prior to migrating to Canada they were from such places as Nago, Kina, Uehara, Chatan, Kin, Heshikiya, Onaka, Higa, Haneji, Izumizaki, Kenken, Tomishiro, and Heianna.²⁵² Naoko’s grandfather, Kana Shimabukuro was among the attendees at this inaugural meeting.

10	Shimabukuro 島袋	Kana 加那	Canada カナダ	1886-05-15 1886年5月15日	21 yr 21歳	M	1907-08-21 1907年8月21日	1907-07-31 1907年7月31日	Household Head 戸主	Railroad Engineer 鉄道工夫	Nakagami-gun Katsuren-majiri Higa-mura 中頭郡勝連間切比嘉村八八番地	88	6	Show	7790
11	Shimabukuro 島袋	Kana 加那	Canada カナダ	1886 (est) n/a	32 yr 32歳	M		1918-05-24 1918年5月24日	Household Head 戸主	Repeat Trip 再ビ	Nakagami-gun Katsuren-son Aza-Higa 中頭郡勝連村字比嘉八八番地	88	6	Show	23327
12	Shimabukuro 島袋	Kana 加那	Canada カナダ	1886 (est) n/a	48 yr 03 mn 48歳	M		1934-08-25 1934年8月25日	Household Head 戸主	Repeat Trip, Farming 再 (農)	Nakagami-gun Katsuren-son Aza-Higa 沖縄県中頭郡勝連村	88	6	Show	46404

Figure 5. Document of the Okinawa/Canada travels of Kana Shimabukuro in the 1900s. Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii.

In 1918 at the age of 32, three years prior to this first meeting of the Alberta Okinawa Kenjinkai, Kana had already made one of his return journeys from Hardieville

²⁵¹ The Vancouver Okinawa-ken Yuaiikai, *Commemorating 25 Years*, 62.

²⁵² Higa, *History of Okinawan*, 2.

to his home in the village of Higa.²⁵³ The research within this thesis, along with the Figure 8 spreadsheet of his travels from age 21 to 48, is evidence of his commitment to both homes in southern Alberta and on Hamahiga Island in Okinawa, and proof of the *kika nisei* sub-culture that existed. Over the course of the last few years immersed in master's work I discovered that the Shimabukuro family relationship with Canada and Hamahiga Island suggests more depth than I could have imagined—a generational *kika nisei* continuum.

As intended at the outset, Naoko's eyewitness testimony about her experience in the village of Higa on Hamahiga Island during prewar, wartime, and postwar is presented in the mid-chapters—her voice is the heart and soul of this thesis. The historical narrative in these three chapters follows her life from 1937 at the age of two years old to 1953 as a young adult. Chapter 2 is the prewar period of time prior to the last campaign of the Second World War known as the Battle of Okinawa up to Naoko's age of nine. Chapter 3 addresses wartime beginning with the milestone 1944 bombardments of Okinawa's capital city Naha and then to Naoko's Hamahiga Island frontline vantage of the battle in 1945. Chapter 4 examines the postwar period where Naoko moves away from the village at the age of seventeen to work at Futenma during the American occupation and reconstruction of Okinawa. Furthermore, each chapter adheres to the same material management system of underlying scaffold built upon a common methodological process. This process involved interview, transcription, chronologic assessment of

²⁵³ Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii. Okinawan Genealogical Resources Databases and Websites: Okinawan Emigrants' Emigration Records 1900-1928. Kana Shimabukuro, Canada entries 10, 11, and 12. Access September 20, 2020. Honolulu: Hawaii United Okinawa Association, 2020. https://lewchew.warubozo.com/opl/opl_results.php

information, quotation selection appropriate to the chapter and subject matter, historical and quotation analysis, and further study and crosschecking of items within Naoko's narrative with existing evidence that corroborates coordinates, chronology, geography, and related analytics.

There are over eleven hours of interviews conducted. With this in mind I was encouraged to be selective about quotations. Therefore, excerpts chosen from the interviews were on matters that seemed of particular importance to Naoko and significant to her journey. It was difficult to relinquish any of the material; however, passages were chosen thoughtfully and include representation of family, food, education, being barefooted, caves, the fear and curiosity of the soldiers during wartime, the relationship to the natural world, and the reality of her imagined Canada.

Finally, at the beginning of each chapter I have presented self-reflexive proems with the intention of contributing an expression as evidence of generational awareness and transference of Okinawan culture—in doing so, I am writing myself (and my self) into the oral history process.²⁵⁴ The component of self-reflexivity registers an important element to this thesis, not only for demonstrating first-hand generational transference but in my ongoing examination as an oral history practitioner of positionality in relation to

²⁵⁴ Carly Adams, "(Writing Myself Into) Betty White's Stories: (De)constructing Narratives Of/through Feminist Sport History Research." *Journal of Sport History* 39, no. 3 (2012): 395-413. Citing: Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner, "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Re-researcher as Subject," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edition, eds. Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000): 897-992; and Pirrko Markula and Jim Denison, "Sport and Personal Narrative," in *Qualitative Methods in Sport Studies*, eds. David Andrews, Daniel Mason, and Michael Silk (London: Berg Publishers, 2005): 165-184.

the narrator.²⁵⁵ Beyond effort to make an Okinawan Canadian contribution to the existing diasporic scholarship, this self-reflexive integrated research study combined with Naoko's incisive frontline recollections reveal to me that even firmly established historical narratives can be impacted and reshaped by a singular authentic voice that arises in the present by virtue of account or artifact of the past.

*Looking at that one star over the ocean:
anu hooshi tiichi, wun tiichi;
anu hooshi taatchi, wun taatchi,
anu hooshi miichi, wun miichi*²⁵⁶ ...

“You know what you say when you can't sleep?
It's similar to how you count the sheep:
That star one, me one;
that star two, me two;
that star three, me three ...”²⁵⁷

—Naoko Shimabukuro

²⁵⁵ Alan Wong, “Conversations for the Real World: Shared Authority, Self-Reflexivity, and Process in the Oral History Interview.” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2009): 245. doi:10.3138/jcs.43.1.239.

²⁵⁶ *Tiichi, taachi, and miichi* means one, two, and three in Okinawan. Mitsugu, Sakihara, *Okinawan-English Wordbook*, edited by Stewart Curry, Shigehisa Karimata, Leon A. Serafim, and Moriyo Shimabukuro, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 177, 169, 113.

²⁵⁷ Shimabukuro, *Naoko4*, 31:21.

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