

## Message from Consul-General of Japan Takako Ito

September 2018

August is a month when various festivals are held across Japan, and, even here locally, Japan Festival CANADA was held to great success last month. Marking its third year, the festival was held on Aug. 25 and 26 in Mississauga, Toronto's neighbouring city where about 100 Japanese businesses are currently operating. A special stage and booths showcasing exhibits and events of various Japanese businesses and organizations were set up in Celebration Square in front of the Mississauga Civic Centre. The visitors enjoyed such Japanese festival fare on sale as yakisoba and yakitori, as well as a special corner featuring Japanese sake, and the total number of attendants over the two days seemed to have exceeded 80,000. That such a huge event can be held successfully without charging admission is due to the hard work of countless people, including the host organization and the City of Mississauga, along with the support of the various sponsors and tenants. I would like to take this opportunity to extend to all of them my heartfelt appreciation.



Remarks were given during the opening ceremonies by: local Federal Members of Parliament who conveyed a message from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau; Japanese Ambassador to Canada Kimihiro Ishikane; Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie together with City Councillors; former Mayor Hazel McCallion; and myself. What was most impressive was how Ms. McCallion, who served as Mayor for 36 years and is now 97 years old, passionately spoke on her city's relationship with Japan wearing a *happi* jacket bearing the name of Kariya, Mississauga's sister city located in Aichi Prefecture. The former Mayor, affectionately known as "Hurricane Hazel", was instrumental in the establishment of Mississauga's twin relationship with Kariya, and even calls Mississauga the "Japanese capital in Canada". The audience of festivalgoers seemed very taken by her strong voice and charming smile.

To be honest, I had secretly considered myself to be a "Sunshine Lady" who brings good weather to any event she attends, so for this opening, I was hoping that the weather would hold despite all appearances. In the end, however, rain and wind began to overtake the square during the ceremony, and it was pouring by the time the subsequent taiko drum performance began. It seems there was a powerful "Rain Man" present, and he turned out to be the internationally celebrated taiko master from Japan, Mr. Eitetsu Hayashi, who was on a tour of Canada. Japanese drums traditionally have been used in ceremonies calling for rain, and the



ensemble accompanying Mr. Hayashi even called themselves Eitetsu FU-UN no KAI, which translates as “Eitetsu’s Storm Ensemble”. Mr. Hayashi himself said, “I am a Rain Man.” Of course, their marvellous performance was so powerful that it called down a storm from the heavens. Despite the rain, which resulted in water exploding off of the surface of the drums as they were beaten, the audience listened attentively to the end of the wonderful performance by Mr. Hayashi, the Eitetsu FU-UN no KAI and the



local taiko group Nagata Shachu, and rewarded them afterwards with thunderous applause. Mr. Hayashi and his ensemble’s tour took them through Calgary, Vancouver and Ottawa and their final performance was at Mississauga’s Japan Festival CANADA. Despite the rain, I think it was a very satisfying concert for everyone present.

Three days prior to this, Mr. Hayashi and the Eitetsu FU-UN no KAI gave a performance at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. This was an indoor concert, and tickets were quickly sold out, resulting in over 500 people attending. Some people were seeing Mr. Hayashi for the first time, and hearing voices from many Canadians who said, “I have never seeing anything so wonderful!” made me at once extremely happy and very proud. Mr. Hayashi, who uses his whole body to play – at times concentrating intently for over 30 minutes – continues to train every day at age 66, never missing his daily 4-kilometre jog and always watching his diet. Today, he is a musical legend celebrated around the world. He told us, however, that when he first visited Toronto and performed at the JCCC 42 years ago, he slept in a sleeping bag on the Centre’s floor.



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Mr. Hayashi told us many stories, but the one which was most impressive for me was about the drumsticks made of wood from Sakura trees, which were given to him at his stop in Calgary during this tour. A Japanese Canadian gentleman by

the name of Shotaro Shimizu once lived in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, and returned there after being interned during the Second World War. In 1959 and 1960, he donated a total of 1500 Sakura cherry trees to the city. To him, this must have been an expression of goodwill and appreciation for being welcomed back into the community. The trees were loved by the local residents and provided them with a place for relaxation. However, by some grave mistake, some of them were cut down earlier this year. The people of Prince Rupert were shocked, and angry voices apparently could be heard asking what had happened. Some caring citizens took the chopped wood from the Sakura trees and sent them to Mr. Shotaro Shimizu’s grandson, Mr. Greg Shimizu, who lives in Edmonton. Greg-san, who is an instructor of taiko,



learned of Mr. Hayashi’s tour this year, and carved drumsticks out of this wood then presented his first set to Mr. Hayashi in Calgary. Mr. Hayashi, after telling this story from the stage at the JCCC, proceeded to perform using these very same drumsticks. Responding to an offence made in error with a gesture of goodwill – the feeling of appreciation and friendship expressed by Messrs. Shotaro and Greg Shimizu to the people of Canada will now spread across the world through the music created by the drumsticks given to Mr. Hayashi.

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Two days after Mr. Hayashi and his ensemble left to go back to Japan, I was paid a courtesy call by three representatives of Maidreamin maid café, who were in Toronto at the invitation of the Fan Expo Canada convention. Maid café, along with otaku culture, is now known through the world, and the Maidreamin entertainers were apparently also a big hit at the Otakuthon convention held in Montreal in early August. At first glance, these young women are simply cute. When you hear their stories, however, you discover that their work



ranges from managing a shop with revenue of over 1 billion yen (approx. \$12 million) where they do administrative work such as personnel and operations management; through hiring and training over 470 maids across Japan; to memorizing scripts in foreign languages for their hour-long performances overseas. They are truly professionals who are serious about their work. There are some maids who have returned to work after having children, and for others who feel they are too old to work as a maid, there are also administrative work which can be provided. They also told me of their ambitions of



widening their business activities as career women. I feel theirs is an example of workplaces created by women where women shine, and that they are contributing toward “a society where all women can shine”. They told me that about 30 to 40% of maid café patrons are either women alone by themselves or families accompanied by their small children. I may even drop in myself to have a look when I go back to Japan.