

I have recently had the opportunity to exchange letters (and not emails) with some people in Canada and came to realize there are quite a few people here who still write letters. Among them are those whose correspondence presents artistic designs and ingenuity, and while embarrassed at being a poor correspondent, I appreciate the warmth of handwritten letters.

On August 2, we held at my official residence a farewell cocktail for this year's 19 new JET Programme participants from our jurisdiction. On the eve of their departure for Japan, their faces mirroring their hopes and enthusiasm were especially memorable. I believe they might have felt somewhat anxious ahead of their departure for a foreign land, but at the same time, they had the opportunity to hear about former participants' experiences as we had also invited JETAA Q/A (JET Programme Alumni Association Québec/Atlantic) members.



I am confident that these new JET Programme participants will support English language education in Japan and international exchanges, act as representatives of Canada and introduce the country to their students, and contribute to the deepening of Japan-Canada mutual understanding and relations. Dear participants, do let us know how your life in Japan goes!

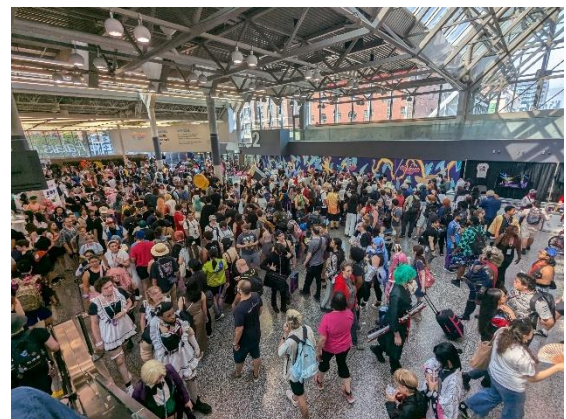
Note: The JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Programme is an initiative inviting foreign youth to work with municipalities and other public entities to foster foreign language education and promote international exchanges regionally.



Otakuthon, the largest annual Japanese pop culture convention in the region, took place at the Palais des Congrès de Montréal from August 2 to 4, attracting a huge crowd of more than 36,000 anime, manga, and video games enthusiasts. The event featured many guests from Japan, including anime and manga creators, voice actors, and music artists.

The Consulate General set up a booth to promote the JET Programme and MEXT Scholarships, and introduced Japanese traditional culture with tea ceremony workshops organized by the Montreal Association Chado Urasenke Tankokai, a Japanese folk song and dance activity presented by Komachi Montréal, and a judo demonstration by Shidokan judo club. Also, the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) held an information booth and presentations. The event's varied activities offered a golden opportunity to discover Japan's multifaceted charm. Thank you to all contributors!

Additionally, during the Masquerade, I presented the Consul General's Award to one of the 50 competing cosplay teams. With only cosplays of exceptional quality and works that reflected a genuine love for Japanese anime and games being showcased one after the next, even the outsider that I am felt a rapidly growing interest for that world, leaving the venue impressed.



On the evening of August 5, I attended alongside Montreal City Council Chair Martine Musau Muele the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony held at the Japanese Garden of the Montreal Botanical Garden. Together, we rang the Peace Bell at the exact moment when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima 79 years ago and joined the other attendees in a moment of silence. The Peace Bell was donated by the City of Hiroshima to the City of Montreal 26 years ago.

With many in attendance despite the rainy skies, including members of the National Assembly of Quebec, high school students from Hiroshima participating in a short-term study abroad program in Montreal, and local residents, a message from Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui was read in Japanese, English, and French. I would like to reiterate here our wish for a world without nuclear weapons and respectfully express my deepest condolences to the victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



On August 10 and 11, the Festival Matsuri was held at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal (JCCCM), featuring Japanese taiko drum performances, a mikoshi parade, Bon odori dances, and more. The event also included kiosks offering many items such as Japanese food, sweets, yukata, and accessories, highlighting various cultural aspects. On the 10, the Consulate General held a booth to introduce Japanese culture, the JET Programme, and the MEXT Scholarships. Many visitors inquired about the Japanese art on display and sought information on visiting and travelling in Japan, reflecting a strong interest in Japanese culture.





In Closing

This year was my first time experiencing spring and summer here, and I noticed that once winter's snow melted, Japanese cultural events started being held in quick succession, much as the tumbling waters of swollen rivers in spring. As mentioned in my messages, staff from the Consulate General and/or I have attended the events listed below. Of course, there must have been many more, of all types. It was a pleasant surprise to realize the high level of interest people have for Japan, and I cannot help but take my hat off to all organizers for their continuous and devoted efforts. The Consulate General of Japan in Montreal will also continue to put every effort towards deepening the interest in and understanding of Japan.

- “東海道 Tōkaidō - Dreamscapes by Andō Hiroshige” ukiyo-e exhibition, *Montreal Museum of Fine Arts*
- Kimono Fashion Show, *Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal (JCCCM)*
- Montreal Chapter of Ikebana International annual floral arrangement exhibition, *Japanese Pavilion, Montreal Botanical Garden*
- O-hanami picnic under the flowering crabapple trees, *Japanese Garden, Montreal Botanical Garden*
- Japanese Film Festival, *Cinémathèque québécoise*
- YATAI MTL, *Hangar 1825*
- Association d'amitié Québec-Japon's Sakura Matsuri, 4th edition, *Québec City*
- Fantasia International Film Festival, *various screening venues in Montreal*
- Otakuthon, *Palais des congrès de Montréal*
- Festival Matsuri, *Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal (JCCCM)*

**In addition to the above, I was able to exchange ideas and opinions with various Japanese and Canadian people and organizations, making for a meaningful month.*