Interviewee: Miyoko Nakamura
Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda
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*Note that this interview contains outdated terminology referring to Indigenous people.

[Start Interview]

Lisa Uyeda: Wonderful.
Miyoko Nakamura: Mm-hm.
LU: Great. So today is January 20th, 2011, and this is an interview with Miyo Nakamura, and would you like to start off please by telling us when you were born and when you were born?
MN: Oh yes, well I was born December 25th, 1925. Um, *ushi-doshi* year, the year of the Ox. I was born in New Westminster hospital, and that day was Christmas Day, and our doctor was not very pleased with his job, coming to the hospital to admit me, you know, to– for my– help my mother. And, because he was missing his Christmas dinner. And so, I was a second child, as my mother had a miscarriage, with the first boy. And, when I was born at the hospital, my father mumbled something. Something like, "mou, da- mou" or something. And she figured, "what is that?" She wasn't sure what he meant– whether it was good or bad. So, when she got home, she found out that he was expecting a boy. And so, he must've said "oh damn." [chuckles] So I wasn't– I wasn't, expecting– I wasn't very welcome I guess, in a sense, because I wasn't a boy. Um, anyways, I was the oldest of four children, and I was expected to take a lot of difficult responsibilities. And one incident I remember well, is when I was only age 11, my father and I went to Vancouver, and tried to– I mean went to a lawyer, to appeal on this expensive medical bill that he got for my brother's caesarean birth that my mother had to go through in Mission hospital. And, my traumatic experience was remembering to enter this huge building, and-in Vancouver, and entering the lawyer's office. But in spite of the effort in the- that my father and I tried to explain to the lawyer, he just did not want to deal with our- our situation. He said, "I'm not dealing with- with you, with your child translator," he said. [chuckles]. So, it would have cost a lot of money for my father to hire a translator, and that's what happened. That was one of my experiences as a child. Ruskin, B.C was a- is a small village, 35 miles east of Vancouver, just north side of Big Fraser River. And this is where my father had purchased a berry farm– well, it was a bush land, but he hoped to be- make it a berry farm, growing strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and pi–and rhubarbs. He immigrated in 1905 or 06 to Hawaii, to work on either a pineapple farm or some plantation, and then he came to British Columbia in August 3rd, 1907, and worked in the botanical Britannia copper

mine. It was– he was able to settle in Ruskin and bring his mother, and son, sister from Gifu-ken, Japan. This– also, he was able to bring my wife– his wife, from Chiba-ken, Japan. My mother was told in Japan, that "Canada's roads were paved with gold". And, in other words, it was a prosperous country. When my mother came, she was very disappointed when she came to Ruskin and found that it was a wild bush land far away from the act of society. So, shall I continue?

[0:05]

LU: Sure! Yes.
MN: Okay. Well, my childhood days– father and mother both felt education was very important and should not miss a day of school. One winter in 1932, we had a large- well huge amount of snow, and dad had to shovel a tunnel for me to reach the main road, from the house. It turned out, I was the only one there, and- and also, the school janitor Mr. Bartlet. Ruskin Elementary School was a small, two-room school– one to fourth grade in one room, and five to eight in another room. The classes were attended by a majority of Japanese Canadian-born children. The school was visi– visited annually by the Department of Education Inspector, and he would refer to our school, to the teacher, as saying, "how's the Japanese school today?" The children in school, especially from Japanese families were very clean. Every family in the area usually had a house, and a separate building called bathhouse, or *ofuro*. Father felt that the berry farm was tedious, in– involving many hours of labour, in spite of extra hired helpers. So, in 1938, an uncle– he and Uncle Okubo started a box factory. It was ingenious how they put together a mill, starting with an engine that they found to operate the head saw planer and trimmer. Logs were brought in by a local logger, and hemlock is peeled, wood or veneer was brought in from Vancouver. Stitching machines were operated by the girls to make baskets, and the men were hired to assemble crates. The baskets were made from hemlock. We also had a truck for delivery, and in the early spring- in the winter, during the winter, area, the farmers were visited by- by my uncle to take orders for the coming summer. And in the early spring, the deliveries were made by our driver. Childhood memories. There were several vegetables grown for our use, and excess was stored in the root house for winter. We had chickens for eggs, pig, and a good horse called Brown to plow the land, and also for transportation. My mother used to make *sake*, the Jap- rice wine. And this once, she threw out the residue of the *sake* in the garden. The chicken picked it all and ate all of it, and got drunk, wobbling here and there, and everywhere. And one of the workers said, "Why don't we dig a hole, for each chicken, and place them in the hole and feed them mustard and water solution?" Well, they all survived. In- by 1939, it was high school and, and we had to travel eight miles to- by bus to Haney, BC., Haney Junior and Senior High School. When the war broke out in 1941, we expected our teachers, who were- who we respected and cared for a lot, were indifferent with our sear- situation, and we were rather disappointed. They gave us a certificate of credit for our third year of high school. After Pearl Harbour bombing, which was August 1941, the government issued curfew to all Japanese,

which meant we were not allowed to leave our house. We had to- we had to stay within, indoors, after 6:00 pm. My brother, young brother- he was eight years old at the time, he cut his hand with a saw between the thumb and the fore finger.

[0:10]

MN: Our vehicles were confiscated, and Mr. Bartlet was the only person with a car in our area. When dad asked him a favour to drive him to the hospital, he willingly drove my brother and dad to Mission hospital. He was actually breaking the law. Thankfully, my brother was able to get incisions stitched up. 1942, mom and dad were given the choice to evacuate to Alberta sugar beet farm or go to camp in Tashme. But Tashme was not ready for- at the time. So, dad and the family, we had to wait for Tashme to be ready, and we had to move to a white man's farm just south of here. South of Ruskin. Father had to leave our nice house, including all furnitures, and the box mill, and this land, and pack a few belongings to move out. Mom and dad had a large ve- six large wooden boxes of Japanese dishes. They dug a huge hole to bury them for storage in the garden, 'til they- so that they- when they return, that they will be able to come back and retrieve them. It still amazes me; they both never showed their true feelings. [whispers] Shall I go on?
LU: Sure!
MN: Tashme was up in the mountains. The mount- mountain road from B- Hope, B.C. Hope was 100 miles from the coast of British Columbia, and Tash- and Tashme was, originally, an abandoned fox farm converted into rows and rows of tar paper huts. And I remember it being very cold and drafty. Frost formed on the inside of the house during the winter. It would eventually house approximately 2500 Japanese folks from all along the coast of British Columbia. Many residents were from the city of Vancouver, Vancouver Island, towns along the coast, and many residents from interior small towns and villages. The huts were equipped with wood stove, tiny kitchen, no running water, coil oil lamps, beds furnished with straw mattresses, and gray B.C. Commission lam- uh commission blankets, I meant. Activities in the camp were amateur concerts, occasionally a silent movie, boys formed several baseball teams, and the tournaments were held every weekend. The girls did crafts, and many took up dress making. The new materials were very difficult to acquire. Every Christmas, one of my father's gentleman friend would visit us, and bow to us, we- and repeat, [bows forward] "*kurushimi-masu,*" [sic] we are suffering. End of every fourth row of the home huts, they built a large bath house. At each- it was- each bath house was sectioned off for men and women. Hot water in the bath were ready for- by mid-afternoon. We all must wash, scrub, and rinse ourselves first before we jump into the giant bath house. Bath, I mean giant bath, I meant. [light chuckle]

[0:15]

MN: And the Elementary school was established for young children and correspondence course all- at night for older ones. For about four to five months, I

taught grade three. General store, butcher shop were also built, and few other buildings like fire halls and post office. And a barn was the social hall for parties and dancing. I was not very welcome when Pat Roberts befriended me. She was a daughter of a B.C. Commission Executive. A number of people felt I should not associate with *hakujin*, after all, who displaced us? 1945, 1946, people were gradually moving out- out of Tashme, as the replacements were available. Long as it was east of Tashme or further east of the Rockies, we were- there were- we were able to move. No one was allowed to return back to their original homes. Choice was, go east of the Rockies or get on the ship to Japan. Well, for a manager, Mrs. Margaret Sage gave my sister and I a replacement- a placement in Kingston, Ontario. We had to part from the family and leave on our own. Mother wrote up some dos and don'ts rules for us to follow. After a long terrifying trip across Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, we arrived in Kingston. To our dismay, we were met by a uniformed soldier, and he escorted us to his jeep. Brigadier Smith met us and interviewed us in a special office. He scolded us first for arriving two days late. He told us that this household entertained extensively, and one of the duties, he expected the cook, who was myself, to be able to mix all cocktails at their functions. To begin with, I did not know one liquor from another, and I thought to myself, "Cocktail? Is that something in the poultry family?" Of course, we did not qualify for the positions. He was annoyed with the B.C. Commissions for sending us- [chuckles] both of us to his home. We both ended up with housekeeping position in two private homes in Kingston, Kingston, Ontario. During our stint in Kingston, I went to evening class and took up business course. B- bookkeeping was my preference. My sister took up dress making. We moved to Toronto in 1948, and by 1950, I married Joe D. Nakamura. And Joe worked for his father's company, N.N.S. General Contractor. We have a home, four children, and I volunteer my time to- at Toronto Buddhist Church, Cultural Centre, and others. My husband and I operated and owned duplex and triplex 'til we retired. The family cottage was our favourite past time. Boating and fishing was enjoyed by all. When I retired at age 65, I went to George Brown College for two years and graduated in ceramics. I also enjoy gardening, ikebana, golfing, bowling, cards, and bridge. [chuckles]
LU: Wonderful!
MN: [chuckles] Oh no.
LU: Great!
MN: [chuckles] You think?
LU: Yes! That was great! Now, I just have a few questions. Um, what else do you remember about your strawberry farm that you grew up on. Did you have any chores that you'd have to do? What do you remember?

[0:20]

MN: Oh yes, uh-huh. Well, we went to school-, well during- but- the strawberry picking time or when it was time to harvest the berries, we were hired as students

and- or the parents used us or- and we used to pick strawberries, and it was always packed, like picked and then packed for distribution.
LU: Oh.
MN: Yeah.
LU: Oh wow.
MN: A lot of people did the berry farming, yes.
LU: Mm-hm. When is the berry farming season? When do you pick?
MN: Um, okay, it would be towards June, middle of June or end of June, and July. Raspberries and blackberries were a little later, and rhubarb always was very popula- you know, demanding. So, that's some of the things we picked and sent out.
LU: Mm-hm. And when would you go to school? Was- was it like it is now? With the summer holidays or?
MN: Yes. July and August was holidays. Mm-hm. And we always walked to school, and pa- and the mother would pack our lunch. [chuckles] And then, when my younger sister and brothers wer- brother was born, my mother didn't have enough breast milk, so we used to take empty peanut butter can to Gilchrist farm, and on the way home from school, we would have to pick up the milk in this can, and bring it home. But on the way home, some boys or naughty fellows would chase us. So, when we ran with the milk, it got- part of it got spilt [chuckles], so we lost some milk by the time we got home.
LU: And how long was the walk to school? How far did you have to travel?
MN: Well at least, I guess it must've been about close to a mile and a half or two, mm-hm, two miles I guess, yup. And then, on Saturdays, we went to Whonnock for Japanese school, which was close to three miles.
LU: And would you walk to Whonnock as well?
MN: Mm-hm, yes. Leave early in the morning.
LU: And what time did school start?
MN: Well 9:00 at- on Saturday, at 9:00 'til 3:00.
LU: Do you remember going to Japanese school?
MN: Mm-hm.
LU: Do you remember some of the activities you would do there?
MN: Well, it was mostly reading and writing. And, I remember on Tuesdays and Fridays, it was after school right in Ruskin, in the Ruskin Hall, right in the village. But when we went to Whonnock, it was the three villages. Whonnock, Albion, and Ruskin children all congregated together, and there was two teachers, and yeah. But I remember some of the boys, when they were naughty, this building, the hall was built on top of the hill with lots of stairs going down to the road. And their penalty was bringing up wood for the fire, up those stairs, and they had to do it five times or ten times depending on the heaviness of their penalty. [chuckles] That's what it was, yeah.
LU: And the farm, did it have electricity?
MN: Well, eventually we got electricity. Eventually, we got telephone, and the telephone was the one that was called- what was it called? They- we had to- it was, few- few families used the same line, and it was through run one ring, two ring, three

rings, or two rings and a short ring would be somebody's phone. That's how we knew who got the phone call.
LU: Oh!
MN: Yes, uh-huh. So, if you could be – if you wanted to be nosy, you could pick up the phone before your neighbours- from your neighbour's call, you know, [chuckles] and find out what's going on, what's happening.
LU: So, your parents are *isseis*, so they came to Canada, but did they ever learn how to speak English or-?

[0:25]

MN: Yes, my mother us- used to study, that- what was the name? "Jack and Jill" book, I think, it was that First grade [jacket?] book. But my father, he was too busy working, not to try to learn English. But his favourite word, I remember was when we had a visitor like Mr. Gilcrest or someone come to visit, he would say, "anyhow" and that was the- every other word was "anyhow." [chuckles] I don't know how he got his- communicated well with Mr. Gilcrest, but I don't know, he managed, yeah.
LU: Mm-hm. [chuckles] So when your parents would speak to you, I guess they would speak in Japanese?
MN: In Japanese, right.
LU: So, are you still fluent in Japanese or-?
MN: I- yes, I can understand, and- but I won't- I couldn't say I read well or write well. But I do understand Japanese, yes.
LU: Mm-hm, and for how many years did you complete Japanese school?
MN: Well, when we were in grade- well from one to six, I think to grade six and seven and eight, we always went right after school. And so, it was up to about grade seven and eight, yes.
LU: Wow. [chuckles]
MN: But it was only reading and writing.
LU: Mm-hm. So, I guess going to Japanese school after originally going to public school wouldn't leave you a lot of time to go play with friends or-
MN: Oh no, no. [chuckles] No.
LU: Do you re-remember doing any other activities though when you would have time making friends?
MN: Oh well, yes, yes. Skipping rope, we used to play a lot of skipping rope and over the- over, they used to call it "over," and that was throwing the ball over the building, and that- our school wasn't really high, so we would throw the ball over the building and the oth- other team would have to catch it. If they caught it, and came running around and tagged us, we were out. [chuckles] Yeah, that was one of the games, yes.
LU: Would the ball ever get stuck on top of the roof?
MN: Oh, yes. [chuckles] Yes, yes, uh-huh.
LU: What other games would you play? Jacks or marbles?

MN: Oh yes, Jacks, and the boys loved marbles, and they were always trading, and yeah. Uh I- there- we had lots of ordinary games, tag, and I don't know, I can't remember the names of some of the games that we played, but- yes. [nods]
LU: Would you ever have, I know little girls now, they have dolls to play with or they play house.
MN: Oh, yes. Mm-hm.
LU: were you playing games like that when you were younger?
MN: Well, we- yes. And that would be called *mamagoto*, like we, yeah, friends get together and play with our dolls. And I remember having a nice Japanese doll for the *kimono* and everything, and I think my brother got a hold of the hair and used to swing it around. [chuckles] I think it got mashed up a bit. But one thing I remember which was really nice, Mr. Pilkey, the owner of- he used to work at the Ruskin station, the railway station. His wife would knit nice costumes for the plastic kewpie dolls, and we would get it at Christmas. Yeah, which was very nice. [nods]
LU: Mm-hm.
MN: Yeah.
LU: So, your family celebrated Christmas.
MN: Yes. [nods] Uh-huh, yeah.
LU: And what do you remember about those holidays?
MN: Well, all I know is for my birthday, it was a Christmas cake. Everybody else got something else, [chuckles] you know, nice cake. New Year was also celebrated, more. Yeah, Christmas, we had Christmas tree, and dad used to go into the bush, cut the tree, and bring it in, and -
LU: Would you decorate the tree?
MN: Mm-hm.
LU: What would you decorate it with?
MN: With the homemade chains [hand gestures] and yeah, sometimes we found a star or whatever, yeah. It wasn't very elaborate. [chuckles]
LU: [chuckles]
MN: And then, for New Years, I think they- the tradition was to put two trees at the gateway [hand gestures]. I put two pine trees, and I remember that. I used to think, what a waste cutting down two trees to- for, I think, for the New Year, you encourage good- good luck to walk through that door- gateway to your home. I think that was probably what they practiced, yeah. [nods]

[0:30]

LU: Mm-hm, were your parents religious?
MN: My father was and my mother, yes. But we didn't have a Buddhist Church or anything. Maybe once or twice a year, we would get a speaker, guest speaker from Vancouver or somewhere, you know, and they would come and give a little sermon, and it was more a party. [chuckles] We all took lunch and [chuckles] yes, that's about it, yeah. But there was United Church, quite active, uh-huh, yeah. And kindergarten was run by United Church, I think.

LU: So, on Sundays, would you have to go to Sunday School or-?
MN: No. [shakes head]
LU: Did you ever go to church on Sundays?
MN: No. [shakes head]
LU: So, Sundays, you didn't have school, you didn't have church. What would you do? Is that the time you would-
MN: That was workday, I think as well. [chuckles]
LU: Oh my. [chuckles]
MN: Well, we had lots of duties, you know. Cleaning the house, our window, I think we had to do - do the window cleaning a lot. Yeah, yeah, cleaning. Cleaning the house, yeah.
LU: How big was the house? Do you remember what it looks like?
MN: Mm-hm, it was two floors, and the parlour was hardwood floor, and our job was to put the wax on and wash it and wax it [hand gestures] and then polish it. And so, it was quite a chore. And my brother would get hold of the *soroban*, what do you call those in Ja- English? Abacus, they said, or- anyways, he would use it as a roller skate and skate on the hardwood floor. [chuckles] Yeah, and my father said, "Oh, you will be punished. That's supposed to be sacred. That's for counting, counting, for using- for me- you shouldn't use that or even you shouldn't step on books either because that's supposed to be your- you know, it's sacred. You should try to respect those because that's all a part of your education." That was- that's what they always taught us anyways, yeah. [chuckles]
LU: Was your father well educated or-?
MN: No, he wasn't! No, he was self-learnt, yeah, yeah. [nods] Uh-huh, yeah.
LU: Did he go to school in Japan or-?
MN: Yes, uh-huh, yes. But he lost his father I think, a year- when he was still quite young. So, he had to come out to Hawaii and then B.C., British Columbia, Canada to, I guess support, help the family. Yeah, mm-hm.
LU: Did he come from a very large family?
MN: Yes, fairly large, I think. Yeah, he was the oldest. And- and Gifu, Gifu-ken, Japan, even when we went back later, recently, to Gifu, people in the village, Gifu village were amazed at the fact that there was somebody from that area went to Canada [hand gestures] and built his home. Yeah, it was quite- it wasn't common. [nods] It was a rarity. [chuckles] Yeah.
LU: So, you mentioned that your father, brought his mother-
MN: Mm-hm. Yeah.
LU: And his sister?
MN: Yeah, and yeah. And my half-brother. Yeah, he had a son by the first marriage, and then I think something happened. His brother, I guess stole his wife. [chuckles] So he brought his mother and son to Canada, yeah. [chuckles]
LU: Oh wow. [chuckles]
MN: So, he really- worked hard to uh get situated, you know, get settled in Canada.
LU: Mm-hm.

MN: Without much education too, you know, formal education. Whereas my mother, had gone to *chuugakkou*, which is kind of a high school, is it college? And she was from a fairly well-to-do family, so she expected a lot more than a bush land when she came to Canada. [nods] Mm-hm.

[0:35]

LU: Mm-hm. Was she from the same area in Japan?
MN: No, she was from Chiba near Tokyo in Japan, Ei-chou (could be that she was referring to Sakae-machi and the surrounding areas, not sure), Chiba-ken in Japan.
LU: Do you know how your parents met?
MN: Yes, my father worked in Britannia- Brita- what, Britannia copper mine, and my mother's brother- older brother worked there as well. So that's how my father got introduced to my mother.
LU: Oh.
MN: Yeah.
LU: So, more or less, similar to an arranged marriage.
MN: Yes, yes. Uh-huh. [nods] When my mother, I guess my father had to go to Japan to bring, you know, bring her to Canada. Yes, I don't think she knew who he was or- [chuckles] It was the first time, yeah.
LU: Oh wow, and did your mother come from a large family as well?
MN: No, she was- she had brothe- three brothers. They were half-brothers, like she was the only daughter I think, you know. No, two brothers and a sister, yeah. So they were half-brothers and sister, and she was the youngest.
LU: How come she was half with them?
MN: Oh, so his- her mother, married- second marriage I guess, the family all- I guess the first family, Ishikawas, he must've lost his wife, so my mother's mother married Mr. Ishikawa [chuckles].
LU: Oh wow.
MN: Yeah, yeah.
LU: And what was your father's last name?
MN: My father's name was Hikosaku Fujita.
LU: So Fujita is your maiden name?
MN: Maiden name, yes.
LU: Oh okay. And do you know any other stories about your family history and what they were doing in Japan or where they were?
MN: Oh yes, well, I don't really know what they did. I think they did-, they did grow rice in Gifu, in Gifu-ken, yeah.
LU: Oh wow.
MN: Mm-hm, yeah. But the more- my- I know more about my husband's side, who is Nakamura. They, I think, Nak- my husband's grandfather had quite a bit of land, and when MacArthur, when they signed the pape- well they had to, what do you call that? Sign the peace treaty, the landowners had to divide their property. They couldn't own a large- large land. So that's what happened to his grandfather's property, yeah.

Democracy I guess was developed. So Nakamuras, I guess they had to disperse all the land, give it away to their brothers or whatever.
LU: Oh wow.
MN: Yeah.
LU: And was the Nakamura family a large family as well or-?
MN: Yes, uh-huh. Quite a big- quite a big family, yeah. And, Joe's father who is a Nakamura, must've been the youngest of the Nakamura family.
LU: Mm-hm, and did he ever receive land or-?
MN: Yes, he did. But because of the war, and coming out to Ontario, I think his sister, or some family took over. He didn't get- he didn't- I guess he didn't keep it. He just let them have it.
LU: That seems to be fairly common.
MN: Common.
LU: Yes, yeah, that instead of worrying about the land over in Japan, since they're here in Canada, they would just let their siblings take over.
MN: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. [nods] Yes.
LU: Which works out.
MN: Yeah.
LU: So, do you still have family in Japan?

[0:40]

MN: Well, I have second cousins. And I do correspond once a year with them. And in- when we were in Tashme during the war, our next-door neighbour was a Buddhist minister, and their family went- had to go back to Japan because government did not recognize Buddhism or whatever. And he- he got sent back to Japan, and so, I still see their children, young children and grandchildren.
LU: What family was that?
MN: Um, Reverend Tachibana, from Vancouver. He was, I think in Vancouver, yeah. I went to see the- see them- oh I would say about eight years ago and visited them.
LU: Oh wow, and was that your first trip to Japan?
MN: Oh no, several, yeah.
LU: When was the first time you went?
MN: First time, well, I went on a *ikebana*-, well there was always like ikebana group that went. That must've been in 19- towards, close to 1980s or somewhere in there.
LU: What was it like going to Japan for the first time?
MN: Well, oh yes it was quite an experience. I remember saying to my cousin, who lives in Tokyo, I said, "Wow, there's a lot of Japanese. A lot of people with black hair around here." She says, "You're in Japan, you remember?" [chuckles] she says to me, because when you went to a station or anywhere, you just saw masses of Japanese people and you don't see this- see it here, you know, yeah.
LU: [chuckles]
MN: But it-it's really immaculate, clean. Japan is, I guess where we- I was, I think it was always very, very clean. And I saw once where, when we were visiting a temple,

there was school children on the other side of the lot, and I could see one of them picking up cigarette butt. She saw that somebody had thrown a cigarette butt on the ground- on the ground, and she picked it up and took it into- put it into the trash. [hand gestures] And I thought, wow, you know, and that little girl must've been only about six or seven. They were taught to be, I guess, not to litter, litter. Mm-hm [nods].
LU: Mm-hm. Oh wow.
MN: It's quite a change, when in Canada, there's all kinds of waste along the highway [chuckles].
LU: I know [chuckles].
MN: Yeah.
LU: And what about speaking Japanese in Japan? Did you find it to be difficult?
MN: Mm-hm. [nods] My Japanese was "antiquated," they said. It's an old, old way of speaking Japanese. [chuckles] And that's the way my parents taught us, right? [nods] So, it wasn't modern Japanese, right? [chuckles] We were told that anyways.
LU: Mm-hm. But did they understand what you were trying to say?
MN: Oh yes, uh-huh. [nods] Yeah. I remember, my husband and I walking in Kyoto and asking a passerby where Odori Street was, and they- this person just pointed to the sign [hand gestures], just as if to say, "read it!" [chuckles] They didn't help us! They expected us to speak and read Japanese because we looked like Japanese right. So, we learned that speaking English to them was the best way to get around. Mm-hm.
LU: Mm-hm. [chuckles]
MN: They went out of the way to help you if you spoke English.
LU: Oh. And when did you start doing *ikebana*?
MN: Oh, way back. My mother kind of influenced us to take up *ikebana*. Oh, gosh it's got to be 1960s I think, yeah.
LU: Mm-hm.
MN: I took it for quite a while.

[0:45]

LU: And did your mother ta- know *ikebana* as well or-?
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm, she also yeah, she also took some lessons with us, yeah. Yeah.
LU: And what about other Japanese traditions? Um, like *odori*-
MN: *Odori*, yes, uh-huh. Yeah, my- I sent my children, daughter to *buyo*, classical dancing, yeah.
LU: Oh wow.
MN: Mm-hm.
LU: And what did the boys do?
MN: Oh, *judo* or any, you know, something like *judo*. Mostly *judo*. I don't know what other- I don't think it was practical to have *kendo* or any of the other boys whatever culture.
LU: And where would you take these lessons?

MN: This, well, it was kind of just someone who knew how to da- do the dance, *odori*. It was just amateur performance. [chuckles] Yeah.
LU: So, I guess it would be at somebody's house or-?
MN: Mm-hm, yeah, and you'd practice at someone's home, and then there would be an annual concert or whatever, and you'd be asked to dance. That's the way it was. Until you came to Toronto, of course, they had classes, yeah.
LU: Mm-hm. That's exciting though. [chuckles] Oh wow.
MN: Yeah.
LU: And what else do you remember about Ruskin, B.C. and- because you were there for quite some time before you had to move away. So, you were about 15 or 16 years of age when you had to move?
MN: Yes, at the time when I had to move. I have a booklet here [raises booklet] It's all about Ruskin.
LU: Oh.
MN: Uh-huh. And it shows a map of Ruskin, where my father's box mill was, and there's Mr. Gilchrist, where we used to get our daily milk. And that was Fraser River here. And Parker Road was where we lived. And you know, I don't know who were the builders, but they built my father's factory, and then they built this Japanese hall. And I don't know whether they were unionized carpenters or anything, they just went ahead and built it. And they- and it looked pretty secure [chuckles].
LU: Oh wow. And did your parents have friends or anyone in the area that they would get together with and socialize?
MN: Oh yes, uh-huh. Yes. [nods] Every time they had birth- special birthday or a wedding, we'd all get together. Everybody was invited. Everybody was invited to the funeral. [chuckles] We all kind of gathered together quite often, yeah.
LU: And would it be Japanese people and non-Japanese people?
MN: We were never included among the white people, no. They were quite separate from us. And I don't know, we must've been categorized as same- same level as the Siwash Indian. Siwash was a tribe's name I think, where we were. And my- all the Japanese used to say *saibashi*, which I think meant Siwash, you know. And if we were dressed unruly or slobby, the parents would say, "Don't look like *saibashi*!" [chuckles] So yeah. But anyways, yeah, we weren't included in their activities. Only in school, we were among them, white people, yeah, white children.
LU: Did you ever play with those children after school?
MN: Not really, no they were quite separate. Well, we might play Jacks or something at school.
LU: Mm-hm. And how many Japanese families were in that area, do you remember some of the names?
MN: Mm-hm. Well, there was the Sawadas, then there was Yakashiros, Wakaharas, Taniguchis, Fujinos, Okubos, us, and then Nakanos, Nikaidos, Nagatas, Kounos. Yeah, I guess it was about fo- 12 or so families, 12 or so, mm-hm.

[0:50]

LU: That's a lot. [chuckles]
MN: And they all had quite a few children. Like, well our family, we had four. But some families had twelve and some had ten. So, of course they would fill the Ruskin school every year [chuckles].
LU: In your family, were you given Japanese names and non-Japanese names?
MN: Mm-hm, mostly Japanese names.
LU: Mostly Japanese names.
MN: Yes. Then a lot- as we grew older, I think they just stuck us with an English name.
LU: Hm, and is Miyo short form for-
MN: Miyoko.
LU: Oh, Miyoko, oh that's nice[chuckles].
MN: Mm-hm, Miyoko. And yeah, somebody tried to make me a Margaret, but I felt that it was too long. So, I stayed, I even shortened Miyoko to Miyo, yeah. So when we came to- when we came to Toronto in 1948, we would apply for a job over the phone and it would be in the paper, so you would apply and they would say, "Well come at 10:30 to such and such to Bay Street" or wherever. This was a office position, and when I get there, they open the door [hand gestures], and say, "Oh I'm sorry," looking at me they'll say "Oh I'm sorry, position has just been filled." Because I look Japanese, they weren't hiring. [chuckles] Certain people wouldn't hire Japanese, yeah.
LU: Mm-hm, oh no.
MN: Yeah, yeah [nods] there were some experience like that.
LU: And how long did it take you to find a job in Toronto?
MN: Oh yes, Toronto. Well, if I remember Dr. Quigley in Kingston gave me a reference. So I was able to find a job maybe after the fourth try, in the office. [nods] Yeah.
LU: Oh wow. That takes a lot of effort.
MN: [chuckles] Yeah.
LU: And was it difficult to find a house in Toronto or was that a-
MN: Oh yeah, when we first came, we just lived in a flat, yeah. And I remember living in Kensington area with my parents, and we had a flat upstairs, and I think the downstairs people were Jewish, but they were Orthodox Jew- Jewish people and they practiced it. So on Friday and Saturday, we would help light the candle or you know, do different chores that they weren't allowed to do on that day, yeah. But they were kind to us, yes. They were- they would-very kind people.
LU: Oh wow.
MN: Yeah.
LU: And were you with your husband at the time, or were you with your sisters?
MN: No. My- my family. My father and my family.
LU: Oh okay, and what happened to your siblings? Were they with you as well or-?
MN: Yes, well, mother and father, we came to Toronto, but my father and mother had to go to another area. First to Kingston, I think they lived with a dentist family, and I think they had a menial job there, looking after their household and working on their land. Then they went to Ki- Beamsville. They moved a few places and then came to Toronto. And then we- that's when we all got together.

LU: Mm-hm.
MN: But my sister and my brother were able to go to regular school here, and graduate from high school.
LU: And did you finish your high school?
MN: No, I never did.
LU: You didn't do correspondence when you were in Tashme?
MN: No, I didn't, no I didn't. I just- but I just kept going to night school to [chuckles] kind of brush up on some of the skills, yes.
LU: And when you were in Tashme, what do you remember about teaching the grade Three class?

[0:55]

MN: Well, they were nice little kids, yes. And I would just follow the routine that I was left with. And then for play time I would take them on a hike, and you know, spend time that way, yes.
LU: Mm-hm.
MN: But yes, it was an experience. I don't remember a lot about it, you know, but- 'cause it was such a short time. I think I had to fill in for someone who moved to Saskatchewan or something, yeah, the teacher who was te- head of grade three, had to move to Saskatchewan.
LU: And was that your first job?
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm, yes. That's right. And then after that, I got into the Tashme office, and helped with- in the welfare, which was with Mrs- Mrs. Sage, Margaret Sage. I think I already mentioned her in my talk. So, I worked in the office in Tashme as well.
LU: Mm-hm. And what would you do in the office?
MN: Well, you know our general store always had- it wasn't cash, it was all coupons. And it was tens, ten cent, five cent, and a dollar tickets. And so, in the office, there was one area where they counted all those tickets to find out what that store sold. Yeah, I think that was one of the jobs. And the other one was welfare, which was more or less helping people moving or establishing, yeah.
LU: Oh wow, and was that the part of the general store that was in Tashme?
MN: Mm-hm. [nods]
LU: And what are some of the things that the general store would sell?
MN: Well, always vegetables, and butcher always had the meat and poultry, and then beef, poultry, and then butter. Butter, I think also was sold in the butcher shop. Sugar, flour, all those basics were sold in the general store. And they even- oh they had such- quite a few variety after a while. It started off small, yeah, uh-huh. There were quite a few girls working in the store.
LU: And what about sweets or-?
MN: Oh, they were hard to get by- come by, because sugar was rationed and, sugar was rationed, butter was rationed, wasn't it? Quite a few things were rationed, weren't they? [chuckles]

LU: Mm-hm. That's right. Just going to switch this one here, so we will take a break for one moment.
MN: Yup. [Lisa changes film for the camera]
LU: Okay, so we left off just talking about the general store, and if you needed new clothes or if you needed new shoes or- whe- where would you get those items from?
MN: I think maybe you were able to order it to Woodward's or some Vancouver stores, or you could go down to get a permit to go down to Por- I mean to Port Hope, B.C. Hope, little town, and you could get a few things there, your- like say under clothes or- and then a lot of materials and all that. I think they were ordered in from the catalogue.
LU: Oh.
MN: I can't remember too much about all- what the general store sold.
LU: Mm-hm. And when you're in Tashme, were you able to go and get a permit to go to other places or did you ever take trips?
MN: Well, you had to apply for it, yes, you had to get permission from the mounted police, yes.
LU: Did you ever go anywhere?

[1:00:00]

MN: No, I remember just going to Hope, that's all, to get something. [looks up] Oh it's quite-
LU: It's windy. [chuckles] Oh my.
MN: Mm-hm, it is.
LU: And when you were coming to Tashme, do you remember travelling from Ruskin and then you went to Hope first?
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm, on the train.
LU: Did you take the train?
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm.
LU: And what was that like?
MN: Oh, there's not- I don't really remember too much. It wasn't exciting, but the road, we were all loaded on the truck from Hope, all the family, loaded and we had to get on the truck, and we had to travel by truck. There was quite a few families. We had to travel to Tashme, and that's how we got to Tashme.
LU: Was it a long truck ride?
MN: Yes, it's qui- yes, because it was through the moun- through the mountains, yeah. And we were surrounded with mountain in Tashme.
LU: Mm-hm. And what was it like being in Tashme away from your home in Ruskin. Did you ever think that you would go back to Ruskin?
MN: Well, I think that was our parents, of course. They, it was their investment and they probably were quite at a loss, you know. But with a lot of-well even myself, I was just trying to get to know how to get along with different people and that sort of thing was more in our mind than thinking of what we could've or where we could be. Our daily- daily attraction or whatever you wanna call it- duties, were, you know,

what we had to achieve, I guess. And no, I never- I didn't really- but I guess the parents must've, they must've had to. But then how they felt was what the government want the people to do, they were I guess more obedient to the fact that, you know, you didn't want to go on strike or go into- [stuttering] cause any trouble, they, they wanted to be peaceful. Yeah so, yeah, they just accepted what was done to them [nods].
LU: And when they were in Tashme, were your parents working?
MN: Yes, they all found a job, menial jobs like, each- somebody would come every day to fill your coal oil lamps with coal oil. Some people would work in a bath, you know, trying to start the fire in bath houses. Different menial jobs like that. And some people went to a mill, a close by– like to work in a mill, but you know they were paid like 25 cents an hour. Yeah, it wasn't very much. A lot of young men were in road camps trying to make that trans-Canada highway [nods].
LU: Mm-hm, and what were your parents doing? What jobs were they-
MN: Oh, I- my father didn't really- my father and mother didn't really hold a job, no. A lot of- I think most *isseis* just- no, there wasn't a position to fill, you know, really. Unless you worked in the general store, a butcher shop or if you were a nurse in the hospital, you could but no, maybe, a doctor or dentist or someone like that, they could have a job.
LU: Mm-hm, and what about hearing news about what was going on in the world?
MN: Well, it was just the radio.
LU: Did you have a radio in Tashme?

[1:05:00]

MN: Yeah, but I think it must've been hard to get international news though.
LU: Did many families have radios or was this a shared-
MN: Yeah, few- No, a few people had radios. But it must've been a smaller one because the big- anything bigger was confiscated.
LU: Mm-hm, and what about cameras? Were cameras confiscated as well?
MN: Yeah, yeah. Well, we had cameras, and that was one of the jo- one of the- well, past time. Everybody took everybody else's picture and then you exchanged pictures. [chuckles] Yes, yes.
LU: Do you still have those photographs?
MN: Some of them, yes, I do! Yes, I do.
LU: Oh wow. And what about the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] or Mounties? Did you have any interactions with them or what were they like?
MN: Well, they- they were- I think Japanese were- are law abiding people, I think, 'cause not too many ever got into any trouble, no. We just respected their presence and behaved. [nods and chuckles] I don't think there was any- not too much trouble really.

LU: Mm-hm, and do you remember the day of Pearl Harbour, and how did you hear about the news?
MN: It was- yes, it was [stutters] by radio, mm-hm, yeah.
LU: And were you with your parents at the time?
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm, mm-hm.
LU: Do you remember their reactions at all?
MN: Oh yes, well they, mix- very mixed rea- reaction, eh? Mixed. Of course they are from Japan, and they were hoping that Japan would win the war, but they didn't, and yeah. It was very mixed reaction. I didn't really hear too much. I think maybe it was the grown-ups and the intellects. They all had probably discussions going on. But I never got into any of that.
LU: Mm-hm, it must have been very difficult for them then.
MN: Mm-hm, yeah [nods].
LU: And your grandmother at the time, she was no longer around?
MN: My- no, no, no. [shakes head] She was- she was- she died early.
LU: When did she pass away?
MN: In 1927, I think. Yeah.
LU: So, you were only two.
MN: Mm-hm.
LU: And you don't remember her very much? [chuckles]
MN: No, no. I- all I know was we had a picture of her, and she was very- you know, grandma, she was grandma. Quite plump and sitting on the chair. I remember that that's about it. [chuckles] Yeah.
LU: And family photographs, were there a lot that were left behind at the house in Ruskin?
MN: Mm-hm, yes. We couldn't bring huge pictures [hand gestures], picture of grandma. We had a huge picture of grandma. No, we couldn't bring that. But then our parents didn't- were too busy working to spend too much time taking pictures of the different [unclear] activities. Yeah, so maybe at a picnic or something they would take pictures. But no, we didn't have a lot, no.
LU: Did you go on picnics often?
MN: No, not that much, no. If they had a picnic, it was like a village picnic, and my father used to love- his hobby was to make the- Gosh I can't remember what the name is. He used to make something out of a rubber ball [hand gestures], and he- you could ignite it and it would- [hand gestures].
LU: Oh, like a firework?
MN: Fireworks! Fireworks. He would do that [hand gestures] and he would always tie a lucky number or a coin on some of the things, and people who found it, it was a prize. This was at the picnic. He used to make those.
LU: Oh wow.
MN: Homemade ones. [chuckles] Yeah.

[1:10:00]

LU: That would be fun though.
MN: Yeah, yes, uh-huh. That was fun. And we all had race and relays and, and I was a tomboy, so I used to get into every one of them. [chuckles] Try to win.
LU: [chuckles] Oh wow, and how much younger are your siblings? When were they born?
MN: They were- my sister, next sister was born two years later, two and a half years later, and my brother was five years later, and my youngest sister was nine years later.
LU: Mm-hm, nine years, wow.
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm.
LU: So, there's only one- one boy in the family?
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm.
LU: And are they all in Toronto still?
MN: Yes, he's in Ontario. And Pickering, in fact.
LU: Mm-hm, oh wow.
MN: He has a family on his own.
LU: Mm-hm.
MN: My youngest sister now passed away, but I have another sister next to me. She lives in Grimsby.
LU: And which sister is it that travelled to Kingston with you? Was that your next sister?
MN: Oh, my next sister, yeah. She's- she lives in Grimsby.
LU. Mm-hm. And what do you remember about that train ride? Going from Tashme all the way to Kingston?
MN: Mm-hm.
LU: What would you do for food or-?
MN: Yes, well-
LU: You know, you'd be on the train for a long time.
MN: Mm-hm. I think we were given lunches and meals. But I remember sleeping a lot. A lot on the train. And then I know we stopped at- in Coaldale, Alberta, I think it was, overnight. And tha- that's probably why we were late- two days late for the interview. But, rest of the time, I can't remember going through Winnipeg and Saskatchewan, all that, no. Because I guess we were tired and we slept a lot.
LU: Was the train very busy? Were there a lot of people on the train?
MN: No, it was- well there was, but then we never- you know, we were just two kids from camp and we just kind of, very timid. We didn't even talk to anybody [chuckles].
LU: Were there other Japanese people?

MN: No, no. Just the two of us, yeah.
LU: Oh, I wonder where everyone else was going then.
MN: Yes, mm-hm.
LU: Or what they thought sitting on a train with these two young girls.
MN: Yes. [chuckles] Yeah, they were probably wondering, "Who are they? Are they Indian? Canadian Indian or what?" [chuckles]
LU: Mm-hm, and what else do you remember about your time in Kingston and working?
MN: Oh yes. They- when we had to- we had to stay at the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] because Brigadier Smith didn't want us, of course. And that's how we found- they found a position for us. Housekeeping at Mrs. Mahood's, that is one I went to, and I think my sister went to Dr. Buse's place to look after their kids- children.
LU: And would you have to live there?
MN: Yes, you lived there, and got your meals, and I- they gave me a uniform. Mrs. Mahood gave me a white uniform, and I had to always wash it and starch it. And she had to teach me how to cook, cook different things, you know. And she would say, "Well we're going to have pudding. Bread pudding." So, she would teach me how to make the bread pudding, and then on Sundays, she would have roast of beef or roast of chicken. And so, I learned how to make roasted chicken, stuffing and everything. And one- and polish- polishing her silver was once a week. And that could mean, with another job, and you know, I had all those chores. But she said, she's having company, and "When I ring this bell in the dining room, you're supposed to bring in the food." So, it was time for me to take in the roast of chicken on a platter, and it was always a swinging dining room door, dining room door, [hand gestures] into the dining room. So, I went like, [hand gestures] I pushed, pushed the door to open, and the chicken fell on the floor. I thought, [raises hands to head] "Oh my gosh what am I gonna do?" So, anyways the door closed, fortunately, so I picked up the chicken and wiped it up with a tea cloth [hand gestures] and took it in. [chuckles] That was-

[1:15:00]

LU: Hopefully nobody saw.
MN: I know, nobody had really realized that I had dropped it. Yeah, but no, she had to teach me how to make all these food- different - 'cause of course, my mother didn't do dinners like that. But she always rang the bell [hand gestures].
LU: What would your mother make for dinner? What do you remember-
MN: Oh, she always made tempura or rice, and you know, or sukiyaki kind of thing.
LU: It's a lot of Japanese food when you were growing up.
MN: Mm-hm, oh yes, all Japanese food and maybe pancakes sometimes [nods].
LU: So, what would you have for breakfast?

MN: Toast, yeah. Mostly toast, yeah. Toast. Tea.
LU: And lunches, would you take bento boxes?
MN: Sa- yeah, oh no, for school we always got- mom made sandwiches for us, and it wasn't elaborate. If she had steak or whatever- leftover steak, she, I remember she had meat between the bread and when we took it to school, it was not a tender steak, I guess, because when we bit into it, the meat was in my mouth, our mouth, and the bread was out here [hand gestures and chuckles]. But you know, it was mostly lettuce and tomato in the sandwich, fried egg on a sandwich, that kind of thing. Yeah, lots of fruits off the- our tree, you know, pear or apple in season, we always had those.
LU: Oh wow. And when you're in Kingston, would you have days off? And what would you do?
MN: Yes, yes, mm-hm, half a day. Well, we would go to a movie, my sister and I would go to a movie or visit families who were there in another area, you know. Especially, we went to this hotel- what's it called? Hotel- Mrs. Webb's hotel, I think it was. But the basement was more or less like assembly place for few Japanese, couple of Japanese families, you know. And my sister and I met Hideo and my husband, Joe. Joe had just apparently bought a car for 25 dollars. But it was a rainy day, and my sister and I were offered [stuttering] a ride in the car. So of course, that- that was won- great, you know, we thought "Oh we're going for a ride in the car." And thing is, it was raining fairly hard. And the two boys sat in the front, the driver, and the, you know, my husband drove, and his boy friend sat in the front seat, and we two were- Minnie and I had to sit in the back. But there was a hole in the roof because it was canvas roof. And the pou- rain was pouring in [hand gestures] so we had to stay way over in the corner away from the rainwater coming through the roof. That was our experience with the first ride in his car. [both laughing] Well, anyways we kind of got together and just- it was just visiting, visiting.
LU: So how did you meet Joe? Was he-
MN: He was- his family was near Kingston, Collins Bay, and so he used to come down to Kingston and he used to have friends, so yeah. But I met him, I just didn't- I just saw him there and we- I didn't really become friends with her- him. But when we came to Toronto, we looked up each other and he- yeah that's when we started going out [chuckles].

[1:20:00]

LU: And how long were you in Kingston for?
MN: Oh just 1946 to 48, two years.
LU: And would you correspond back and forth with your family or friends?
MN: Yeah, yeah that was a lot of course. Mm-hm, we- we used to write to each other.

LU: And did your parents stay in Tashme until they came to Toronto or did they go anywhere else?
MN: They went to- they went to Kingston too and to a dentist- dentist family, and they were outside of Kingston city, so yeah.
LU: Mm-hm. So, when did they leave Tashme?
MN: I think it must've been a month or so later because they had to close Tashme, and put every- all the ones who were going to Japan on the ship. Yeah, must've been- we were- we left in June, I think it was. But I think two or three months later, they had to close it, close the camp. So, yeah, and that's when my parents, they had to find a location, position for them. Everybody had to have a job, east of the Rockies if you didn't want to go to Japan.
LU: And your family didn't want to go to Japan?
MN: No, no. They- well, first they signed up. They didn't know what to do, so they signed up to go to Japan. Then they called it cancellation or *torikeshi*, so they signed- cancelled that application and so they- 'cause we, I think my sister and I kind of protested, we didn't want to go to a country where we don't know anybody. [chuckles] Of course, we came east and we didn't know anybody either. [both laughs] It was a choice. Choice. It wasn't a- whether it was a good choice or a bad choice, whatever. It was a choice, one or the other. Yeah, uh-huh, yeah.
LU: And what about when you first went to Toronto and you were staying in a flat, um do you remember the address of the-?
MN: Mm-hm, it was in Kings- Kensington Market area, yeah.
LU: What street was it on?
MN: Oh, I can't name, can't remember the name of the street, you know. There was another- a few Japanese families around. But you know, if you were able to buy a home, you know, you were- we were- well, okay, you know, you could, it was okay. But a lot of people had to stay in flats till they saved enough money to buy a home. Yeah.
LU: Mm-hm, and your first home when you moved out of the flat, was it just you and your husband or were you with your parents?
MN: No, I was- no I was with my parents and they bought a home, they bought a house out in the east end. It was Hastings Avenue off Gerrard I think it was. [nods] So they had- they bought a home there, yeah.
LU: And who lived in that house?
MN: Well all- everyone, we all did.
LU: So even your brothers and sisters?
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm, we all did.
LU: And Joe?
MN: No, Joe had his own family. I think they lived on Devin Road. Yeah, so yeah.
LU: And how long did you stay at that house for?
MN: 'Till 1950, when I got married, yeah.

LU: And did your parents stay at that house until they passed?
MN: Mm-hm, yup, yup, mm-hm. They stayed there.
LU: And what did the house look like?
MN: Just small, detached home. Semi-detached home. It had a little porch and [chuckles] yeah, it's a very downtown home, yeah. Mm-hm.
LU: Mm-hm. And when you got married, where did you get married?
MN: Oh, it was in the [Legion?] Hall, and I made my own gown, wedding gown, and with a train. We had to go up the elevator to the second floor, yeah, and they used the- just the hall for the wed- ceremony, wedding ceremony. And then went to Chinese dinner for reception, yeah, that was 1950.

[1:25:00]

LU: Mm, were there a lot of Japanese people in Toronto by that time?
MN: Mm-hm, I think so. There were quite a few. And Sam Yamada was a photographer for all the brides and- brides and grooms at that time. It was a- he was quite popular, yeah.
LU: Mm-hm. Oh wow.
MN: [chuckles] Yeah.
LU: And then you mentioned before that you started a family, and how many kids did you have?
MN: I had four. Mm-hm, yeah. Four and only one is living in Toronto, the others are all out of town. But I have grandchildren, four.
LU: And great-grandchildren?
MN: Great grandson, yup. [nods, both laugh] So nobody married a Japanese though. They all married somebody that they met in high school, so yeah.
LU: And did they go to high school in Toronto?
MN: Mm-hm, yeah.
LU: And what about- I know the Japanese commun- or Cultural Centre wasn't established yet in the 50s but where would the Japanese gather?
MN: Well, I think all the churches all had their congregation. United Church, Anglican Church, and Buddhist Church had started- like they had a little- I think a house to start with and then they built their church. So yeah, I think it- that- and then they always had concerts and things at- in the Polish hall or those places. Yeah, I think that's Polish hall. They used to- they used to do [stutters], I mean, they used to manage real good concerts. People would sing, they would dance, [chuckles] they would have skits, *shibai,* you know, drama. You'd be- you'd be surprised how talented everybody was. [chuckles] Yeah, uh-huh, yeah. And then of course, there was always dance, like Thanksgiving dance or Valentine dance or whatever and everybody, all the young people gathered there.
LU: And what kind of dance would it be?

MN: Just a regular dance. With a- no band, live band. Just a record player.
LU: Mm-hm, and what are some of the dance steps that-?
MN: Oh, I think they were very- just keeping, staying in tune with the music. It was foxtrot or something but it was just plain dancing. Yeah, oh yes a lot of jitter bugging.
LU: Jitter bugging?
MN: Jitter bugging, yeah [chuckles] or jive, is that what- [laughs]
LU: Oh wow, that's fascinating.
MN: Yeah, fascinating? [laughs]
LU: Yes! Absolutely, nobody knows those dances anymore [laughs].
MN: No? [chuckles]
LU: And what about when the cultural centre first started getting established?
MN: Mm-hm.
LU: Were you a part of that?
MN: No, I- I think the- there was just a few group that was really, good leaders I guess, you know, yeah. It was more our parents' age who got it rolling.
LU: So, when did you start coming to the centre?
MN: Oh when they had the old building, we used to go to different functions that they held. They had judo matches, and they had concerts that were very good. Yeah, and they always had fundraising things going on, bazaars and things, yeah.
LU: And what about caravan? Would you take part in caravan?

[1:30:00]

MN: Oh, no I didn't. [shakes head] I think they had umpteen volunteers. [chuckles]
LU: I heard it was a busy time. [chuckles]
MN: Yes, it really was. Uh-huh, no, caravan was- caravan was quite popular at that time, and cultural centre always won prizes because they were doing so- did so well, yeah.
LU: So, was caravan part of other communities as well? Is that-
MN: Yeah everyone- I think everyone joined in. It wasn't a se- different, separate groups of religion or anything. It was everyone. [hand gestures] Everyone was participating.
LU: And what about the redress?
MN: Oh yes. Uh-huh.
LU: Were you apart of redress at all?
MN: No, no, no.
LU: Were your parents still here to receive it?
MN: No, never got it.
LU: Oh.
MN: Yeah.
LU: But you and your siblings seemed to have got it?

MN: Yes, yes, that's right.
LU: What do you think your parents would have said if they were here when redress occurred?
MN: Yeah, I guess there's better than nothing. But you know, I think they used to wonder how the government erased the deed of the land. They owned land, property. How did they eradicate the ownership, you know. They used to wonder about those things. But we never- I don't think- no one got an answer. [chuckles]
LU: Did you- were your parents ever compensated for the loss?
MN: Yes, yes. Well, I think they were- gosh, yeah just some sum of money. But it wasn't very much. No, and of course my father's compensation would've- what, wouldn't, couldn't have amounted to too much because he had probably maybe mortgage or something that he had just got started on this business, eh? Yeah, so- But the land price, I don't know. I don't think they got very much of any, anything, not worth mentioning, yeah.
LU: Mm-hm. Did your father have a car as well?
MN: They had the truck, yeah. Truck. No, he didn't have a priva- small car, no, no.
LU: And when was the truck taken away?
MN: Well, as soon as the war was declared, you know. Yeah, yeah.
LU: Mm-hm. Oh wow, that's a lot to lose.
MN: Yeah, uh-huh. I remember we used to listen to the gramophone. You wind up the gramophone, [hand gestures] and [chuckles] that- that was a big piece of furniture. I- yeah, we, we had to leave all that, eh? Yeah.
LU: Mm-hm. Did your- I guess your parents expected to go back since they buried some of the dishes.
MN: Yes, mm-hm.
LU: Did anyone go back and try to dig up those dishes?
MN: No, no. 'Cause they were- when the war ended, you couldn't go back to your prop- land. And you had to come out east, and in the meantime, apparently a lot of the properties were either destroyed or given to soldiers who returned, came back from war. So yeah, and I heard that a lot of it was stolen, you know. So, it's too bad, isn't it?
LU: Yeah, that's too bad.
MN: There was no- they weren't really respectful of the value of the properties, Japanese stuff anyway. [chuckles] Yeah.
LU: Do you remember what you did pack with you to go to Tashme?
MN: Yes.
LU: Did you take anything that you thought was of value at all?
MN: No. My typewriter. Portable typewriter, I think I remember.
LU: Mm-hm. [chuckles]
MN: And then you know, living in, living in the country, Ruskin or anything, you didn't have a lot of clothes to pack or you know, we- we were just- and then you

didn't have any heavy winter clothing either because BC was always mild, you know. So, I can't remember packing anything, no. Only thing that I remember is I wanted to make sure I took my typewriter. [chuckles]

[1:35:00]

LU: Mm-hm.
MN: And I worked hard to buy that because every summer I would work at a- work for some farmer or somebody and earn enough to buy the typewriter. [chuckles]
LU: How much was the typewriter?
MN: I don't know. Couldn't have been very much, 199 dollars or something?
LU: Oh it would have been a lot at that point though.
MN: At that time yes, uh-huh. I think my mother had to pay for some of it. [laughs]
LU: What happened to the typewriter?
MN: Mm, I had it for awhile, yeah, mm-hm.
LU: So you brought it with you to Toronto?
MN: I think so, yeah I did. Mm-hm, yeah. So, I remember using it for travelling case. I took the typewriter out of the case 'cause it was one of those typewriters that was in the case and I would take out the typewriter and use the- you know, use the suitcase part for traveling. It was a nice size [hand gestures] you know? [chuckles]
LU: Yeah. [chuckles]
MN: 'Cause it was a portable typewriter so, yeah.
LU: Do you remember any other stories about your time in Ruskin or Tashme or did you ever go and visit Vancouver when you were younger?
MN: Oh yes, uh-huh. Yeah.
LU: What would you do in Vancouver?
MN: Well we always- it took us two- two and a half hours to go to Vancouver. And it was on a truck, it wasn't on a bus or a fancy car. And if it was foggy on the highway, it would take hours to get to Vancouver. But my mother's annual trip was to go to Vancouver before the school started, and to the 95-cent day, and to buy, well, shoes and all the clothing, and all this- anything that you needed for school. That was one annual trip and always went to have noodles at Fuji Chop Suey or, you know, something like that on Powell Street. Yeah, uh-huh. And my cousin lived on Cordova Street, so we always stayed there.
LU: Oh, your cousin. What was your cousin's name?
MN: Uh they were Ishikawas, my mother's side. My mother's brother's family.
LU: Mm-hm, oh wow. My grandparents were on Cordova Street.
MN: Oh, really?
LU: Yes, I'll have to ask them.
MN: I remember- Oh you lost your pen? [Lisa chuckles] Yes, it was near the St. Joseph's Hospital, 800 block, yeah, so-

LU: And what was their house like?
MN: It was- I'm sure they didn't own it, that must've been a rented house, but it was a nice two-storey house. And when we visited, as a young seven- year-old, eight-year-old, I used to just think it was great. You hear the- early in the morning you hear the clippity clop and the milk man would bring the milk, and then the bread man would bring in nice cinnamon buns, still warm, and my aunt would buy it and I thought, "Oh gee, it was such a treat." 'Cause we didn't have any of that in Ruskin. [chuckles] Yeah, so that was some of the nice visits to Vancouver.
LU: Mm-hm, 'cause when you were in Ruskin you would have to go and collect the milk.
MN: Yes, buy it, yes, yup. Collect the milk or go to the general store and buy the bread, yeah.
LU: How close was the general store to your house?
MN: Oh it wou- it was further than our school, yeah, about an hour- maybe one and two quarters of a mile or something.
LU: Oh wow. What do you remember about that store?
MN: Oh, they always had caramel candies. Anything that was two for one cent or whatever, [chuckles] we, we all got- were able to get it, you know. I remember trying to go to a store in Albion and I lost a whole dollar, dropped it on the road. And when I came back- dropped it on the road and when I came home, my mom and dad said, "You have to go back and look for it." So, I remember trying to find it, [chuckles] going back to the area and couldn't find it of course. But yeah, that was just a dollar, but they made me go back. That's a lot of money! [laughs]

[1:40:00]

LU: Mm-hm, was that a lot back then? A dollar?
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm, yeah. 'Cause the bread and everything were what, something like 10 cents and 25 cents, wasn't it? Yeah, uh-huh, yeah.
LU: You could buy a lotta food for a dollar.
MN: Oh yeah, uh-huh, yeah. Mm-hm. Things have really changed, eh?
LU: Mm-hm.
MN: In the- how many, I'm- I'm-
LU: 85.
MN: 85, so lots of changes.
LU: When were your parents born? When were their birthdays?
MN: Um my father's birthday was November 19- 1879, my fa- my mother's birthday was May 1897, yeah.
LU: And when did they pass away? What years?
MN: My mother passed away 1987 and my father passed away in 1962.
LU: 1962? Oh wow.

MN: And my father- my mother passed away in '87 I think it was, yeah.
LU: Mm-hm, wow, that seems really young though, '62.
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm.
LU: But I guess he would've been-
MN: 60, no, he was just 80?
LU: Yeah, yeah. Oh wow.
MN: And my mother was 87 when she passed away.
LU: Mm-hm. Hm. Oh they lived a long life though.
MN: Mm-hm, mm-hm.
LU: Yes, that's a long time. [both chuckle] Did you have any other stories that you'd like to share? Or anything that you can think of?
MN: No, I think you really, uh-
LU: I really picked your brain didn't I?
MN: Yeah, you certainly did! I think you're just wonderful. [both laugh]
LU: Wonderful! Thank you very much.
MN: Uh-huh.
LU: I'll turn these things off.
MN: Yeah, that's good.

[Interview Ends]