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**Shin Imai fonds
Accession 2022.01**

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Biographical note

Shin Imai helped form the Sodan-Kai group during the Redress movement for Japanese Canadians. He played a pivotal role in the events leading up to Redress, and the organizing of the Japanese Canadian people in the Toronto area.

Born in Tokyo, Japan, Imai immigrated to Canada as a child with his family in 1953, one of the few Japanese families allowed to enter Canada during the post-war era. His father, Reverend Canon Ken Imai, was an Anglican Minister who had been invited to Canada to lead a Japanese speaking congregation, composed of Japanese Canadians who had settled in Toronto after internment. Though the family was initially prepared for three years in Canada, they chose to stay and received Canadian Citizenship in the 1960s.

During the Redress movement, the Toronto chapter of the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (JCCA) had become fractured, and members were torn between whether or not Redress should include individual financial compensation and civil rights protection. Though his family had come to Canada after the war, Imai became an active member in the movement. At the time he helped to prepare briefs for the National JCCA Human Rights Committee. He, along with two other lawyers Maryka Omatsu and Marcia Matsui created the Sokan-Kai in 1983. The Sodan-Kai was meant to be a forum for public discussion on Redress, taking no sides and acting separately from the Toronto JCCA and the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC). Imai was inspired by Vancouver sansei called the Canadian Centennial Committee and Canada's growing awareness of the treatment of Japanese Canadians during WWII. The group began informal discussions at each other's homes, and members grew to include Joy Kogawa, Ron Shimizu, Edie Goto, Yukio Mizuyabu, Roger Obata, Bryce Kanbara, Wes Fujiwara, Connie Sugiyama, Jim Matsui, David Fujino and Harry Yonekura. Imai chose the name "Sodan-Kai" as it roughly means "discussion society". The group came from many different backgrounds and had varying opinions on Redress. What they held in common was their belief that Japanese Canadians should be informed about the issue and have a platform to discuss it before addressing the Canadian government.

The first public meeting of the Sodan-Kai was held Sunday May 15, 1983 at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC). Over 300 came to listen to members of the Japanese American Citizens' League, George Imai of the National Redress Committee, and Gordon Kadota the NAJC president. The second meeting was held Saturday, July 23, 1983, with Shin Imai and Frank Moritsugu acting as chairmen. Those in attendance agreed to form a Toronto Redress group from members of both Sodan-Kai and the Toronto JCCA.

The Sodan-Kai participated in the Prince Hotel Conference where the NAJC and its representation was overhauled. Their participation caused much controversy, especially from those who still followed the Toronto JCCA. The third public meeting of the Sodan-Kai was Sunday, October 23 at the JCCC, though there was little discussion of Redress.

After dismissive comments from Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the Sodan-Kai organized the CentreStage Forum, titled "Racism and Injustice: The Japanese Canadian Experience". Taking place at the St. Lawrence Centre on April 25, 1984, it was the first time non-Japanese Canadians were invited to participate. Shortly after the forum, the group stopped meeting, but only until 1987 did they formally dissolve.

The logo for the Sodan-Kai was designed by David Fujino.

Shin Imai received his law degree in 1980 and has spent much of his career working in human rights, refugee law and indigenous rights. He currently teaches at Osgood Hall Law School.

References:

Ito, Roy. "Chapter 5: Sodan Kai." In *Japanese Canadian Redress: The Toronto Story*, edited by Momoye Sugiman, 103-120. Toronto : HpF Press, 2000.

Omatsu, Maryka. *Bittersweet Passage: Redress and the Japanese Canadian Experience*. Toronto: Between The Lines, 1992.

York University. "Shin Imai." Accessed January 3, 2023. <https://www.osgoode.yorku.ca/faculty-and-staff/imai-shin/>

Scope and Content

Dates range: 1970-2018

Extent: 3 boxes (1 linear meter), comprised of
29 folders of textual material
1 button
1 award : col. 10.5 x 32.5"

Fonds is comprised primarily of articles and material advocating for Japanese Canadian Redress. Textual material from the formation and activities of the Sodan-Kai are also included.

Note:

Arrangement: Files were left in original order, created by Shin Imai. Due to the small volume of material, files were not intellectually arranged into series. Titles, unless given in square brackets, have been taken from the original material / containers.

Please see full file level descriptions on Discover Archives.

Access: Unrestricted.

Boxes: 3

Appendix

File List:

File number	File title	Date range	Location
2022.01.001	Emergencies	1970-1982	Box 1, File 1
2022.01.002	Redress: War Measures Act	1980, 1984-1988	Box 1, File 2
2022.01.003	1988 [The New Canadian & Ottawa Rally]	1988	Box 1, File 3
2022.01.004	J.C. Redress - January 1987	1987	Box 1, File 4
2022.01.005	NAJC -- Redress Jan'86 - Dec'86	1985-1986	Box 1, File 5
2022.01.006	1985 (?) "The Case for Redress"	[1985]	Box 1, File 6
2022.01.007	J.C. Redress Jan. 1/85	1984-1985	Box 1, File 7
2022.01.008	National Association of Japanese Canadians File No. 56, 1984-1988	1984-1989	Box 1, File 8
2022.01.009	JCCA 1984-1986	1984-1986	Box 1, File 9
2022.01.010	Democracy Betrayed	1984	Box 1, File 10
2022.01.011	Redress: Briefing for Forum	1984	Box 1, File 11
2022.01.012	Redress -- Newspaper Art.	1984	Box 1, File 12
2022.01.013	Sodan Kair[Kai]	1983-1984	Box 1, File 13
2022.01.014	Japanese Canadians - General	1984	Box 1, File 14
2022.01.015	Misc. Newspaper Repnts[Reprint?]	1983-1984	Box 1, File 15
2022.01.016.1	Sodan Kai Materials	1981-1985	Box 1, File 16
2022.01.016.2	Redress for Japanese Canadians button	[n.d.]	Box 1, File 17
2022.01.017	Research	1983	Box 1, File 18
2022.01.018	J.C. 1985	1983-1985	Box 1, File 19
2022.01.019	Court Cases - Comments	1982	Box 1, File 20
2022.01.020	Japanese Canadians Charter of Rights	1980	Box 1, File 21
2022.01.021	Japanese Canadians The Annex	1977-1980	Box 1, File 22
2022.01.022	MISC. Media and Reports	1982-1988	Box 2, File 1
2022.01.023	[Redress Anniversary Gala Reception]	2018	Box 2, File 2
2022.01.024	Toronto Redress Story	1999	Box 2, File 3
2022.01.025	Public Presentations	1978-1986	Box 2, File 4
2022.01.026	Writing-Japanese Canadians	1978, 1983-1984	Box 2, File 5
2022.01.027	Writing-Indigenous	1985	Box 2, File 6
2022.01.028	Writing-Civil Liberties-Immigration	1971-1981	Box 2, File 7
2022.01.029	Nikkei Research	1999-2001	Box 2, File 8
2022.01.030	[Award]	2018	Box 3