

Oral History Collective: Seminar Series

Darren Aoki

**An oral historical intervention in a historiography of erasure:
a case study of Japanese in Canada and memories of the
postwar at the end of life**

**Wednesday 27 February, 5.30-7.00pm
Armstrong Building, Rm 2.49**

This paper will address how the second generation Japanese Canadians I've met in oral history interviews have questioned the way the history of Japanese Canadians and their place in Canadian history has come to be represented. In contrast to American scholarship, Canadian work has tended to fixate on writing and redressing histories of wartime mass incarceration, dispossession and displacement, victimisation, persecution and political resistance.

By shifting the entry point into their history - focussing on the latter half of the twentieth century without automatically premising this as an effect of war - the people who've met with me have sparked new ways of thinking about their history which don't require them to always and only be representatives of a history of eternalised victimhood. When I started the project, many advised me that it was too late to be interviewing individuals so late in their life, and that the region itself was not of particular note. But, in fact, I've found that although this perspective has come with many challenges, it has also opened opportunities to re-think these histories and its value.



Dr. Aoki is Lecturer in World History at the University of Plymouth. His research interests include twentieth century Japan and East Asia, with a focus on the post-Second World War period.

More recently, Aoki has re-aligned his interests in identity and narrative to exploring trans-Pacific migrations and encounter, specifically, the history of Nikkei (people of Japanese descent) in North America. Emerging out of the Nikkei Memory Capture Project is a growing research, teaching and outreach partnership with the Centre for Oral History and Tradition (University of Lethbridge) in teaching and outreach.