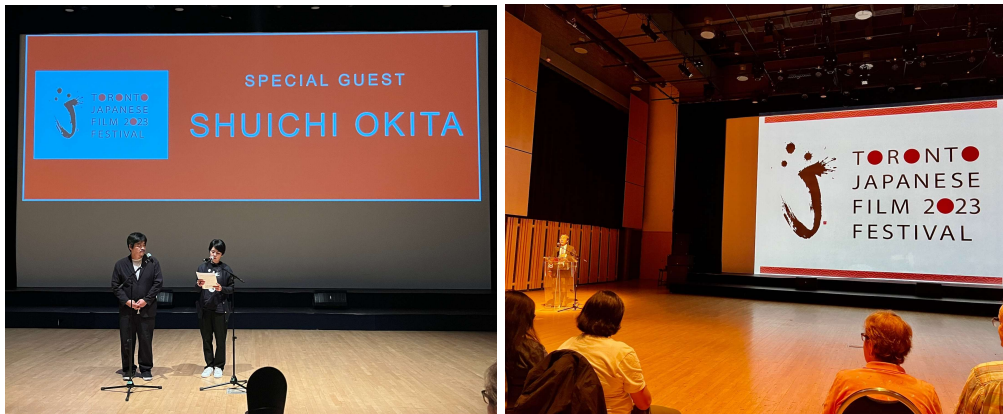


MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

June 2023

Clear summer skies characterized June. The season marks the end of school and the start of summer holidays, making this one of the busiest times of the year. This month was also packed with many notable events here in Toronto. The Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC), for example, held its annual Toronto Japanese Film Festival for two weeks starting June 8. Japanese director Mr. OKITA Shuichi attended in conjunction with the screening of his film *The Fish Tale*.



With Mr. Okita

1. Notable Japanese in Toronto

(1) Ice skating's "Rikuryu" pair

Ms. MIURA Riku and Mr. KIHARA Ryuichi, who achieved a Grand Slam this season by winning the Grand Prix Final, the Four Continents Championships, and the World Figure Skating Championships, are based in Oakville, just outside Toronto. Despite their busy schedules which consist of postseason practice sessions, they kindly came to my official residence accompanied by their massage therapist, Mr. AOSHIMA Tadashi, to share their stories with me.

It was in 2019 that the Rikuryu pair moved to Oakville, just before the start of the pandemic. The reason they chose Oakville was because Mr. Bruno Marcotte, reputed to be the best pairs coach in the world, was based there.

Ms. Miura was first taken by figure skating when she was little and saw Disney's Mikey and Minnie Mouse ice skating. Mr. Kihara undertook various activities when he was young but skating eventually won out over the rest. They decided to form a pair when they first practiced together and intuitively felt that they were meant to perform together. Ms. Miura is small in stature, but the differences in physique can actually be an advantage in pairs skating.

Winter sports are, of course, very popular in Canada. Apparently, what sets the coaching here apart is the constant use of positive thinking. (Not to compare, but this kind of mental training is completely opposite to all the negative thoughts that occupy my mind before a golf game.) Apparently, they are told to recall times when something goes well (including those during practice), while at the same time keeping in mind the points where improvements are possible. Both won the Olympic gold in Beijing for the team event, but they received their biggest break as a pair this past season.

Mr. Aoshima has been working as a trainer in Toronto for some time now and has worked with some of the world's top competitors. He was also the trainer for the famed skater HANYU Yuzuru. First-class athletes can sometimes have their own methods and routines from which they do not wish to deviate, and they may only accept Mr. Aoshima's guidance after some time. Becoming the best in the world also comes with the anxiety of maintaining this position. Rikuryu's attitude toward competition, however, remains unchanged, and they continue to train while maintaining a sense of humility.

My sincere hope is that they will continue to meet with success after this season, sending out their positive energies from Oakville to the world.



From left, the Consul-General and Mrs. Sasayama, Ms. Miura, Mr. Kihara, Mr. Aoshima, Consul MATSUI Masahiro, Japan Foundation, Toronto, Executive Director YAMAMOTO Noriko and Vice-Consul SUZUKI Tokiya



The “Rikuryu” pair on ice.

(2) Mr. SUGINO Shinya, Photographer

By his own account, Mr. Sugino moved to Toronto at age 18 by himself, carrying just two suitcases. He had already started work in art photography, and, recognizing his own talent, went on to establish a studio and gained experiences in a variety of fields, including commercial photography, creative photography, and portraiture. He was even once awarded advertising gold at Cannes. Among his work in commercial photography, there are many images that are still being used by major corporations.

I had the invaluable opportunity to speak to Mr. Sugino about his experiences and his profound insights into the future of photography. What was clear while listening to him was his insatiable curiosity and willingness to experience new things. For example, Mr. Sugino brought digital technology into his photography back at a time when this was still rare. He also had very interesting experiences working with famous actors who were his subjects. He also spoke for a while on AI image generators, a topic garnering a great deal of interest right now. Despite copyright issues, Mr. Sugino felt that image generators will become a commonplace tool in the future, just like digital technology in the past. The question will be how one can incorporate this new tool into one's own work. Due to our talk, I was able to catch a glimpse of Mr. Sugino's foresight and proactive stance.

A collection of Mr. Sugino's works, *Déjà vu*, is on exhibit right now at the JCCC.



**Group shot with Mr. Shin Sugino
(From left: Consul Matsui; Mrs. Sasayama;
Consul-General Sasayama; Mr. and Mrs. Sugino)**

(3) Ms. KOSAKA Eri, Principal Second Violin, Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO)

Ms. Kosaka had been primarily working in the United States, but in 2012 she joined the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Recognized for her outstanding work, she assumed the title of Principal Second Violin in 2022.

The TSO is one of the preeminent orchestras in North America. It is well known that Maestro OZAWA Seiji served as its musical director for four seasons starting in 1965. The current musical director is Maestro Gustavo Gimeno from Spain. He assumed his position during the pandemic but was able to fully take on his role as conductor this season.

From contemporary works to classical pieces, I was very impressed by the orchestra's refined technique, their coordination and creativity. After the concert, I was able to visit Maestro Gimeno in his green room. A vinyl recording of a performance led by Maestro Ozawa was on display. I was told this recording was of the TSO's first performance of Oliver Messiaen's Turangalila from the 1960s. Maestro Gimeno told me that, more than 50 years later, he recorded the same piece last year!. (It is scheduled to be released on CD next year.)

Ms. Kosaka plays a key position as Principal Second Violin in such a revered orchestra. I look forward to her continued success in the future.



**Group shot with Maestro Gimeno
(from left: Mrs. Sasayama; Ms. Kosaka;
Maestro Gimeno; Consul-General Sasayama)**



Ms. Kosaka in concert



Ms. Kosaka is featured in a banner ad

(4) Mr. EBE Naoya, Principal Dancer, National Ballet of Canada (NBC)

In my August message, I was able to introduce you to Mr, SATO Kota of the National Ballet of Canada. This month, I was able to meet with Mr. EBE Naoya and Ms. ISHIHATA Koto, two of the company's principal dancers. Mr. Ebe has been dancing in the principal position since 2015. The National Ballet holds performances throughout the year, and *Romeo and Juliet* was on the program this season. I attended a performance in which Mr. Ebe played the part of Romeo while the part of Juliet was performed by someone taking on the role for the first time. Nonetheless, their chemistry was apparent, and I was extremely impressed by the impeccable performance befitting principal dancers of the National Ballet.

Ms. Ishihara gained a lot of her experiences in the US, in particular San Francisco. She has been performing as a principal in Toronto since 2021. She also has performances scheduled in Japan this summer.

Performances of one work may take place over about ten days. Days when there are both matinee and evening performances can be very long. Depending on the physical condition of the performer, a substitute may suddenly be called in. This is why company dancers must always be on standby, even on days when they are not

scheduled to perform. There are also sudden calls for roles, so constant study and research are indispensable. Intense concentration is required of the dancers during performances.

On the other hand, NBC's policy is to place great importance on family. Children and family members of the dancers were also among the audience during the performance I attended.

I also had an opportunity this month to visit the National Ballet School of Canada where young dancers hone their craft. Located in downtown Toronto, it is a place where students can focus on ballet lessons while completing their studies from junior high through high school. There is also a boarding house for the students nearby. There are about 20 students per grade, and 12 Japanese students are currently enrolled at the school. In addition to nurturing performers, there is also a program to develop future instructors. Here, too, was a Japanese student who had previously been trained in Europe. I understand it is rare anywhere to have such a facility that consistently nurtures young dancers, as well as instructors.

The youngest among the students is just 12 years old. It is common to hear in recent years that young people in Japan have become inward looking. Here in Toronto, however, youths who have their eyes on the world gather. After completing their studies, they will audition internationally for various ballet companies then leave their nests as young professional performers. The National Ballet of Canada maintains exchanges with various parts of the world, but it has particularly strong connections with Japan. There were even students who came here to train from the New National Theatre Ballet School in Tokyo.

Succeeding as ballet dancers at times requires possessing certain physical features like height and physique. I sincerely hope that the students who possess impeccable technique and infallible aspirations take off from Toronto to find great success globally.

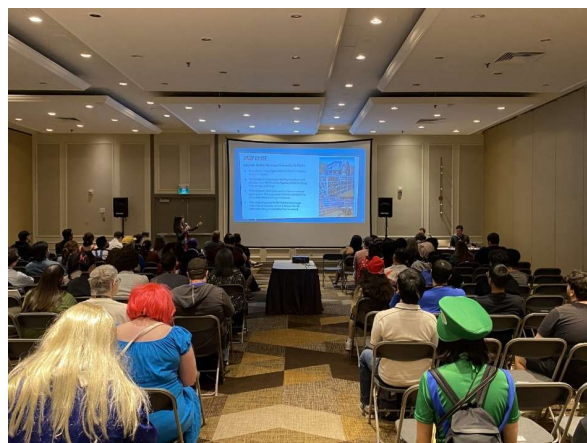


2. Anime North

An endless sea of cosplayers. Anime North, the immense anime festival that takes place each year in early summer, has returned once again to Toronto. With the pandemic largely behind us, this year's event was also free of health mandates. Anime North is completely run not-for-profit, and I was very surprised that a festival of this size could be held solely by volunteers. I was also taken by how Japanese anime has now taken on a life of its own and was now creating such a unique, vast universe. The diversity of participants reflected the multiculturalism of Toronto, and I also noticed the wide range in their age. Young people no longer monopolize anime as people of all ages enjoy cosplay in their own way. The program consisted of countless events occurring organically within a packed schedule. If you were not careful, you could easily get lost looking for a particular event.

The Consulate-General of Japan once again joined the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) and the Tokyo Convention and Visitors Bureau (TCVB) to give a presentation of anime tourism for anime fans planning to visit Japan.

The promotion of inbound tourism to Japan in the future will focus on quality rather quantity. Fans who participate in Anime North are surely repeat visitors to Japan. I would like to continue to discover other Canadians visiting Japan with such specific themes.



3. George Brown College Culinary Cities of the World

Founded in 1967, George Brown College, located in the heart of Toronto, is attended by nearly 30,000 students and offers more than 20 career-focused programs. Hospitality-related courses are also available, and the college's culinary programs are also very well known. The school has been more focused recently on implementing courses on Japanese cuisine which is popular among the students. One of the school's popular regular events is the annual Culinary Cities of the World which features the cuisine of a particular country and invites celebrity chefs who specialize in it. Washoku, Japanese cuisine, was the focus of the event this year, and George Brown invited New York-based Chef SHIMBO Hiroko, who has written numerous books and is celebrated internationally.

In addition to classes for students, the three-day event included a presentation by Chef Shimbo which gave me a valuable opportunity to hear her insights.

In order to truly understand Washoku, it is not enough to simply use Japanese ingredients and cooking methods. It's essential to also understand the culture of Japan that is its backdrop, as well as the ways of thinking that shaped it. Chef Shimbo began her presentation by explaining features such as seasonal appreciation, colour, texture, purity, and balance that underpin Japanese cuisine, especially kaiseki cuisine. She also introduced the history of cha-kaiseki – kaiseki for the tea ceremony – which was formulated in the 17th century and is the origin of what we know as kaiseki today. She also explained the philosophy behind cha-kaiseki which include concepts such as yin-yang and the Five Elements. Chef Shimbo, who has achieved great success in the US over the past more than 20 years, gave a very persuasive and entertaining lecture in a packed space in which even the standing room was full.

As Chef Shimbo pointed out, cuisine is a very effective and efficient way of promoting Japanese culture, but without understanding the history behind kaiseki cuisine, as well as the thoughts that formulated it, one cannot say they truly understand Washoku. I myself have written about Washoku many times in my monthly messages, but I found this opportunity to be particularly rare and felt similar events should be planned in the future. Chef Shimbo doesn't just teach culinary arts in the classrooms but also visits Japan every year with people interested in Japan's culture and cuisine. I understand the theme of this year's visit will be Kyushu.

The Consulate-General of Japan and the Government of Japan will continue to strengthen their ties with such organizations as George Brown College in order to convey the appeal of Japanese cuisine.



Chef Shimbo's presentation



**A group photo after the presentation
(from left: Vice-Consul Suzuki;
Chef SUZUKI Haruna of the
Consul-General's
official residence;
Chef Shimbo; Consul-General
Sasayama; Chef Jon Klip)**

4. Sudbury – Visit to Sudbury and Sumitomo Metal Mining's Côté Gold Project

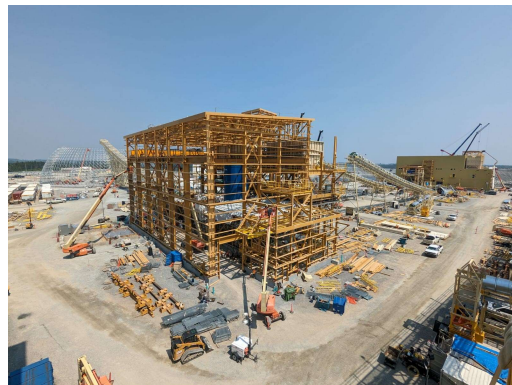
Ontario is three times the area of Japan. Alberta is known for its oil and natural gas in Canada, but Ontario, the vast area of which extends to the Arctic Circle, is also a treasure trove of rare metals. This is one reason why Ontario has recently been attracting attention as a major production site of EV batteries.

I took an hour flight from Toronto this month to visit Sudbury, a city which for a long time has prospered from mining and manufacturing. In June 2017, Sumitomo Metal Mining announced joining Canada's IAMGOLD Corporation's Côté Gold Project. I had the opportunity to visit the project, which is scheduled to begin production in 2024. Partly because the investment for this project was announced during the pandemic, it has gained considerable attention from both the Canadian and Ontario governments.

The site is located among great wilderness three hours north of Sudbury. It was the first time I toured an open pit mine, and the grandeur was more than I could have imagined. The pit itself is 2 km by 1 km in area, and various facilities are spread out

for 6 km square around it. Because of the lakes and rivers in the surrounding area, development is progressing in a way that does not damage the environment. Communication is also going well with the local First Nations representatives.

Work was progressing on site at a rapid pace in preparation for the start of production next year. Operations currently go on 24 hours a day, with approximately 2,000 workers on 12-hour shifts. The project is said to currently involve nearly 4,000 people. Indeed, it resembled a city coming into existence. Furthermore, unmanned transport trucks utilizing DX are contributing to make the work efficient and safe. About 400 people will be employed after production begins, but there is no denying that this is a huge project. The mine is expected to be in operation for 18 years.



Representatives of Sumitomo Metal Mining working on the site commute from the city in two-week and one-week shifts. After two weeks of days split in two 12-hour shifts, they return to Sudbury for the next two weeks. Most of them were veteran of

the mining industry who had worked all over the world. The Japanese population in Sudbury used to consist of just a few families, but it has literally doubled since the Côté project began.



There will be a Japan festival held in Sudbury on July 22, which is something else to look forward to.

Further north from the Côté region is the so-called Ring of Fire, where many rare metals including nickel, lithium, and cobalt are believed to be present. According to the Government of Ontario, it would be possible to produce electric vehicles exclusively in this province if such metals are used. Because the site is remote, there are such issues as the need for infrastructure and transportation of both goods and people. As declared at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, building a resilient economy and supply chains is also of importance. Through my recent visit to the gold mine in Côté, I have come to sincerely hope that the public and private sectors can work together to make good use of the resources available in the region.