

How were the last few weeks for everyone? With May came pleasant weather and countless cultural events in celebration of Asian Heritage Month. The growing interest in Japan becomes obvious when we consider the events held one after another in Montreal, Québec City, and elsewhere, that focused on Japanese culture's many facets. Listing them all would be a challenge. Traditional culture such as ikebana and tea ceremony. Manga, anime, and video games popular especially among young people. Music. Martial arts such as judo, karate, kendo, and aikido. Japanese gastronomy. Etc.

I feel a great deal of gratitude and respect for the event organizers and all contributors who have helped in various ways, such as by volunteering their time.

Annual exhibition by the Montreal Chapter of Ikebana International

On May 9, the Montreal Botanical Garden's Japanese Pavilion hosted the opening ceremony of the Montreal Chapter of Ikebana International's annual ikebana exhibition. Representatives from each ikebana schools showcased remarkable arrangements that highlighted the beauty and expressiveness of flowers, gracefully reflecting this year's exhibition theme: "Floral Fantasy". The Consulate General appreciates the association's activities in promoting the traditional culture of flower arrangement and remains committed to supporting them.



Meeting with Ms. Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

In a 2020 survey conducted by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, two of the most common responses regarding what is most attractive and interesting about ikebana were "the possibility of experiencing the seasons" and "working with living materials". Sensing some connection between the practice of this art and biodiversity, we asked the Montreal Chapter of Ikebana International to invite Ms. Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary of the Montreal headquartered Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to their exhibition's opening ceremony. With her having long been interested in Japan's traditional culture, it was a great opportunity to discuss the CBD's recent activities while appreciating the iconic traditional art form that is ikebana.



O-hanami picnic under the flowering crabapple trees by the Montreal Botanical Garden's Japanese Pavilion

On May 18th, Deputy Consul General Yoshiaki Takaku attended the annual crabapple tree blossom viewing event hosted by the Japanese Pavilion at the Montreal Botanical Garden. Unfortunately, the event was held indoors due to rainy weather, but the venue was filled with excitement thanks to a powerful kobudo traditional Japanese martial arts demonstration and Arashi Daiko's Japanese drum performance. In the Japanese Pavilion was held a tea ceremony by the Montreal Association of Chadō Urasenke Tankōkai, and many participants enjoyed matcha tea while gazing at the elegant Japanese garden in the rain. I would like to express my gratitude to all those involved in making this event possible year after year.



Discussions on the promotion of Japanese language education

On May 22, a roundtable discussion and a networking reception on the promotion of Japanese language education gathered at my official residence individuals involved in Japanese language teaching, the Japanese Language Speech Contest, or Japanese cultural promotion, as well as representatives of the Montreal Japanese Association of Commerce and Industry, the Japanese Scholarship Alumni Association Quebec/Atlantic (JSAA Q/A), the Japan Foundation, Toronto, and the Embassy of Japan in Canada.

It was an opportunity to hear valuable insights from participants active in various fields related to the local promotion of the Japanese language and also served as a meaningful occasion for networking and exchange.



The Consulate General will continue to make every effort to increase interest in the Japanese language, making the most of opportunities to introduce Japanese culture.

The 41st Montreal edition of the Japanese Film Festival

On May 23 and 24, the 41st Montreal edition of the Japanese Film Festival, co-organized by our Consulate General and the Japan Foundation, Toronto, was held at the Cinémathèque québécoise. All three films screenings were very well received, with the Japanese classic, Kenji Mizoguchi's "Sansho the Bailiff", deeply moving the viewers, some even sharing that they had not been able to stop crying. It is wonderful to think we provided the audience with an opportunity to gain through cinema a deeper understanding of Japan's culture and history. My thanks to all who attended.



Discovering Quebec's creative industries

On May 27th, Quebec's Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie (MRIF) invited the Consular Corps to discover the province's creative industries. An informative presentation reported that the Quartier des spectacles, located in the heart of Montreal, has been operating for nearly 20 years through the partnership of more than 80 cultural, educational, and commercial organizations, with more than 40 events held there each year.

Then we were taken on a walking tour of the area, and although it was not my first visit having attended many concerts at Place des arts or the likes, I was able to better understand how the organizers, how Montrealers think about the promotion of culture and how the district came to be.

Afterwards, many representatives of enterprises and groups well-known even in Japan such as Moment Factory, MUTEK, and C2MTL gave presentations on



their respective activities, and we heard quite a few saying that they were collaborating with Japanese companies and organizations, or that they were soon going to Japan on business. I came to recognize once again the close Japan-Quebec relation that exists and evolves in this promising field. I would like to express my gratitude to the MRIF for organizing this meaningful visit, and to the local companies and organizations that took the time to join us and provide information and explanations.

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