

President's Annual Report 2023

2023 was a very busy year for the VNCS, as we not only got back to our regular programming but also included several events that we hadn't held for a while and had a couple of special one-time events. Here are the highlights:

- After a 2 year hiatus, Mochi Tsuki Shinnen Kai was re-launched. Despite the absence of the popular potluck dinner, many people turned out to bring in the Year of the Rabbit, Japanese style.
- After a 2 week delay due to a snow storm, Nori Tori was blessed with great weather, a large turnout including several new harvesters and abundant and delicious nori.
- Also, after an absence of at least 5 years, we held an Udon Luncheon Social for our members. It sold out quickly and had a long wait list. The popularity of this event points out that we should plan more social gatherings for our members.
- The Heritage Committee conducted several tours including a special all-day tour of Japanese Canadian historic sites on Mayne Island. This Mayne Island Tour was sold out and garnered rave reviews.
- We were requested by the Japan Consulate to hold an event for the visit of the Japanese Training Naval Squadron. We collaborated with the Japanese Friendship Society to hold a welcome event at the Gorge Park Pavilion for the 160 navy cadets.
- The new Human Rights Committee held 3 events this year – Bystander Intervention Training, Healing Circle for Change session with Dr. Satsuki Ina and a Nonviolent Communication Workshop. All were well attended.
- Both our fundraising events, Japanese Cultural Fair and Japan Fest, attracted large audiences and achieved record levels of revenue. The Japanese Cultural Fair significantly expanded its outdoor footprint to accommodate other activities including more food vendors.
- At our Obon event we washed and place flowers on the gravestones of the 155 Japanese pioneers that are buried at Ross Bay Cemetery. This was followed by a service conducted by Rev, Grant Ikuta, of the Steveston Buddhist Temple.
- After a long absence, we held a Japanese Film night hosted by the Consulate General of Japan. It was also well attended.
- We sponsored a special Diakagura performance by Michiyo Kagami, an artist from Japan.

In addition to a very full schedule of events, we also undertook a number of significant internal projects.

- We have initiated a project to establish a strategic plan for the VNCS. This is still in progress.
- We had a search to find a new Treasurer to replace Ken Watai who, due to health reason, was unable to conduct Treasurer duties for most of the year.

Fortunately, Dave Lawson stepped forward to take on the role. An ad-hoc Finance committee was formed to assist Dave in getting our financial accounting situation up to date.

- We sent six delegates to the NAJC Capacity Building Symposium in September to identify opportunities to leverage NAJC funds and expertise to help the VNCS increase its capacity. Several pilot projects will be soon be initiated.
- We worked on 3 grant applications to the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society Fund – Community Grant, Capital Purchases Grant and Intergenerational Wellness Grant. We are still awaiting their decision.

As you can see it has been a busy year on a number of fronts.

Financially we did very well this year ending up with a net income of \$22,726. This was due to the success of our two fund raising events, Japanese Cultural Fair and Japan Fest. We issued 4 \$500 grants this year – two to individuals, 1 to Uminari Taiko and 1 to the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Peace event.

I want to thank the current Board members for the time and effort, they have contributed to running the VNCS. With all the new internal projects we have started, the demands on the Board member have been higher than usual. Thank you Natsuki Abe, Maureen Bird, Yuuri Daiku, Karen Geiger, Reyna Goshinmon, Debbie Ibaraki, Amy Kawano, Dave Lawson, Yukari Peerless, Joyce Tobo, Ken Watai and Kimiko West.

Five of our Board members will be stepping down this year.

- Ken Watai has been a Board member and our Treasurer for 14 years. He has contributed immensely not only in the Treasurer role but in other capacities such as mochi making and carpentry projects.
- Yukari Peerless joined the Board in 2014. During her 10 years as a Director she has served as the Editor of our Newsletter and as our Communication Director and most recently as the Co-Chair of the Cultural Fair.
- Natsuki Abe has been a Board member for 4 years. She was the co-chair of the `Heritage Committee.
- Maureen Bird has been a Board member for 3 years. She has been our Fair Volunteer coordinator for many years and has trained her replacement.
- Yuuri Daiku has been a Board member for 2 years. Despite being out of town most of the time he has provided good advice based on his many years of experience working in the NGO environment.

Thank you, Ken, Yukari, Natsuki, Maureen and Yuuri for your service to the VNCS.

Prepared by Tsugio Kurushima, January 15, 2024.