UNDER THE **GUARD TOWER**

—— MODULE FOUR ——
NATURE AND MEMORY

Duration: *45 minutes*

Learning Objective: *Reflect on Chikaji Kawakami's use of landscape during incarceration and create a visual response that connects personal experience or imagination to historical context. Examine how nature, memory, and imagination function as sources of emotional resilience.*

Chikaji Kawakami, *Topaz Skyline*, n.d.

Nature is a key feature of most of Kawakami's paintings at the camps. Not only did he paint the surrounding landscape, but he also painted from memory scenes from Yosemite Park in California. The Topaz camp was in an arid, harsh environment that made life miserable for the internees, exposing them to extreme temperatures in both summer and winter and to a constant wind that covered everything with dust. For Kawakami, nature was both a source of suffering and a source of beauty and peace.

→ Take a few moments to reflect on the role nature can play in emotional or physical well-being. Have you ever experienced a moment when nature helped you feel calm, grounded, or at peace during a stressful or challenging time? Have you ever expressed that feeling through drawing, painting, or another creative activity?

→ If yes, create a sketch based on that memory. Focus on the elements of nature that made the experience meaningful (light, space, weather, color, scale).

→ If you have not had a personal experience like this, imagine one. Picture a place in nature that could offer you a moment of peace during a difficult time. What does the environment look like? What details (sounds, textures, movement, atmosphere) contribute to its calming effect? Create a sketch of this imagined landscape, emphasizing the aspects that evoke calm or reflection.

Chikaji Kawakami, *Untitled*, n.d.

→ In small groups, answer the following questions:

1.   Why do you think Kawakami chose to paint natural landscapes from memory while living in an environment as harsh as Topaz?

2. How might memory and imagination function as tools for resilience during confinement or hardship?