



National Association of Japanese Canadians

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**By: Kevin Okabe**

### **Introduction**

I am very grateful to the National Association of Japanese Canadians for bringing me on as its' new Executive Director. It has been exactly four months since I assumed this position and it has been a whirlwind from the beginning.

In some ways things have come full circle for me with the NAJC. I was first employed by the NAJC almost thirty years ago as their part-time accountant, when I was in the middle of my University studies back in Winnipeg. I now return to the NAJC after retiring from a career that included 15 years of public practice with Chartered Accounting firms and 12 years working in senior management roles in the private sector.

During the past thirty years, I remained connected with either the NAJC or the local Japanese Canadian communities in Winnipeg and Calgary, so in some way, this role brings together my passion for serving the Japanese Canadian community and my experience in management and accounting. I am also grateful for the flexibility offered by this role, which allows me to balance the demands of the store/deli operations that my wife and I operate, and the work required by the NAJC.

### **Work Completed to Date**

There definitely is no shortage of things to do in this role. My first few months have primarily been focused on supporting and streamlining the administrative aspects of the NAJC, including:

- Organizing meetings of the NAJC National Executive Board, National Council, and preparing for the Annual General Meeting, in conjunction with the National Administrator and the AGM organizing Committee;
- Compiling financial reports for the organization, including audit preparation efforts relating to the 2018 fiscal year end, updating investment analytics, and supporting the budget making processes;
- Supporting the preparation of the NAJC Annual/AGM report;



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- Supporting the work of the Nominating Committee in attracting candidates, formalizing election processes, and documenting issues;
- Streamlining and enhancing current processes through the use of technology (including document sharing and synchronization and video/web conferencing); and,
- Distributing membership communications, e-news and website updates.

During the past few months, I also represented the NAJC at the Mount Robson Signage Unveiling, Consul-General (Calgary) events, and events hosted by the Asian Heritage Foundation of Southern Alberta.

As co-chair of the Asian Heritage Foundation of Southern Alberta, I also have been attending Alberta Governmental consultations as a representative of the Japanese Canadian community relating to Anti-Racism Strategy (attended Government announcement unveiling their Anti-Racism Strategy), Charitable Gaming Funding (issues faced by charitable organizations), Economic Development (business opportunities and trade between Asia and Alberta). Through the Asian Heritage Foundation, I hope to expand the exposure of the Japanese Canadian community (at least in Alberta) to key governmental institutions and officials.

### **Short Term Priorities**

For the next month or two, I will be focused on supporting the AGM/National Conference event and the transition to the new National Executive Board. Following that, I expect to focus on:

- Updating the organization's strategic plan, leveraging from the work done by the Future Directions Team, past National Executive Boards and input from the AGM and National Council;
- Enhancing the organizations' financial budgeting and reporting, with the aim of generating monthly reports and eventually real-time reports;
- Coordinating the NAJC's communication strategy, to make effective use of our website and further automating our email distribution channels; and
- Enhancing our communications strategy and plan. Communications need to be more frequent and timely, while at the same time not being overwhelming for our membership.



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### **Thank Yous!**

I would like to close by thanking the National Council member organizations and individuals for their continued support of the NAJC. Your participation, input and feedback drive our organization forward and it is this continued support and dialogue that will propel the organization forward.

The past Executive Director, Ken Noma, also deserves kudos for expanding the reach of the NAJC by helping to attract new member organizations and individuals to the NAJC, and for recruiting new volunteers to work with the organization in a variety of capacities. Many new programs and initiatives were launched under his leadership, and that fact should be acknowledged and recognized.

I would also like to thank the members of the past National Executive Board for their dedication and service. The number of hours devoted to the NAJC by NEB members is countless, and their leadership has helped expand the reach and scope of the NAJC's activities. Along that vein, the many members that work on NAJC committees and those that help advise the organization must also be appreciated, as this organization would not continue to flourish without their hard work and efforts.

Finally, the efforts of our tremendous National Administrator, Karina Uehara must be appreciated. Her capacity to handle all of the key administrative tasks for the NAJC is incredible. She is quick to complete tasks and is always on top of things, sending out friendly reminders and emails to ensure that everything stays on track. She assumed much of the administrative burden associated with our bookkeeping and financial responsibilities and always operates with a friendly, positive attitude!

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Okabe  
Executive Director