



National Association of Japanese Canadians

YOUNG LEADERS COMMITTEE REPORT

**Prepared by: Bryan Tomlinson
(Chair, Young Leaders Committee)**

OVERVIEW: the Young Leaders Committee (YLC) was created by the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) in early 2012, as has been a nation-wide coordinating body that helps facilitate the connection of emerging young Japanese Canadian (JC) leaders both locally in their communities, and nationally across Canada. Over the past six years, the YLC has overseen just as many Young Leaders Conferences, which continue to be an invaluable means of building a nation-wide network of young JC leaders working to help advance local and national goals. The NAJC continues to play a crucial role in providing the underpinning support – especially financial – for the initiative to foster a new generation of JC leaders keenly involved in the community. Coinciding with the 30th anniversary of Redress, the report below takes stock of key developments in the YLC over the period between September 2017 and September 2018, and reflects on challenges and opportunities in the future.

1. 2017/2018 Young Leaders Committee Administration

Committee Composition: Bryan Tomlinson continued his second year as YLC Chair, as ratified by the NAJC's National Executive Board (NEB) in November 2017. As of August 2018, the YLC consists of eight members, whose have been delegated roles to help facilitate the delivery of a wider range of activities and services:

- **Bryan Tomlinson** (Ottawa, Ontario) – Chair; overall coordination of YLC, including the Young Leaders Conference, liaison with the NAJC NEB, overseeing the Young Leaders Fund, and community outreach in general;
- **Alex Miki** (Winnipeg, Manitoba) – Young Leaders Conference Coordinator
- **Kiyomi Planidin** (Calgary, Alberta) – Budget
- **Chad Pickerell** (Calgary, Alberta) – Budget
- **Mana Murata** (Vancouver, British Columbia) – Young Leaders Fund co-coordinator
- **Hana Ogasawara** (Vernon, British Columbia / Gatineau, Quebec) – Young Leaders Fund co-coordinator
- **Kyla Fitzgerald** (Victoria, British Columbia) – Member at Large
- **Carolyn Nakagawa** (Vancouver, British Columbia) – Member at Large

Information Management & Key Documents: Documents and all other YLC business are shared on a Google Drive in order to facilitate transparency and access (Note: any sensitive information such as personal information is secured with access limited). As the YLC is a standing committee of the NAJC, the YLC members have familiarized themselves with the NAJC Constitution, Bylaws, and Policies &



National Association of Japanese Canadians

Procedures. These key documents are available on Google Drive for ease of access for YLC Members as they are not currently available on the NAJC website.

Monthly Meetings: The YLC has held monthly virtual meetings via Skype, allowing YLC members to provide updates on general activities in YLC Members' respective communities and to discuss JC youth-specific programming. These local updates help keep YLC members abreast of what is going in each others' communities, and allows members to share ideas, brainstorm how to address challenges, and highlight other opportunities at a national level. These monthly meetings are a cost-effective mechanism by which the YLC conducts its core business, such as discussing and passing the YLC budget, discussing Young Leaders Fund (YLF) applications, and planning for the Young Leaders Conference. Consideration is being given to moving these virtual meetings to the Zoom platform used by the NAJC NEB and some other standing committees.

Website and Social Media: Bryan was involved in the effort to solicit and hire a new webmaster to redesign the NAJC website (www.najc.ca). Over a standard procurement process, Mr. John Endo Greenaway (Vancouver) was hired to create a refreshed and user-friendly website, and the Young Leaders were given a page on this new site at <http://najc.ca/committees/young-leaders-committee/>. The YLC also maintains a Facebook page has a modest following with 191 followers (a 25% increase from 153 followers in August 2017), and remains a major means of disseminating information, especially about events. The YLC Twitter account is currently has 176 followers (a 9% increase from 161 followers in August 2017), and is an additional means of boosting online content created by the YLC. Both accounts have been maintained by the YLC chair, but more content could be created should the accounts be managed by other committee members in the future.

2. Overview of Key Activities in 2017/2018

2017 Young Leaders Conference: Following the precedent set by the 2016 Japanese Canadian Young Leaders Conference (JCYLC) in Calgary, the 2017 JCYLC was "embedded" in the NAJC's AGM and Conference held in Ottawa, and whose theme focused on the "Past, Present and Future" and the YLC were invited to organized a panel for the "future" component of the theme. The 2017 JCYLC was attended by 30 young leaders from across Canada, with representatives from: 3 from Calgary, AB; 1 from Charlottetown, PEI; 1 from Edmonton, AB; 1 from Gatineau, QC; 1 from Hamilton, ON; 1 from Kamloops, BC; 1 from Lethbridge, AB; 9 from Ottawa, ON; 7 from Toronto, ON; 1 from Vancouver, BC; 1 from Victoria, BC; 3 from Winnipeg, MB. Four attendees (from Vancouver, Lethbridge, Charlottetown and Victoria) received subsidies from the YLC to facilitate their attendance. A number of local associations – including Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton – sponsored young leaders to attend the conference.



National Association of Japanese Canadians

The YLC worked closely with the Ottawa Japanese Community Association (OJCA) to finalize the conference program. The Young Leaders-hosted component of the program featured an inter-generational communication workshop, facilitated by renowned communications coach Mr. Garry Watanabe. The workshop focused on how participants can effectively communicate ideas, and be more receptive to different points of view. The NAJC Conference was closed with remarks by Ms. Alex Miki, highlighting her lessons learned from the conference as a young leader, and can be found as an annex in this report (*please see Annex A*). Some of the key outcomes the young leaders aimed to facilitate included:

- Building a nation-wide network of young Nikkei people (ages 18-35) through face-to-face interactions, sustained thereafter through virtual networks;
- Fostering collaboration and community building across different JC generations;
- Broadening an understanding of Nikkei heritage, history and culture;
- Reaching out to other minority groups to better understand common issues across our respective communities; and
- Advocating to increase the number of young leaders on local JC community boards.

Young Leaders Fund (YLF) 2017-2018 Fiscal Year: The 2017-18 fiscal year saw the first activation of the YLF. Out of five applications received in spring 2017, three were selected that merit funding (split equally with \$1,000 each). All applicants were deemed to be in good standing with the NAJC, and their local NAJC organizations, based on strong recommendation letters received. These sums (\$1,000) went towards the specific stand-alone projects proposed. The NEB unanimously passed the YLC's recommendation.

However, due to phasing of the assessment process, securing NEB approval, and the drafting of agreements, one recipient ended up declining. In a decision supported by the NEB, the funding from that project was then diverted towards Ms. Kayla Isomura's "[Suitcase Project](#)", bringing her project funding up to \$2000. All projects that were funded had the first half of funds (\$500) disbursed once they were approved, and the second remaining half was disbursed once the projects were completed and final reports were received in mid-March 2018 (in advance of the end of fiscal year) and reviewed by the YLF Committee.

Media received from these projects has yet to be published on the NAJC website, and the YLC Chair recommends these projects be shared on both the website and social media in the future. Of particular note, Ms. Kayla Isomura's project received nation-wide media attention, including articles in the [CBC](#), Vancouver-based media ([Georgia Straight](#); [BurnabyNow](#)) and other media ([Ricepaper Magazine](#)), to name a few highlights. The YLC and NAJC should continue to pursue supporting young leader led initiatives such as Ms. Isomura's, given their artistic merits, thought-provoking discussions on heritage and identity, and making JC history generally more accessible to a wider audience across Canada and abroad.



National Association of Japanese Canadians

YLF 2018-2019 Fiscal Year: The 2018-19 fiscal year marks the second iteration of the YLF. Out of four applications received, three were deemed to merit funding, given their themes and focus. All projects below have had their first tranche of funds disbursed:

- **“Young Japanese Canadians Language Exchange” (\$200) Mr. Davin SHIKAZE (Richmond, BC):** This project facilitates the meeting of JC youth - Nikkei and recent immigrants - for Japanese language practice. The cost is mostly for annual “Meetup” membership (\$155.38) with remainder for refreshments. A “Meetup” group is an online community comprised of members who can choose to join groups with common interests, such as sports, language, arts, etc. It is free to sign up as a member, however there is a monthly cost to start and maintain a “Meetup” group. Currently, there are a couple of Japanese language-themed “Meetup” groups, however none that target Young JCs specifically.
- **“Kansha: An exploration of Cultural Appreciation Through Dramatic Process” (\$1,400) Ms. Hanna Mariko BELL (Victoria, BC):** This Project involves a theatre play about cultural appreciation - focused on the history of the kimono, and how to respectfully appreciate another culture. The proposed project is a devised theatre play about cultural appreciation with a focus on Japanese culture, specifically the history of the kimono. The play's title is *Kansha*, which means appreciation in Japanese. The central research question at the heart of the performance will be: "How do we respectfully appreciate another culture?" This performance will take place as a part of Intrepid Theatre's YOU Show series on November 2 and 3, 2018. The Japanese community will be invited to the performance.
- **“Tea Ceremony for the Current Canada” (\$1400) Mr. Calder TSUYUKI TOMLINSON (Vancouver, BC):** This project will involve constructing a portable tea hut (*chashitsu*) adapted to a 21st century Canadian context (Japanese, European and indigenous influences) - procuring tea utensils and woodworking tools in Japan - and bring chashitsu to Montreal (from Vancouver) and across Canada in future. With Calder’s own JC heritage in mind, this entails a European influence, as well as an engagement with Indigenous practices (particularly as they pertain to a relationship with land). Doing so involves moving away from the structured tradition of the Urasenke school’s style of tea towards a more experimental and contemporary – and thus independent – practice. As such, this project will be as much an exploration of Calder’s own tea practice, as it would be a sharing of a complete concept to guests.

[3. YLC RESPONSES TO FUTURE DIRECTIONS TEAM QUESTIONS](#)



National Association of Japanese Canadians

As part of the Future Directions Team (FDT) effort to collect more information from key constituencies in the NAJC and JC community, the YLC was invited to provide feedback on specific questions related to young people in the community, given the pivotal role we will play in the context of the future of the NAJC. Full responses to the questions can be found in the adjoining annex (*please see Annex B*). Below are the questions and a bullet capturing the YLC response.

1. ***How do you engage with your local NAJC organization?*** YLC members engage their local NAJC organizations through a wide range of activities and roles, including help with events, to sitting on boards; others have helped organize NAJC AGMs/Conferences.
2. ***How do you connect with other young leaders on a local and national level?*** Locally, YLs have held youth-specific social events and activities. Nationally, the NAJC conferences have catalyzed many of the connections between young JC leaders; these in-person conferences allow YLs to not only maintain national connections, but also continue working actively with people in their own cities whom they wouldn't have otherwise met, helping build the community among a new generation of leaders.
3. ***If you have attended an NAJC AGM and Conference, what has this enabled you to contribute to your community upon return?*** Participation in the NAJC AGM and Conferences has resulted in positive outcomes for local engagement. For the most part, this galvanized a number of former participants to get more involved in their location communities upon returning home. Annex B has an overview of specific cases.
4. ***What kind of support and relationship do you value and what would you like to see from the NAJC?*** We support and encourage both local organizations and the NAJC to engage in youth *empowerment*, not just youth engagement. The YLs value a mutual relationship where the NAJC offers support (e.g. financial, publicity, promotions, networking, and contacts) for YL-driven projects and goals. Generally, the JCYLCs are seen as a really valuable foundation for young leaders to connect and build their own independent initiatives, while linking back to wider NAJC priorities.
5. ***What kind of support and relationship do you receive and what would you like to see from your local organization?*** Generally speaking, helpful and meaningful support from local organizations would take the form of empowering youth to have a real share in decision-making, and/or being given support or opportunities to run YL-led initiatives and ideas. The idea of having a regionally-focused platform for centers to communicate more openly can help smaller centers to exchange ideas and strategies.



National Association of Japanese Canadians

6. **How should the NAJC support new immigrants and other kinds of YLs?**

Diversity within the NAJC is an issue that seems to be under-addressed. Among young people, there seems to be a socio-economic barrier as most conference attendees in our generation are university students or professionals. Other groups that may need more support to have an active voice in the NAJC include women, new immigrants, and LGBTQ+ people. Being aware of different kinds of under-representation, the barriers they face to participating, and the broader societal challenges these groups might face is the first step towards thinking about how to lessen the barriers present for diverse leaders. The NAJC should be conscious of the steep learning curve present for anyone becoming active in the organization for the first time and take measures to be as open and explicit as possible about expectations and standard procedures.

On the topic of the Young Leaders Fund (YLF) being adjudicated along with the Community Development Fund, being assigned to the Endowment Fund Committee, the YLC members prefer that the YLC continue to evaluate applicants for the YLF. The YLF application was created not just to fund projects led by youth, but also to empower youth on the YLC to make decisions regarding management of the fund. (please see Annex B, question 7 for details on the process how the YLF is adjudicated).

4. YLC Strategic Discussion

Thinking about challenges and opportunities for the YLs: In May 2018, YLC members were asked to think about the top two or three things they want to get out of their time with the YLC. Bryan raised these with the new NAJC Executive Director, Mr. Kevin Okabe, in May. They were later discussed when Kevin Okabe was introduced to the YLC members in August 2018.

YLC members shared thoughts on informal strategic plan. Having the ED sit in on a meeting with the YLC members in August 2018 was timely, as it is essential to build rapport and a relationship in order for YL voices to be well-represented in the NAJC. Some of the key priorities include the following:

- A major challenge is how to **maintain the momentum generated at the Conferences**. Virtual networks tend to lose followers as the momentum is lost. Regional conferences or smaller-scale “get-togethers” may be a good mechanism in the future. On a more ambitious note, a youth trip to Japan would also be a great opportunity to examine our roots first-hand; alternatively a trip to Japanese-American communities could be educational to see how other Japanese-ancestry communities are developing/functioning.
- Advancing a **national mentorship network** – or possibly a “meet the leader” speakers series using the online zoom platform – could be good ways of keeping YLs engaged once a conference is over.



National Association of Japanese Canadians

- Forwarding and championing the idea of **empowering youth**, not just engaging them is important to avoid “tokenization” of youth in the NAJC context. The integrated nature of the conferences in the past few years is a step in the right direction. But it will take more effort to get young people integrated in the NAJC as a whole, and part of decision-making by default, not just as “tokens”.
- Addressing the steep learning curve for those joining the NAJC, and making the NAJC and its operation more transparent could help **address structural issues** and break down some of the barriers for young people getting involved.
- Overall hope that different generations can work together, and work across different committees in the NAJC. This requires ongoing networking in order to maintain these links going forward, and to promote and maintain a **diversity of perspectives** would be great to be an NAJC priority.
- Finally, **providing a voice for smaller communities** (esp. the interior of BC) a lot of the smaller centres don’t have a lot of say in NAJC affairs. In this sense, there could be more outreach by the NAJC to smaller communities that could be but aren’t NAJC members (e.g. Kelowna). Others questioned why Montreal is not part of the NAJC, and that this gap should be addressed.

5. Budgetary Matters

2018/2019 Budget: The YLC's total projected expenses for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018/2019 are \$8,650, with \$6,250 coming from the NAJC. The difference of \$2,400 covers conference costs, namely subsidies for YL participation, and is a shortfall that could be covered by donations, fundraising, and other alternative sources of income. Given the absence of fundraising this year, YLC members were encouraged to reach out to their local associations to solicit additional financial support for the participation of YLs at the 2018 Conference.

This year’s budget is reduced from \$9,650 in FY 2017/2018, the \$1000 difference being the elimination of material costs, given the Young Leaders Conferences have been “embedded” in the NAJC AGM / Conferences. The current FY 2018/2019 budget includes \$3,250 from the NAJC (down from \$5,250) for the 2018 Young Leaders Conference, and a sustained \$3,000 for the Young Leaders Fund.

Further to the NEB’s call for revised prospective budgets from all NAJC Standing Committees for the 2018-19 fiscal year, and further to the former Past President’s suggested revisions, the YLC prepared a revised budget that is reduced from the FY2017/18 budget. The current budget that was submitted is available on Google Drive:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1qKqW4AdPyhAz79j9R40DQRdy6fkzmfIXstq7jHGoT7o/edit?usp=sharing>



National Association of Japanese Canadians

Rationale for Cost Reductions: Regarding cost reductions, in keeping with precedents set in FY 2016/2017 and FY 2017/2018, the YLC is not having a standalone conference in 2018, nor will there be a standalone conference in 2019. The YLC will have a youth-specific component following the 2018 NAJC AGM/Conference in Winnipeg; by using the Japanese Cultural Association of Manitoba (JCAM) center in Winnipeg, the YLC will not therefore require venue rental costs.

As aforementioned, additional funding of roughly \$2,400 (recommended sum; not binding to fundraise this much) has been sought through fundraising via grants, sponsorship, community fundraising, and JCAM helping supplant the cost associated with subsidizing the participation of 10 youth attendees. The subsidy for YLC members from across Canada is at \$2000 in order to facilitate participation of Committee members who have helped plan and develop content for the conference. In 2018, however, only five YLC members are able to attend, and costs are further reduced due to certain members receiving additional funding to cover their costs.

Remaining Concerns: The reduced budget reflects the removal of a subsidy for members of the Young Leaders Conference and reductions in the operational costs, in keeping with the situation for other NAJC Committees. Though the budget has been reduced, YLC Members remain concerned that the time and effort that could otherwise go towards tangible work for the NAJC is now going towards fundraising. Subsidies are an essential part of the YLC's budget, as YLC members – as students, young professionals with student debt, or other precarious financial situations – are often not in a position to pay out of pocket to travel to and attend NAJC Conferences.

The YLC seeks to maintain the Young Leaders Fund (YLF). No external funds will be sought for this, as it would be challenging to get sponsorship or grants for this NAJC fund. As this will be the third year running the YLF, the NAJC YLC aims for no budget surpluses, based on proactive promotion of the YLF, and early vetting of projects.

Constructive Cost Reduction Measures: In light of the discussions on the possibility of NAJC Conferences being discontinued on an annual basis, and how this could affect YLC activities, some YLC members have suggested exploring alternatives to nation-wide conferences such as through regional or local 'get-togethers'. Regardless of what form these opportunities to convene entail, the general feeling is that there is a continued importance for in-person meeting on a regular basis, as this remains *the* most effective means of building our community. Though the concrete results may not be immediately evident, the long-term pay-off is that a new generation of young leaders is beginning to coalesce and will help sustain the NAJC going forward.

6. Other Issues



National Association of Japanese Canadians

Efforts to Commemorate the Nanjing Massacre: Ranging from a Private Member's Bill ("Bill 79") presented in December 2016 in the Ontario Legislature, to the more recent petition launched by Vancouver NDP MP Jenny Kwan, the JC community has faced increasing internal and external pressure to take a stance on this sensitive matter. A number of past and present YLC members have voiced strong concern over the NAJC's stance on this controversial matter, and this signifies the wide range of opinions within the JC community and NAJC. The YLC Chair has continued to make specific calls for more open communication of sensitive issues amongst the NAJC NEB, and is encouraged that there has been a gradual trend towards more respectful discussion on this matter. Given the wide range of perspectives, and the number of sensitivities it touches upon, it remains yet to be seen how the NAJC and wider JC community ultimately addresses this issue.

Drafted: Bryan Tomlinson (YLC Chair)

Reviewed: YLC Members

Date: 31 August 2018



National Association of Japanese Canadians

ANNEX A: SUMMARY OF JCYLC 2017 22-24 September 2017, prepared by Ms. Alexandra Miki

Saturday September 23rd

Young Leaders Breakfast Breakout Session

- What do young leaders hope to get out of the conference?
 - To build and rebuild friendships: A network of community and support in order to feel connected to one another and have organic relationships.
 - To develop a vision of who we are as a community and a sense of purpose
- What are current challenges for young leaders?
 - There is a current feeling of tension between the older and younger generations where the youth feel as if their voices are not being heard or are muffled.
 - To be able to build an inclusive community: consisting of Japanese Canadians, new immigrants, and non-Japanese. How do we maintain a community when we are spread out across the country?
 - There is an external North American view on what our identity should be based on stereotypes. There is a challenge to define what it means to be Japanese Canadian for ourselves and to explore the differences between the Japanese culture and the Japanese Canadian culture.
- What is the future direction for the NAJC regarding young leaders?
 - There is a desire to work with the NAJC and to integrate young leaders into their conference and have face to face conversations
 - Questions regarding how young leaders fit in with the NAJC:
 - What is our value to the organization?
 - Does the NAJC want youth involvement?
 - What role would young leaders play in the NAJC?
- A need for mutual respect when bringing forward new ideas.
- A fear that the organization will feel as if young leaders want to take over
- Would new changes to the NAJC's NEB make it more difficult for youth to become involved? How would changes impact youth conferences in the future?



National Association of Japanese Canadians

NAJC AGM: Dr. John Price

Dr. John Price from the University of Victoria researching how the incarceration of Japanese Canadians happened and the roles that racism and the government played. He highlighted three points from his research:

- There was a campaign that was planned and organized to influence the idea of internment.
 - There was widespread resistance to the incarceration of JCs throughout the country with diverse attitudes towards JCs.
 - Lots of letters of support for JCs
- The B.C. government followed the campaign to incarcerate JCs.
 - The provincial government encouraged the uprooting of JCs and applied pressure to the federal government for mass uprooting.
- The B.C. government implemented discrimination in order to continue and enforce the campaign and has yet to acknowledge its role in the internment of JCs.
- B.C. government withheld education for JCs
- Prevented JCs to return to B.C. (only 30% eventually returned)
- Used the internment as motivation for political campaigns

Possible external motivation to incarcerated Japanese Canadians even before the war. Registration of Japanese Canadians began before Pearl Harbor.

Despite how much time has passed since the internment, it is never too late to get the acknowledgement from the B.C government for its role it played in pressuring the Federal Government to uproot and intern Japanese Canadians. There is also an ongoing need for current education systems to teach about the history of Japanese Canadians.

NAJC AGM: Future Directions Group Discussions

Small groups were created for roundtable discussion on five different topics/ideas proposed by the Future Directions Team:

- Creation of the "Special Advisor for New Immigrants"
 - There is a need for the NAJC to shift their focus in order to serve new Japanese immigrants
- Have regional conference meetings



National Association of Japanese Canadians

- All meeting minutes from local chapters or regional conference meetings should be available online
- All chapters should have access to local projects so that local chapters can help each other's project
- Restructuring of the NEB from 10 to 6 members
 - Proposing to no longer have specific committees such as Heritage, Arts, Culture, and Young Leaders but to have special advisors instead
 - Special advisors would be on a 1 year term and would create their own working groups. Proposed special advisors would be:
 - ACE (Arts, Culture and Education) Heritage
 - Emerging Leaders
 - There would be no specific budget for these advisors but can present proposals for funding
 - Emerging leaders would include anyone who wanted to be a leader i.e. New immigrants/families, young leaders, retirees, women, etc.
 - Worries were expressed that having one advisor to encompass such a broad spectrum of different areas would result in a concentration of power and a dilution of groups such as young leaders whose voices could get muffled further
 - Funding to projects will be dealt out based on priority determined by the NEB
 - The staff on the NEB should be reviewed in terms of what their specific roles are
 - A call for a review in the bylaws that state that 'members of the NEB must be of Japanese descent'
- AGM and conferences to be held every 3-4 years instead of annually
 - If conferences are held every 3 years, there will be a loss of the one on one conversations. Suggested possibly every 2 years instead
 - To reduce the financial burden of annual conferences, could reach out for sponsorship in order to create even larger conferences. Suggested to appoint someone on the board who would look after sponsorships
- Needs to be more relevancy and enticement. Most local chapters don't have a clear sense of what the NAJC is.



National Association of Japanese Canadians

- Restructuring of membership
 - Discussion on what the value of membership is: What do members get and is it enough.
 - If conferences are only once every 2 years, will that be enough for members.
 - How do you attract new members (ex. Youth) and how to keep current members

NAJC Conference: 'The Past' Panel

Panelists discussed finding a new home: Postwar relocation to Eastern Canada, and Japan

- Dr. Henry Shibata's family was given the option to move East in Canada or go to Japan. His family chose to go back to their home in Hiroshima in hopes of helping survivors of the bombings.
- There was a feeling that the issei lost a lot in terms of property, possessions, sense of identity, however that the nisei gained a Canadian culture.
- Some panelists consider both Canada and Japan to be their home
- Issei wouldn't mention the internment to their children and although children faced racism at school, there was a reluctance to tell parents due to a fear that they were the ones doing something wrong.
- Some panelists stayed in Canada after the war and families were often given jobs by Jewish families in the neighbourhood

NAJC Conference: 'The Present' Panel

Panelists discussed being Japanese and Canadian, each panelist focused on topics such as National identity, Food, Family, Language and Religion:

General Steven Moritsugu is the highest ranked Japanese Canadian in the Armed Forces. Serves the Canadian Armed forces despite being of Japanese descent and does not feel anyone should receive special treatment nor should they expect special treatment for being different.

Caroline Ishii is a chef and author who uses food as an interactive tool to bring people together. One project got 100 people to bring 100 ingredients which she turned into a curry which was then shared among the participants. Caroline focuses on vegan food so that she can make something that everyone can enjoy. In group discussions, many families still eat Japanese comfort food and many prepare Japanese food at home

Lisa Ann Meawasige-Kertesz identified the most with her indigenous roots until she discovered her Japanese family. Still feels somewhat disconnected to her identity.



National Association of Japanese Canadians

Sumi Nakamura is an interpreter who believes language is a good tool to bring people together and aid in communication. The Japanese language is not essential for identity but language does help in understanding and appreciating the culture

Yoshimichi Ouchi is a minister at the Buddhist temple and is a 25th generation minister in his family. The Buddhist temple also has Odori and community events to bring people together. Encourages anyone to come to the temple regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

Sunday September 24th

NAJC Conference: 'The Future'

Garry Watanabe facilitated a workshop hosted by the Young Leaders titled "collaborative tools for difficult conversations".

Key points from the workshop include:

- Clarity is an important tool in order to ensure that there is a mutual vision
- Talked about different motivations for change: 'Push and Pull'. Motivations can come from injustices and betrayal such as the push for redress. Can also come from emotions and inspiration.
- The technology and experience doesn't necessarily have to change but the way in which a story is told or conveyed can be altered in order to elicit an emotion.
- When communicating, should use 'yes, and' to always add ideas without subtracting.
- Should build off of the 'third story' (not your story 1st or their story 2nd) in order to build on a mutual purpose
- It's easier to refute and reject than to add value
- Always take a step back and make sure you are being clear and everyone is on the same page
- Collaboration requires listening, accepting contributions and to build off of one another

NAJC Conference: Reflections from Ottawa

Alex Miki provided remarks on behalf of the Young Leaders (YL) and their perspectives of the conference and the future of

JC youth:



National Association of Japanese Canadians

Throughout the conference, the YLs from across Canada came together and shared overall thoughts about what they wanted to get out of the conference. Three key challenges and concerns were brought up among the YLs:

- **Individual identity.** We come from varying backgrounds and most of us are only half or even a quarter Japanese, where few know the Japanese language which makes preserving traditions a challenge. Young Japanese Canadians today face a different set of challenges than previous generations; growing up after the internment and post-redress. In North America, being Japanese is considered "cool", becoming somewhat of a fad, and media puts more pressure on defining who we are based on stereotypes. Many young leaders over the weekend expressed their concern over the challenge of trying to define our identity for ourselves instead of being told what it means to be Japanese Canadian.
- **Intra-relationships between each other and other JC youth.** One of the most important points that came up throughout the conference was the need to create a network of young Japanese Canadians and to most importantly, create lasting friendships in order to be connected and support one another. Growing up, there was a sense that there was only a small group of young JC in your city, without knowing that there were so many others around the country. Having the opportunity to attend conferences like these and be able to meet others just like yourself is so important in order to maintain, and grow the future community. A major challenge is that the young leaders today are spread out across the country and need a way to connect face to face and be able to sustain these relationships when in their respective cities. There is also a need to get new young leaders involved and to keep them interested. Overall, young leaders need a safe space where they can share ideas, learn from each other and build new friendships with one another.
- **Inter-relationships between YL and other groups.** As we build relationships between each other, there is also a challenge to build connections between the older generations as well as the NAJC organization. Learning from the experience and knowledge from the older generation is an important piece in order to pass down and continue traditions. In addition, many questions were raised about the future of young Japanese Canadians and the NAJC. What are the NAJC's expectations of YL and where do we fit in with the organization? What is our value to the NAJC and what is the value of the NAJC to us? Young leaders expressed their desire to be more involved with the community and to be able to bring new ideas towards the organization but feel like their voices become muffled or diluted. We do not want to just be observers but to be active participants who receive mutual respect and are taken seriously. However, there is a growing fear that the older generation or the organization will feel like we are trying to take over when in reality we just want to help and work together to create a future for everyone.

In conclusion, the Japanese Canadian Young Leaders want to be more involved in their local communities while building connections with each other and across the country. Conferences which bring young JCs together face to face to revisit with old friends as well as to build new friendships are essential and the most effective way in order to grow the community. YLs were encouraged to go back to their local chapters and listen to youth groups and offer help in any way they can. It is so important to listen and support



National Association of Japanese Canadians

new ideas in order to bridge the gap between the old and new generations to create an exciting connected future.

Young Leaders Check-ins and group discussions

The Young Leaders (YLS) gathered in the afternoon to check-in and to get a grasp on how everyone was feeling heading into the end of the conference. YLS had the opportunity to raise any concerns or topics they wanted to discuss and eventually broke off into small group discussions. We reconvened and shared discussions with the rest of the group.

Check-ins

- Emotions varied near the end of the conference. New participants generally felt overwhelmed at the complexity and tension between the young leaders and the NAJC.
- For YL who had attended previous conferences, there was a somewhat 'bleak' feeling that not much progress was made between conferences and that there is a lot of excitement after conferences, but that it dwindles as the year goes on. Therefore, there is the sense that conferences begin in a similar way with the same questions without yielding many answers.
- Some wanted more concrete answers and ideas to bring back to their respective communities to continue the momentum obtained at the conference

Small Group Discussions

- Community involvement: what will encourage new young JCs to get involved in their community? There is a challenge of organizing events and having people come to the events but not getting them to stay and help organize the next event.
- Nationality/identity: How strongly do people identify with their Japanese heritage and how do we form a community which is inclusive to everyone? Our identities are complex and diverse and does that need to be defined or labelled?
- Culture: There tends to be an exclusion of the newer culture from Japan. Needs to be more involvement with new immigrants and incorporate new cultures (differences between Japanese and Japanese Canadian culture). Also, a need to work with other minorities and communities to build healthy relationships
- Education: A need for educational mentorship. Other JC in similar fields to be mentors for the younger generations in order to provide advice in the professional world.

Proposed events/ideas

Locally:

- food lessons which include both older and younger generations



National Association of Japanese Canadians

- Tea ceremonies/breakfasts/lunches
- Movie nights

Nationally:

- Short term goal: Regional conferences within the year (prior to JCYLC in Winnipeg 2018) to discuss and create a concrete proposal of our vision, goals, identity, challenges etc. Three regions could be Western (Vancouver), Central (Calgary) and Eastern (Toronto), each would have a meeting to discuss and answer some of the questions/concerns raised throughout this conference. These discussions could be used as a platform to get new young JCs involved and the culmination of these reports could be presented at the next JCYLC.
- Long term goal: Possible future trip to Japan?



National Association of Japanese Canadians

ANNEX B: NAJC FUTURE DIRECTIONS TEAM SURVEY **Questions Exclusively for the NAJC Young Leaders Committee** **Members** Spring 2018

QUESTIONS:

1. *How do you engage with your local NAJC organization?*

- YLC members engage with their local NAJC organizations (members or affiliates) through a wide range of activities
- The majority of YLC members volunteer at local events throughout the year, helping out where needed (they often have family members who are engaged in leadership in local organizations)
- In other cases, YLC members are on the executive boards of their local NAJC organizations, helping with leadership on a range of local issues, budgetary and resource considerations, and helping engage with a younger generation.
- Others have helped organize and plan the NAJC AGM / Conferences that were hosted in their local communities (Calgary, Ottawa and Winnipeg). This is the case for former members of the YLC from Vancouver.
- In Vancouver, there has been less engagement with the JCCA (mostly on event planning), and more with Nikkei National Museum as emerging professionals in the arts and culture sector. The NNM has also hosted events at the museum which young leaders have helped with. YLs have also helped the Vancouver JCCA with events they have hosted at the Nikkei Centre.

2. *How do you connect with other young leaders on a local and national level? (Include method, motivation, and result/activity)?*

- There are a variety of mechanisms for YLC members to connect with other YLs at the local and national levels.
- Locally, they have occasionally held youth-specific social events and activities, including casual social meetups, either closed among friends or open to newcomers, along with group planning sessions. In Winnipeg, they have held occasional Halloween and back to school parties. Calgary has had youth-specific movie nights. Vancouver's Kikiai Collaborative has engaged youth in the community through occasional dinners. Toronto YLs have organized a youth-specific booth at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre's annual matsuri in the past, engaging youth in the organizing process, but also at the event itself. Ottawa has also held informal joint meals to try and reach out to young people in the community.
- Nationally, on the NAJC YLC which meets via Skype monthly, but these meetings are closed to the YLC itself. Otherwise, the NAJC conferences, and specifically the Young Leaders Conferences have catalyzed many of the connections between young JC leaders. Otherwise, there is a Slack group chat (online planning/productivity



National Association of Japanese Canadians

platform) to share ideas and sometimes nationally a skype session (ex. Poetry readings, and general check-ins)

- The face-to-face YL Conferences have allowed YLs to not only to maintain national connections (via Skype, Slack, and email), but also continue working actively with (and maintaining friendships with) people in their own cities whom they wouldn't have otherwise met.
- The national conferences also enabled creation of local groups in Vancouver and Toronto. They also helped galvanize connections in Calgary, Winnipeg and Ottawa.
- Others who have not attended a conference have benefitted from the "trickle-down effect" of others' attendance, with people in Vancouver and Toronto reaching out to non-participants and introducing these YLs to others across the country who they met at conferences.

3. ***If you have attended an NAJC AGM and Conference, what has this enabled you to contribute to your community upon return?***

- Overall, YL participation in the NAJC AGM and Conferences has resulted in a variety of positive outcomes for local engagement. For the most part, this galvanized a number of former participants to get more involved in their location communities upon returning. Additionally, local organizations that hosted AGM/Conferences were able to maintain a degree of momentum after the conferences, and formed local young leader specific groups (esp. in Vancouver and Toronto).
- In many cases, YLC members directly credit the conferences for giving them access to a nationwide network of young JCs they would not otherwise have met. This also led to the formation of local young JC groups which plan their own activities and are still growing as independent organizations.
- In Winnipeg, following the organization of the standalone JCYLC in 2015, one YLC member was connected to YL on a national level and was encouraged to join the YLC within the next year. This experience opened eyes regarding new perspectives on the current issues facing YL and the NAJC.
- In Ottawa, one YLC member participated in the 2014 Vancouver JCYLC and was prompted to get more involved in the Ottawa local community thereafter, becoming a board member of the Ottawa Japanese Community Association, focusing on advocating youth perspectives.
- Participation in the conferences have also helped promote awareness of youth-focused opportunities such as the Young Leaders Fund, various scholarships that the NAJC is affiliated with, and other leadership opportunities.
- Note: the 2014 and 2015 JCYLCs in Vancouver and Winnipeg were standalone events that were very important in galvanizing a national network and community of young leaders. In 2016 and 2017, the JCYLCs were embedded within the Calgary and Ottawa conferences, and helped foster higher degrees of intergenerational interactions.
- The JCYLC that was heralded as a watershed by many young leaders and former participants was the 2014 Vancouver conference. Though it was held in parallel with



National Association of Japanese Canadians

the NAJC's AGM/Conference, the standalone nature of the conference was cited as a major factor for this.

- It has been invaluable for YLs to have dedicated time and space for face-to-face meetings to engage in wider discussions about key issues we face nation-wide. This has helped us grow and realize key commonalities in the key challenges and opportunities we have in our respective communities.

4. ***What kind of support and relationship do you value and what would you like to see from the NAJC?***

- We support and encourage both local organizations and the NAJC to engage in youth **empowerment**, not just youth engagement (i.e. just having token representation of youth, but not enabling young leaders opportunities to lead).
- In this regard, YLC members note that they value a mutual relationship where the NAJC offers support (e.g. financial, publicity, promotions, networking, and contacts) for YL-driven projects and goals.
- The YL could better leverage these areas of support through better articulating national-level goals for the short and long term.
- Support from current leadership is key, and there has been a very challenging dynamic in the past. YLC members believe there is a great deal of future potential in this relationship, and it would be great to see more communication between the YLs (not just the YLC) and the NAJC.
- One possible way forward is to facilitate a nationwide communication platform, via use of the ZOOM. Another possibility is to promote opportunities for in-person meetings where YLs have the space to connect and imagine potential for many different ways of working together.
- Generally, the JCYLCs are seen as a really valuable foundation for young leaders to connect and build their own independent initiatives, while linking back to wider NAJC priorities.

5. ***What kind of support and relationship do you receive and what would you like to see from your local organization?***

- There are a wide variety of opportunities in local communities, but we note that this survey does not capture the views of underrepresented communities (esp. rural communities in BC, Ontario, and the Prairies), and there may well be large support gaps.
- Generally speaking, helpful and meaningful support from local organizations would take the form of empowering youth to have a real share in decision-making, and/or being given support or opportunities to run YL-led initiatives and ideas.
- Sometimes this is as simple as arranging for a space (physical space or timeslot) in a larger community event that young people can do what they like with, or including young people in invitations to community events and consultations. In this regard, the Ottawa AGM/Conference has set an important precedent in allowing YLs to directly voice our hopes, concerns and ideas to a wider audience.



National Association of Japanese Canadians

- Another potential option could be the development of a platform for centers to communicate more openly in order for some of the smaller centers to exchange ideas and strategies, perhaps on a regional basis.
- Space to host our own meetings and events in is also nice when it can be provided. We do not want to be invited into a group or meeting simply to be a token presence whose ideas are not listened to. In this sense, we support and encourage both local organizations and the NAJC to engage in youth **empowerment**, not just youth engagement.
- Some examples of tangible local support:
 - In Winnipeg, there is a small budget for youth type events from their local organization to host parties at the local centre in order to bring youth together. It would be great to organize more social events, even just to go out for dinner or coffee to be able to build relationships. Note: there isn't currently a formal YL group in Winnipeg.
 - In Ottawa, the local OJCA has helped enable participation in past conferences (both NAJC AGM/Conferences and JCYLCs) by providing subsidies for participation. Toronto, Edmonton and Winnipeg have also provided funding for two YLs to attend the 2017 AGM/Conference. More could be done to encourage NAJC member organizations to help make it possible for YL participation, alleviating budgetary pressures on the YLC.
 - Ottawa currently has a cultural centre that is far from the city centre, making youth participation difficult, especially for those who don't have their own vehicles. They are exploring novel approaches to facilitating more participation, including an uber-sharing subsidy scheme (i.e. uber costs will be subsidized if two or more people share one to get to the centre). This could be a means of helping overcome barriers to YL participation in local events.
- Note: Opportunities pertaining to youth involvement within the Okanagan centers in BC are relatively non-existent. Most events located within smaller communities are targeted at the broader community and are typically events which have been held consistently for a large number of years.

6. ***How should the NAJC support new immigrants and other kinds of young leaders?***

- Diversity within the NAJC is an issue that seems to be under-addressed. Among young people, there seems to be a socio-economic barrier as most conference attendees in our generation are university students or professionals.
- Other groups that may need more support to have an active voice in the NAJC include women, new immigrants, and LGBTQ+ people. Being aware of different kinds of under-representation, the barriers they face to participating, and the broader societal challenges these groups might face is the first step towards thinking about how to lessen the barriers present for diverse leaders.
- The NAJC should be conscious of the steep learning curve present for anyone becoming active in the organization for the first time and take measures to be as open and explicit as possible about expectations and standard procedures.



National Association of Japanese Canadians

- Having clear contact people for different kinds of questions, or even a one-to-one mentor system for anyone new to the organization with an open line of communication could make the organization more welcoming.
- The NAJC could provide opportunities for new people to get involved in existing projects AND support to start their own projects. In this sense, there is a need for clear and open communication about these opportunities and any attached expectations (while keeping things as unrestricted as possible).

7. *It is being proposed that the Endowment Fund Committee adjudicate the Endowment Funds, the Community Development Fund, and the Young Leaders Fund to ensure consistency of decision-making of all applications for NAJC funds and accountability in how those funds are being utilized.*

Do you support the adjudication of the Young Leaders Fund, along with the Community Development Fund, being assigned to the Endowment Fund Committee?

If yes, how can the Young Leaders Council continue to have a voice in how the fund is used?

- Though it takes away a key area of work for the YLC, there may be a potential efficiency gain with this new arrangement.
- If this change is to occur, it should occur alongside a specific quota of YL representatives being added to the Endowment Fund Committee (EFC) and/or working alongside the EFC to make decisions on YLF applications.
- For example, there should be two YL representatives and two Endowment Fund representatives working together to review and provide recommendations on the funding applications.
- This could be a valuable opportunity for learning and communication as long as YL voices are an essential part of the decision-making process.

If no, how can communications between the Endowment Fund Committee, the Community Development Committee and the Young Leaders Committee regarding the adjudication of the granting of funds be improved?

- YLC members prefer that the YLC continue to evaluate applicants for the Young Leaders Fund (YLF).
- The YLF application was created with the intent that it could be easy to fill out for YLs, and with the idea that these were reviewed by youth, so as to not deter applicants from applying.
- Much like how it is a great learning experience for YL to apply for the YLF, it is also a great and rewarding experience for YLC members to assess and approve applicants, and is part of the process of developing leadership capabilities for a new generation of leaders in the NAJC.



National Association of Japanese Canadians

- The YLC has a core group of members (the Chair supported by two members who are the designated “coordinators” of the YLF) that will initially look over applications, then bring a recommendation to the YLC for approval (then approved by the NEB).
- There could be enhanced coordination and communication with the Endowment and Community Development committee to advance a more coordinated NAJC position on projects in any given year. This can also ensure that there aren’t overlaps in projects and that applicants are not “double dipping”, but our understanding is that the National Administrator is keeping a master list of the different funds, and should be able to do a quick check to ensure that applicants are not applying for multiple grants (NOTE: One challenge here is that the timeline upon which applications and projects run are different, but this can be revisited).
- Again, the purpose of having a YLF separate from the Endowment Fund grants is to give YL autonomy and ownership over their own projects, including the approval of funding on the part of the YLC. Having the YLF administered by the Endowment Fund would strip it of that meaning.