

Powell Street Neighbourhood Before the Uprooting Interview

Friends and Playing Around Powell Street

Nancy Morishita (b. 1920s) describes her classmates and riding a bicycle, jumping rope, and playing around the Powell Street neighbourhood.

Excerpt from Landscapes of Injustice oral history interview with Nancy Morishita.

CAROLYN NAKAGAWA

No? Do you remember if there were lots of other Japanese Canadians in your class?

NANCY MORISHITA

Japanese and Chinese. Yeah.

CAROLYN NAKAGAWA

Did everyone get along pretty well?

NANCY MORISHITA

Yeah, I think so. We all played with everybody. And I remember playing with this lady called Sonja, but she was Scandinavian. But she used to play with my brother, looked after my brother and me, and she used to look after him because he was only two years old. But I remember her, Sonja.

CAROLYN NAKAGAWA

Sonja? And was she an adult?

NANCY MORISHITA

Huh?

CAROLYN NAKAGAWA

She was an adult?

NANCY MORISHITA

She looked older. She was older than me.

CAROLYN NAKAGAWA

She wasn't a kid? She was a grown up?

NANCY MORISHITA

I think she must have been in her teens.

CAROLYN NAKAGAWA

Oh, okay. Was she a neighbour?

NANCY MORISHITA

Yeah, in the neighbourhood.

CAROLYN NAKAGAWA

I see. And she would look after you and your brother?

NANCY MORISHITA

Yeah. And Sonja her name was. I don't know her last name. And then, we used to go roller skating. I must have -- older, maybe when I was more about seven years old or something. We roller skated all the way down into Powell Street/Alexander Street, American Kang Company. Everybody in the neighbourhood played there on the weekend. Nobody worked on the weekend there. So we were able to play on the ground, the sloping sidewalk there. Yeah, we used to play there. Must have been the Sunday. So we used to roller skate there. And then my cousin that lived with us, you know, my cousin Kojiro, he used to ride the bicycle all the time. So I was riding the bicycle on his ...

CAROLYN NAKAGAWA

Handlebar?

NANCY MORISHITA

Handlebar, yeah. All the way round, round, round, and round. [Laughs.] I remember that. And we played skipping. And jacks on the ground. And I had some friends from a couple of blocks over, the Churuya family. He used to own the Churuya Singer Sewing Store [?], and he used to have a store on Powell Street. But I remember I played with the daughter, one of the daughters there. And there's another girl, Nouda, but I can't remember her first name. But she usually liked to sing Roy Rogers' songs. She used to live on Powell Street. I have a picture of a girl named Haruumi, but she used to live on Heatley, on one of the cabins. And she used to come and play with me. And then there was a Hozaki, Toshiko Hozaki. I still keep in touch with her in Toronto. [Laughs.] She called me last week. Happy New Year, you know?