

How is everyone faring now that spring has officially come?

Since coming here, I have on multiple occasions felt that Quebecers are very warm-hearted. This impression came not only from being on the receiving end of that kindness but also as an onlooker on the sidelines. I simply wished to write a few words to share this observation with you.

With the weather getting warmer, Japan-related events abound, but for this monthly overview, I will cover both April and May.

The Consulate General started accepting donations for the victims of the Noto Peninsula Earthquake on January 31 and already we have received kind donations from local residents, many hailing from different countries. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude. We will send the donations to the Government of Japan and the Japanese Red Cross Society, which will subsequently ensure they reach the victims of the earthquake.

While temporarily back in Japan, I traveled to Kyoto Prefecture on April 11 and, warmly received by its people, I paid courtesy visits to Governor of Kyoto Prefecture Takatoshi Nishiwaki and Kyoto Prefectural Assembly President Munehisa Ishida. With the Province of Quebec and Kyoto Prefecture having concluded partnerships of cooperation and exchange three times in the past, in 2008, 2012, and 2016, discussions covered current Quebec-Kyoto exchanges and future steps to further strengthen bilateral relations. In between meetings, I visited the Kyoto Imperial Palace which is located near the prefectural government offices and where I had not set foot in in a long time, and this proved to be a very refreshing experience.

Within the framework of the Quebec-Kyoto friendship agreement, the President of the National Assembly of Quebec, Ms. Nathalie Roy, traveled to Japan from May 13 to 18 with two other assembly members. During their visit to the beautiful city of Kyoto, in addition to discussions with President Ishida and Governor Nishiwaki, they also exchanged opinions and ideas with MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)

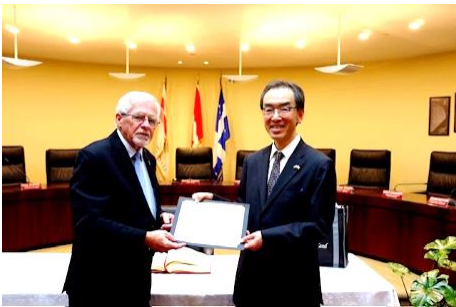


Director-General of North American Affairs Bureau Yutaka Arima. I am confident that this official visit will be conducive to the fostering of stronger relations between Japan and the Province of Quebec.

On April 20, Deputy Consul General Morimoto attended the Shihan André Gilbert's 33rd Karate Championship and gave a speech at its opening ceremony. Seeing the many Montreal karatekas, regardless of age and gender, passionately taking on the martial arts demonstrations and matches was assuredly an impressive sight.



Still within the context of karate, I visited a karate dojo in Kirkland on May 15. At Kirkland city hall, Mayor Michel Gibson and his spouse had greeted me warmly, and at the dojo, long-time karate instructor Angelo Massotti allowed me to observe an ongoing practice. Apparently, the dojo currently numbers over 120 students and even includes some two-generation parent-and-child duos, or the likes. That day, I witnessed a lively children-focused practice, feeling deeply moved by the fact that this sports which originated from Japan is being practiced here locally. I am grateful for Mayor Gibson, Mr. Massotti, and everyone else's contribution.



On April 20, the "Everyone Can Kimono" Fashion Show was held at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal (JCCCM), with Deputy Consul General Morimoto in attendance. Broad-ranging kimono fashion was presented, from authentic traditional wear to modern arrangements.



The special exhibition "Tōkaidō – Dreamscapes by Andō Hiroshige" is ongoing at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts until September 8, 2024. Its vernissage was held on April 25 with a large number of invitees joining in on the celebrations. Ando Hiroshige's "Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō" being also deeply linked to travel and tourism, the Consulate General of Japan seized the opportunity and offered guests a Japanese cuisine experience. With the theme of "Culinary journey along the Tōkaidō" in mind, the food served used ingredients representative of some of the localities along the famous road. I deeply respect MMFA Curator of Asian Art

Laura Vigo and the many other representatives of the establishment for their efforts in bringing this special exhibition to life, and hope that many will come discover these masterpieces of Japanese art.



photo credits: Sébastien Roy



The vernissage of the floral arrangement exhibition held annually by the Montreal Chapter of Ikebana International took place on May 10 at the Montreal Botanical Garden's Japanese Pavilion. Deputy Consul General Morimoto gave a speech on the occasion, while I visited the exhibition the following day, on May 11. With this year marking this long-standing event's 53rd edition, a large number of visitors appreciated the Ikebana International members' many extraordinary works of art. I was happy to realize that ikebana attracted the interest of Quebecers of all types and backgrounds, and I am grateful for the association and the Japanese Garden's efforts in sharing this piece of Japanese traditional culture.



Also taking place at the Japanese Garden was the O-hanami Picnic Under the Flowering Crabapple Trees. This annual tradition has been going strong for over 30 years and this year's edition, held on May 19, welcomed over 400 participants. They enjoyed Japanese bento lunches in the gardens under a beautifully sunny sky all the while appreciating the location's luxuriant nature. The event also featured an uplifting Japanese drum performance by Arashi Daiko and a kobudo (ancient Japanese martial arts) demonstration, which the visitors watched with great interest.

Meanwhile, inside the Japanese Pavilion, Montreal Association of Chado Urasenke Tankokai members served tea and introduced the art of the tea ceremony to countless interested visitors. I was also pleasantly surprised to discover the Botanical Garden's many bonsai trees exhibited during this season around the pavilion. I have much respect for all those who were involved in making this beautiful event held amidst soothing greenery the immense success it was.



On May 14, Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoko Kamikawa received a courtesy visit by a Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group delegation currently in Japan by invitation of the Japanese House of Representatives. The delegation included several elected officials from provinces in the Consulate General's jurisdiction: Co-Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Group and Nova Scotia Senator Stan Kutcher, Vice-Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Group and Quebec MP Angelo Iacono, Executive Committee Member of the Inter-Parliamentary Group and Nova Scotia Senator Michael L. MacDonald, and Executive Committee Member of the Inter-Parliamentary Group and Quebec MP Sébastien Lemire. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words, and I am convinced that their in-person visit allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of Japan.



On May 17 and 18, the Consulate General held in collaboration with the Japan Foundation its annual Japanese Film Festival, with this year marking its 40th edition. Screening three films very different in periods and themes, the event proved a success even surpassing previous years. One of the chosen works was Director Yasujiro Ozu's "The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice", a 1952 classic presented with French subtitles. As I have mentioned before, films carry a lot of easy-to-understand visual information and are especially attractive as a medium in the way they allow viewers to learn about a country's customs and ways of thinking through simple dialogs and gestures. As the event's organizer, I hope that everyone who attended our screenings had a most pleasant time, and if they also left the movie theater with a desire to learn more about or even to travel to Japan, then that would be the cherry on the top!

