

## LESSON 1 SOURCE 1.20 THE MURAKAMI FAMILY

**Family Name:** Murakami

**Family Members:** Kastuyori, Kimiko, Alice, Violet, Mary, and Rose

**Street Address:** Salt Spring Island, B.C.

**Occupation:** Farming, chickens, strawberries

**Location:** Salt Spring Island, British Columbia



Salt Spring Island is one in a cluster of islands nestled between the British Columbia mainland and Vancouver Island. To the local Salish peoples, it is known as  $x^w\text{ə}n\text{ə}n\acute{e}\check{c}$ . The Colony of Vancouver Island incorporated and re-named it Salt Spring Island in 1910. The island is host to settlers of different backgrounds. The first were African Americans fleeing racism in California. Settlers from the British Isles, Hawai'i, China, and Japan soon followed. These lands sit on the traditional and unceded territories of the Tsawwassen,  $W\text{S}\acute{A}N\acute{E}\check{C}$ , Stz'uminus, and the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group.

Locals make a living farming, fishing, and logging. They run businesses in towns of Ganges and Vesuvius. The first Japanese Canadians on Salt Spring Island worked as labourers on the farms of settlers. In time, some Japanese Canadians purchased their own lands and began their own farms. Others support themselves by following the seasons. They fish in the summer and take on supplementary work, like carpentry or charcoal-making, in the winter.

The island has a mild climate, fertile soil, and abundant seafood in its waters. Many farmers raise chickens and sheep. The butter produced at the Salt Spring Island Creamery is famous on the island and beyond its shores.

Church groups and associations, like the Japanese Young People's Association, play an important part in people's social lives. Picnics and boating are popular pastimes. The Pacific Ocean might be cold, but that doesn't deter Salt Spring Islanders. Summers are spent swimming in its blue waters. In recent years, Salt Spring Island has become a desirable summer locale and resorts have opened to welcome tourists from Victoria and Vancouver.

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### ABOUT THE MURAKAMI FAMILY

Kimiko and Katsuyori Murakami live on Salt Spring Island, near a town called Ganges. They have four young daughters: Alice (11), Violet (9), Mary (5), and Rose (2). Kimiko is a *nisei*, or second-generation Japanese Canadian. She was born in Steveston, a fishing village, in 1904. Kimiko's parents moved to Salt Spring Island in 1909. Kimiko met her husband, Katsuyori, on a trip to Japan in 1925.

When the newlyweds returned to Canada, they worked on the farm of Kimiko's parents so that they could save for their home. That day came in 1934, when they purchased a property next-door. Katsuyori cleared

the land: he used dynamite on the largest stumps and built their home by hand.

On Sharpe Road, where they live, there is a sense of community. Their neighbours are other Japanese Canadian families and Kimiko and Katsuyori know that it's safe to let their daughters run and play.

The Murakami farm is growing and prosperous. They have six chicken houses, with over 5,000 chickens. They sell asparagus and berries to markets in Victoria. When the British King and Queen visit Victoria in the summer of 1939, they will eat Murakami strawberries.



Left: A photograph of Salt Spring Island. Salt Spring Island Archives  
Centre: Katsuyori and Kimiko Murakami with their children. Alice Murakami, standing, Violet and Mary seated, and Rose on Kimiko's knee.  
Salt Spring Island Archives 2044-005-024  
Right: Katsuyori Murakami feeding the chickens. Salt Spring Island Archives 2004-005-012