

**Interviewee: Dorothy Toshiye
Tanaka**
Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda
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THE JAPANESE CANADIAN LEGACY PROJECT

[Start part 1]

Lisa Uyeda: There we go. All set? Okay. And do you prefer Dorothy? To be called Dorothy, or your Japanese name?

Dorothy Toshiye Tanaka: Well, in Vancouver, when we were growing up, they all called me by, you know, they all used their Japanese name. But since I came back to Canada and started working, you know, with the Canadians, instead of my Japanese name, I used my Christian name. Dorothy is my Christian name.

LU: Oh, how do you properly say your Japanese name?

DTT: To-shi-ye. [nods head yes]

LU: "Toshiye, oh, wonderful. Well, I guess we'll call-

DTT: Most people just call me Toshi, you know, [laughs] the short form and everything.

LU: Wonderful. Well, this is an interview, then, with Dorothy Toshiye on June 24th, 2010. Now we're just going to start off with some basic history, but when and where were you born?

DTT: I was born in Vancouver, B.C. [British Columbia], right at the centre, where the Japanese people live. [chuckling] My birthday is July the 4th, 1923.

LU: 1923. And were you born at home or were you born in a hospital?

DTT: Gee, that I don't really know. I think, those days, you know, a lot of people had their babies at home. [Shakes head no] I really don't know. [laughs] I'm sure it must have been home though.

LU: Probably was.

DTT: Yes.

LU: So, what generation Canadian are you?

DTT: I'm a nisei.

LU: So, second generation. And what do you remember about your parents? When and where were they born?

DTT: Well, they were all born in Shiga-ken in Japan. My father was here before, I think, really, I don't know when he came here, but my mother, after they got married, she came over. But she was a nurse in Japan and she wanted us, you know, she was educated herself, so she wanted us all to have education. She always say, "Study hard and get a good education." [laughing] Yes.

LU: So, your parents got married in Japan first? Or, did they come here and get married?

DTT: Really, I don't- really, I've never heard about it.

LU: Oh, okay.

DTT: Yes. I'm sure she must have come over after, my father came first, you see, so she must have come over later on.

LU: Oh okay, and do you have any siblings?

DTT: I had an older brother. His name was Matthew, and my younger brother, Kenji, and my younger sister, Joyce. They all passed away now.

LU: Were they all born in Vancouver as well?

DTT: Yes, yes. [nods head]

LU: Oh wow. And do you remember anything about your grandparents at all?

DTT: Grandparents, um- I was in Japan, you see, to study, and when I first went there, my mother's mother, that's my grandmother, she was alive. But my father's parents weren't, I never saw them. [shakes head no] And she took very good care of me, [laughs] I was the only grandchildren, you see, so.

LU: And growing up, did you grow up in Vancouver?

DTT: Yes, I was born and raised in Vancouver until I finished my high school, and then, I was going to UBC [University of British Columbia], but the principal of the Vancouver Japanese Language School asked me whether I would like to go to Japan to study. I never even thought of going to Japan before that, but I thought that might be a good idea, you know, just- So, that was in 1940, after I graduated high school, you know, in June. And then, in August, I went alone on the Hikawa Maru, that's the last ship that transferred back and forth, eh? Anyway, I- My relatives were mostly in Osaka, because we're Shiga-ken so, you know, Osaka was nearby. And my mother's family were all living in Osaka, so they all came to Tokyo when I landed, you know-

[5 minutes]

DTT: -Yokohama, I should say. And my uncle came and picked me up, and I came back to Osaka. And I lived with that uncle until, when was it now? I applied for teacher's college in Osaka. But then, school- We, our school here, starts in September to June, you see, but in Japan, they start from April to March, and so, I went in September so there's a period of- I couldn't get in until April, eh? So I was just like a monitor student, I guess, I just sat in one of the classes and [quietly] went with it. And then in April, in 1941, I went into the first level of Osaka teacher's college.

LU: Oh.

DTT: And then, I was in a dormitory, I went into a dormitory and stayed there, and then the war started off in December, isn't it? [makes a *tutting* sound] I couldn't come back anyway, so I decided to stay on and finish my studying there. And two years later, I graduated but the war was still going on, I couldn't go home, and I had no contact with my parent, you know, family. I didn't know where they were, so I decided I better stay in Japan. So, I was teaching in Osaka, and 1945, the war- you know, the US [United States] bombed Tokyo and Osaka, it became very bad, so we were all told to evacuate into the country. But some of the children had no place to go, so the school had to take them to the country. So, I went with one of my classes to Tokushima, that's in Shikoku, eh? And stayed there until the end of the war. And I came back to Osaka after the war, and Osaka was- everything was gone. I could see from one end to the other end. [sweeping hand gesture]

LU: Oh wow.

DTT: Yes. That was all- You know, in Japan, the houses are made of wood and paper, and they brought, what do you call it, the firebombs or whatever, that sets fire to all

the- If one house gets on fire, all the houses, you know, go. This is why Tokyo and Osaka was, you know, you could see from one end of the city to the other. But of course, Hiroshima and Nagasaki is different, eh? Because of that atomic bomb but- anyway, I- the house that my, the home that my uncle lived, that I used to live with, was all destroyed. But there was another uncle who was a doctor and he, he had to stay in Osaka, he couldn't go out of the city because they needed doctors, eh? And so, I went to stay with him until I come back to Canada. And after the war, the family had evacuated into the country, but they came back after that, and I was living with them. And I was teaching, yeah, in Osaka, but after the war, because I, I can speak English, one of the private school asked me whether I can come and teach English to them, so I was teaching English instead of elementary children. [laughs] At the beginning, I was teaching elementary, you know, children. But then, I went to teach at this special school. That was just in Osaka, right near the, across the Osaka Castle. And I stayed there for ten years, I was teaching English there.

LU: Oh wow.

DTT: But then, in 1956, I didn't know where my family was anyway, you know, where they were evacuated or what. I got a letter from my mother and one of the G.I.'s brought it, I don't even know who he was, just gave me a letter from my mother and he just [swoops hand] went away. I didn't even have time to ask who he was or- Anyway, I got this letter from my mother, and I heard that she was in Slocan and then they went to London, Ontario and they were living there. So, she told me to come back home, and of course, I wanted to go home after that. But then, I was married and had a child, four years old. In 1957, I brought them back here to Canada.

[10 minutes]

DTT: And I went to London, it was very cold. In Osaka, it's warm, eh? You don't need a winter coat or anything. I had a fall coat on, it was really cold, the snow was deep and everything. [laughs] And anyway, I stayed in London, about half a year, but I came out to Toronto, my brother was living there. He said, "Come out, there's more work here." So, I came to Toronto to start, you know- But, I don't know, I was working with this Anglican Church house, in accounting, and then I had, my second daughter was born. When she became six years old, I put her into our school, Toronto Japanese Language School, and the reason I went to Japan was to become a teacher and come back to Vancouver and teach Japanese, and that was my motive so I thought, I'd better start teaching then. [smiles] Because I have to take my daughter to school anyway and wait for her so, I thought, I'll decide to teach then. And that was 1966. From then on, I've been there. [laughs] And I was teaching the little- At that time, it was the little children, niseis and sanseis, eh? But 1978, I think it was, they took me as a principal, you see, I mean, there. Right now, this year, we celebrated our 60th anniversary, you know, in the JCCC [Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre], you know, Kobayashi Hall. There were about- about, near 600 people there, we had a very successful- [laughs and trails off] I mean that's what it is, I'm still there. [laughs]

LU: Perfect. So, you're still principal at the school?

DTT: Yes, I am.

LU: And do you plan on being principal for a long time?

DTT: I don't know. I had a bad time last year, my sister passed away, she was a diabetic. My brother, younger- these are my younger sister and brother, my brother had kidney trouble, so he was on dialysis every other day. So, one was sugar free, and one was salt free, and they were living together. I told them to get together because they were single- My sister was married but she never had children. My brother was single, he never got married. So, I said, "Why don't you come to get together?" And my brother was living in Windsor, so I said, "Why don't you come back to London and live with her?" And so they were living together until last year, in April, my sister passed away, and from then on, my brother, he just went downwards. He couldn't walk or anything after that, he had to have the, what do you call it? Walker. And I had to go to back and forth to London, so I said, after my sister died, "Why don't you just come over this way? It'll be easier for me to look after you." So, we found a nursing home in Mississauga, and he came over. I went to see him almost every day, but he was going weak, getting weaker and weaker every day. And then this January, passed, last January, he passed away. So, I had to attend the two funerals, I had to get, you know, all- everything ready from them after that. I'm still looking after my sister's estate and everything. And that's why, I got myself- I didn't feel so good after that, I had to go to the doctor. Now, he couldn't tell- I had a pain around here. [gestures out of frame] Anyway, the doctor couldn't tell what it was, so I took a lot of tests, but they all came out negative! And doctor said, "You're not ill at all, you shouldn't be!" And then, this ill- this pain, just came on suddenly and went away suddenly, I don't know what happened. Anyway, the doctor didn't even know what to do, you know, because he couldn't tell what happened. So, I'm free from the doctor now.

LU: Yeah.

DTT: So, I thought, maybe I'll stay for another year anyway. I have a lot of things to do and finish before I- [laughs]

LU: So, what childhood memories do you remember, growing up with your brothers and sisters?

DTT: Gee. [chuckles]

LU: Do you remember games that you used to play or toys or shopping in the general store?

DTT: [laughing and shaking head no] No, just the usual lifestyle. I can't-

[15 minutes]

DTT: I'm more Japanese now, you know, because, I mean, staying there for 17 years, yeah. I became fluent in Japanese and also in English, so when I came back, they took me immediately as a teacher, you know.

LU: What was it like living in Japan when you first arrived?

DTT: Oh, I liked it! Very much. I didn't care to come back home, really. But my family, my whole family was here, you see, and I wanted to see them again. And my mother said, "Come back," so I did come back. It was a good thing because I came back in 1957 and five years later, my dad- I knew he was going. He wasn't very well anyway.

He died in 1966, oh, that's why I guess, my mother wanted me to come back home anyway, yeah.

LU: So, when you arrived in Japan, did they know you were not Japanese? Did they know you were kind of a-

DTT: Well, yes, well-

LU: An outsider?

DTT: Well, I told them I came from Canada, you know, and I can speak English. They asked me to help them with their English anyway. [laughs] It was very hard, you know, studying Japanese. My Japanese, I can speak and understand Japanese and write, you know, and write 'em, but it was not enough to cope with the other students, you know, they were much, much better. [laughs] Yes.

LU: And, when- what was it like to live in Japan, for somebody who hasn't ever visited Japan, what were the houses like?

DTT: The houses are made of paper, and wood and paper. Winter is very cold, because they have no heating system, eh? They only have those, what are they called? [Hibachi]. Do you know what [hibachi] is? It's a small, big container with ashes in it, and you put charcoal in. And that's how- yes, and at night you put a hot water bottle or something in, that's all. Because there wasn't any heating system until after the war, you see. They couldn't put any in a paper and wood- you know, it might go on fire. [laughs] Catch fire. So, yes, the heating system came on after the war in Japan, yes. But, Osaka wasn't that bad- you know, wasn't too cold. Not like here. There wasn't much snow. I had a lot of fun with my cousins. [laughs] Anyway, I liked it in Japan, so I didn't worry about- much about my parents and family but, when I got the letter, you know, of course, I became a little home sick, rather come back here, I thought.

LU: Other than going to school in Japan, what kind of activities did you do or-

DTT: Well-

LU: -entertainment that you would-?

DTT: My cousins and my uncles, they all like going to see the, what do you call it? What do you call those things? Shibai, shibai, or shows, eh?

LU: Oh shows.

DTT: What do you call those, I forgot now. Ah man.

LU: Movies or plays?

DTT: Not movies but plays, eh.

LU: Plays. Oh okay.

DTT: Yeah. Kabuki or something like that, yeah. We went to a lot of them. Because my uncle used to like them, he often, often went to them. And we had sumo wrestler- next door was an inn, so wrestlers used to stop there, you know, stay there. So we got to see a lot of them. All those big fellas. [laughs]

LU: Did you ever go see a sumo match?

DTT: Oh yes. [laughs]

LU: Yeah?

DTT: It was fun though. Well, in Japan, there is a lot of things, you can keep yourself busy. Here, you have to go far away to go, you know, see something, or go, you know, but in Japan you can go just by walking or just take the street cars or something, you

know, eh? So, anyway, the country is small so. [laughs] Well, I had a good time, I liked it there. I could have stayed there if I didn't hear from my mother, I think.

LU: Yeah, yeah. Wow. And what was it like not having any correspondence with your family?

DTT: Well, I didn't worry much about it, I guess. I was worried more, can I keep up with the studying, you know, because my Japanese wasn't so good as the Japanese there. I don't know, well, I did wonder what they were doing, but I couldn't do anything. I didn't even know where they were, you know. Yeah. But-

[20 minutes]

LU: And how many- you said you were evacuated with the children.

DTT: Yes.

LU: How many children went with you?

DTT: There were about 50 of them, I think, around there. Yeah. Two classes, I think.

LU: So, there was another teacher?

DTT: Oh yes, there were other teachers, you see.

LU: And did some of the children go back home to their parents and the ones that couldn't went with you? Or did all the children stay together?

DTT: No, some of them evacuated, if they had relatives, somebody in the country, eh, they can go to. But those that don't have any, had to stay in the city, but it was getting dangerous. I know that there was bombing every day. And so, they evacuated the children to the country. We went- our, my school went to Shikoku, that's a little island next to the Honshu, there's four islands, eh. And I went with one of them, I stayed there until end of the war. I could see the bomb that, the bomb that- atomic bomb that was, came to Hiroshima. You could see it across the sea. It went just like a mushroom.

LU: Yeah. How long did it last like that for?

DTT: Oh. I don't remember though, not too long though, yeah.

LU: Well, I heard before that there was black rain that came down-

DTT: Oh yes.

LU: -after the bomb, did you see that as well?

DTT: Well, I couldn't see that [shakes head no], you know, across the sea and ocean, eh. Yeah. But I could see the bomb coming up, you know, just like a mushroom, yeah. But when I came back to Osaka, I was very surprised because everything was burnt down, eh? Yeah.

LU: Mhmm. And-

DTT: And there was lots of people living like homeless, there was lots of homeless, you know, eh? They just made rooms for themselves with cardboards or something like that. But I was fortunate enough because my uncle was living there, eh? I didn't have any trouble much. A lot of people say they didn't have food to eat, but if you had the money, you could buy them, you know. So, I didn't suffer much, really.

LU: That was lucky. How many people were on the island with you and the children? Were other people evacuated there as well?

DTT: No, we were the only school in that area, they went all across- There's other places they could all evacuate, you know, into the country. Our school was the only one there, yeah.

LU: And, what kind of house did you stay in?

DTT: Oh, it was a big house because the owner was a rich person, I think. And he gave up his house and we lived there until- Oh we had, instead of studying, we had more fun, I think. [laughs]

LU: So you didn't study very much?

DTT: Well, there- when the alarm goes on, you know, the siren, I guess you call it, we have to evacuate, you know, hide into the mountains and you know, we just [run?]. So, there was a lot- I guess they had more fun, I think.

LU: So how did you manage to keep them calm and safe, throughout the war?

DTT: Hmm. Well, in the country, they just pass over the head, overhead, eh? They don't send any bombs down, so it was okay. The children- the only thing that we had trouble with was that, living together like that, they got lice in their hair. We had to get rid of that, wash them every day. [laughs]

LU: Oh wow. 50 children, that's a lot!

[Both laugh]

DTT: But they were, you know, grade six or somewhere around there, so they were not bad.

LU: And they were just scattered, sleeping all over the floor together?

DTT: Well, in Japan, they all sleep, you know, they bring out their futon, and spread it out all-

LU: Oh wow. So did the-

DTT: It's not any bed, you know, like that, you know. Just the futon that we just- in the summer, it's okay.

LU: So did the children have any chores that they had to help around the house with?

DTT: Well, after- they had to get ready, you know, take turns, helping in the kitchen, washing the dishes and those things. Otherwise, they had to go to school. We went to the ordinary public school, you see. They took us and we went there during the day and come back home, and do chores and then study. Do their homework, and those things.

[25 minutes]

LU: Oh, oh wow. And how old were the children?

DTT: Oh they were about grade six, you see, so about 12, 11 or 12, somewhere around there, yeah.

LU: Oh, so pretty old. Mhmm. Oh wow. So, when you finally left and returned back, where did the children go? Did they return-

DTT: Well, I can't remember now. There was no school, the school was destroyed. I can't remember what we did. We went back to Osaka but, somehow, they all knew where their parents were. You know, they were all evacuated, I guess, somewhere, or I don't know, because Osaka was burnt, burnt down. I don't know where they

went, but I guess they got in contact with them, and they came and picked them up, you know, in Osaka. I really don't remember anything about it. [laughs]

LU: No, you have a very good memory! Very good. And, so, did you find, when you started living with your uncle after the war, did you find that it was very hard to find a job?

DTT: No. I became a teacher and started teaching again in Osaka, but then when the G.I.s came over- English! They started trying to learn English, eh? It became very popular, so I was- they asked me to come and teach English at this special private school. And this was a school for only boys at the beginning, but now boys and girls were in it. And they had high school and university there. Yeah. I used to teach them during the day and then go tutoring sometimes, and then I did a lot of translating. It was fun.

LU: So, when you were in Japan, did you ever meet any of the Japanese Canadians that were returning home?

DTT: No, not until I went to, you know, I got on the boat. That's it. I came back on the Hikawa Maru and then I went back on the Hikawa Maru, that was the last trip I hear. But there was a lot Canadians then, going back, you know.

LU: And did any of them say how long they were in Japan for?

DTT: Gee, I don't know. I haven't heard from any of them.

LU: And, where did you meet your husband?

DTT: Gee, I can't remember now. My uncle was a doctor, he came for a check-up or something like that, and we became quite- you know. [laughs] He came so often, so I came to know him so- That's all.

LU: And let's see, so you had a second child, here, when you returned-

DTT: Here in Toronto.

LU: In Toronto. And did they go to Japanese language school as well?

DTT: Oh yes, I put my older one first, but then, they were seven years apart, eh? So when my second one became six years old, I just put her into the school. And that's when I- that was 1966, and I just became, you know, started teaching then.

LU: And when you were at home with your family, did you speak Japanese? Or did you speak English to each other?

DTT: Well, my older daughter, didn't know any English, she was four years old. She only spoke Japanese. So, she could read and everything, you know. But I had to put her in a kindergarten too because she has to start school sometime, eh? So, I can speak English, so I did teach her some but in a month, she had enough English to go by. Yeah. Children are fast. My husband, he was in his thirties, and I guess it took him a long time. It was difficult for him to learn English.

LU: Did he know any English before he came?

DTT: No, he never spoke any English.

LU: Oh wow. Was he-

DTT: Even now, he's very broken. [laughs]

LU: Was he excited to go to Canada and visit your family?

DTT: I don't know. At the beginning, he didn't feel like coming but- Since his parents had been passed away, he only had brothers, [shakes head no] no brothers, he was the only son. He had three other sisters, but they were all older and that, eh? So, he just came, I guess, because he had to, I suppose. [laughs]

[30 minutes]

LU: And where did he work in Japan?

DTT: He had a business of his own, like electrical things, eh? Not electronics but electrical machines and those kind of shop, yeah.

LU: Oh okay. And what was his war experience like? Where did he go?

DTT: He was in the army, I know. But then- that was around, near the end of the war. And he was in Korea once, for a time, but he had to come back and he was in Japan when the war ended, he was fortunate enough, you know. He was in Korea then, he wouldn't be able to come back right away. Yeah. A lot of them couldn't make it back. So he was very fortunate, he was back in Japan, yes. I don't really know about it, but that's what he said.

LU: And what do you remember about your parents and your family's story? You said that they went to Slokan, did you ever remember hearing about what their life was like in Slokan?

DTT: Yeah, I don't know, there were- well, in Slokan, it was one of those huts that two families live in a house or something like that. That's all. My brother was in, what do you call those- because he was much older and he was just finishing university, UBC, and they took him away before he finished it, so his friends, his classmates, you know, they said, "Why don't you let him graduate?" Yeah, they all spoke for him. That's why he got his graduation certificate.

LU: Oh wow.

DTT: Because- I don't know what would happen. So, my younger brother and sister, they had to leave school, you know, until, after they came back up to London. But he was able to finish his university.

LU: And your other brothers and sisters, did they finish high school?

DTT: They finished high school but then they started working, you see, yes.

LU: And you said you went to UBC as well, what were you studying there?

DTT: No, I was gonna go.

LU: You were going to go.

DTT: I graduated high school that year and the teacher- the principal asked me to go to Japan, so I didn't make it there.

LU: Oh! [chuckles] Wow. And when you first moved back to Canada, did you find it very hard to find work?

DTT: Not really, I [remember I worked?] someplace in a factory, but I wasn't good, I didn't like it. [laughs] I was making something, sewing or something like that. But I'm not good at those kinds of things so, I thought, oh I'd better find some other work. And my brother in Toronto said, "Why don't you come here? You know, you might find something." So I came out to Toronto after 6 months in London, yeah.

LU: And did you and your family find your own house or did you stay with your brother for a while?

DTT: Well, we stayed in an apartment in- a second floor apartment, and then we moved to an apartment building and then we had a home of our own after that but, yeah.

LU: Oh wow. And so you started teaching, at the Toronto Japanese Language School, and over the years you've received a couple of awards.

DTT: [laughs] First award I received was from Japan, eh? The- what do you call it, I can't even remember the names of them.

LU: Order of the Rising Sun?

DTT: Mhmm.

LU: The Silver Rays award.

DTT: Silver Ray, yeah. And then, I had this- the other day- the other month, May, in the month of May, I got the Asian Canadian Community something.

LU: Outstanding Asian Canadian Community Award, I know it's a long title.

[Both laugh]

DTT: And then last week, wasn't it? Last [unclear], I got the- what was that award? I can't even remember what the award was. Well, it was for the 60th anniversary, you know, they were celebrating that. Gee, it was- it said something. Something award. I can't even remember. [laughs] That's about all.

LU: And so when you were there and since- when you started as principal you started establishing adult classes.

[35 minutes]

DTT: Well, that was 1965. Well, we had three- four schools, in the beginning. When we started, eh? One of- We started in the Buddhist Church and a lot of Japanese Canadians didn't like having a Japanese language school because they thought there'd be backlash from the, you know, Canadians. So, it started as a culture class, in the Buddhist church. [Shakes head no] It wasn't a school yet. But then, a year after, the Ijikai was formed, and then they decided they should become independent, and became the Toronto Japanese Language School. We call it TJLS, eh? Can't remember where it was now. Anyway, and then we moved out of Buddhist church and went to the legion hall, and that was only for a short time. In 1965, just a year before I became a teacher, they moved to Orde Street, that's where we are right now. That's 1965, so about 45 years ago, eh? And 1966, I went to- became a teacher. But I became a teacher- Well, in those days, there was the Orde Street, and the Buddhist church anyway, and then we came to Orde Street, and we have one in Scarborough, one in Etobicoke, and one in, you know, the Ginza Restaurant? We had the Ginza Restaurant, and there was a hall on the second floor. We rented that for class for adult, one adult. So there were four schools really. But then, Etobicoke and this [tairiku], the adult classes, we cancelled that, and they came to Orde Street. And so, we only had Orde Street and the Scarborough school. The Scarborough school- when was it? 1981? Was it? They became independent themselves. Because they wanted to become- join the Ontario heritage program, and [shakes head no] we didn't care for that. So, we stayed- we became separate. And so, a lot of students left our school because- And after that, you know, a lot of immigrants came in, and they had that we- They were fluent in Japanese, and our children couldn't speak Japanese, so we had to find a school for them. And so, the Shokokai School, we found that, and we found the Kokugo Kyoshitsu for the immigrants, eh? And so, a lot of students went to some of, you know, other schools so our children- There were only about 60 or 70

students, I think. And I thought, gee, if we leave it like that, we're gonna be- there won't be any more school. So we thought, we'd better start an adult class. We had one class every year, just a beginner's class, but then we started a class for- and that one class was more for niseis and sanseis, you know, but then we opened our classes to anybody, of any nationality and any age. So, we had from teenagers to seniors, you know. And we started one beginner's class. The next year, we started an intermediate, and next year, we had- the third year, we had the advanced class. And then this developed into so many- beginner's, we had so many classes. Right, well, the biggest enrolment was last year. I think we had over 300 students.

LU: Wow.

DTT: And it's come down a little. We had 285, two hundred eighty-five students this year. I don't know how many will be coming this September [smiles], but [I hope that they will?]

LU: That's a lot.

DTT: Yes. So, we have seven children's classes, right now, seven, I think. And adult class, I have about ten- twelve, I think. Well, last year, we had five beginner's class and two beginner's at second level and one each of level three, four, five, six, up to eight. That's about 12 classes for adults. And then- but this year, we only had three classes of adults in the beginners, so it came down. The children enrollment is, you know, we have bigger classes. And we have-

[40 minutes]

DTT: We started a Nihongo class, and these are children of mixed marriage. You know, a lot of immigrants come here and marry Canadian, and the children that are brought up are Japanese Canadian, eh? So, they can speak Japanese if their parents-part parents, you know, speak Japanese. So, we made a class for them. And that developed- we only had one class one day, one year, and now we have four classes of it. So, I'm depending on them to come join our school. Because, if you can speak- if you're Japanese and, you know, the new immigrants, they all go to other schools.

There's other schools: Shokokai, Nisshu Gakuin, Nikka Gakuen, there's four, [Kokogyotsu?], four of them! Eh? But they are mostly- parents are Japanese so they speak Japanese, eh? But our children, they are half-half, eh? Canadian and Japanese so, I'm aiming at them to come to our school and learn Japanese, you know. If they're Japanese, they should keep up their Japanese, that's what I- [laughs] So, I'm hoping to develop more children's class, you know. Before, we used to have about seven, right up to grade seven, eh? We only have, right now, four Nihongo class and three non-Japanese speaking class for the children, eh? Yes, that's seven. But-

LU: And-

DTT: I don't know what happen- every year is different. I just depend on enrollment in September. You know, I can't tell how many of them will be coming back so I can't even tell the teacher, "Come back again next September." I tell them I'll call them if I need them, that's all I can say. Yeah.

LU: Mm. Mhmm. And what do you remember about going to Japanese school when you were younger?

DTT: Well, I don't know. We learned a lot. Our Japanese- well, our parents were Japanese so we spoke Japanese at home. We can speak, but- and we can understand, but we can't write. We learned writing, but I think a lot of them forgot. Now my friends, they all speak Japanese but, you know, they've forgotten how to write them now. But- since I went to Japan, it's okay for me but, yeah.

LU: Seems like the two schools are very different from when you were in Japanese school and children now are in Japanese school.

DTT: Oh yes, because now, they're mostly speaking English, eh? And even the new immigrants, their children, they were speaking Japanese but now, a lot of them speak mostly English now, eh? They're becoming like the sanseis now, you know? Yeah. It's too bad, they should keep it up somehow. [laughs] But of course, you know, when they come from Japan, you want to learn English, that's the trouble, that's the main thing. Even the parents want to learn English, so they speak English to the children, eh? So, they forget to speak the Japanese. They should keep it up, I think, you know.

LU: Mm. Mhmm. And how important is it to you that your family and future generations learn about their Japanese heritage?

DTT: Well, Japan, you know, I think if they were at- How do you say it? After the war, they- what do you call it? They sprung up so quickly. You know, look at Italy and Germany, they were good but our- Japan was the first one to, you know, how do you say it? Stand up on their own anyway. And recently, until recently they were what, among the five countries of the world, eh? I think they are going downwards now, you know, because Korea and China is getting there now, yes. If they, the Japanese, if they don't- I don't know, I think they had too much of a good life, up till now I think, in Japan, eh? Yeah. I don't know [unclear], even the prime minister just changed because he- I don't know how. You have to have a good prime minister. [chuckles]

LU: So, is it important that you teach your children about your Japanese-

DTT: I would like to but-

LU: -background?

DTT: -you know, it's up to them. Because once you go out of your home, even if you do speak Japanese at home, once you go out, it's English, eh? You don't use your Japanese at all.

LU: Right.

DTT: Unless you find a job that you need your Japanese, yeah.

[45 minutes]

DTT: But there are lots of, you know, Japanese companies you can go to and find some jobs if you're good at it. But you need your Japanese for that.

LU: And have you returned to Japan since you-?

DTT: Not, not much. Twice, three times. That's all. Last time was when I got my award from Japan, eh? I was there and the consul general from Toronto phoned me and told me, "Would you like to receive your award in Japan?" And I said, "Well, I don't know anybody except my relatives," eh? Rather, I think I rather have it here with my friends, so I came back home and received it here.

LU: Oh wow. And were you visiting family over in Japan, when you went?

DTT: Well-

LU: Your cousins?

DTT: Mhmm. Well, that's all I have. I only have- oh, how many cousins? Not very many. My family is small. Every family is small. The largest is only four in a family or something.

LU: Wow.

DTT: Yeah. So, we don't have very many, but I have a lot of friends that I can go to and see. But of course, you have to write to them to keep up with them. [laughs]

LU: [laughs] Yeah!

DTT: And I've been too busy to do that. Yeah.

LU: Seems very different because, most families, Japanese Canadian families here have, you know, anywhere between six and eight children.

DTT: Our family was only four. Yeah.

LU: Wow.

DTT: Even in Japan. One of them had only one, one family had only three. That's about all.

LU: Oh wow.

DTT: Yeah. Well, I- I remember having only a- there was another one with two. That's all I had. Three, one, and two, eh? That's all the cousins I have. They're all small families.

LU: Yeah.

DTT: I like a large family, I think, it's nice. [laughs]

LU: Yeah, lots of people. And when you went to Japan, what did you notice was the biggest difference from Canada?

DTT: Well, you know how small Japan is, you can go to anywhere, right? But here, you have to travel a lot, that's what- And in Japan, there is a lot of ocean and mountain, any place, there's a lot of place to go. But here, you have to travel far away to go to whatever you want to go, you know. Yeah. That's the only thing.

LU: And how was the meals different?

DTT: Well-

LU: Like did you eat a lot of Japanese food when you were growing up here?

DTT: Yes, well at home we did, yes. But in Japan during the war, everything was scarce. There wasn't- we didn't get any rice!

LU: Oh.

DTT: We had to- all the rice went to the army or navy or something, you see. So, the public didn't get any. And even if you do get 'em, it's all, you know, black market. It's very expensive. So, what we had to eat was sweet potatoes or pumpkins, or what do you call it, pumpkins or- what do you call it? Nanking kabocha? [laughs] Squash!

LU: Squash, yeah!

DTT: That was- we used them for, instead of rice, eh? And that was every day! That's all we had to eat, [shaking head no] there wasn't much to eat, yeah. All the good food went to the army or, you know, the soldiers that had got it. Yeah.

LU: Was there still a lot of fish? Were people fishing still?

DTT: Oh yeah. Fish, I guess so. But if you had the money, you can buy it, but after the war, money was useless. They said- the farmers had rice, and if you go to ask them,

“Can we purchase something?” They wouldn’t let you have them unless you bring money, they want some other item, kimonos or something like that.

LU: Oh, to trade!

DTT: Yeah.

LU: Ohhhh.

DTT: Money was useless. It’s only in the black market that you can use the money, eh? Yeah. So, a lot of people gave up their kimonos. We did too. We took kimonos and get rice. But I was fortunate because my father had a farm in which my uncle was living, and he was making rice, you know. So, he used to give me rice to eat, you know. So, I went to- but in those days if you want to travel by train or something, it was just full! You had to hang up, hang onto the train, eh? Yeah. And if you get caught, you know, bringing rice back to the city, you can get fined too, you know.

LU: Oh!

[50 minutes]

DTT: Yeah. So, we had- it was difficult! But I did get a lot of rice from my uncle and brought it back to Osaka. So, really, compared to other people, I think I was fortunate, yes. I didn’t have to suffer much, I had much, lots- you know, my uncle was in a- I could buy everything, so. A lot of people say, “I would never go back.” I don’t know why. And when they- a lot of people went back to Japan after the war. A lot of the people there say, “Why did you come back? We have nothing to eat!” You know, they had nothing to- no rice or anything. Why did they have to come back here now? You know, they say they would never go back again, they say. Yeah, but compared to them, I think I was very fortunate. [smiles]

LU: So, when you came to Japan, did you arrive in a kimono or were you wearing-?

DTT: Come back here?

LU: When you went from Canada to Japan.

DTT: No. In Canadian wear.

LU: Did everybody-?

DTT: No, they don’t dress in kimonos much, you know, just the older people maybe. Except for festivals or New Years’ time or Christmas or something like that, yeah.

That’s the only time the young people would wear kimono. I only wear them when it’s New Year’s or something like that. I gave them all away, because I didn’t think I would have any use here! I should have brought them back with me. [laughs]

LU: Well- [chuckles]

DTT: But I think I had a good time.

LU: Mhmm.

DTT: Yes.

LU: You were very fortunate. Very.

DTT: I’m very grateful.

LU: Mhmm, wow. Well, is there anything else that you would like to add before- any other stories you can remember?

DTT: I don’t know. I mean, I’ve been talking about myself so many times I forgot-

LU: I know, you've had lots of interviews. Well, I think we're all set then! Thank you very much!

DTT: You're welcome.

[End of interview]