

Reactions to Dispossession Interview

“His boat was his wife”

Betty (b. 1925) recalls the seizure of fishing vessels in winter 1941/1942. She recounts a young fisherman crying when he saw his fishing boat rotting: “I remember him coming over one night just crying, he said his boat was his wife.”

Excerpt from a Landscapes of Injustice oral history interview with Betty Toyota and Joy Trapnell.

BETTY TOYOTA

I mean, I don't know what the reaction was, but we knew what happened. And then when they said that all the Japanese were enemy, we were all enemies. We were all treated as enemy aliens, it was ... And this was in December, remember, and the Japanese people were going to have a big Christmas dance and every year, you know, every group had these big Christmas. The Buddhist people would have this great big Japanese and New Year celebration and all that. And all these young people were going to have this big dance and all that. Everything was just cancelled. Everything. We all had to surrender our cars. Oh the first thing was the fishing boats. People fishing up by the coast right away they were told to bring the boats down to Stanley Park. And some of them didn't even know why because they didn't have a radio in their boat. But they all had to bring their boat right down. And that's where it just rotted. It just rotted on the ... And I remember the young fellow; he was a young bachelor living next door to us. He was a fisherman and he had to bring his boat down and he left his boat at Stanley Park. And he went everyday to look at his boat. And I remember [him] coming over one night, just crying, he said that his boat was his wife. It was like a wife to him. And now it's sitting there rotting. And that's what happened. And then right away the Japanese people who had cars, they all had to take it to Hastings Park.