



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JAPANESE CANADIANS

NAJC STATEMENT:

Passing of The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney

Calgary, Alberta - March 1, 2024

As the current president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), I wish to express my profound sadness on hearing the news of the passing of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. The NAJC, each of the 21 member organizations of NAJC across the country, and the entire Japanese Canadian community owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Mulroney for making Redress for Japanese Canadians a reality on September 22, 1988.

The president of NAJC on September 22, 1988, who signed the Redress Agreement with Prime Minister Mulroney was Art Miki. The following passage from Art Miki's recent book *Gaman—Perseverance: Japanese Canadians' Journey to Justice* articulates in his own words just how important Brian Mulroney was to achieving Redress, and how the Japanese Canadian community will always remember the man.

"I believe that had it not been Brian Mulroney's personal commitment for justice and human rights that the Japanese Canadian redress agreement would not have happened in 1988. ... When I met with him privately in his office after the announcement in the House on September 22, 1988, and thanked him for the government's apology and compensation package after 4 years of discussions, he responded by saying that it had taken him this long to convince his Cabinet colleagues that it (redress) was the right thing to do. I sensed sincerity and honesty in his response. My impression of Brian Mulroney was that he had genuine interest in resolving the redress issue earlier, but his party did not share his views. We as Japanese Canadians should be truly thankful to Brian Mulroney for having the courage and persistence in seeing justice done."

The Redress Agreement included a 12-million-dollar Community Fund that was utilized to preserve the legacy of Japanese Canadians and to rejuvenate Japanese Canadian communities across the country. In addition, the agreement resulted in the creation of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation which continues to fight racism and hate in Canada to this day. In addition, by courageously signing the groundbreaking Redress Agreement with the NAJC in 1988, Mulroney paved the way for addressing other historical wrongs such as the Chinese Head Tax and Residential Schools. For many reasons, then, Japanese Canadians are sad to learn of the death of a man who had such a positive influence on who we are today as a community, and as Canadians.

The National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) was formed in 1947 to fight for the rights of 22,000 Japanese Canadians who were stripped of their rights and interned during and after the Second World War. The NAJC led talks for Redress, and in 1988, the Canadian government acknowledged and apologized for the injustices. The NAJC strives for equal rights and liberties for all, in particular racialized and Indigenous peoples.