

‘Hey, Why Don't We have a Bonspiel?’<sup>1</sup>

Narrating Postwar Japanese Canadian Experiences in Southern Alberta through Oral Histories of Curling

Abstract

Southern Alberta is home to Canada's third largest post-war concentration of Japanese Canadians. Many Japanese Canadians were relocated to this region between 1942-1949 and many remained to rebuild their lives and communities during the postwar period. In this paper we draw on oral histories conducted as part of the *Nikkei Memory Capture Project*, a multi-year oral history project that initiates the narration and analysis of the cultural and social history of Japanese Canadians from 1950 to the present in southern Alberta, Canada, to interrogate the cultural practice of curling, near ubiquitous and evocative in the memories shared, as a means and representation of Japanese Canadian integration, civic engagement, community building, resiliency and agency. In southern Alberta during the postwar period, curling, as a physical cultural practice, served several purposes: first, it provided a social space for community renewal through, sometimes Japanese-only, events and gatherings; second, representations and experiences of curling reflect and contribute to the *nisei* goal of achieving full integration into Canadian culture; third, curling provided space for expressions of resiliency, agency and escape through camaraderie and physical movements on the ice.

Keywords:

Japanese Canadian; curling; oral histories; postwar; southern Alberta, Canada

*I've really loved curling and getting together with everybody because it brought old friends together, new friends, and we get to see each other once a year.*

*It was my parents Bob and Toshi Miyanaga that first got me to love curling, because that's all I saw all my life. When I married my husband, he curled for the first time and now all my children curl as well.<sup>2</sup>*

Hollis (Miyanaga) Pickerell, *sansei*, (third generation) Japanese Canadian grew up on a farm near Taber, Alberta where her family grew sugar beets, potatoes, and corn. Since she was a teenager, Hollis has been involved in curling through the Taber Curling Club, and for over 20 years she has been the secretary-treasurer for the Taber organizing committee for the annual Alberta Japanese Canadian Curling Bonspiel (hereafter referred to as the JC Bonspiel).<sup>3</sup> In July 2012, as a guest speaker at an event at the Nikka Yūkō Japanese Garden, in Lethbridge, Alberta, Hollis spoke passionately about her family's involvement in curling, what it meant and still means to her. She shared her own memories and experiences as well as stories of curling that had been passed down to her by her father Bob Miyanaga, and her uncles and other friends and family members who were involved in curling following the relocation of many Japanese Canadian families to southern Alberta during the 1940s. Since she was a child, curling has been a central part of Hollis's life and as the opening quotes above suggest, through curling Hollis and her family and friends found important spaces for community building, self-expression and intergenerational physical activity.

This paper is part of the *Nikkei Memory Capture Project*,<sup>4</sup> a multi-year oral history project that initiates the narration and analysis of the cultural and social history of Japanese Canadians from 1950 to the present in southern Alberta, Canada. We draw on oral histories conducted as part of the *Nikkei Memory Capture Project* to interrogate the cultural practice of curling, near ubiquitous and evocative in the memories shared, as a means and representation of Japanese Canadian integration, civic engagement, community building, resiliency and agency. In southern Alberta during the postwar period, curling, as a physical cultural practice, served several purposes: first, it provides a social space for community renewal through, sometimes Japanese-only, events and gatherings; second, representations and experiences of curling reflect and contribute to the *nisei* goal of achieving full integration into Canadian culture; third, curling provides space for expressions of resiliency, agency and escape through camaraderie and physical movements on the ice.

### ***Nikkei Memory Capture Project: Context and Background***

In 1941, following the Japanese offensive in British Hong Kong and Malaya, the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and Canada's declaration of war, the Canadian government took away the rights of its Japanese Canadian citizens, decimating communities on the west coast of Canada. Families were dislocated and divided, stripped of their homes and businesses, and dispossessed of their property. The Canadian Government systematically incarcerated some 21,500 individuals from British Columbia (95 percent of all Japanese Canadians, the majority of whom were Canadian citizens) and sent them to internment camps, all, allegedly, in the interests of "national security."<sup>5</sup> At the war's end, Prime Minister Mackenzie-King acknowledged that no Japanese was found to be a threat, yet he initiated a program to disperse Japanese Canadians across Canada, east of the Rocky Mountains, and to Japan. The cultural and eugenic implications of this program have led the "Evacuation" to be likened to a 'cultural genocide.'<sup>6</sup> It was not until 1949 that Japanese Canadians

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regained the rights of their Canadian citizenship and were allowed to return to the west coast of Canada.

Southern Alberta was home to Canada's third largest post-war concentration of Japanese Canadians. Many Japanese Canadians were relocated to this region between 1942-1949 and a great number remained to rebuild their lives and communities during the postwar period. Much of the research on the 'Evacuation' as the internment of Japanese Canadians is euphemistically known, to draw on the words of sociologist Pamela Sugiman, has 'highlighted the emptiness of life, confiscation of property, denial of opportunity, violation of rights, and enduring losses.'<sup>7</sup> Research about Japanese Canadian victimization and inter-generational trauma across the latter half of the twentieth century has seen a diverse array of approaches: critical race and gender theory frameworks that develop powerful oral history analyses;<sup>8</sup> heritage and memorialization;<sup>9</sup> elite and grassroots political activism in the early postwar decades;<sup>10</sup> as well as artistic and museum representations.<sup>11</sup> Certainly, scholarship has documented the racial politics and personal impact of the internment across generations of Japanese Canadians and armed the 1980s movement for Redress with pivotal evidence that has charted postwar Japanese Canadian political activism.<sup>12</sup>

What has become clear through the *Nikkei Memory Capture Project* oral histories is that the powerlessness and devastation and the dominant histories of 'suffering, hardship, and injustice' that surround this historical moment are complicated, multi-faceted, and messy.<sup>13</sup> Many of the histories about the Japanese Canadian experience are damage-centred in that, in the words of Unangax scholar Eve Tuck, it is 'research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation.'<sup>14</sup> According to Tuck, 'in a damage-centred framework, pain and loss are documented in order to obtain particular political or material gains.'<sup>15</sup> This was the case with the Redress movement in the 1980s – in this case stories of damage, as Tuck writes, 'pa[id] off in material, sovereign, and political wins.'<sup>16</sup> In 1988, the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) and the government of Canada came to a Redress agreement with in which the government issued an apology for the wrongs the nation committed, offered symbolic payments to individuals and to the community, and provided funding to establish the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to 'foster racial harmony and cross-cultural understanding and help to eliminate racism' in Canada.<sup>17</sup>

While Redress marked a pivotal moment in Japanese Canadian histories and experiences, the danger in damage-centred research is that 'it is a pathologizing approach in which the oppression [in the case of Japanese Canadians – the internment] singularly defines a community.'<sup>18</sup> Certainly, the years following Redress have led to films, memoirs and museum exhibits. Yet, these representations of Japanese Canadian histories tend to reinforce a hegemonic historical narrative that in many ways position the histories of Japanese Canadians as emerging from the internment, and, more problematically, ending with, Redress. Much of what has been written is framed in the long shadow of Redress with the master narrative focusing on the war and internment. In an attempt to move away from damage-centred research, we seek to create new spaces within this body of literature by focusing on two often forgotten or overlooked "areas" – geographically, the area of southern Alberta in Canada, a central point of intra-Canadian transit and residence for thousands of Japanese Canadians between 1942-1949 and beyond, and sport – a cultural practice that was central to the lives of many Japanese Canadians as they rebuilt their communities in the postwar era. By examining moments of agency and resiliency, experiences of everyday life, such as those happening on the sports fields and rinks, are situated within broader social and cultural contexts to consider sport and recreation as embodied expressions of space in Japanese Canadian communities in

southern Alberta. Oral stories about the experiences of the everyday lead to a deeper understanding of the ‘complexity, contradiction’ and value of the lived lives of Japanese Canadians in southern Alberta. In the words of Tuck, ‘such an axiology is intent on depathologizing the experiences of dispossessed and disenfranchised communities so that people are seen as more than broken or conquered.’<sup>19</sup> We call for such an axiological sensitivity as we consider how our interviewees’ memories and experiences of curling point to the ways memories of curling, and sport and recreation more broadly, complicate dominant narratives of Japanese Canadians in southern Alberta during the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

As the *Nikkei Memory Capture Project* has revealed, and scholars of the “everyday” have argued, banal and significant moments making up daily life are often remembered in disconnected and episodic ways, mixing fact and feeling to create textured impressions, a ‘bricolage’ of experience belying linear narratives.<sup>20</sup> All oral stories are partial, perspectival, self-conscious, and fluid.<sup>21</sup> They are a product of conversations, relationships, of questions asked and answered, and they meaningfully connect the past to the present.<sup>22</sup> As historian Alessandro Portelli reminds us: ‘Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and now what they think they did.’<sup>23</sup> For this project, relationships with our interviewees were forged through several public events in the summer of 2017 that celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Nikka Yūkō Japanese Canadian Garden in Lethbridge, Alberta and through the Nikkei Cultural Society of Lethbridge and Surrounding Area.<sup>24</sup> The interviews were coded to facilitate content and discourse analysis, with particular attention paid to the ways in which the postwar period was narrated through key episodes and over-arching stories that related to everyday life. One of the themes that emerged with regularity in many of the interviews as our interviewees shared stories about their lives, was the importance of sport and recreation experiences. Positioning curling as a lens through which to focus on moments of everyday life and explore the memories generated and passed down intergenerationally, points to how we might value the Japanese Canadian past in innovative and creative ways, affirming its place in our shared sport histories as Canadians, and the active role we can all play in the generation of histories, identities, and futurities.

Historical research on sport and recreation in Japanese Canadian communities has mostly focused on the famous Asahi baseball team from Vancouver, the emergence of baseball in the internment camps as teams were formed by some of the Asahi players who had been relocated, as well as judo practices during the interwar years.<sup>25</sup> Scholars interested in these areas argue that what occurred in these sporting spaces was ‘inextricably linked to issues around assimilation, resistance, ethnicity, and identity formation.’<sup>26</sup> Baseball historian William Humber suggests that ‘in choosing to play baseball young Nisei’s were simply following the customs of virtually every new ethnic group who saw baseball as a passport to acceptance, integration and not incidentally good times.’<sup>27</sup> Yet, as sport scholar Shannon Jette writes, ‘to view “sport” as simply a game...is to ignore its multilayered and complex nature.’<sup>28</sup> Certainly, these bodily practices were linked to broader social, political and economic structures shaping everyday life in postwar southern Alberta.

Although there has been much written on Japanese participation and success in baseball, specifically the Asahi team from Vancouver, there is a dearth of information on the ways in which sport and recreation practices were used as a means for community engagement and renewal during the postwar period. This omission is reasonable given the need to address and examine more pressing issues such as processes and practices of integration, relocation and redress. When viewed in this way within a broader social framework, research that explores the role of sport in the postwar

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period seems like an inconsequential undertaking. However, the memories and experiences of our interviewees reveal that sport, and more specifically curling, played an important, and in some people's lives, central role for maintaining social contacts, as a respite from hard labour and the pressures of family life. It was an important social space for gathering with friends old and new, and for shared intergenerational time through a physical cultural practice during the postwar period.

### **Japanese Canadian Curling Bonspiel: 'It's About the Granddaughter Curling with the Uncle, and the Grandpa.'**<sup>29</sup>

From February 14-16, 2020, Lethbridge hosted the 68<sup>th</sup> annual Alberta Japanese Canadian curling bonspiel. First started in 1953 as a small eight-team event, six decades later it has grown into a three-day tournament with more than fifty teams each year. Attracting participants from across Alberta, British Columbia, and occasionally from other parts of Canada and Japan,<sup>30</sup> the itinerary for the weekend includes social events, opportunities for shared food and drink, a silent auction, Hall of Fame inductions, a banquet, a junior clinic for children ages five and older to encourage younger players to take up the game, and other entertainments – the tournament is about much more than curling. The purpose of the bonspiel, as written by the organizers, is 'to bring members of the Japanese Canadian community together to celebrate the sport of curling as well as our common heritage.'<sup>31</sup>

The cultural practice of curling, and more specifically the annual JC Bonspiel event, represents a site of agency and resistance as Japanese Canadians use this space to renew and create new friendships, to socialize, to challenge social exclusion and shape their sense of place, identity, and community. To this end, the "space" of the JC bonspiel, the curling rink, is relational and fluid. It is both shaped by and productive of social and political relations.<sup>32</sup> Patricia Vertinsky explores the meaning of de Certeau's (1984) conceptualization of 'space as a practiced place,' in her examination of the gymnasium and how it produces social relations and disciplinary knowledge.<sup>33</sup> We conceptualize the spatiality of the curling rink, the physical space in which the JC Bonspiel takes place, 'in a highly active and politically enabling manner.'<sup>34</sup> It is a highly social space with heated areas offering comfortable places for participants to sit, to gather, to have a drink and chat about the tournament. This space is a practiced place.<sup>35</sup> The curling rink, defined by the sheets of ice, the backboards, rocks, and brooms is transformed into a space by the curlers and spectators and the physical practices that take place on and off the ice that constitute how the space is experienced and produced.

The production of the "place" of sporting practices, and specifically the productive potential inherent in the curling rink, is meaningful as curling is recognized as a quintessentially Canadian cultural practice. Imported by early Scottish settlers in the late eighteenth-century, curling has contributed to cultural understandings of Canada and has long been linked to Canadian national identity through settler colonial legacies.<sup>36</sup> Curling has been a popular sport in Canada since the early 1900s and was played long before that across the country, expanding with the western movement of the railroad in the nineteenth century. According to historian Karen Wall, 'from the 1950s to the end of the 1970s prairie people led the country in curling. In 1960-61, for instance the region held 17 percent of Canada's population but 66 percent of the nation's curling clubs and 48 percent of all curlers.'<sup>37</sup> Indeed, as leisure studies scholar Heather Mair argues, curling has played a part in 'the construction of social identities at the local community and national level in Canada'<sup>38</sup> Yet, despite curling's connection to Canadian national identity, the history of the sport in Canada has not received the same academic attention as other quintessentially Canadian sports, such as ice

Carly Adams and Darren J. Aoki (Forthcoming). *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 37 (14). hockey.<sup>39</sup> Sociologists Kristi Allain and Barbara Marshall suggest that this may be due to the relatively recent professionalization and commercialization of the sport.<sup>40</sup>

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Born in British Columbia in the early 1930s and relocated to southern Alberta with his family in 1946, “Shun” explained that in the early 1950s, the idea for the JC Bonspiel was developed during conversations among Japanese men playing poker. He recalled that one night while playing poker, someone said ‘Hey, why don’t we have a bonspiel?’<sup>41</sup> Curling has long been conceptualized, and perhaps romanticized, as a sport centred around the sociability of events that welcome all abilities and ages and tied to rural rinks and rural community recreational and sporting practices.<sup>42</sup> Oral histories of the sport in southern Alberta Japanese communities, speak to this social aspect of the sport. The JC Bonspiel began as social gathering among mostly men,<sup>43</sup> an event that over the years became quite competitive. The early bonspiels were described as “wild times for the men, most of whom were young single and sewing wild oats.”<sup>44</sup> Because they were playing on natural ice, sometimes the curling matches were all-night affairs. The weather needed to be cold for the ice to freeze properly to allow the rocks to curl. “Shun” recalled: ‘You used to have it so that we had to curl all night almost because we couldn't curl in the daytime because it’d be too slushy, the ice.’<sup>45</sup> Hollis too, recalled anecdotes passed down by her father and uncles of late night matches: ‘I’ve heard stories too where since it was a natural ice, if it was too warm, ... they would go for 24hrs. If it was too warm they would have to wait for the ice to freeze, so they’d then be curling at midnight or 2 o’clock in the morning to get the games in.’<sup>46</sup> The curling matches often took place alongside or were followed by all-night poker matches. Tosh Kanashiro, born in Ocean Falls, British Columbia in 1938 was relocated to a sugar beet farm near Iron Springs, Alberta. He became involved in curling after moving to Lethbridge in the late 1950s. Tosh explained that “evacuees” who came to southern Alberta brought their love of sport with them as they settled into the many villages and small towns to which they had been relocated. In the summer, they congregated at the ball diamond and in the winter the curling rink. He suggested that sport was an ‘important way for the Japanese community to get together socially.’<sup>47</sup>

The first JC Bonspiel was held in Lethbridge on March 29, 1953. Eight teams competed, one each from Lethbridge, Raymond, Coaldale and Brooks, with two from each of Picture Butte and Taber. The entry fee was eight dollars and each team played two four-end games.<sup>48</sup> Curling was a new game to Japanese Canadians in southern Alberta. The winners of the first JC Bonspiel in 1953, Jim Hironaka, Sak Saruwatari, Yosh Takaguchi and Spud Kitagawa from Raymond, Alberta (see figure 1) learned the sport through the Raymond Curling Club in the early 1950s and were considered veterans of curling within the Japanese Canadian community. After winning the bonspiel two years in a row in 1953 and 1954, the four men were forced to separate and find new teams due to a rule change implemented by the JC Bonspiel organizing committee that prohibited them from playing together in the 1955 bonspiel. In an article in the 2002 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary JC Bonspiel program, Dawn Sugimoto writes, “three of the four [men] went on to compete in other JCCA Bonspiels with other teammates, bringing strength and experience to new teams and helping spread interest in the sport.”<sup>49</sup>



Figure 1: Spud Kitagawa, Yosh Takaguchi, Sak Saruwatari, Jim Hironaka. Winners of the JC Bonspiel in 1953 and 1954.

Since the 1950s, the JC Bonspiel has been an annual winter tradition in many Japanese Canadian families in Alberta. A number of our collaborators spoke passionately about their involvement and their family's involvement in the event, often remembered in fragmentary and episodic ways through shared anecdotes and stories that have been passed down from generation to generation from fathers and mothers to sons and daughters – stories that take the form of folklore and legend through the recounting of exceptional acts and individuals. When asked about the early days of the bonspiel and some of the oldest members, Kazumi “Tricky” Oikawa’s name is often mentioned first. Born in 1931 in New Westminster, British Columbia and relocated with his family to Picture Butte, Tricky is reputed to have played in every bonspiel from 1953 until he passed away at the age of 82 in 2013. A decorated curler, capturing the men’s title four times (1955, 1965, 1968 and 1970), he was once described by the local press as the ‘smooth, cigar-smoking skip.’<sup>50</sup>

A requirement for participation in the JC Bonspiel, continued since its inception in 1953 is that participants must be of Japanese descent or married to someone of Japanese descent. “Shun” recalled a Chinese friend asking why he could not play and the awkwardness of having to explain to him that the event was about creating a place for a Japanese Canadian-only gathering: ‘... I had a Chinese friend, they wouldn't let him in. I says, “What’s the difference? ... He’s Chinese, he’s more Oriental than these guys that’s married to a Japanese girl.”’<sup>51</sup> “Shun” explained that his friend grew up with the Japanese community and was considered family by many. Yet, despite this he was not welcome to participate in this curling event. This rule is still enforced as a requirement for participation. Hollis suggested the continuation of this rule is about maintaining the uniqueness of the JC Bonspiel as an event run specifically by and for Japanese Canadians with the intent of fostering relationships and connections within the Japanese Canadian community. She explained, if there was not this rule, ‘you just lose all that connection because there’ll be just different people coming and going.’<sup>52</sup>

By the 1960s, the event had become so popular among Japanese Canadian teams across Alberta and British Columbia it was difficult to accommodate all of the teams. Calgary was the host city for the first time in 1961 and Edmonton hosted in 1972. In 1973, a commemorative *Lethbridge Herald* newspaper edition featured the JC Bonspiel on its front page declaring the event ‘the largest

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Japanese Canadian event of its kind in the world.<sup>53</sup> Tosh Kanashiro explains the importance of this recognition:

This is 1973, if you consider that the Japanese really weren't given back their civil rights until 1948-49 and within that period of time these guys [the JC Bonspiel co-organizers Push Matsumiya and Jim Shigehiro] had established a well enough relationship with the people at the *Herald* to get them to do this for us – it was significant. At the time, of course you don't think of it, but now that we're looking back at that history and thinking about how the integration and assimilation worked and why so quickly, some of these things pop up and you think, that's odd. Especially when we were designated as enemy aliens, to actually be able to have sufficient contact within the community to be able to pull that off. Because, I have never ever seen or heard of the *Herald* doing that for anybody else. It was just the one-shot deal and it just coincidentally happened to be the year that we won [the JC Bonspiel].'

Laughing Tosh added, 'That was a one-off thing too.'<sup>54</sup> The JC Bonspiel hosted 48 men's rinks and 24 women's rinks in 1985, the largest event yet. This record attendance was perhaps due to the participation of two teams from Obihiro, Japan.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, 1985 marked a significant year in the development of the JC Bonspiel as a twinning ceremony took place during the tournament to recognize and formalize relationships between the two curling communities:

We, the undersigned, the Presidents of the Lethbridge Curling Club of Lethbridge, Canada and the Obihiro Curling Association of Obihiro, Japan do hereby proclaim the twinning of our two curling organizations. The purposes of this affiliation are to promote the game of curling in our respective countries and to develop a mutual understanding and friendship between our organizations. We pledge that the affiliation will be dedicated to the improvement and the development of international curling and to strengthening the ties that all curlers share – signed this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 1985, in Lethbridge Canada.<sup>56</sup>

In this way, the JC Bonspiel fosters relationships and connections beyond fellow Nikkei living within Canada's national borders. It also facilitated trans-pacific connections to Japan.<sup>57</sup>

It was the social gathering aspect of the event that attracted Hollis' father to the sport. When reflecting on why the JC Bonspiel was so important to her Dad and other evacuees, she explained:

In the olden days when it was super competitive, they still had hospitality rooms. The Vancouver people would come with all of their seafood. So after curling everybody would have different parties in their rooms. And, you would go visit these rooms because they had sushi, shrimp and crab, all this cool food. That was a big thing for my Dad. ... You got to meet with your old friends from Vancouver, and drink, and eat some good food.

In ways like this, community organizers and participants assigned their own meaning to the sport through this event. They created a Japanese-centred space, and developed unique traditions related to the event in keeping with Japanese cultural understandings. The annual curling bonspiel is about more than curling; it is about cultural expression, social belonging, and finding strength in community gatherings.

Since the 1960s, the tournament has lost some of its intense competitiveness as it became an intergenerational, family-focused gathering. 'There is a still a bit of competitiveness, but it is about the family getting together ...' Hollis explained, 'I curl with my dad and my nieces.' In Hollis' view, 'it's not about winning, it's about the granddaughter curling with the uncle, and the grandpa ... It's fun to do something together' as a family. 'Even my nieces who aren't curlers, they'll curl in it [the JC Bonspiel]. And, they don't care if they are good or bad, yeah they want to win but ... all of the cousins are together and grandpa's going to be there and we all get to hang out ... it's a big thing to get together as cousins and just hang out and play the game.'<sup>58</sup> Stories like these speak to

the ways in which the curling rink was a space for community respite, social gathering and friendly competition. Japanese Canadian organizers and participants shape the bonspiel, the structure, practices and social events, associated with the sporting practices in ways that create a meaningful cultural space for those who participate. When asked why the JC Bonspiel has been so important to the Japanese Canadian community in southern Alberta for over six decades, Hollis explained, ‘It’s been the whole gathering, right? Of old friends, you know even though they got relocated, at least once a year some of that same group is getting back together and maybe to start out making new friends, right? Being in the same situation and then it just grew...it was fun to see each other once a year.’<sup>59</sup> Indeed, it has become an inter-generational social gathering as much as annual sporting event.

### **‘It was Like Seeing the World Differently:’ The Women’s Division and Expressions of Agency and Resiliency**

Although some women entered the JC Bonspiel in the 1950s and 1960s as part of mixed teams, the ‘Ladies’ division was not added until the winter of 1968. The division consisted of eight teams: two from Lethbridge, two from Taber, and individual teams from Rainier, Calgary, Raymond and Picture Butte. Elsie (Shigehiro) Sasaki was involved in getting the organizers of the JC Bonspiel to establish the division for women. Born in Langley Prairie, British Columbia, as one of fourteen children, Elsie has been an avid curler for almost 70 years – indeed she still curls three times a week at the age of 86.<sup>60</sup> She fondly recalls, ‘I remember the first time I entered the Japanese Bonspiel. There was no ladies’ division at the time. I curled with my brothers in Taber in an all-nighter. No sleep – it was exhausting.’<sup>61</sup> By the late 1960s Elsie was also an avid curler in a women’s league in Taber; she was eager for a women’s division to be added to the JC Bonspiel. She recalls getting some of the women together and approaching the organizers to add the new division.

The 1960s and 1970s was a transitional, uncertain and difficult period for women’s sport in Canada. There were significant changes taking place in the political and administrative structure in Canadian sport as well as the meaning of sport in the national imagination. Women athletes, leaders and organizers were often left out of decision-making processes with the increasing professionalization and commercialization of men’s sport.<sup>62</sup> There were only a few women’s sport governing bodies speaking on behalf of women and curling was one of them – it was in 1960 that the Canadian Ladies Curling Association was formed. Indeed, despite the tenuous nature of women’s sport, women’s curling was growing across the country in both urban and rural areas. In Western Canada the rink was increasingly becoming a space for women, especially married women, to be active. Women like Elsie, advocating for and developing the game in rural areas, were part of this growth.

From the first time Elsie saw the rocks sliding down the ice in the late 1950s, she was hooked. She recalled: ‘I learn a lot from watching them [the men]. In those days the men curled in their leather dress shoes and used rubbers [ice grippers] as well. The corn brooms were hilarious. The whole atmosphere fascinated me. It just fascinated me, the ice, and the rocks, those big rocks, 42 pounds and then the brooms and the sweeping. I thought, wow, this is a great sport. So, I joined the Taber Ladies’ League a year later. It was just fun to go and participate in something different, something that really attracted me.’ Elsie spoke passionately about the meaningful conversations that took place off the ice with the other women: ‘Most of us were housewives...so it was nice as a housewife to get out and enjoy something other than your own home life .... All of their husbands would have different occupations and we used to talk about what they did, the latest in food, latest news, everything. Someone would say, “Have you read the paper?” Did you see ...?’<sup>63</sup>

Elsie recalls being both fascinated with the sport but also incredibly frustrated – frustrated that there was no one in southern Alberta teaching or coaching curling. She shared: ‘There was no teaching back then but I kept watching the men whenever I could. Soon I bought a Ken Watson paperback, as he was demonstrating a leather slider glued on to a boot or shoe. How quickly that slider changed the game of curling! Any chance I got, I would read up information or buy books to get the latest information .... But no one really took us out and taught us how to deliver. I was not happy about not having curling clinics for new or prospective curlers like myself. I enquired and asked if there were teaching courses for curling.’ Elsie was determined to change this – to create a space where the game could be taught to those who wanted to learn. In the early 1970s, Elsie took courses with the national curling association and soon earned her instructors’ pin. She began teaching at the Taber Curling Club. She was then asked to go to other clubs to teach. She recalls, ‘I taught in our club’ in Taber ‘anybody who wanted to learn we’d have them come. Back then most of the women didn’t work .... Back then the ladies could come in the afternoon. Elsie also reflected on the challenges of being a woman and teaching men: I taught some men too, but they have a harder time learning something new like that and being taught by somebody else.’ Elsie also inspired her three daughters get involved in the sport (see figure 2). Wanda, Elsie’s middle daughter, spoke with pride about following in her mother’s footsteps as a curling instructor and coach. She shared: ‘I ended up getting certified too, as an instructor, and actually I coached Hollis [Pickerell] and a group of girls.’<sup>64</sup>



Figure 2: Elsie and her three daughters, Kendy, Linda and Wanda.

In her 2004 article, ‘Passing Time, Moving Memories,’ Sugiman writes: ‘the pain caused to all persons of Japanese descent by the Canadian government’s actions during the years of the Second World War is etched in my memory. It has become an integral part of my existence, as well as the defining moment in my own family’s history.’ So too is this etched in the memories of Elsie and her daughters. It is a defining moment in their family history. Kendy, Elsie’s youngest daughter, reflecting on why curling was so important to her mom, shared: ‘It was a way out for her. It was her way of giving back but also her way of escaping ....’<sup>65</sup>

In 1942, the Shigehiro family, Elsie's family, was forced to leave their home as part of the mass evacuation. In recounting this time of her life, Elsie recalled:

I was too young to understand how the government went about kicking us out of the province, confiscating all of our properties and treating us Japanese Canadians horribly. To this day, I know it hurt very deeply. Dad never recovered from being forced out of his home and land to a new area in Alberta doing sugar beets for mere pennies. Certainly not enough to make a living off of. I remember my Mom going to town in Raymond and asking for credit during the winter and spring months. We were lucky because they did extend ... credit. The boys went to work out somewhere in the bush or feeding cattle or any odd jobs to put food on the table. Slowly we could manage with everyone contributing. Life became a little easier.<sup>66</sup>

After finishing Grade 11, Elsie left school to work and help her family. A year later she moved to Lethbridge to attend Garbutt's Business College. For Elsie at the age of 18, this was her first time away from home. She recalled:

My brother Jim wanted me to go to Garbutt's College in Lethbridge. He said you need to do something for yourself. I'm going to send you to Garbutt's. I had to go live with this lady and gentleman, who I won't name – she was a bear, a bear. She said you have to do this and this and this and I don't want you to do that and that and that. I earned my way by cleaning her house and helping cooking. Cook, clean, dust, scrub, whatever.<sup>67</sup>

While she thought she was moving there to be part of their family and live with them while going to school, doing some housework to earn her keep, in reality Elsie was a domestic servant. She shared:

It was brutal for me. They ate in the dining room and I ate in the kitchen by myself. It was a first time for many things for me. The lady told me I wouldn't be able to go home for a month. She must have seen my eyes tearing up because she quickly said 'maybe sooner, we will see. All I remember is working harder for her than doing my homework at Garbutt's Business College.'

In reflecting on her life and the significant moments in her life, Elsie went immediately to reflecting on meeting her husband and the importance of curling. Elsie met her husband Ken on the ball diamond – an important place for community gatherings. She recalled, 'My older brother started a ball team on a Sunday ... The boys used to get a whole bunch of the Japanese people together and used to have ball games out in this prairie field. And that's where he was playing, my husband. He's taller than all of the Japanese and he played first base. He liked ball. In BC, in Mission, he used to play ball.'<sup>68</sup> When reflecting on curling she shared:

Curling was really important in my life. It was the beginning for me to begin who I am today and happy. It's been a tough road but really rewarding. And, my kids, I love my kids oh my gosh, family is the most important thing. Probably one of the best things that ever happened, was to join curling. It gave me a new life to look at. I knew it was going to be hard, living together and starting out farming, I knew it was going to be hard, but I was okay with that. But the curling just brought new life into me. It was like seeing the world differently.

Certainly, Elsie's life history and her memories of sport, of community gatherings, successes and celebrations are not uncomplicated. They reflect the enduring trauma of internment and relocation.. But for Elsie, her bodily movements on the ice, her efforts to grow curling in her rural community, the camaraderie and escape it brought her are also important expressions of resiliency and renewal. Elsie's life histories speak to the ways in which these postwar memories of resettlement are complicated and multi-faceted and they challenge the notion that one story – the story of

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dispossession and oppression, can singularly define Japanese Canadian's life histories. Elsie actively sought to develop curling in southern Alberta and spent hours teaching, coaching and developing the game. These stories of agency and resiliency need to be recognised in our historical understandings of Japanese Canadian postwar renewal.

### **The JC Bonspiel and the Curling Rink as a 'Practiced Place'**

For many of the Japanese Canadians interviewed as part of the *Nikkei Memory Capture Project*, the postwar period is remembered as one of renewal and integration. Yet Japanese Canadians are not hapless victims of Canadian assimilationist rhetoric but are instead influential in terms of the boundaries they subvert, the relationships they innovate and the hybrid identities they invent.<sup>69</sup> In the 1950s and beyond, the Japanese Canadian community actively engaged in integration strategies that, on one level, seemed actively to turn away from their recent history, and in turn their cultural heritage and identity: encouraging children to only speak English and to have non-Japanese friends. They also encouraged their children to engage in popular "Canadian" activities, such as hockey, curling and bowling.<sup>70</sup> But in fact, these strategies shaped integration to be a process that might paradoxically affirm Japanese identity. In this light, integration was not simply a process of loss, but a creative act to navigate the degradations of the recent past – the degradations of war and prewar racist exclusions.<sup>71</sup>

As historian Colin Howell writes:

over the years, Canadian sport has been a collective exercise ... it has involved struggle, conflict, and resistance, as well as attempts to exercise social control and maintain hegemonic authority. At times sport has involved struggles for liberation, and contributed to self-determination and self-awareness, and provided a way for disadvantaged constituencies and cultural groups to assert the values of their communities.<sup>72</sup>

This willful intent to cast off the degradations of the Second World War in these ways was supported by a long history of institutions, communities and individuals turning to sport and physical activity as a means of integration, as by the 1940s there was a firmly held belief that 'British and Canadian games could serve as agents of cultural socialization.'<sup>73</sup> Integration for Japanese Canadians in southern Alberta was not straight-forward; it was tenuous, on-going, and multi-valent. It was about both becoming part of the Canadian nation through successful integration while also finding spaces, such as the JC Bonspiel for fostering and building anew, Japanese Canadian identities and cultures. Individuals actively shaped their own lives and were not merely passive recipients of postwar Canadian assimilationist strategies.

In the life histories of Japanese Canadians, stories of sport, recreation and leisure, of community gatherings and celebrations, such as Tosh's memories of winning the 1973 bonspiel and Elsie's role in developing curling in Taber, are complicated. They are always already tied to memories of internment, relocation and resettlement during the postwar, to decisions about where and how to build community and how to "be" in their everyday lives, to memories of intentional and unconscious integration practices among the community, family and in individual actions. The cultural practice of curling, and more specifically the annual JC Bonspiel event, represents an ongoing site of agency and resistance as Japanese Canadians use this space shape their sense of place, identity. In this sense, the space of the curling rink and the annual curling bonspiel event, is a 'practiced place.'<sup>74</sup> Situating curling practices and the annual bonspiel in this way and viewing it as active and politically enabling, helps to provide deeper understandings of the multifaceted

Carly Adams and Darren J. Aoki (Forthcoming). *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 37 (14). 13 complexities and the agency of the experiences of Japanese Canadians during the postwar in southern Alberta. The stories and memories shared through oral histories from the *Nikkei Memory Capture Project* complicate dominant narratives of Japanese Canadians in southern Alberta and point to the ways the histories of oppression and injustice are also stories of strength, hope, desire, agency and resiliency.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Interview with “Shun”, March 25, 2013, by author 2, notes in possession of the author. Anonymized by request..

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Hollis (Miyayaga) Pickerell, March 9, 2018, Lethbridge, Alberta, by author 1, notes in possession of the author.

<sup>3</sup> A bonspiel is multi-day, multi-team curling tournament. For more on the development of curling in Canada, see Heather Mair. "Curling in Canada: From Gathering Place to International Spectacle." *International Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue internationale d'études canadiennes* 35 (2007): 39-60.

<sup>4</sup> The term Nikkei comes directly from the Japanese language and the characters that make it up (日 = *nichi* or *ni* = Japan; 系 = *kei* = lineage/descent) translate to ‘of Japanese descent’. The Nikkei Memory Capture Project uses it as it has been embraced by Japanese diasporic communities and identities around the world as a creative term, one that speaks to the ‘Trans-Pacific’ focus and inter-individual collaborative ethos of our larger project. In this paper, Nikkei will be used interchangeably with Japanese Canadian or Japanese, terms which were more frequently heard amongst our interviewees as they described themselves and their communities. We have met over 100 individuals as part of this larger oral history project exploring the postwar experience of Japanese Canadians in southern Alberta, one of Canada’s largest Japanese Canadian populations. Although the interviews we draw on in this article are too few to be representative of the wider Japanese Canadian experience in southern Alberta, they shed light on the place of sport and recreation in the postwar experience and point to the ways in which the cultural practice of curling, and more specifically the annual JC Bonspiel event, represents an ongoing site of agency and resistance.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the internment see Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians*. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976). Ann Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Kirsten Emiko McAllister’s discussion on collective forms of remembering political violence in *Terrain of Memory: A Japanese Canadian Memorial Project* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 12-15.

<sup>7</sup> Pamela Sugiman, ‘I Can Hear Lois Now: Corrections to My Story of the Internment of Japanese Canadians—For the Record,’ in *Oral History Off the Record*, eds. Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 149-167.

<sup>8</sup> Mona Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of the Internment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Pamela Sugiman, "Memories of Internment: Narrating Japanese Canadian Women's Life Stories," *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 29 no. 3 (2004): 359-388. Pamela Sugiman, “‘Life is Sweet’: Vulnerability and Composure in the Wartime Narratives of Japanese Canadians,” *Journal of Canadian studies* 43, no. 1 (2009): 186-218.

<sup>9</sup> See Kirsten Emiko McAllister, "Archive and Myth: The Changing Memoryscape of Japanese Canadian Internment Camps." In *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada*, eds. John C. Walsh and James William Opp (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010): 215-46.

<sup>10</sup> See Patricia E. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941-67* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007); Aya Fujiwara, ‘Japanese-Canadian Internally Displaced Persons: Labour Relations and Ethno-Religious Identity in Southern Alberta, 1942-1953’, *Labour/Le Travail*, 69 (2012): 63-89; Masako Iino, *Nikkei Kanadajin no rekishi* [The History of the Canadians of Japanese Descent] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> See for example, Joy Kogawa, Joy. *Obasan* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd., 1981); Mieko Ouchi, *Shepherd's Pie and Sushi*, 100 Miles Film Group and National Film Board of Canada, 1998; Anne Wheeler, *The War Between Us*, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1995; *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta*, Glenbow Museum. <https://www.glenbow.org/media/MavericksMediaKit2007.pdf> (accessed January 6, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> See for example Roy Miki. *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* Vancouver: Raincoat Books, 2005); Sunahara, ‘The Politics of Racism.’

<sup>13</sup> Sugiman, ‘I Can Hear Lois Now,’ 149.

<sup>14</sup> Eve Tuck, ‘Suspending damage: A letter to communities.’ *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 409-428.

We are cognizant that we are drawing on Unangax scholar Eve Tuck frequently in framing our analysis and discussion. We do not mean to suggest that we are engaged in the specific project that Tuck describes; instead we cite Tuck and her

important theorization of damage-centred research to point to the current framing of much of the research related in the Japanese Canadian experience. Following Tuck's lead, we call for an axiological shift that creates more space within Japanese Canadian scholarship to consider acts of resiliency and agency.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 413.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 414.

<sup>17</sup> See Canadian Race Relations Foundation. <https://www.crrf-fcrr.ca/en/about/crrf-about> (accessed January 6, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> Tuck, 'Suspending Damage,' 413.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 416.

<sup>20</sup> See Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Susan Geiger, 'What's so feminist about women's oral history?' *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 1 (1990): 180.

<sup>22</sup> Emily Honig, 'Striking lives: Oral history and the politics of memory,' *Journal of Women's History* 9, no. 1 (1997): 140.

<sup>23</sup> Alessandro Portelli, 'The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event.' In *The death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991): 1-26.

<sup>24</sup> A brief note about positionality - As a research team we relate to the stories and histories shared by our interviewees in different ways. Author 1 is known in the Lethbridge community as a sport historian and it is through this that connections with many of the community members involved in this research have been forged. Author 1 is often asked about her sport experience and background. It is through these interactions that her "authority" as a researcher is questioned and confirmed as relationships are fostered and experiences shared despite being an outsider to the Lethbridge Japanese Canadian community. Author 2 on the other hand is very much an insider. He is a *Sansei* within the Japanese Canadian community in Lethbridge. He was born and raised in Lethbridge and his family is well known within our research community. Author 2 is also a recognised historian of Japan and Japanese culture. Sport and recreation, however, has not been a space of connection or an area of research for him. Our research team is further made up of undergraduate and graduate students in history and kinesiology, some who have been with the project since its inception in 2017. Given these dynamics and the rich and diverse experiences and backgrounds we bring, as a team we have ongoing conversations about "doing history" exploring how co-creative practices and shared authority through oral histories can challenge the power dynamics that shape historical knowledge.

<sup>25</sup> Pat Adachi, *Asahi: A Legend in Baseball* (Etobicoke: Asahi Baseball Organization, 1992); Shannon Jette. 'Little/Big Ball: The Vancouver Asahi Baseball Story,' *Sport History Review* 38, no. 1 (2007): 1-16; Anne Doré, 'Japanese-Canadian sport history in the Fraser Valley: Judo and baseball in the interwar years,' *Journal of Sport History* 29, no. 3 (2002): 439-456.

<sup>26</sup> Jette, 'Little/Big Ball,' 1.

<sup>27</sup> William Humber, *Diamonds of the North: A Concise History of Baseball in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995),

<sup>28</sup> Jette, 'Little/Big Ball,' 12.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Hollis Pickerell.

<sup>30</sup> To our knowledge, Japanese Americans have not participated in the annual JC Bonspiel. For more on the ties between Japanese Canadians and Japanese Americans see Louis Fiset, and Gail M. Nomura. *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Mark and Cheryl McDonald, *60th Anniversary JC Bonspiel program*, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1974).

<sup>33</sup> See Patricia Vertinsky, 'Locating "A Sense of Place,": Space, Place and Gender in the Gymnasium.' In *Sites of Sports, Space, Place, Experience*, eds. Patricia Vertinsky and John Bale (New York: Routledge, 2004), 8-24.

<sup>34</sup> Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 250.

<sup>35</sup> See Patricia Vertinsky, 'Locating "A Sense of Place,": Space, Place and Gender in the Gymnasium.' In *Sites of Sports, Space, Place, Experience*, eds. Patricia Vertinsky and John Bale (New York: Routledge, 2004), 8-24. See also Carly Adams, 'Troubling Bodies: The "Canadian Girl," the Ice Rink and the Banff Winter Carnival,' *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 48 no. 3 (2014): 200-220.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen, G. Weiting and D. Lamoureux, 'Curling in Canada.' In *Sport and Memory in North America*, ed. Stephen G. Weiting (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2001), 140-153.

<sup>37</sup> Karen Wall, *Game Plan: A Social History of Sport in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2012), 101. For more on curling in Western Canada see also, Vera Pezer, *The Stone Age: A Social History of Curling on the Prairies* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Mair, 'Curling in Canada,' 39; Heather Mair, 'Club life: Third Place and Shared Leisure in Rural Canada,' *Leisure Sciences* 31 no. 5 (2009): 450-465.

<sup>39</sup> Some exceptions include, Pezer, *The Stone Age*; Weiting and Lamoureux, 'Curling in Canada,' 140-153; Morris Mott and J. Allardyce, *Curling Capital: Winnipeg and the Roaring Game, 1876-1988* (Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg Press, 1989); Doug Maxwell, *Canada Curls: the Illustrated History of Curling in Canada* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> Kristi A. Allain and Barbara Marshall, "'Buff boys" with Brooms: Shifting Representations of Masculinity in Canadian Men's Curling,' *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 13 no. 2 (2018): 119-135.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with "Shun".

<sup>42</sup> See Weiting and Lamoureux, 'Curling in Canada,' 140-153 and Mair, 'Club Life,' 450-465.

<sup>43</sup> A women's league was not introduced until the 1960s, however, some women occasionally played on the men's teams.

<sup>44</sup> Dawn Sugimoto, 'Remembering the Good Old Days,' *Japanese Canadian 50<sup>th</sup> Bonspiel*, Souvenir Program (Lethbridge: 2002), 16.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with "Shun".

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Hollis (Miyanaga) Pickerell. Mary Saruwatari also shared stories of all-night curling events. Interview with Mary Saruwatari, October 15, 2018, Taber, Alberta, by author 1, notes in possession of the author.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Tosh Kanashiro, Takeshi "Tak" Okamura and Tokio Hori, June 18, 2018, Lethbridge, Alberta, by author 1, notes in possession of the author.

<sup>48</sup> Sugimoto, 'Remembering the Good Old Days,' 16.

<sup>49</sup> Dawn Sugimoto, 'Original Winners,' *Japanese Canadian 50<sup>th</sup> Bonspiel*, Souvenir Program (Lethbridge: 2002), 15.

<sup>50</sup> 'Tricky Oikawa's 50 Golden Years,' *Japanese Canadian 50<sup>th</sup> Bonspiel*, Souvenir Program (Lethbridge: 2002), 11.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with "Shun".

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Hollis (Miyanaga) Pickerell.

<sup>53</sup> '60 Rinks Gunning for Bonspiel Honors,' *The Lethbridge Herald*, January 27, 1973, Special Commemorative Edition, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Tosh Kanashiro, Takeshi "Tak" Okamura and Tokio Hori.

<sup>55</sup> Sugimoto, 'Remembering the Good Old Days,' 17.

<sup>56</sup> 'Renewing Friendships,' *Japanese Canadian 50<sup>th</sup> Bonspiel*, Souvenir Program (Lethbridge: 2002), 5.

<sup>57</sup> For a more detailed analysis of these trans-pacific connections see Nobuko Adachi, 'Ethnic, Culture, and Race: Japanese and Nikkei at Home and Abroad,' *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 8, no. 37 (2010): 3-8; Nobuko Adachi, *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents and Uncertain Futures* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Hollis (Miyanaga) Pickerell.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Elsie (Shigehiro) Sasaki, December 3, 2018, Taber, Alberta, by author 1, notes in possession of the author.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> See M. Ann Hall, *The Girl and the Game* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Elsie (Shigehiro) Sasaki.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Wanda (Sasaki) Renner, January 29, 2019, Lethbridge, Alberta, by author 1, notes in possession of the author.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Kendy Sasaki-Ross, January 15, 2019, via Skype, by author 1, notes in possession of the author.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Elsie (Shigehiro) Sasaki, Taber, Alberta, December 3, 2018, notes in possession of author.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Elsie (Shigehiro) Sasaki. It should also be noted that the woman Elsie worked for was White. For more on the experiences of Japanese Canadians as domestic servants during the postwar period see Mona Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of the Internment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), especially pp. 185-194 which draws analysis from oral histories she conducted; and Hyang-Sae Kang, 'Gender, race/Ethnicity, Work and Family: The Experience of Second Generation Japanese Canadian Women in Winnipeg, 1942-Present.' Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Winnipeg, 1996. See also, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese Americans in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Elsie (Shigehiro) Sasaki. Elsie's memory of meeting her husband as a spectator at the baseball diamond speaks to the gendering of some social spaces.

<sup>69</sup> Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2009).

<sup>70</sup> As mentioned here, Japanese Canadians were active in many sport and recreational pursuits during the postwar period. The intention of this paper is not to engage in a discussion about why some people participated in curling instead of, or as well as, other activities. Instead we interrogate the JC Bonspiel and the practice of curling as an important space for expressions of resiliency, agency and escape as articulated through the experiences of our interviewees.

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<sup>71</sup> The exploration of Japanese-ness as a vital and generative aspect of Japanese Canadian identity is explored especially by Aoki in his work with the Nikkei Memory Capture Project, for example: Darren J. Aoki, 'Assimilation-On (Not) Turning White: Memory and the Narration of the Postwar History of Japanese Canadians in Southern Alberta.' *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 53 no. 2 (2019): 238-269; Darren J. Aoki, 'Remembering 'The English' in Four "Memory Moment" Portraits: Navigating Anti-Japanese Discrimination and Postcolonial Ambiguity in Mid-Twentieth Century Alberta, Canada.' *Rethinking History: Journal of Theory and Practice*, 24 no. 1 (2020): 29-55; Darren J. Aoki and Carly Adams 'Of Ice Cream, Potatoes, and Kimono-Clad Japanese Women: Forgetting and Remembering the Japanese Racialization of Lethbridge's Sensuous Geographies' in Caroline Hodes and Glenda Bonifacio (eds.) *Race and the City* (Edmonton, AB: University of Athabasca Press, Forthcoming).

<sup>72</sup> Colin D. Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 143-44.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 117. See also, Russell Field, 'Sport and the Canadian Immigrant: Physical Expressions of Cultural Identity within a Dominant Culture, 1896-1945.' In *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities*, eds. Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, and Yuka Nakamura (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012), 29-56.

<sup>74</sup> See Vertinsky, 'Locating "A Sense of Place,"' 8-24.