



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JAPANESE CANADIANS

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Ana Martins, Heritage Planner, City of Toronto  
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Toronto City Hall, Floor 19E

**Via Email:** [Ana.Martins2@toronto.ca](mailto:Ana.Martins2@toronto.ca)

CC: Marian Prejel, [marian.prejel@toronto.ca](mailto:marian.prejel@toronto.ca)  
Toronto Chapter, National Association of Japanese Canadians  
National Association of Japanese Canadians Human Rights Committee

***RE: 123 Wynford Drive, Toronto***

Dear Ms. Martins:

123 Wynford Drive, North York is a building that tells the story of a people interned and then displaced by their own government. It is a building that represents the Japanese Canadian community and its historical ties to Toronto, the Province of Ontario and Canada.

In early 1942, over twenty-one thousand Canadians of Japanese ancestry, many born in Canada, were divested of all their possessions, cars and homes, rounded up and sent to internment camps in the interior of BC never to return. At the end of the war 'liberated', the internees were forced out of BC, east past the Rockies, experiencing further displacement and homelessness.

The largest number of Japanese Canadians landed in Toronto where anti-Japanese racism followed from the west. Some were not able to enter Toronto due to the racist policies of the day and those who did struggled to find housing and jobs encountering overt racist exclusion.

The Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC) building reflects the story of the Japanese Canadian people as a symbol of both the oppression, racism and hate experienced as well as the strength, resilience and hope of the issei (first generation) and nisei (second generation). The building had its official opening in June of 1964 and became the place that many could finally call home. A place built from the hearts and minds and backs of the Japanese Canadian community. Seventy-five families mortgaged their homes and the whole community pitched in to build a space to gather with each other and with friends.

Architecturally the building is a jewel, designed by world renowned architect Raymond Moriyama with details culturally significant to Japanese Canadians: modern design with traditional beauty; concrete geometrics with soft wooden lantern shapes; shiny parquet floors and tatami mats. The building is at once Japanese and Canadian. Moriyama, himself Japanese Canadian, designed the building with his lived experience of internment and displacement. The emotional spectrum of despair, shame and pride experienced by our community is reflected in what Moriyama termed his “architecture of inclusion.”

Historically, the original JCCC building at 123 Wynford represents the afterlife of a people uprooted and interned for the colour of their skin. It is a testament to the hard work, hope and belief in a better life for the next generation and the generations to come. There is no other building in the country that came out of that time that is so meaningful to our community. The National Association of Japanese Canadians strongly urges that this building be maintained and preserved.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Les Kojima', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Les Kojima

President, National Association of Japanese Canadians