

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL TAKAKO ITO

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When summer holidays end and we enter September, the Consulate-General of Japan suddenly shifts into high gear to meet the increased workload. September in Toronto means the opening of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) which lasts about 10 days every year,



Festival (TIFF) which lasts about 10 days every year, drawing film stars and celebrated directors to this city from around the world. Seven films from Japan were curated and screened at this year's TIFF, and the Japan Foundation, Toronto, and the Toronto office of the Japan National Tourism Organization co-hosted a "Japan Film Night" on Sept. 9. In attendance were some of the Japanese directors who were

screening their work during the Festival. I also attended and gave remarks, and also provided the sake that was served to the guests. The 200 guests, comprised of representatives from



the film industry as well as fans of Japanese cinema, enjoyed the festivities in the presence of four Japanese film makers (Mr. Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Mr. Hirokazu Kore-eda, Ms. HIKARI and Mr. Koji Fukada). Each of them remarked



that in Japan and at film festivals elsewhere, it is extremely rare for them to have the opportunity to meet and talk with other Japanese directors, and that they were delighted to be provided with one in Toronto. It was a moment when I reaffirmed what a privilege it is to be in this city. I sincerely hope we can see continued success for Japanese films, as well as more visits by Japanese film directors next year.

We also held conferment ceremonies for the Foreign Minister's Commendations upon receiving the certificates for what were announced in July in Tokyo. Within the jurisdiction of our Consulate-General, the Commendation was awarded to one individual and three organizations.



The individual was Dr. Shinya Ito, Head of the Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology Division at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. The organizations which received the commendation were: the Canadian Japanese Cultural Centre of Hamilton; Nagata Shachu, the taiko drum ensemble which has been giving performances and providing instruction in Toronto for over 20 years; and the Toronto Cricket Skating and Curling Club, which has maintained ties with Japan in the field of figure skating for over 50 years through the exchange of Japanese athletes and their training. All of the recipients of the Commendation had contributed greatly and over a long period of time toward promoting exchange and friendship between Japan and Canada.



With respect to the Commendation awarded to the Cricket Club, we received tremendous support from Ms. Joyce Hisey, former Vice-President of the International Skating Union. Now over the age of 90, she remains remarkably spry. She enthusiastically undertook the role of the emcee for the ceremony. Not only that, she was a great contributor to the success of the ceremony as she took the trouble of contacting various Japanese skaters across the generations and also decorated the venue with dolls and fans she had received from her friends in Japan. I was truly in awe of her leadership and initiative which reflected her many experiences, which include serving as captain of Team Canada in figure skating. Ms. Hisey also showed me what she described as her precious treasure: a photograph of her at the Nagano Winter Olympics explaining the finer points of figure skating to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan (at the time Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Crown Princess).



When I explained to her that His Majesty's Enthronement Ceremony will take place in October, she fondly recounted that it had been an immense honour to explain her sport to the future Emperor of Japan, and that Their Majesties were both wonderful people.

Annually, the Foreign Minister's Commendations are awarded to individuals as well as groups with outstanding achievements in international fields for at least five years, in order to acknowledge their contributions to the promotion of friendship between Japan and other countries and areas. If you would like to recommend someone deserving – either someone you know or even yourself – please contact the Consulate-General of Japan.

I also took trips to other regions in the province, thinking it would be best to do so before the arrival of winter. Thunder Bay maintains a vibrant exchange of



educators, students and municipal delegations with Gifu, its sister-city in Japan. Moreover, Lakehead University, which is located in Thunder Bay, has exchange agreements with six Japanese universities. When I visited the University, I was able to meet with Japanese students who were on exchange for one semester. When I asked them what made them choose Lakehead, the answer I received the most was the beauty of the

surrounding natural landscape. Indeed, they seemed to be fully enjoying student life in such a spacious environment. I also met with the Japanese woman on staff who had been assigned with taking care of the students, and was deeply moved by the trust they placed on her, as well as her ability to take on all tasks with a smile. With the assistance of the Thunder Bay Branch of the Canadian International Council, I was also able to give a presentation on Japan-Canada relations while at Lakehead University.



About a one-hour plane ride from Thunder Bay is Kenora, which is a sister city of the town of Shimokawa in Hokkaido. The population of Kenora is normally about 16,000 but this grows to 60,000 in the summer due to tourists attracted by the

many beautiful lakes and islands. In the outskirts of Kenora, there are also indigenous communities that have exchanges with Japanese medical personnel familiar with Minamata disease, because of the mercury poisoning there. The members of the local media and the economic development committee in Kenora, with whom I met after paying a courtesy call on the Mayor, were all young and energetic in considering their community's future, and I felt they would become a strong core of the city's development. I also gave a presentation on Japan-Canada relations in Kenora at the local Rotary Club.



In the City of Clarington, about an hour and a half from Toronto by car, is a community called Newcastle inheriting the name of the municipality which existed before the region's amalgamation. Actually, there is a meeting known as the Newcastle Summit which every two years gathers representatives from



communities named Newcastle (or New Castle) around the world. In 2016, this Summit was held in Newcastle, Ontario, and in 2018 it was held in Shinshiro in Japan's Aichi Prefecture. (Shinshiro in Japanese means "new castle".) While in Newcastle, I was reunited with members of the delegation whom I had met just before their participation in the Summit in Shinshiro last year. They told me how much they were impressed by the welcome they

received in Japan, especially the warm hospitality shown to them by the children of Shinshiro. I also was able to plant Japanese maple trees on the grounds of Newcastle Town Hall.

It was a month during which I was able to meet many people who, through their own initiative and hard work, nurtured friendship with Japan over many years, often unbeknownst to those of us working in government offices. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation for their efforts, as well as my hope that their goodwill and friendship will reach as many Canadians and Japanese as possible. Needless to say, we at the Consulate-General of Japan will also do our utmost to support their work.