

盗まれた思ひ出
STOLEN MEMORIES
A FILM BY KAGAN GOH

“IF YOU HAD TO WALK OUT OF YOUR PRESENT LIFE IN 48 HOURS,
POSSIBLY NEVER TO RETURN, WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE WITH YOU?
WHAT WOULD YOU LEAVE BEHIND?”

SYNOPSIS

STOLEN MEMORIES is a detective story about filmmaker Kagan Goh's personal quest to return a photo album “stolen” from a Japanese Canadian family during the Japanese internment.

The filmmaker's brother bought a photo album along with a framed photograph of a Japanese samurai warrior that once belonged to a Japanese Canadian family, at a garage sale for a mere \$5 apiece. When his brother asked the Caucasian man who sold him the album how he had come to possess such a precious family heirloom, he replied indifferently that he found it in the attic collecting dust and he just wanted to “get rid of it.” The photographs are dated 1939. Three years before the Japanese internment.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1942, Japanese Canadians were ordered to turn over property and belongings to the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property as a “protective measure only.” Caught in the whirlwind of anti-Japanese hysteria and paranoia, all of the Japanese descendants living in Canada at the time were rounded from their homes and herded off to internment camps and declared “enemy aliens.” They had no choice but to leave everything behind. The album was left behind when the family was interned and their possessions were either seized by the Canadian government and sold for a pittance, or stolen by looters. They lost everything.

Kagan Goh, aided by Mary Seki, his 70-year old detective sidekick, embarked upon a quest to find the rightful owners, find out what happened to them and return their lost photo album to them. Documenting the search as well as redressing the wrongs of the past is a symbolic “homecoming” – coming home in terms of returning to a place of self-acceptance, belonging, wholeness and healing.

STOLEN MEMORIES reflects deeply rooted issues of prejudice which have affected the Japanese Canadian community throughout the last one hundred years, experienced not just by the family but by the Japanese Canadians who helped in the quest to return the ‘stolen’ photo album. The extraordinary story is a microcosm within the macrocosm of the Japanese Canadian legacy.

“It's a very effective way of touching on an important common feature of the internment – loss of much family material due to forced relocation. The personal touch seems a good idea too, as many such documentaries have been a bit distant from the victims.”

– Stan Fukawa, former president of the Japanese Canadian Citizen's Association

