

ACTING PRESIDENT'S REPORT for 2025

2025, for The Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society, was a busy year despite changes that were unanticipated at the start of the year. In April 2025, elected President, Tsugio Kurushima, was taken ill and I, as elected Vice-President, assumed his role as Acting President.

As the Board of Directors and members adjusted to many changes and challenges throughout the year, regular programming created a familiar framework and provided opportunities for our members to participate in some favourite activities while bringing forward new ideas for future expansion. Some highlights included:

- Mochitsuki Shinnen Kai – a January tradition that started the year with a shared potluck meal along with members of our co-host societies, the Victoria Japanese Friendship Society and the Victoria Japanese Heritage Language School Society.
- Heritage Committee Udon Luncheon – members gathered together and socialized – this event was very popular with seating tickets selling out quickly. Following the successful event, enthusiastic conversations encouraged ideas about what we can do in the future to bring members together.
- Heritage Committee walks showed historical sites of the early Japanese community in downtown Victoria.
- Human Rights Committee outreach with two virtual “Fireside Chats” with guests from across Canada including Art Miki, Maryka Omatsu, Lynne Deutscher Kobayashi and Mitch Miyagawa. These well attended virtual events have encouraged future chats.
- Young Leaders and Youngsei group representatives participated in a National gathering in Vancouver that coincided with the Powell Street Festival
- Participation in the Victoria community recognition of the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan.
- Obon in Ross Bay Cemetery; a day of recognition of Japanese pioneers that are buried there with the cleaning of graves and a Buddhist service at the Kakehashi Stone. On this day, we were quietly supported by The Old Cemetery Society and the Ross Bay Villa Society as we worked within the cemetery space.
- The (VNCS) Japanese Cultural Fair held at Esquimalt Gorge Park, once again expanded in the outdoor park space to house both a Community Showcase and a Community Market. Despite the heat, our volunteers worked hard and helped to make the event a financial success as well as building a springboard for the years to come.

On an administrative level, the Board of Directors kept busy throughout the year with several projects that included:

- Joining a newly formed collaborative called “Asia in Victoria” (support provided by the Victoria Foundation) and then participating in three outreach events that brought attention to many groups of Asian heritage located in this area. As this collaboration moves into year two, we can anticipate an expansion to activities and requests.
- Reviewing our capability to successfully hold Japan Fest 2025 at Broadmead Shopping Village in mid-July. After much consideration, a decision was made to forgo holding the

event in 2025 due to several factors including not being able to quickly find an event coordinator to replace Tsugio who was at the helm of this event. Our corporate partners were understanding and look forward to working with the Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society in the future.

- Japan Fest had grown to be our second highest revenue source after the Cultural Fair and the loss of income from the cancellation was felt for program planning; however, it did help to provide a breathing space for the community to focus their energy on the remaining summer events.
- Reviewing our storage needs to facilitate the import of club assets and market sales inventory being stored in private homes as well as the intake of new donations. The storage problem impacted our revenue as we were unable to take in new donations until we found a suitable expanded space. The move to a larger space took place in mid-December 2025 and we are now able to once again take in donations for market inventory.
- Selecting delegates to attend two (2) NAJC Conferences with the first one held in April for the Western Region area (British Columbia and Yukon) and the second one a National Conference held in September. Both conferences highlighted capacity building while also introducing new programs for member groups to explore including programs held in Japanese.
- Work towards the creation of a Strategic Plan with short and long-term goals to include capacity and succession planning for the growing community. To support this initiative, an application for a Capacity Building Grant of through the NAJC in the amount of \$20,000 was applied for and, at the close of 2025, we were still waiting on final approval.

At this time, I want to thank the Board Directors for their contributions of time and effort on the work at hand as well as their dedicated support for the society and community while encouraging us to move forward. And, on a personal note, my gratitude for the support they have given me throughout these past months. Thank you so much; Michael Abe, Natsuki Abe, Karen Koyanagi Geiger, Taro Gurney, Amy Kawano, Doug Kobayashi, Craig Mercer, Yumiko Mizuno, Djuna Nagasaki, Shinichi Tanaka and Lily Yee.

2026 looks to offer many good opportunities for us to build on the work done in 2025, and as we work together with our membership and community partners we can walk towards future growth.

Prepared by Deborah Ibaraki (February 7, 2026)