

# Publishing in Slocan

REV. TIMOTHY NAKAYAMA provides a Canadian perspective on publishing during the Japanese internment with this history of activities undertaken by his father, the Rev. Gordon Goichi Nakayama, in British Columbia.



The *Pine Crescent Breeze*, a paper the Rev. Gordon Nakayama produced for school children in Slocan, B.C., between 1942 and 1945.

BETWEEN 1942 AND 1945, we of Japanese origin were erroneously classified as “enemy aliens” and by orders of the ruling authorities in Canada and the USA were—in the language

of the day—“evacuated” and “relocated” inland for internment. Japanese Americans were sent into 10 scattered American military camps by an executive order signed by U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his role as commander-in-chief of the U.S. military.

It was a military action in a time of war, whereas in Canada a rather uncivil civil action took place as Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and his cabinet forwarded Orders-in-Council that resulted in all of us—men, women and children—being uprooted, removed and deprived from our homes and businesses into the horticultural barns of Vancouver’s Hastings Park.

We were eventually sent from here en masse into the British Columbia interior. Our family—my parents, my sister Joy and I—were to go to southeastern B.C., to a remote, old, virtually abandoned gold mining town called Slocan, 58 miles north of Nelson. It was in a stunningly beautiful, starkly remote area of cold, deep, clear freshwater lakes, rushing rivers and streams, surrounded by high, rocky, scraggy mountains covered by thick forests, at the headwaters of the Columbia River.

Unlike in the U.S., barbed wire was unnecessary here. I can recall seeing only one RCMP officer in downtown Slocan City, among the several thousands of us living in the dusty old hotels that remained from the gold mining days and in single-room buildings constructed by Japanese carpenters, row upon row, on farmland subdivided into several streets—in Bayfarm, Popoff, and seven miles south of Slocan City in Lemon Creek.

#### VITAL COMMUNICATION LINKS

We were forbidden to have or use radios, and we saw no newspapers. This didn't prevent us from communicating with each other, using a mimeograph machine our father brought along in our very limited luggage, restricted to 150 pounds per person. Before the war, our father Gordon Goichi Nakayama (an Anglican priest) published two books, both in Japanese: *Kiōsho kenkyū no tebiki / A Guide to the Study of the Prayer Book* (1934) and *Utsukushiki shinkō monogatari / Beautiful Stories of Conversion* (1936).

He also published *The Church News*, a two- to three-page newsletter that appeared weekly and monthly from 1929 to 1979. During the Second World War, he published 1,600 copies every month and distributed these to Japanese Canadians in the internment centres, then later to Japanese Canadians who were scattered throughout Canada by the government's post-war policy of dispersal.

Printed by mimeograph and published under the auspices of our church community in Slokan, *The Church News* was the only way many of those who endured forcible isolation stayed in contact with each other. Personal news was interspersed among notices about church services and reports of fellowship activities. Cartoon-like line drawings illustrated the news. Our school paper, the *Pine Crescent Breeze*, came into being and was distributed among school students. These became our communication links.

#### PRINTING VIA MIMEOGRAPH

Here is how *The Church News* was produced. A silkscreen fastened to a hardwood frame was the base to which we would fasten a vellum stencil. A manual typewriter would be used, with any ribbons disengaged so that the type would strike the stencil directly. With a metal stylus with a pointed pen, we would write or print Japanese ideographs or draw pictures on a fine file, a wider stone slate sheet.

These imprinted vellum sheets would be fastened to the silkscreen, and in the

absence of mimeographing ink, we developed a substitute by mixing automotive grease with a very fine black charcoal powder. Somehow, we were able to get sufficient sheets of mimeographing (absorbent) paper.

In a process of trial and error, we finally eliminated grease marks on the foolscap-size paper. The beds in our bedrooms were the surfaces where the sheets of wet mimeograph paper were laid out to dry. And so the mimeograph became our "printing press," as it were.

#### POST-WAR MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Throughout the war years, and later when we were not permitted to return to the West Coast because of the government's dispersal policy, our father continued publishing. *Seiai / The Divine Love* was a monthly magazine he began publishing in 1948 from the shack where we were living in southern Alberta. It was still being published when he wrote his autobiography in the summer of 1982 (the unpublished typescript is part of the Gordon Goichi Nakayama Fonds at UBC Library's Rare Books and Special Collections).

My sister and I helped with applying homemade rice or flour paste on the backs of sheets of papers with addresses on them, leaving them to dry, then cutting them out and wetting each one with a sponge and applying the address to the folded and stapled church newspaper. I would take bundles of these tied into categories by geography, placing them in a box and onto the carriage of my bicycle, and deliver them to the post office.

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~ The Rev. Timothy Nakayama is a retired Episcopalian priest living in Seattle, Washington. He is the brother of Joy Kogawa, who contributed information to these recollections. Kogawa's semi-autobiographical novel *Obasan* (1981) is rooted in her experiences in Slokan.





Alcum Waygoose, Vancouver. Photos courtesy of Jason Vanderhill. Photo collage by Louise Phillips.