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Mitchell Taiji

Sus Taiji

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The Lake Country Museum is pleased to present

過去の世代

A CENTURY OF COMMUNITY

**11255 Okanagan Centre Rd. W
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過去の世代

Kakonosedai: A Century of Community is the inspiration of Lake Country Museum Curator Dan Bruce.

Kakonosedai is part of an overarching initiative to tell the story of the first Japanese Canadian pioneers of our community and their experiences during the period from 1899 to pre-World War II. Through the gracious funding provided by The Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation, the museum wishes to honour the many Japanese pioneers.

The exhibition celebrates the Japanese pioneers of Lake Country and their descendants, with a look at what they would have brought with them from Japan to Canada. On display will be a collection of original artefacts, photographs and personal documents to supplement the existing stories of these courageous people.



*European and Japanese crews at the Rainbow Ranche circa 1922.
Lake Country Museum Archives*

Hanafuda:

The very first playing cards appeared in central Asia in the 9th century. Though a traditional *hanafuda* deck is distinctly Japanese in appearance, the overtly Japanese illustrations conceal an important Western influence. Hanafuda's most obvious predecessor is actually the Portuguese *hombre* deck, which was the first 48-card deck to appear in Japan. This particular set is an excellent example of the beautiful transformation these playing cards underwent when being adopted into Japanese culture. These cards were owned by Tarokichi Koyama and were a popular item amongst his family members.

Prior to the arrival of the first European traders, the Japanese used playing cards almost exclusively for recreation, but the gambling card games preferred by the Portuguese visitors quickly gained popularity among the natives. The Japanese government saw the danger in this new hobby and quickly banned private gambling. Less than a century later, when Japan instituted its new isolationist policy, all foreign playing cards became illegal. It was only after the Meiji Restoration that playing cards became socially acceptable once again.



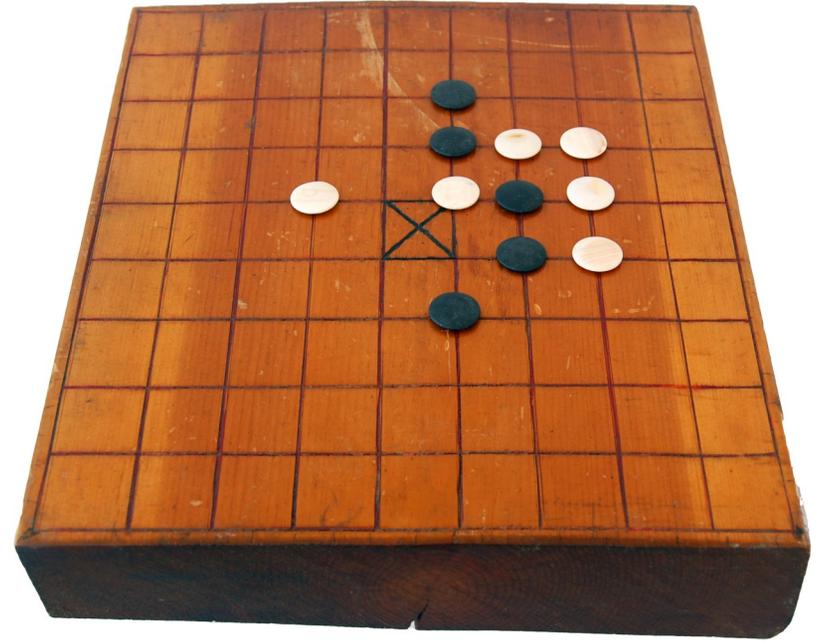
Kokeshi Dolls:

Kokeshi dolls originate from the Tohoku region of northern Japan, an area well-known for its *onsen* (hot spring) resorts. These handmade wooden dolls are thought to date back to the early 19th century when *kijiya* (woodworkers) began using their woodworking skills and lathes to make simple dolls to sell as toys and souvenirs to the *onsen* visitors. They are handmade from wood, have a simple trunk and an enlarged head with a few thin, painted lines to define the face. One characteristic of *kokeshi* dolls is their lack of arms or legs. The bottom is marked with the signature of the artist. The dolls may originally have had a spiritual significance with the *kokeshi* representing a wish for a healthy child. It is common to see *kokeshi* dolls adorning Japanese households, including these examples which were owned by Toyokichi and Oei Taiji, and were likely to have wished good health to their two children, their daughter Michi and their son, Susumu.



Courtesy of Sus Taiji

Courtesy of Sus Taiji



Courtesy of Addie Maehara

Lemon Creek Go Board

Shortly after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, some 22,000 men, women and children of Japanese descent were branded as enemies in their own country. The Government of Canada considered them dangerous to the country because of their racial origin. Many spent the war years in hastily created camps in the interior of B.C. One particular example was located in Lemon Creek, which was the largest internment camp in the Slocan Valley from 1943 to 1946. Not all Japanese Canadians were displaced, those living in Lake Country and the Central Okanagan were not forcefully relocated. Susumu Taiji and Eijiro Koyama of Winfield organized a visit to see their friends displaced in Lemon Creek. Upon returning, this Go board was given as a present to Mr. Koyama. Contrary to popular belief, Japanese Canadians were never a threat to national security.

Courtesy of Addie Maehara



Box Sushi:

Oshizushihako is a box or mold used to make *oshizushi* (pressed sushi). The box can be taken apart into three parts, a bottom part, the rectangular walls, and a top part. *Oshizushi* is prepared by pressing blocks of rice in a special mould to create perfect rectangles of sushi with a topping of your choice. Mr and Mrs. Taiji both worked for the Okanagan Valley Land Company. Mrs. Taiji routinely made lunch for all the workers at Jack Seaton Park. No doubt this type of item was offered to the Japanese orchardists who received lunches from Oei Taiji.



Courtesy of Dan Hikichi

Soroban:

Japan has been influenced by imported concepts, art, technology, and approaches from nearby Korea and from mainland China. It is understood that the Japanese abacus, the *soroban*, arrived in Japan at least by the 17th century AD. It became very popular and was used especially by Japanese merchants as a calculation tool in business. This example belonged to Shigehisa 'Sam' Hikichi, the Japanese foreman at the Rainbow Ranche. Mr. Hikichi is known for being the first foreman at the Rainbow Ranche to start the procedure of crop estimating, a method of calculating the expected fruit yield. It would be reasonable to assume that this *soroban* was an important tool within his calculations. He was also in charge with keeping track of the hours of each worker. The owners would then give him cash, which he would divvy out to the workers.



Courtesy of Sharon Hope

Silk Cushion

Due to Hiro Kobayashi's family business background in silk, she had brought a large supply of silk batts. Her resourcefulness allowed her to combine the silk batts with sheep wool to make futons and cushions. These futons would be used in her own house as well as being given away as gifts. The silk cushion example was also made by Mrs. Kobayashi as a means of providing extra comfort on the hard wooden chairs.

Oil Lantern

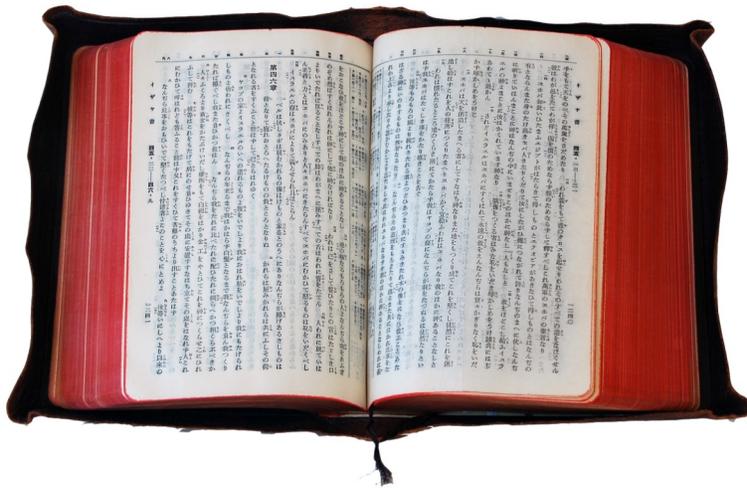
One of the most important tools for Mrs. Hiro Kobayashi was her lantern. Not only was she raising a large family, she was also a self taught mid wife and attended almost all the births in the Japanese community. The lantern provided the lighting needed at every stage of the evening. Most times she would be the only qualified attendant there. The doctor would have been called from Kelowna, but he tended to arrive after the child had already been born. Mrs. Kobayashi not only attended the births but she acted as a nurse, taking care of the expectant mothers before and after the child was delivered.



Courtesy of Sharon Hope

Japanese Bible:

Christianity was repressed during the 16th century, seen by the government as a threat to national security, with the *Shogunate* fearing foreign traders and missionaries would destabilize the culture. As a result, it was banned in 1587. After Japan reopened to world trade in 1853, Catholic, Protestant and other missionaries arrived, and Christianity was legalized during the Meiji Restoration. The resurgence of Christianity in Japanese culture was also felt here in Lake Country.



Courtesy of Sharon Hope

Within the community, the United Church in Okanagan Centre played a prominent role in the lives of many Japanese Canadians. Reverend Yoshinosuke Yoshioka was called in 1929 to the mission at the Japanese United Church in Kelowna. This particular bible belonged to Denbei Kobayashi. With the arrival of Rev. Yoshioka into his life, Denbei underwent a profound conversion. With the baptism of his children, the Kobayashis accepted a new faith. With Christianity, Denbei's vision of integration into the Canadian community was further enhanced.

Scythe:

The scythe, or *kama*, is a traditional Japanese farming implement that is used for harvesting grain crop or cutting grass for hay. This particular example belonged to Kizo Kobayashi, though it appears it was never used. The original advertisements adorn the handle; also preserved is the wax paper that was used to wrap the sharp curved blade. The inside of the curve is sharp, so that the user can draw or swing the blade against the base of the crop, catching it in the curve and slicing it at the same time. The material to be cut may be held in a bunch in the other hand (for example when reaping), held in place by a wooden stick, or left free.



Courtesy of Richard Kobayashi

Usubata:

This brass implement is commonly known as an *usubata*. Its purpose was to provide a solid foundation for the flower arranging art called *ikebana*. Though early Japanese pioneers would have adopted many aspects of the Canadian lifestyle upon their arrival, certain practices continued. Toyokichi Taiji was an adamant practitioner of *ikebana*. More than simply putting flowers in a container, *ikebana* is a disciplined art form in which nature and humanity are brought together. Contrary to the idea of floral arrangement as a collection of multi-colored arrangement of blooms, *ikebana* often emphasizes other areas of the plant, such as its stems and leaves, and draws emphasis toward shape, line, and form.



Courtesy of Sus Taiji



Courtesy of Sharon Hope

Haiku Toolset:

The paintbrushes, *fuda*, and other implements on display belonged to Denbei Kobayashi. Each tray was a crucial part of every haiku writer's household. The beauty of Japanese calligraphy lies in its simplicity, and the various artifacts are the tools that help enthusiasts to achieve it. For calligraphy, the best is a white thick paper of solid consistency on which the brush can glide effortlessly, strong round brushes that are long and light, and black luminous ink. The ink stone should be large and convenient so that the calligrapher can grind the ink properly. It is a solid stick, a compressed mixture of vegetable soot and glue that the calligrapher grinds with some water on a special ink stone to produce liquid ink.

The Aobakai Club was formed in 1922, and consisted of men and women haiku enthusiasts of the community. In Japanese, haiku are written all in one vertical line, often in beautiful brush calligraphy. According to the classic haiku poets of Japan, haiku should present the reader with an observation of a natural, commonplace event, in the simplest words, without verbal trickery. The effect of haiku is one of "sparseness". The rigid lifestyles of the time carried over into art; every poem had to have a specific form. The approved form was the 5-7-5 triplet followed by a couplet of seven syllables.



Courtesy of Sharon Hope



Written by Tome Hikichi 'Wakako'

Translation:

*Year after year,
I enjoy clear thinking and
I come before God*

Haiku

The two haiku examples were written by local poets, Tome Hikichi and Hiro Kobayashi. Tome wrote many poems under her pen name, 'Wakako', and was a prominent member of the Aobakai Club. Hiro Kobayashi was also a poet in her own right. She tended to write in private and it wasn't discovered until after her death that she was a prolific and talented writer. An exercise book discovered by her family was found to contain years of her poetry. Even her husband of almost fifty years had no idea that she had been so talented.

Translation:

*The beauty of dew
On the plants in
early summer mornings.*

Written by Mrs. Hiro Kobayashi

