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To cite this article: Millie Creighton (2017) A tree house in Tokyo: Reflections on Nikkei, citizenship, belonging, architecture, and art on the 75th anniversary of Japanese American and Japanese Canadian internment, Contemporary Japan, 29:2, 246-260

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/18692729.2017.1354752>



Published online: 24 Aug 2017.



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# A tree house in Tokyo: Reflections on Nikkei, citizenship, belonging, architecture, and art on the 75th anniversary of Japanese American and Japanese Canadian internment

Millie Creighton

Department of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

## ABSTRACT

This think piece discusses the continuing influence of Japanese American and Japanese Canadian internment, which commenced 75 years ago in 1942 and also affected Nikkei from 13 Latin American countries. Contextualizing the Canadian case, the essay explores the lives of Raymond Moriyama, a Nikkei architect interned despite his Canadian birth and citizenship, and William Allister, a White Canadian Prisoner of War (POW) of Japan, and their mutual attempts to overcome bitterness through their architecture and art. The article explores the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo designed by Moriyama as a tree house, reflecting Moriyama's belief that a tree house is a special place where the human spirit can dwell and soar. The Canadian Embassy in Japan as a tree house proclaims possibilities of addressing historic wrongs and embracing diversity. North American Nikkei attempts to prevent further injustices against others are related to the contemporary context in which some North American voices advocate a registry of Arab Americans. The essay asserts that the official Redress acknowledgements by the United States and Canada in 1988 that the internment of people of Japanese descent was wrong stand as a precedent against such targeting of specific groups.

## KEYWORDS

Nikkei; internment; immigration; dwelling; architecture; citizenship

## Introduction

The year 2017 marks the 75th anniversary of the uprooting and internment of people of Japanese descent in the Americas, which began in 1942 in the context of sentiments within North America following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawai'i, USA, in December 1941. At the time this was frequently referred to as the 'Japanese internment' but it is important to recognize that the majority of those interned were American and Canadian citizens. Most were *Nisei*, second generation out of Japan, or those born in the United States and Canada. Those who did not have citizenship, mostly *Issei*, or 'first generation' in the United States or Canada were nonetheless legal members of these societies with recognized residency status, thus neither 'foreign' nor 'aliens.' Compounding the unfortunate nomenclature of the 'Japanese

**CONTACT** Millie Creighton ✉ [millie.creighton@ubc.ca](mailto:millie.creighton@ubc.ca) 📠 Department of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver Campus, 6303 NW Marine Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1, Canada

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internment' is that it often continues into the present and can detract from the full recognition of the United States and Canada seizing the property of its own citizens and legal residents, uprooting them from their communities and incarcerating them for years.

The internment remains a pivotal aspect of Nikkei history in the Americas, along with the subsequent struggle to gain recognition of it as wrong, called Redress. The two processes shape issues North American Nikkei communities engage in, the value statements made by their organizations, and their commitment to protect and preserve the rights of all groups, minorities, marginalized peoples, and immigrants. While internment and Redress were pivotal in Nikkei experience and commitments in the United States and Canada, they had a major impact on Nikkei in other countries of the Americas, because Nikkei from 13 Latin American countries were brought up and interned in US camps based on agreements the United States had with Latin American countries at that time (Creighton, 2010).

In many cases, Nikkei from South America found themselves picked up, and sent to the United States, without being able to contact their families or let them know what was happening. The largest number came from Peru. Such Nikkei had additional difficulties after World War II as they were caught between national boundaries when at war's end they did not have US citizenship despite being interned within the United States, and they usually lacked legal papers indicating their nationalities or the cause of their being in the United States. They were not initially recognized in the 1988 Redress settlements through which the United States and Canada acknowledged the wrongs of uprooting and interning Nikkei and granted financial compensation to any still alive. Interned Japanese Americans who were still alive received a letter of apology from President Reagan or President George G. W. Bush and US\$ 20,000 as compensation in the 1988 Redress settlement. Japanese Canadians received Cdn\$ 21,000 based on the equivalent value at that time. Since those from the 13 Latin American countries were neither citizens nor legal residents of the United States when they were interned there their rights as citizens or residents of the United States (or Canada) had not been violated. These were the main tenets under which the Redress process was legally argued, and hence it would be several more years before they received an apology letter from President Clinton and 25% of the compensation, or US\$ 5000.

I use the term, Nikkei, as it is now frequently used outside Japan to refer to people of Japanese descent who are not Japanese or whose home country is outside Japan. The term Nikkei combines the character for sun used as 'ni' in *Nihon* (Japan) and a character read 'kei' meaning line, hence meaning 'in a Japanese descent line.' Another term used more in Japan, *Nikkeijin*, has the additional character 'jin' or 'people' meaning, 'people in a Japanese descent line.' Some scholars prefer the Japanese term, *Nikkeijin*. For example, Geiger (2016/2017, p. 13), guest editor of a special issue of the journal *BC Studies* on 'Nikkei History,' says she prefers the Japanese term *Nikkeijin* because it 'makes a more general reference to ancestry than does Nikkei.' I, however, prefer Nikkei, because *Nikkeijin* is the Japanese term used by those in Japan to describe people of Japanese descent basing Japan at the core of conceptualization, whereas Nikkei was discussed and adopted as their own self-referent by members of Japanese descent communities throughout the Americas (Creighton, 2010). Previously, the Japanese terms for 'first generation' (*Issei*), 'second generation' (*Nisei*), and 'third generation' (*Sansei*) referring

to the degree of generational removal from Japan were common. Even these terms premise Japan at the core. Nikkei was chosen by those of Japanese descent outside of Japan for their own purposes. Generational definitions, fairly distinct for the first few generations in the Americas, began to break down. People did not always marry and have children at set times in countries emigrants went, making generational groupings less precise. People made jokes about whether those born as *Sansei*, third generation, based on one parent while *Yonsei*, fourth generation, based on the other, could be called *Sansei-han* or 3.5 generation descent individuals. With increasing intermarriage people of Japanese descent also often had other descent heritages. New immigrants from Japan were not fitting into previous descent generation categories. Communities were thus seeking a more embracing term for the variety of people comprising Japanese descent communities.

Communities were also linking together more to discuss their shared yet diverse experiences. The creation of a new organization called PANA, the Pan American Nikkei Association, created a forum for Nikkei from throughout North and South America to gather, discuss similarities and divergences of their experiences, and consider the term Nikkei as one broader than generational groupings based on time of immigration (Creighton, 2010). They adopted Nikkei as a larger umbrella term that could link all people of Japanese descent in the Americas (and elsewhere).

The historical experiences of having been targets of prejudice, resulting in loss of property, communities, and freedoms, along with the battles to gain recognition of the wrongs involved, resulted in Nikkei in the United States and Canada committing themselves to work against this happening to other groups. This has resulted in Nikkei organizations being at the forefront of concern over contemporary anti-Arab American or Islamophobic sentiment in the United States and at times Canada and calls for profiling or restricting such individuals. Nikkei have criticized policy suggestions in their home countries of the United States and Canada, as well as Japan for its strict immigration policies or attitudes towards minorities.

As mentioned, the erroneous collapsing of Japanese and Nikkei is something that continues. Even recent US President Barack Obama in his book, *The Audacity of Hope*, writes that it is very important to 'Arab and Pakistani Americans' that the United States has 'learned the right lessons from the Japanese internments' (2006, p. 309). Thus, in the same paragraph, Arab Americans are rendered 'Americans' who are Arabs, while Japanese Americans continue to be incorrectly rendered as 'Japanese.' Given my experiences with editors who sometimes change the wording of lines it is possible that the rendering of 'Japanese' internment may not have been Obama's original phrasing. However, inappropriate collapsing of Japanese descent with Japanese is something Nikkei in the US and Canada have struggled with and are often outspokenly against.

In this essay, I look at ways the internment and Redress processes continue to shape identities of Nikkei in North America. I focus more on the Canadian case as outside of Canada more is known about the American case. Drawing on Weber's concept that understanding social experience requires looking at the understandable actions of individuals (1946), I focus on two individuals, a Japanese Canadian who experienced internment as a youth and a White Canadian who spent years as a Prisoner of War (POW) of the Japanese during World War II, their mutual attempts to come to terms with their incarceration, and their creative involvements afterwards as architect and artist. Their

lives have been compared in the documentary film *The Art of Compassion* and in exhibits that opened the current Canadian Embassy building in Tokyo, Japan. The comparison has been embraced by some Canadian Nikkei and criticized by others who wonder if it continues seeing Japan imprisoning Canadian POWs as the inverse of Canada incarcerating Japanese Canadians, and thus a continuing denial that in one case, Japan was imprisoning foreign enemies, while in the other Canada and the United States were imprisoning their own citizens and residents.

I focus on these two men because of how they now fit into Canadian constructions of national identity, belongingness, and citizenship, and how Nikkei history is positioned within that. The Japanese Canadian is Raymond Moriyama, who following his internment, became one of Canada's foremost architects. Chosen to design and build the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, Moriyama was shown as re-defined from his historic definition as 'alien' to 'Canadian' and as the one entrusted to represent 'Canada' to Japan and the world. The White Canadian is William Allister, who following his incarceration in Japan as a POW pursued being an artist, as well as a playwright and novelist. Bringing together artistic works by Allister with the architecture of Moriyama for the opening of the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo involved attempts to transcend bitterness from the internment and bitterness felt by many Canadians over the POWs held by Japan during World War II. Through architecture and art, the Canadian Embassy building symbolized a move towards building Canadian identity as multicultural, beyond cleavages of different groupings.

To explore these issues, I discuss the symbolism surrounding the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo, present background on the two Canadians mentioned, Raymond Moriyama and William Allister, discuss their experiences as someone incarcerated by his own country (Moriyama) or by a foreign enemy country as a POW (Allister), and examine their attempts to move beyond bitterness through architecture and art. I underscore the significance of architecture by exploring theories of how architectural form shapes human beings, their behaviours, and their identities, and the importance of 'dwelling' in human life. This is particularly pertinent for both Nikkei and POW experience in which a sense of dwelling and 'home' were taken away. Finally, I look at ways North American Nikkei histories of internment and Redress have shaped continuing Nikkei commitments to struggle against potential civil rights violations of other groups.

### **A Tokyo tree house, an architect and an artist**

The Canadian Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, links the two countries of Canada and Japan; it also serves as an emblem of Canadian identity to the world. I suggest the re-constructed building projects the re-construction of collective national identity, along with a re-envisioning of citizenship, both within Canada specifically and in the possibility of being global citizens or as can be expressed in Japanese, *Chikyūjin* ('citizens of the earth') (see Creighton, 2007, 2008). The lives of Japanese Canadian architect Raymond Moriyama and White Canadian artist William Allister ('White' is used for Allister since an ethnic category is given for Moriyama), and their personal histories and interactions with each other are related to this. Moriyama's architectural goals for the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo symbolize statements of belonging, connectedness, and the human spirit. Moriyama was interned as a youth in his home and native country, Canada. William

Allister was also incarcerated as a young man taken prisoner during World War II by Japan and spending more than three and a half years (44 months) as a POW held by Japan, initially in Hong Kong and then in Japan. For both men, their creative pursuits were an expression of their human creativity and a means of addressing their experiences of incarceration.

### ***The tree house***

Embassies present a material manifestation of the countries they represent to the countries in which they operate and beyond that to the world. When countries are involved in the construction of their embassies they can make choices about how they imagine or present themselves. Architects can have a big role in this process of national identification, imagination, and positioning. The Canadian Embassy in Tokyo is unique in its structural statement of national identity among embassies in Japan, and throughout the world – at least I have never encountered elsewhere the kinds of symbolism built into the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo.

I felt something was different about the Canadian Embassy in Japan when first visiting it during its opening year, 1991. One does not enter this embassy on the ground floor. Instead one boards an escalator that is part of the building but on the outside of it and takes four flights of escalators upwards while still outside the building in order to enter on a higher floor. At that time I was involved in research on department stores and consumer complexes, holding a corresponding sense of where escalators belonged – on the inside. Social scientists point out that Japanese culture maintains strong inside/outside distinctions. I realized that though a ‘Westerner,’ I, too, held inside/outside concepts – when it came to escalators, and, until then, a not even consciously realized belief that their ‘proper place’ was on the inside. For this embassy one rides the escalators outside to the level of the tree tops (those growing in the park adjoining the Embassy) before entering because the Canadian Embassy in Japan is a tree house, a tree house in the midst of Tokyo, one of the world’s densest and most cosmopolitan cities.

### ***The architect***

The architect, Raymond Moriyama, envisioned the Canadian Embassy as a tree house, emblematic of a place where people can gather. A tree house evokes a spirit of youth and nostalgic memories for many people who played in tree houses when young. A tree house can represent idealism. Moriyama thought of a tree house as a ‘magical place’ (Campbell, 1995) for the unfolding of human interactions. The Canadian embassy as one representing a tree house is unique. More commonly embassies and consulates stage grandeur or metaphoric fortresses – structures projecting importance, power, and security. I am a dual citizen of Canada and the United States and once worked at the American Embassy in Tokyo, for which ‘fortress’ seems the more apt metaphor and which contrasts strongly to the Canadian Embassy as a ‘tree house.’

Anthropologists who have studied building form in relationship to the construction of human sociability, identity, and moral personhood (Carsten & Hugh-Jones, 1995; Levi-Strauss, 1963, 1987; Morgan, 1881/1965) claim continuity in collective identity is

suggested in architecture through iteration and re-iteration. The Canadian Embassy as a tree house in Japan involves a re-iteration to the first tree house Moriyama built, not in a major Japanese city, but in the remote interior of British Columbia, Canada. Canada did not commission nor compensate him for building that one. Moriyama built his first tree house as a youth interned by Canada because he was a person of Japanese descent. He was bitter about being incarcerated by his own country. Like many Canadian Nikkei his placement in the B.C. interior came after his family's initial incarceration in cattle stalls at the PNE (Pacific Northwest Exhibition) fairgrounds. Part of Moriyama's bitterness was his mother's miscarriage while the family was living in the PNE cattle stalls which Moriyama felt caused the loss of what he thought would have been his 'younger brother' (Campbell, 1995).

Moriyama received lumber from White Canadian farmers in the community near where he was interned to build his first tree house. Such incidences do not negate the injustices done to Japanese Canadians but suggest hope in the ability of the human spirit to transcend pettiness even in times of stress. Another example is provided in a film by Linda Ohama, also a Canadian Nikkei, *The Last Harvest* (1992). Members of the local White community near a Japanese Canadian internment area contemplated the education of interned Japanese Canadian children – something the government that interned them had not worked out. The locals decided that since some of the Japanese Canadian internees were children, since children should be educated, and since there was only one school for the community's children, the Japanese Canadian children interned nearby should be allowed to attend it. Such hopeful examples indicate that even in stressful times people can react humanely and treat those positioned differently from themselves as nonetheless part of a shared universal humanity rather than simply as a projected 'other.'

### **The artist**

William Allister, an artist who died in 2008, was someone with whom I interacted and discussed his incarceration as a POW and the film comparison of his life with Raymond Moriyama. As a young man he enlisted in the Canadian military with friends – all eager to go off and be in a war for Canada. They were sent to Hong Kong – seen as an 'easy' posting where there was no 'real action.' Allister wrote of his youthful frustration at this, and how he and the others disliked this 'wimpy' posting where nothing happened. They had signed up for war, and wanted to be in it. Allister would later have a 'conversion' experience and spend his life after surviving World War II expressing through his art and talks (one of which he gave to one of my classes) the idiocy of wars, that everyone should realize we should not want wars, nor want to be in them, and that one of our most pressing human moral obligations is to try to prevent war. However, as a young man who had not yet experientially learned this, he was eager for that involvement – and he and his friends got their wish after all.

Hong Kong fell to the Japanese on 25 December 1941. The day had pivotal symbolic significance for many Canadians as Christmas Day. The Japanese had invaded Hong Kong – as a British (and Canadian) post – on the same day it attacked Pearl Harbor as part of the United States, in an all out attack on Western powers. (Although Hong Kong is in Asia it was seen by Japan as a British stronghold.) The day Japan



attacked Hong Kong was 8 December 1941; that the attack on Pearl Harbor is also conceptualized in Japan as December 8 is often missed. For example, See's novel *Shanghai Girls* indicates Japan attacked Hong Kong just one day after attacking Pearl Harbor (See 2009), a statement failing to take into consideration time differences. From the Asian and Japanese perspectives both occurred on December 8, the date for both in Japan which is a day ahead of North America.

The battle for Hong Kong, with Allister and his friends in it, was intense, a classic case supporting the dictum that one should be careful what one wishes for because one might get it. When Hong Kong fell on that highly symbolic Christmas Day, over 10,000 Canadians were taken as Prisoners of War by the Japanese. They were first sequestered in Hong Kong and then taken to Japan. For those who survived, the next few years of their lives would not be good, but would be memorable, shaping the rest of their lives. The majority of those 10,000 Canadians taken as POWs would not survive; they would die of starvation, they would die of sickness, they would die of overwork from forced labour, they would die from beatings and torture, they would die from a combination of these.

Allister wrote that one of his greatest shocks, well into his incarceration as a POW, came not from his captors but from his family. Due to the war, mail stoppages, and censorship, POWs did not get any communication from those 'outside' for a long time. Then Allister received a letter from his family. He wrote he was shocked (and mentioned the incident to me decades later) when he opened that letter and the first line he read stated his family was overjoyed to hear he was a POW. Allister (1989, p. 77) wrote:

Overjoyed! There I sat in shit up to the eyeballs, half dead, crawling with lice, exhausted, starved, disease ridden, jolted by electric feet, a bloody walking skeleton and they were overjoyed? Had they all gone balmy? It took a while to see it their way.

The Canadian POWs taken at Hong Kong – if they survived – were often left with much bitterness, as were other Canadians over these POWs. There have been suggestions that there may have been greater bitterness among people in Australia, Britain, and Canada towards Japan after World War II than among people in the United States. These were countries from which many POWs were taken, but countries that did not have the other experiences of post-war occupation interactions in Japan with average Japanese, compared to Americans among whom there were offsetting positive experiences with average Japanese in the post-war period because of the American occupation. Allister spent years trying to overcome this bitterness. This was not everyone's approach, as seen in the title of the book *Banzai, You Bastards!*, co-authored by Jack Edwards (with Jimmy Walter, 1991), another POW survivor that Allister knew (and whom I met in Hong Kong). The title is not one that promotes transcending bitterness and hatred, a contrast to Allister's approach. Allister once expressed his view that 'even if someone does me dirt' he did not want to hate him or her but instead to try to understand what made the person that way.

Allister dealt with these themes in his POW memoir, *Where Life and Death Hold Hands* (1989). He tells the story of the Kamloops Kid – Kanao Inouye, a *Nisei* born in Canada whose father had fought for Canada in World War I and was a decorated war hero – who was considered a rare counter-example to the usual loyalty of Japanese Canadians during World War II. Inoue became a translator for the Japanese Imperial Army, and



his treatment of POWs was considered brutal; he became the only Canadian tried and found guilty of war crimes following World War II. He was actually tried twice. He was tried, convicted of war crimes, and sentenced to death by a military tribunal in Hong Kong. The sentence was overturned on appeal when his defence argued he could not be convicted of war crimes as a Canadian citizen rather than one on the enemy side. He was then tried on criminal charges of treason, convicted, sentenced to death and executed by hanging on 27 August 1947. Inouye was born and raised in Canada but his family went to Japan in 1936 and he was there when the war commenced. While no one disclaims his brutality towards White Canadian POWs during the war, some have later wondered whether his involvement as a translator for the Japanese Imperial Army was not a necessary survival strategy as a Canadian citizen living in Japan during the war. POWs who testified at his trials described him as one of the worst in terms of POW beatings. Rather than hate him, Allister tried to understand what had caused him to be so brutal and how experiences of discrimination experienced as a Nikkei in Canada may have been at the background to his treatment of the POWs. Despite initially saying he was happy growing up in Canada, Inouye reportedly suffered ostracism and abuse from other children who picked on him and called him names because of his ethnicity. Allister thus made attempts to offset bitterness in his writings about his experiences, and also attempted this in his art by engaging Japanese imagery, often using classical Japanese motifs, or bringing together Japanese and Western imagery.

Allister decided that to overcome any lingering animosity towards Japan, he needed to return to Japan and to the sites of his imprisonment, thereby as he put it in his writing, going back to the scene of the crime. In the 1980s, he travelled to Japan with his wife Mona. He would write a prize-winning essay about this visit that appeared in *Reader's Digest*. By that time, 40 years after the end of World War II, the POW camps were long gone, and the area Allister was imprisoned had become the Kawasaki ship building yards. He wrote to Kawasaki asking for permission to visit the sites where he was imprisoned as a POW. Kawasaki representatives granted his request although nothing compelled them to do so. Allister was even escorted to various sites by the son of a former prison guard.

In terms of physical hardships it can be claimed that Allister suffered more than Moriyama. This is not to negate that the Japanese Canadian internment involved physical adversity, at times extreme, often overlooked, denied, or erased in the minds of other Canadians. By the time the 1995 movie comparing the lives of the two men, *The Art of Compassion*, was made, Allister who had faced the harsher physical conditions seemed to have gone further towards completely eliminating his bitterness. For Moriyama, any remaining bitterness was expressed in the film in a conversation between the two men. Moriyama tells Allister that in some sense Allister was better off because he was imprisoned by the enemy country, whereas what he (Moriyama) had to deal with was his own country imprisoning him. Moriyama's bitterness thus had a stronger psychological aspect of the denial of his belonging, identity, and citizenship as a Canadian.

Some Nikkei criticized making a film comparing the two men's lives. One of the difficulties in the struggle for Redress and the recognition that the internment of Japanese Canadians was wrong (as in the Japanese American case) had been the inappropriate equation, held by many laypeople, of Japan imprisoning Canadians as

POWs with Canada imprisoning people often referred to as Japanese, but who were Japanese Canadians. Statements by those who opposed Canada recognizing internment as wrong, apologizing, or granting compensation often suggested Canada should not apologize, or pay compensation money to 'the Japanese' (actually Japanese Canadians) interned, because Japan had never apologized nor paid monetary compensation to the Canadians imprisoned as POWs. (Similar attitudes were expressed in the US case.) In short, the problem was the false collapsing of two completely different categories, one involving a country imprisoning foreign Prisoners of War, the other involving a country imprisoning its own citizens and legal residents. For some Nikkei, a film comparing an interned Nikkei and a White Canadian POW seemed to again suggest that the two processes were analogous. The comparison was, however, attempting to reconcile different elements of bitterness still lingering decades after World War II to overcome possible cleavages still existing in Canadian multiculturalism, rather than a reification that these had been analogous or inverse processes.

### Building buildings, being, belonging, dwellings, and identities

Architecture is about more than building buildings; it involves building identities, a sense of belonging, and a particular way of being. One purpose of architecture is building dwellings. I suggest that the Canadian Embassy as a tree house is a particular kind of dwelling – a dwelling for national identity now based on multiculturalism, asserting room for everyone comprising the national collective. Moriyama in designing the Canadian Embassy as a tree house saw it as a dwelling – a dwelling for the human soul. 'Dwelling' is pertinent both to Nikkei experience and to the building of national identity. Nikkei in Canada and the United States were uprooted, declared 'aliens,' had their property seized, and were relocated to internment camps, losing not only the monetary value of their property but also 'home,' the places they were dwelling, and the communities in which that dwelling took place. Removal from their dwellings symbolized lack of full belonging to the national polity despite their citizenship or legal residency status. A national sense of collective community involves not only legal definitions but also ideas of being and dwelling.

Social scientists have theorized how architecture shapes human being-ness, social relationships, and personhood. Some follow a Marxian approach that material conditions do not just derive from consciousness but give rise to consciousness. Some follow Bourdieu (1977, 1990), who initially developed the idea of *habitus* in relation to homes and dwelling, showing that just as an early socialization task of children is learning a language, they learn the 'grammar' of spatial expectations in cultural forms of architecture, first experienced in the home or dwelling. Douglas (1970, p. 116) asserts that: 'What is being carried out in human flesh is an image of society.' Echoing this for architecture Victor Buchli writes:

It is the negotiation of these distinctions and the images of society that are sustained in bodily and architectonic form, which together are profoundly generative of the terms by which moral personhood and social life are understood in relation to each other. *It is analytically quite difficult to segregate one from the other in a meaningful way.* This negotiation, however, is at the heart of cultural work, the never-ending terms by which life is made and sustained, requiring new understandings of embodied form in relation to built form

and similarly novel forms of disembodiment *within the same process* [...]. (Buchli, 2013, pp. 137–139, my emphasis)

In his early anthropological work, *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines* (Morgan, 1881/1965), Henry Morgan suggests architectural form both reflects and generates expectations of humans in relation to other humans, the environment, and the cosmos; it prompts forms of social and moral personhood. Morgan believed elimination of want did not mark architectural success, but instead that, 'every institution of [humankind] which attained permanence will be found linked with a perpetual want' (Morgan, 1881/1965, p. xvi). This relates to Heidegger's discussion of the nature of 'dwelling.' Heidegger asserts humans 'must ever learn to dwell' (Heidegger, 1993, p. 363), a never completed process, but not a hopeless one. For Heidegger (and likely Moriyama) the problem of dwelling is a perpetual problem involving a continual process of integration. Writing in a post-World War II context of devastation and housing scarcity which left numerous people bereft of 'home,' Heidegger asserted in his essay, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking':

However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains, *the proper plight of dwelling* does not lie merely in the lack of houses. *The proper plight of dwelling* is indeed older than the world wars with their destruction, older also than the increase of the earth's population and the condition of the industrial workers. The proper dwelling plight lies in this, *that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell*. What if [humanity's] homelessness consisted in this, that [human-kind] still does not even think of the *proper plight of dwelling* as the plight? Yet as soon as [humanity] *gives thought* to [its] homelessness, *it is a misery no longer*. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that *calls mortals into their dwelling*. (Heidegger, 1993, p. 354; see Buchli, 2013)

Heidegger asserted, 'only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.' He emphasized nature and natural processes in approaching architectural design. Moriyama likewise expressed the need to consider nature and the natural environment which he calls recognizing the LAW – land, air, and water. In designing the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo as a metaphoric tree house, Moriyama considered the surrounding environment including the trees lining the area adjoining the embassy site. He also considered nature and natural processes in internal design for the embassy, including rock forms, stone, and pebble gardens reflective of Japanese style gardens while staged to represent Canadian natural elements. Moriyama inverted stereotypes of Japan as an 'ancient country' and Canada as a 'new country' by showing that Canada's land form is much older than Japan's (Campbell, 1995).

Levi-Strauss called architecture an illusory objectification (Carsten & Hugh-Jones, 1995; Levi-Strauss, 1987) through which social and moral personhood is prompted, beginning with dwellings. This is not an illusion in the sense of falsehood, but an envisioned projection. Moriyama also gave thought to such possibilities. The tree house embassy in Tokyo projects the idioms of person, society, identity, and citizenship that it symbolically embraces. In defining the building both as a tree house and as a 'dwelling,' Moriyama considers not just the dwelling of the human body but also of the human spirit. He refers to the symbolism of the tree house as part of his architectural attempt to design spaces where the human spirit can dwell and soar (Campbell, 1995; see also Moriyama, 2006).

## Current commitments of North American Nikkei

The year 2017 marks the 75th anniversary of internment of people of Japanese descent in the United States and Canada. Despite the length of time passed, this and the struggle for Redress to gain recognition that internment was wrong (granted by both countries in 1988) continue to shape North American Nikkei commitments. These commitments have expanded to supporting immigrants, minorities, and others whose rights might be violated with the belief that such errors of social process should not be allowed again.

Japan's attempts at internationalization have involved reaching out to re-connect with its descent communities abroad. Japan has established policies allowing Nikkei to enter, live, and work in Japan, resulting particularly in Nikkei from Latin America living in Japan, with the largest number of such Nikkei coming from Brazil, often bringing spouses who might be of other backgrounds, and children including mixed heritage children (Creighton, 2014). The Japanese government and Japanese society have awakened to the reality that allowing in Nikkei is not the same as having Japanese 'return' to Japan and that Nikkei really do have other cultural backgrounds. There have also been Japanese American and Japanese Canadians entering Japan under these policies. Yamashiro (2017) discusses how Japanese Americans faced difficulties of experience and identity similar in certain ways to those experienced by Latin American Nikkei, after moving to Japan and often recognizing their cultural background as more American rather than Japanese despite Japanese ethnic descent.

In reaching out to descent communities abroad there seemed a belief in Japan that Nikkei would fit 'back' into Japan easily because of descent – something shown not to be the case. There also seemed a sense that those of Japanese descent would agree with Japanese policies in Japan. This likewise turned out to not necessarily be the case. Both the Japanese American and Japanese Canadian communities have criticized Japan's immigration policies. Nikkei organizations have stated Japan should take a larger role in admitting Syrian refugees, rather than simply offering money to help them relocate elsewhere than Japan. They have also expressed concerns about anti-Arab sentiment in Japan, indicated in a statement in the Japanese Canadian Nikkei nationwide journal. Japanese American organizations have also criticized Japan's stance. Instead of the expected support for Japan's restrictive policies because they had Japanese descent, Japan confronted something more powerful, these descent communities establishing a mandate not based on 'genetics' but on lived experience to counter discrimination against any group and the denial of immigration based on race, ethnicity, region of origin, religion, etc. However, given the contemporary diversity of these Nikkei communities there are Nikkei in Canada and the United States, particularly those who immigrated more recently, who may support Japan's policies.

Some Nikkei have discussed Syrian refugees in North America using the term *Issei* (first generation) as it fits Nikkei experience, not as it is used in Japan. In a feature article of the National Association of Japanese Canadians, called *The New Issei*, Watada (2017) writes about Syrian immigrants to Canada as similar to the first generation of Japanese who immigrated to Canada. The term *Issei* is thus used by a Canadian Nikkei as applicable to immigrants from anywhere, whereas in Japan it refers only to Japanese emigrants.

Japan has increased the number of refugees the country can accept to 10,000 a year. How this works out in reality, however, is that in 2015 Japan approved refugee status for 27 refugee applicants, less than half of 1% of the possible limit (*Japan Today*, 2016). There was often a quick refusal for those from African and Middle Eastern countries (*Japan Today*, 2016). For 2016 the number of refugees Japan admitted increased by one, to 28 (Harding, 2017).

Nikkei in both the United States and Canada have been active since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (in 2001) to counter anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment. The Nikkei community in Seattle hosted a panel discussion entitled: 'Connecting the Lessons of History: WWII Japanese American Incarceration and Anti-Muslim, Anti-Immigrant Rights Violations.' The event protested prejudice against Arabs, Muslims, and immigrants in the United States in the post 9/11 world and connected this to the 'failure of leadership' and 'public silence' that led to 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry in the United States being incarcerated (*The Seattle Globalist*, 2016). (In Canada 22,000 were incarcerated.) The event took place on 30 May 2016, Memorial Day (an American legal holiday held on the last Monday of May), a day with American patriotic resonance to remember veterans and those who died in wars. The venue, the Nisei Veteran's Community Memorial Hall, was a reminder of the large numbers of *Nisei* (second generation out of Japan, hence American citizens born in the United States) who served and died for the United States in World War II despite internment. The 442nd battalion, for example, was comprised entirely of *Nisei* and is well known as the most decorated unit in American military history for its size and length of service.

Canadian Nikkei also link their history to issues Muslims face today. In a February 2017 interview, Mary Kitagawa discussed memories of her family torn apart, her father taken away first at gunpoint, when she was seven years old, drastic internment conditions, and post-war deprivation after the loss of livelihoods and property. She discussed parallels with attitudes towards Muslims now, expressing concern over President Trump's election campaign statement that he would start a registry of Muslims in the United States, which was a prelude to internment. She said, 'It just sent shivers down my spine. [...] Today, because of the different laws we have in Canada, I don't think this could happen again. But still, it's a frightening thought that it could' (quoted in Zeidler, 2017). Expressing sentiments shared by many North American Nikkei she added, 'What has to happen is people like us who went through this terrible journey have to support these people who are being victimized right now' (Zeidler, 2017).

## Conclusions

This essay has dealt with North American Nikkei, discussing how the history of internment via which Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians lost their homes, property, communities, and freedom during World War II, affect North American Nikkei in the present, 75 years after internment began. It mentioned the lesser-known internment of Nikkei from 13 countries of Latin America brought up and interned in the United States or used for POW exchanges. Focusing more on the Canadian case, the article dealt with

the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo, designed by Raymond Moriyama, a Nikkei who was interned despite his Canadian birth and citizenship. It also considered the life of William Allister as a White Canadian who was a POW of Japan during World War II, to address the erroneous conflation of Japanese incarcerating enemy POWs and the countries of Canada and the United States incarcerating their own citizens and residents of Japanese descent. For both men, creative processes, architecture and art, were part of overcoming their past bitter experiences to re-embrace humanity.

The Canadian Embassy was explored for its role in linking Canada to Japan and reiterating the historic lessons of the internment. The Canadian Embassy in Tokyo presents Canada to its own citizens, those of Japan and those of the world, as a tree house, representing a place of gathering, belonging, and community. Moriyama contends it also represents a place where the human spirit can dwell and soar. The Tokyo embassy as a tree house reiterates the acknowledgements made in the official Redress statements of 1988 that the country was wrong to intern its own citizens and legal residents (dwellers) because of their ethnicity and creates a commitment to instead building a national identity and community of belongingness promoting multiculturalism.

This essay also dealt with how the historic experiences of internment and struggles for Redress recognition led to a mandate among Nikkei in both Canada and the United States to speak out against perceived discrimination in the present and work to prevent similar miscarriages of justice from occurring. Nikkei in both countries have been at the forefront of protests against an apparent rise of Islamophobia. This comes at a critical historic moment that also ironically marks the 75th anniversary of Japanese American and Japanese Canadian internment. During the US election campaign of President Donald Trump in 2016 a registry of people from 'Muslim countries' was suggested. This has continued to be advocated by some of Trump's supporters since his election and after his subsequent inauguration as President in 2017. Japanese American internment was even used to justify a registry of Arab Americans or immigrants from countries perceived as Islamic. One of Trump's important supporters, Carl Higbie claimed on 16 November 2016 that the 'Japanese [*sic*] internment' during World War II created a legal precedent for a registry of Arab Americans and immigrants from 'Muslim countries' (i.e. Bromwich, *The New York Times*, November 17, 2016).

The Japanese American internment did indeed establish a legal precedent relevant to this: in the official Redress act, the United States acknowledged that the internment of Japanese Americans and legal Nikkei residents of the United States was wrong and apologized for these actions. That is the precedent that should be remembered and of which Nikkei in the United States remind Americans, as Canadian Nikkei remind Canadians. Meanwhile the Canadian Embassy in Japan as a tree house in the midst of Tokyo proclaims people can attempt to overcome historic wrongs, that acknowledging a diversity of cultural backgrounds as part of an imagined national community can be accepted, and needs to be in order to create a seemingly magical place. It also suggests that perhaps this does not really necessitate 'magic' but the commitment and work of people aiming at greater understanding and shared belongingness despite diversity, to create countries, communities, and places where the human spirit can dwell and soar.



## Notes on contributor

**Millie Creighton** is an anthropologist, Japan specialist and Asianist in the Department of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, BC, Canada. She was one of the founders of the Centre for Japanese Research at UBC and works in conjunction with it and on the Executive Board of the Centre for Korean Research. She has done extensive research in Japan on department stores, consumerism, tourism, popular culture, gender, minorities, work and leisure, and identity. She was awarded the Canon Prize for her work on Japanese department stores showing how department store marketing reflected nostalgia and the search for community, tradition and cultural identity. She has also researched Nikkei (Japanese descent) groups and communities throughout North and South America, and their attempts to make connections with each other, along with comparative or integrative research on Japan and Korea, along with Japan and other parts of Asia.

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