

pauseru gaizette

パウエル街ゼット
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generations

a zine of the powell street festival advocacy and outreach committee



photo by hk

Dear readers,

There is a bus stop that lies between the Downtown Eastside and Japanese Canadian communities. At this stop, huddles aaaaallllll the undefined, unrefined, and unspoken ideas of the community, waiting for their bus. This bus might take them to the end of the block, or it might take them across the city. But they wait for that bus to move them from the minds on the corner, to the minds elsewhere. Waiting, waiting, waiting, while the Vancouver drizzle pounds on their umbrellas and jackets. Some of the ideas have been waiting a long time. Some haven't. Doesn't matter: they deserve to get where they're going.

The *Faeru Gazette* was thought up and written to give these ideas legs and arms, wheels and walkers, and **voice**. So that they can board the bus. So that they can visit their friends, see family, and be introduced to new people. So that these ideas can see and be seen by the world and get out from under the relentless pessimistic drizzle.

This issue, "generations" is all about our hope, our responsibility, and our continuum between the old and the new. The old-old, the old-new, the new-old, and the new-new. Stories. Knowledge. From the past immemorial through us towards the future immemorial. What is our hope to embody this ongoing story, and give this knowledge as it was given to us? We know that there is a future waiting for us. Waiting, waiting, waiting, at that last bus stop. And we just know that when we get off the bus, our future will be there. With an umbrella. And a snack.

Thank you all for building this zine with us, and know that we value every reader and every contribution. We're excited! Excited for the future! For the past! For more living and thriving, despite being pressured. We're ready.

Ready to board the bus.

-the editors

No more fires
to the buildings

I wish
Vanessa
dances
\$760

I wish for
more love to
forward the land

[furusato]

by anaïs peterson

i dreamt

[furusato]

in the language i have yet to learn how to
un[forcibly displace]
coax out, repatriate;
my tongue does not
welcome it the way
i wish it would.

and yet —
here.

in this place of ocean and mountains like you had left
this place i was returning to(o)

we dreamt.
and i woke up with you there, and the words ready

to like our families laughter; the easy way it rises to meet our lips
to like the fraser river to pacific ocean, my body brackish
to like the bricks our people gathered, on the second day of the riots
to they came for paueru gal
to like the taiko drums, a sound used to identify home -- borders drawn
to by the furthest stretch
of the thundering assertion
to like the questions i could never ask, not for lack of words but
lack of door to even put my
foot in

if only

i wake up in silence

and imagine the babble you must have lived held by
and wrapped in, how it is has returned -- bouncing
off the same foundation and new walls, i have returned
to this place, and tonight when i leave the corner of jackson and
powell street

a man whose parents might have grown up with you
will tell us お休みなさい and a chorus of voices will
echo it back



are you wondering what the paper blossoms in this issue are all about? ... read below!



The paper blossoms that you see in this issue of the paueru gazette were made by attendees of Hanami ("flower viewing"), a free event hosted by the Advocacy and Outreach Committee held every April, to honour the Legacy Sakura of Oppenheimer Park, as well as the issei who planted them, and all these trees stand for.

Here is some historical context about the Legacy Sakura...

In the late 1800s, when Japanese immigrants first arrived in Canada, *Faueru Gai* (パウエル街 [the Powell Street neighbourhood]) was one of the main places where the community settled. By the late 1930s, a community of roughly 8,000 Japanese Canadians were living in *Faueru Gai*.

However, this community—along with all Japanese Canadian communities on British Columbia's west coast—was forcibly removed during the Second World War. Through several orders-in-council passed under the *War Measures Act*, the Canadian government violently expelled Japanese Canadians from their homes, interned them in camps and work farms in the province's Interior (and Alberta), dispossessed them of all their property, and strategically fractured the community by dispersing people to Japan and, as the government put it, anywhere "East of the Rockies."

Throughout this violence, *Faueru Gai* remained a site of home.

On April 1, 1949, when Japanese Canadians were finally allowed to return to the west coast, almost immediately, people began to return to Powell Street. Many of them were *issei* (first generation). However, with limited English language skills and, often, limited incomes, these *issei* needed support.

In December of 1973, one *nisei* (second generation) man, Jun Hamada, began to offer that support—through the Japanese Community Volunteers, for which he had received grant funding. By the mid-1970s, with significant help from the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA), the Japanese Community Volunteers had secured the resources to establish themselves as a non-profit organization: Tonari Gumi.

Soon, Tonari Gumi gained the attention of young *nikkei* (people of the Japanese diaspora), especially *sansai* (third generation) and *shin-issei* (first post-war generation), as well as a few young *nisei* (second generation). This generational mix was important. After the violence of the Second World War, finally, people were beginning to truly reconnect, and to feel their belonging.

On April 16, 1977, the year of the Japanese Canadian Centennial (i.e. the hundredth anniversary of the first Japanese emigrant's arrival in Canada), with the support of Tonari Gumi, the *issei* expressed this sense of reconnection and belonging in the form of a gift: 24 cherry trees, 21 of which were planted in Oppenheimer Park. These trees are known as the Legacy Sakura of Oppenheimer Park. (The other three trees were planted in Stanley Park, around the Japanese Canadian Cenotaph.)

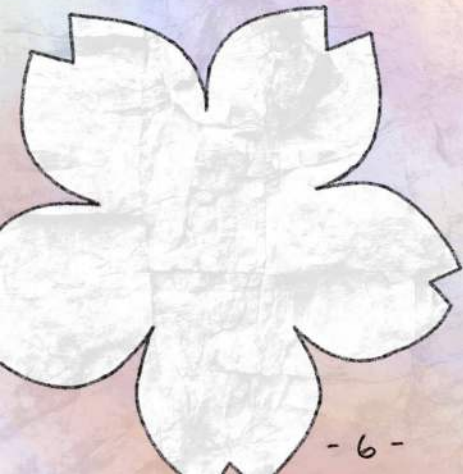
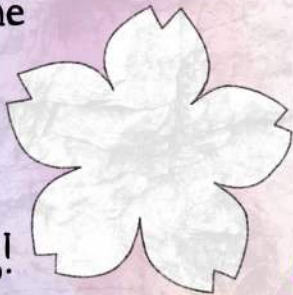
In the spring of 2008, the City of Vancouver submitted a renovation plan for Oppenheimer Park that proposed removing of all the Legacy Sakura trees—but the Japanese Canadian community rallied and resisted. Ultimately, the community managed to save two of the remaining cherry trees. These two cherry trees are still standing, today, in the raised mound by the Oppenheimer Park Fieldhouse.

At the Hanami event in April, we gather under these last remaining cherry trees, the original Legacy Sakura of Oppenheimer Park to honour the *issei*, to revisit their story, and to continue their legacy of longing and reconnection.

This year, we expressed that legacy in the form of wishes written on paper blossoms... and that's what you see, in this issue! Thank you to everyone who came out to the Hanami event earlier this year and shared their wishes with us.

The sakura themselves may not be in bloom now, at the 47th Annual Powell Street Festival, but we invite you to consider: what do these trees mean to you? As you walk around the park and its adjacent streets, how can you honour the *issei*? This place? The Downtown Eastside?

here is some
space
to
write
your own
wishes &
reflections!



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ceremony

by angela marian may

a found poem, made of notes inherited from my grandfather, ian belcher, who grew up in the DTES, at ferrera court (hastings x jackson), and who, like me, was mixed japanese canadian; and

with credit to audrey stegl, who, sitting across the table from me, in strathcona, at the wilder snail, eating a lemon tart, once shared some wisdom with me—about ceremony: 'you'll know what to do'

We have heard of the difficulty of
B.C. its problems of assimilation.

The Japanese in me
remaining in B.C. or returning

an heir
i have traditions
that are old
he is the first.

passed on
the
returned
These Japanese have traditions

re the Canadian scene
great difficulty with the language.

who recently arrived
do not
quite agree with Japan
so i changed

the traditions ill
last through people like the issei
i sum it up neatly
as
ceremony

- 7 -

The last Hanami Season

by Caleb Nakasaki

This year, like every year, we celebrated Hanami season in Oppenheimer Park. Hanami is an ancient and traditional holiday for the Japanese, where people young and old sit under the Sakura trees (cherry blossoms), have a picnic, and basically... well, eat, drink, and be merry!

I have heard friends express a wonder and reverence at those founding members of the Powell Street Festival. This same generation that planted the original Sakura trees, that began the work of returning to the Downtown Eastside, advocating, and resolidifying the post war JC community. Now, 47 and counting years later, the Sakura continue to sit in Oppenheimer Park, and the JC community beside them. We wonder what that must have been like, to live in that new momentum. To plant those trees, to sew that grass, to remove rocks, and build retaining walls, and to water plants. A time when the world of possibilities and boundless work was ahead of them, and the tragedy of the past was behind them.

We wonder if we are not, as inheritors of an old legacy, ourselves old. If the great works have already been done, and dusted, and memorialized. What is there left to do besides enjoy Hanami? Are there any more trees to plant, grass to sow, rocks to remove, events to organize, or people to rally? Are we at the last celebration? No. Our "real work" is something fundamentally different.

Our work is, as it has always been. It remains the same. Our work is to distribute sandwiches. Our work is to invite friends. To lay out blankets. To fill water bottles, to pack coolers, to eat, and talk, and connect, and enjoy! Our everlasting Hanami season. Organizing exists so that eventually, everyone can come to enjoy the season with us, and us with them; in community. Of course, the field is still full of rocks, making it hard for everyone to sit with us at the picnic. Our ongoing task is to continue to remove those rocks. But lets not get it twisted; the picnic. Now that's our real goal. This is the future we have always dreamed of, and while our dream may yet be incomplete, we have the sandwiches in hand. And we have the perfect shady spot, and a full cooler. And we find that we do inhabit the last Hanami season: because it is our intention to keep this shit running forever.

Friends, I remain hopeful that our work is not over and that we have not run out of kindness. That we will not deplete our reserves of goodness. That we can pull out sandwiches, and musubi, and salads, and bento made out of pure hope and love. And that justice is at all times in our hands, ready to unfurl like a picnic blanket. An open invitation to everyone.



did you know... that the
PAUERN GAIZETTE has a
predecessor?! ... It does!

THE POWELL STREET REVUE!

NOTE This history is still being gathered! If you have comments, please direct them to krugera@mcmaster.ca

At the University of British Columbia...

In the late 1960s and early 1970s (approx. 1967-1972), having graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, Dr. Ron Tanaka, in his capacity as a visiting scholar the University of British Columbia, taught several Chinese Canadian and Japanese Canadian students, imparting to them the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement—and especially the Asian American Movement.

Tanaka was critical to the development of these students' political sensibilities and community organizing. The Chinese Canadian students (including Sean Gunn, Garrick Chu, and Joyce Chong) formed Gao Hing ("The Brotherhood"). The Japanese Canadian students (including Mayu Takasaki, Naomi Shikaze, Glen Nagano, and Connie Kadota) formed the Wakayama Group.

Together, Gao Hing and the Wakayama Group formed the Asian Canadian Coalition; and in the spring of 1972, in UBC's Student Union Building, the ACC put on a photo exhibit called *The Asian Canadian Experience*, later presented at the Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall. As samesi writer Terry Watada puts it, "[t]he public saw for the first time pictures of the internment and the Chinese Canadian railroad workers" (Watada, "To Go for Broke," *Canadian Literature*, no. 163, 1999, p. 83).

The ACC eventually developed into two groups: the Chinese Canadian Writers' Workshop (CCWW), which published *Gum San Po* (1974), and the Powell Street Revue, which published a newsletter by the same name, also in the mid-1970s. The CCWW and the Powell Street Revue would go on to form the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop [ACWW] by the end of 1979—but for now, let's stay in the mid-1970s... because there is more to learn!

In Powell Street and the Downtown Eastside...

In 1973, one nisei man, Jun Hamada, noticed that there were elderly issei (first generation) Japanese Canadians living in Powell Street and the Downtown Eastside. Speaking Japanese as a first language, often living independently in Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs) and rooming houses, and frequently struggling in the rapidly growing city of Vancouver, Hamada realized that the issei needed support.

Hamada applied for a Local Initiatives Program (LIP) grant through the federal government's Ministry of Manpower and Immigration (MMI), i.e., a grant program designed to create jobs in light of then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's vision for Canada as "just society". In December of 1973, Hamada learned that his application had been successful.

Realizing that he would need to hire bilingual Japanese- and English-speakers, Hamada consulted Michiko Sakata (shin-issei), who herself had received an LIP grant through which she was running (out of a room in the Lion Hotel) Language Aid, a non-profit organization that offered—in 12 languages—interpretation, translation, and counselling support for those who needed it. Sakata suggested Hamada hire the recently arrived shakuhachi master, Takeo Yamashiro—which Hamada did (as well as Yamashiro's roommate, Seichiro Fukumura). The MMI also appointed Kayoko Minami and Teruko Chinen.

From January to May of 1974, Hamada, Yamashiro, Fukumura, Minami, and Chinen began to organize in Powell Street. Known as the Japanese Community Volunteers, they walked around the neighbourhood, visited the area's SROs and rooming houses, knocked on people's doors, and asked them how they were doing. By the mid-1970s, with significant help from the Downtown Eastside Residents Association, the Japanese Community Volunteers had secured the resources to establish themselves as a non-profit organization: Tonari Gumi.

On August 25, 1975, Tonari Gumi opened its drop-in centre in an old storefront at Hastings and Princess (573 East Hastings). Tonari Gumi then gained the attention of a small contingent of young *nikkei*, among them Naomi Shikaze and Mayu Takasaki (from the Wakayama Group) as well as Rick Shiomi and Tamio Wakayama (whose surname is only incidentally the same as the Wakayama Group's name).

At the time, these young *nikkei* were just discovering a sense of identity as Asian Canadian, Japanese Canadian, and *nikkei* people. To this end, Tonari Gumi was invaluable: as these young *nikkei* worked, volunteered, and hung out at Tonari Gumi, they informed one another's politics and activism. The *sanssei* and young *nisei* had received both university and 'boots-on-the-ground' educations during the 1960s, the era of the Civil Rights Movement, and thus brought with them a certain politics of self-determination. Meanwhile, the *shin-issei* were free from North American identity politics and helped carry the group's energy.

So, what does all this have to do with the Powell Street Revue?

The fact that Hamada and Yamashiro had established Tonari Gumi meant that the *sanssei* who had joined the Wakayama Group at UBC—not just Shikaze and Takasaki, but others, too—had a place not just to gather, but to learn their history (i.e., from each other, from the *issei*) and express their politics.

The Powell Street Festival is itself a legacy of that expression. The very first Festival was started via the energies stimulated at Tonari Gumi—and held as a part of the Japanese Canadian Centennial celebrations, on June 11th and 12th, 1977.



For more of Tamio's photos, check out *Kikyo: Coming Home to Powell Street*

by Tamio Wakayama

The *Powell Street Revue* is another legacy of that expression, written on the page rather than enacted in place. Here is the *Powell Street Revue*, in its own words (circa 1976-1977):

Powell St Revue

Once, long ago in the Land of UBC, there were the Wakayama Rads. Unfortunately, a time bomb blew most of them apart. But recently a few survivors and friends met up to participate in the Powell Street Festival. Working together on our presentations for the festival, sharing experiences and feelings, reaching out to other isolated people, we have decided to form the Powell Street Revue. The purpose? To continue this new sharing and explore further the direction reflected in this newsletter. We have begun a coffee house and have a disco dance in the works plus our participation in the Powell Street Festival. We welcome anyone to join us, just contact Ken Shikaze at 255-2651.

THE POWELL STREET REVUE

A few years ago we would have been typical Sansei, third generation Japanese Canadians. We wouldn't speak much Japanese, knew little of our family histories and generally avoided each other. We were assimilated with little awareness or concern that so much of our lives and attitudes had been shaped by events over thirty years ago. The evacuation, internment and dispersion after the war literally dismembered the Japanese Canadian community. For the Sansei the loss of that sense of community has facilitated a living in disguise in which we pretended we had nothing to do with being Japanese.

It has only been in the last few years that we have begun to awake from this dream. In learning Japanese we have discovered a treasure in the experiences of the Issei. Working together on community projects we have discovered others like ourselves. Sharing our feelings and experiences we have discovered a bond of caring and relating that runs deeper than we have known before.

The Powell Street Revue is the product of that awakening. In exploring our own history, culture, community and identity, we have realised the importance of sustaining these as a dynamic part of Canada.

Powell Street Revue, 1976-1977, File F019, Series S2 (Writing files), AM5123 Paul Yee fonds, City of Vancouver Archives.

