

## Statement of Significance

### Description of Historic Object

The Merriwake is a 9.4 metre single-screw Japanese-Canadian gillnetter fishing boat of wooden construction.

### Heritage Value

The heritage value of The Merriwake resides in its nationally important historical associations and in the physical properties of the vessel itself. It is valuable for being a rare surviving example of one of 1,137 coastal fishing boats owned and operated by Japanese-Canadians that were confiscated by the Federal Government during World War Two. It is also valuable for demonstrating the skilled craftsmanship within the large Pre-War Japanese-Canadian boat building industry.



The boat was built on the BC North Coast in 1929 and was known as S.C. 73 and Sucia 2 before taking the name Merriwake. It was most likely built in Cow Bay in Prince Rupert, a centre of Japanese-Canadian boat-building. Many relevant and typical examples of Japanese-Canadian boat building of the era are evident in the boat's construction. The sturdy boat with a distinctively Japanese-Canadian profile is all hand-crafted using hammers, adzes and pull saws. Local spruce or other trees that featured a segment with a natural curve to form the bow of the boats were used in the construction and wood hull planks were steamed before being hammered into place.

The construction of the boat has been attributed to the Matsumoto Family, one of the main fishing boat builders in 1920s and 1930s Prince Rupert. During Internment in the Slocan Valley during the Second World War the Matsumoto family used their carpentry skills to build many of the shacks that housed their fellow Japanese-Canadians. Isamu "Sam" Matsumoto was one of the most prolific and pioneering shipbuilders of British Columbia. He made the first aluminium welded boats in North America among the 455 estimated boats the Matsumoto Shipyard is estimated to have built.

The boat is thought to have operated on Fraser River on an Easthope engine before being sold to BC Packers in 1942 and then had a series of owners who have made renovations and some changes. Most of planks and frames have been replaced as has the forward trunk cabin and an afterhouse removed. The engine has been replaced twice and colour scheme changed.

### Character – Defining Elements

Boat:

- The original massing, scale and proportions, surface material, hull configuration and exterior elements including;
- Single hull with its length of 9.4 metres (31 feet);
- The original design of the vessel and its inherent characteristics that typify a wooden Japanese-Canadian fish gillnetter of the west coast, embodied in its hull shape, profile, deck, stern and house configuration;
- Original construction methods which embody traditional Japanese-Canadian wood shipbuilding technology, materials and craftsmanship typical of the region and fishing vessels of this type and era.

Use:

- Worked for many years in the large and socially, economically and cultural important BC Coastal sea fishing industry.
- Central role in Japanese-Canadian Internment history.