

Reactions to Dispossession Interview

Receiving Cheques from the Office of the Custodian

Betty (b. 1925) describes her father's attitude toward the government's seizure of property and his dispossession. She recalls when he received the cheque for his property and, in anger, "started to tear the cheque." She recalls how when one of her friends' fathers received his cheque he broke down and cried.

Excerpt from a Landscapes of Injustice oral history interview with Betty Toyota and Joy Trapnell.

BETTY TOYOTA

And my dad was, he was a real, they call it *gambare*?

MIKE ABE

Yeah, *gambare*, yeah.

BETTY TOYOTA

Okay you know what that it, a diehard. He was one of the *gambare*, "I won't come out of the internment camp." So anyway he was in internment camp for about four years, four-and-half years. And during that time my, Margaret, me and my younger sister, we all got married. And here is dad in the internment camp. Didn't know our husbands, nothing. I mean life goes on and then they closed the internment camp. But there were about a dozen, maybe more, diehards, *gambare*. They wouldn't go out of the internment. They said, "No we're not going," like my dad he wanted his money back. In the meantime, they sold his house. He never got anything out of it. And he wanted – they were protesting against the government because they weren't treated properly and unless they got, what, an explanation or apology [Joy: Or compensation] they weren't going to go out. So they sent these groups of men to Moosejaw.

MIKE ABE

Right.

BETTY TOYOTA

There was an interment camp or something in Moosejaw. That's where he went and he was there for quite a while.

JOY TRAPNELL

Really?

MIKE ABE

After the war?

BETTY TOYOTA

Yeah and this is after the war. And by that time my mother and my sister they were all in Thunder Bay, Fort William, it was called Fort William.

JOY TRAPNELL

Because Johnny was there.

BETTY TOYOTA

Johnny was there.

JOY TRAPNELL

That's where he went.

BETTY TOYOTA

And he was on his own and he had a house so he called mom, Jean, and Tak and I, we got married and we were in Slocan. So they talked dad into coming, you might forget about all that.

JOY TRAPNELL

Wow, I never knew that.

BETTY TOYOTA

Forget about all that and come and live in Thunder Bay. So he finally decided to go to – [JOY:
Thunder Bay.]

BETTY

Thunder Bay or Fort William then. And then years later I think they sent him a cheque. They sold his house and they sent him a cheque for about four hundred dollars – I can't remember what it was. They said, "We sold your house and here is your cheque." And I'm sure Johnny said four hundred dollars. My dad was so mad. He started to tear the cheque. And at that time my brother was expecting their second child or something. First child? Anyway the wife was expecting. And he wanted to buy the house.

JOY TRAPNELL

Johnny did?

BETTY TOYOTA

Johnny did. So he said, "At least that money would pay for the down payment." So he taped the cheque up. But I remember years later this girl in Vancouver, we used to go to school together, this is after the war we happened to be talking. And her dad owned a shoe shop on Powell Street. Her name was Kato. And they had a nice house in Vancouver too and he lost his shoe shop and the house and then later on just like my dad, the government sent a cheque to her father. And she says her father was so angry when he looked at that. She says, "It was the first time I ever saw my father break down and cry." Isn't it something? He cried, but then my dad was so mad he was going to tear the cheque up. And that's how it was.