

# NENJU NEWS

JODO SHINSHU BUDDHIST TEMPLES OF CANADA

Volume 2, Issue 2

May, 2020

## FROM THE BOARD

### JSBTC VISION AND

#### MISSION

Vision: A community living a life of gratitude on the path of the Buddha Dharma

Mission: Acting as a catalyst for growing a network of Jodo Shinshu Buddhist centres through dynamic and focused leadership

The JSBTC Annual General Meeting was held on April 24th, by conference call. Delegates from eleven temples attended, with Montreal giving its proxy to Toronto Buddhist Church. All JSBTC Board members were present as well as Socho Aoki, Rev. Grant Ikuta, Rev. Gubenco, and Rev. Ouchi. Rev. Izumi and Rev. Miyakawa were unable to attend. Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara, Jodo Shinshu International Office, attended as a special guest. Despite the fact that the AGM had never been held by conference call before, it proceeded smoothly, with no technical problems.

The AGM held that the 2021 Temple assessments will remain at \$80 per member. There has been no increase in membership fees for 5 years. The AGM also gave the Board the power to determine whether any or all of the 2020 Member Assessments be deferred or cancelled, based on the Board's continuing review of the effects of the pandemic on the revenues of the Temples. Larry Wakisaka, Amy Wakisaka, Debra Campbell, and Harvey Kaita were reelected to the Board. Given the uncertainties of the coming year, it was agreed that either Steveston Buddhist Temple or Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta will be the host for the 2021 AGM, and that either Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta or Steveston Temple will be the host for the 2022 AGM.

Larry Wakisaka has stepped down after two years as President. We thank him for his dedication and hard work, not only as President but also as Vice President in preceding years. He has worked to support the Temples and the Ministers and has encouraged new ideas and expansion while encouraging greater transparency in JSBTC matters. Amy Wakisaka will be resigning as Director of the LDC this summer. Under Amy's direction, the LDC has been totally rejuvenated, creating a training program for ministerial assistants, supporting individuals who wish to train for tokudo and kyoshi, assisting Temples with funding for AV equipment, providing financial aid to students and Sangha members to attend courses, helping Temples build their libraries. We will miss Amy's financial acumen and guidance as well as her devotion to the dharma, and we are very grateful to her. The Board has not yet determined how it will replace her! Larry and Amy are staying on as Directors.

The incoming Board has elected Laura Sugimoto as President, Greg Chor as Treasurer, Debra Campbell Hayashi as Secretary, and Greg and Debra as Co-Vice Presidents.

The Women's Federation also held its annual meeting in April, via email. Re-elected for a second two year term as the leadership team are June Asano, Darlene Reiger, and Myra Takasaki. Thank you for continuing in these positions during these difficult times. In addition, the WF agreed that no membership fees would be charged in 2020 and that all Dana Day funds would remain with the individual Temples to be disbursed in the local communities.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the AGM and the WF meeting. Your involvement is critical to the success of the Canadian kyodan.



## DHARMA MESSAGE

There is much uncertainty as we all find ourselves in unprecedented times due to COVID-19. Our worries that we harbored just a few short months ago seem to fail in comparison to what is forefront in our thoughts today. And as I listen to the daily updates from Alberta's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, I am reminded of the seriousness of the virus that is sweeping the world. In many ways there is a helplessness associated with the pandemic because our best recourse from the virus is isolation from others. However, during the daily update Dr. Hinshaw points out that it is our collective actions that have made the difference in slowing the spread of the virus in Alberta. The words of encouragement related to our collective actions resonate that people have come together in consideration for others and the world that we live in.

Buddhism teaches that Right Action is about ethical conduct, promoting love and compassion for all living beings. It is one of the eight categories of the Path which brings one's focus inward in the attempt to develop ethical conduct to the best of our capacity. This inward focus is essential to understanding how our actions have an effect on others.

With the data surrounding the pandemic and how countries around the world have responded differently to the threat of the virus we can see how taking the right action affects others. I am reminded by hearing the words that our collective actions, our joining together for the common good, with understanding and compassion for others are the activity of the Sangha. The Pure Land tradition teaches that the Light of the Dharma is with us always and it is our self-centeredness that prevents us from hearing the teaching. The late Rev. K. Tsuji said it best in his poem Listen: "...*The Dharma speaks to us through the sounds of the world – forcefully and eloquently and beautifully. It speaks of the unending change around us, the immutable truth of interdependence, and the peace in nature. Do we have the ears to hear and listen...?*" In my lifetime I have not experienced humanity taking the time to stop and listen to the sounds of the world as a collective whole in the way we are doing it today. When we have the ears to hear and listen we understand that we are interconnected with everything that supports us as members of a Sangha. Although these are difficult times I feel that we are truly blessed with being embraced by the Light of the Dharma.

I would like to share with you a little quarantine humor that I received and hopefully it brings a chuckle to your day as it did for me. "*Kinda starting to understand why pets try to run out of the house when the door opens*".

Namo Amida Butsu

Rev. Robert Gubenco



Robert Gubenco was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec and moved to Hamilton, Ontario where he attended high school. After completing high school,

he enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces where he spent five years training as a medical assistant. It was his posting to CFB Calgary which brought him to Alberta where he would raise his family with his wife Lori and daughter Ashley.

After leaving the Canadian Armed Forces he continued his education with diplomas in Electronic Engineering Technology and Civil Engineering Technology. He had a successful career in Information Technology which spanned twenty-five years supporting the Oil and Gas industry.

Retiring from Information Technology he furthered his education by studying Buddhism. With a diploma in Shin Buddhist Studies and receiving Tokudo and Kyoshi ordination, he was assigned to serve at the Calgary Buddhist Temple in January, 2019.

## FROM THE TEMPLES

### THE LITTLE TEMPLE ON THE PRAIRIES – HISTORY OF THE MANITOBA BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Reverend Ulrich used to refer to the Manitoba Buddhist Temple as “the little temple on the prairies”. This article takes a look at how a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist temple arose in the Canadian prairies, namely Winnipeg.

Throughout our 74 years the Manitoba Buddhist Temple located on 39 Tecumseh Avenue (renamed - formerly 825 Winnipeg Avenue) has successfully conquered many challenges to where it is today.

*“During World War II on January 16, 1942 Order in Council PC 365 under the War Measure’s Act called for the removal of all male national from the coastal defense zone. On February 24, 1942 Order in Council PC 1486 empowered the Federal Government to remove all people of Japanese ancestry from the protected area, to impose restrictions which included the right to search without a warrant, dusk to dawn curfew, and confiscation of cameras, cars and firearms.*

*The British Columbia Securities Commission (BCSC) was established March 4, 1942 to transfer all designated people out of the restricted coastal areas. Because of the shortage of sugar and lack of labourers, the Federal and Provincial Governments reached an agreement to relocate Japanese to Manitoba and Alberta sugar beef farms. In Manitoba it was with the understanding that they would be removed after the war. Most of them came from Haney/Hammond and Mt. Lehman area and some from Steveston.*

*The first group of arrivals came on April 13 after a two-day train trip from British Columbia consisted of 20 families (118 individuals). Other families followed, arriving at the Canadian Pacific Railway Station and taken to the Immigration Hall where they were picked out by farmers and taken to farms to work. Usually the families with able-bodied adult workers were placed quickly while those with small children and elderly parents remained at the Hall for months. The BCSC’s forced removal plan stated that the only place a family could move together as a unit was to Manitoba or Alberta. This was a more attractive option than the internment camps in BC where families were separated.*

*In Manitoba the majority of families settled in the Red River Valley, an area extending from Portage la Prairie district to Selkirk, and from Altona to Steinbach areas. Work on the sugar beet farms was back breaking and labour intensive with meagre income. The Japanese workers were known to work hard. The families were scattered, so socializing was restricted. Their housing conditions were inadequate in most cases, ill equipped to withstand the cold winter months. Sugar Beet Shacks were constructed from wood and tar paper. Several families often shared the same living quarters. Exceptions were made to allow some Japanese to work in the city of Winnipeg, such as domestics, and males to supplement income to support their families. In 1946 restrictions on moving into Winnipeg were lifted. However, some families faced discrimination and had difficulty getting a place to rent.” (Japanese Cultural Association of Manitoba Inc., “A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAPANESE CANADIANS IN MANITOBA”, <<https://www.jcamwpg.ca/japanese-canadians-in-manitoba/>>)*

In 1946 a group of devout Buddhists, all of whom arrived in Manitoba as evacuees in the spring of 1942, initiated interest in the establishment of a Buddhist Church within the province of Manitoba. Together they approached Reverend Shinjo Ikuta, the resident Minister of Alberta, seeking his guidance and advice in the building of a place of social gathering and spiritual solace. After conferring, Reverend Ikuta recommended Mr. Hideo Nishimura, another evacuee from BC who was working on a farm in Emerson, to fill the role of Lay Minister. From this auspicious beginning, the movement to establish the Manitoba Buddhist Church began.

Fund raising activities were held over a four-year period. Services were modestly held at first in home of the Lay Minister Hideo Nishimura and also at the old CP Hall at Higgins and Main. In 1950 Reverend Nishimura became a fully ordained Minister and construction of the Manitoba Buddhist Church (now called Temple) began with an estimated budget of \$10,000.

Tragedy struck midway through the year. Due to strong winds the partially constructed Temple collapsed, but it did not discourage the Sangha who gathered up the resources to continue. Three months later, another blow, with the reconstructed building collapsing again. The project monies were quickly diminishing, but the determined Sangha collected another \$5000.

The Altar and Shrine from the Maple Ridge Buddhist Church (BC) was reassembled and enshrined in its new home. In February 1951 the Temple was completed due in large part to the support of many unwavering volunteers.

Over the next five years with the assistance of many helpers Sunday school and Japanese Language school opened and started thriving. Ladies Fujinkai and Young Woman's Maya Club were formed. Most notably in 1959 the annual dues were \$15.

In the 1960's the Temple Bulletin Newsletter was created. Hoyu Kai, Lotus Club, and Boys club were formed. All the clubs worked on fundraising projects such as the spring tea and fall bazaar and also give back activities to the community. The Temple was flourishing with more than 120 Sunday school children in attendance and over 90 Temple families. The Temple was the central hub of all social activities offering cultural dance lessons, language classes, culinary classes, choir and many other events.

The Temple has been very fortunate to have had exceptional Ministers – Reverend Ryokan Nishimura, Reverend Takamasa Moriki, Reverend Yoshiharu Hayashi, Reverend Itsuo Terasaki, Reverend Yasuhiro Miyakawa, Reverend Fredrich Ulrich and Reverend Michael Hayashi. The Sangha felt the tremendous loss of Reverend Michael Hayashi's sudden passing in 2015. Over the past 5 years the Temple has been privileged to have guest Ministers and able to hold monthly services. In addition, as of 2020, with Sensei Tanis Moore attaining her Tokudo, we are delighted to also hold a regular service monthly thus having two monthly services.

Renovations – In 1968 an addition to the rear of the Temple was added and in 1971 the Temple was enhanced by a larger front. The Temple withstood the test of time for 44 years, but in 2015 it had a complete cosmetic overhaul both inside the Temple and outside as well – painting the interior, replacing the flooring, buying new chairs, upgrading the kitchen, landscaping the front – a new Temple was reborn.

Though the congregation is small, we are a mighty, close knit Sangha and grateful that we continue to practise the Nembutsu in our Temple.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Temple was to play host for the now cancelled "Humanity Through a Buddhist Eye – An Exploration of Human Rights" conference. Winnipeg was selected as the host city because it is home of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) which was to play an important part of the conference.

As the world's first museum dedicated to human rights, the CMHR is centred around the idea that respect and understanding of human rights can serve as a positive force for change in the world.

The internment and relocation of Japanese Canadians was a human rights injustice. It's interesting that the Manitoba Buddhist Temple would not exist today had this terrible event not occurred, and here we are today planning to host a JSBTC human rights



conference almost 80 years after the internment and relocation took place. There is a saying that "Life is a circle" meaning the end of one journey is the beginning of the next. Isn't it so true?





*Calgary Buddhist Temple,  
Standing Amida created by  
Kokei Eri and decorated by  
Sayoko Eri in kirikane style*

*Comments? Suggestions? We would love to hear from you*

*[jbtcnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:jbtcnewsletter@gmail.com)*

## The Calgary Buddhist Temple

While there had been a significant Japanese Canadian community in southern Alberta prior to World War II, the only Buddhist Temple was in Raymond; there was no Japanese community in Calgary. This changed with the forced removal of Japanese Canadians from the "Defense Zone" on the West Coast when over 2,500 Japanese Canadians arrived in southern Alberta in 1942, and nearly 1,000 more in 1947. It was in the early 1950s before Japanese Canadians were able to move from assigned areas and take up residence in Lethbridge or Calgary or other locations with better employment opportunities.

The Calgary Buddhist Temple's roots go back to those days when, in 1951, about ten families joined together to create a Buddhist society, Calgary Hoyu-kai (Friends of Dharma) under the direction of Sensei Y. Kawamura from Raymond, meeting in one another's homes. They celebrated their first Obon on August 17, 1951.

By 1970, the group concluded that a sufficient number of Buddhist families in Calgary were prepared to support a minister, and in 1972, the Calgary Buddhist Church was founded. In early 1972, the Buddhist Churches of Canada offered to support part of the wages for a minister, which enabled Sensei Susumu Ikuta and family to move to Calgary to lead the newly formed Temple.

In 1981, the Board and the Sangha made the significant financial commitment to purchase the Croatian Catholic Church in Bridgeland, just north of downtown Calgary. This church had been built in 1912 and then moved to its current location in 1926; its original congregation of Ukrainian Canadians experienced discrimination during WWI, and the church subsequently passed through a number of Eastern European congregations.

The purchase of this building by the Calgary Buddhist Church was only made possible through the committed financial backing, including personal guarantees and mortgages on homes, of members of the Calgary Sangha and with donations from across Canada. The inaugural service was held on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1981.

Members of the Sangha under the direction of Sensei Ikuta worked to repurpose the building as a Buddhist Temple, creating all aspects of the najin, including the altar and tables (kyozukue and shoko-dai), the donation box, and other decorative aspects, some of which were specifically built for the Temple by Temple members. Other important pieces were donated by members. As well, Sensei Ikuta began searching for a Buddhist statue or similar artifact for the Temple. Through his father-in-law's temple in Japan, he and Mrs. Ikuta met Sayoko Eri, a kirikane artist designated in Japan as "the bearer of an Important Intangible Cultural Asset". Mrs. Eri introduced them to her husband Kokei Eri, who is designated as a Master Sculptor of Buddhist statues. One of Mr. Eri's statues, a standing image of Amida (Amitabha) Buddha decorated by Mrs. Eri was then on an art tour through Japan and Europe. Mr. and Mrs. Eri generously donated this significant art work to the Calgary Temple; this is one of very few pieces of their art that is outside of Japan. On October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1984, in a special dedication service, the statue was installed in the Temple, in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Eri.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1984, the Gomonsu and Lady Ohtani visited the Temple. During that special service, the Monshu ordained Rev. Fred Ulrich as a minister of the BCC.

After the Sangha had been in the Temple for over 15 years, it became clear that the building needed substantial repair and maintenance work; the building was, by this time, nearly 100 years old. In addition to the annual chicken teriyaki dinner fundraiser, the Sangha began holding casinos to raise money to either renovate the building or acquire another one. Initially the focus was on acquiring a new property, but this proved to be prohibitively expensive. Over a ten year period much work was done investigating all possibilities, with Sangha members spending countless hours on this work.

In the spring of 2008 Rev. Ikuta retired as minister, with Rev. James Martin stepping up as the minister. James Sensei had worked and studied under Rev. Ikuta for some years and had received his kaikyoshi designation. Also assisting was Sensei Ken Madden, who had received his tokudo designation.

By 2012, the Sangha had raised nearly one million dollars for the building. It was then that Sangha member architect Erin Nagata offered to prepare a renovation plan for the building within the Board's budget. The resulting design was so inspiring that the Board, under President Lester Ikuta, decided to move forward with renovations to the building.

The Sangha vacated the building in mid-June, 2014, and renovations started in early July. Unfortunately, the demolition and renovation encountered a number of unanticipated problems, from bat guano in the attic to leaning trusses in the roof, which increased cost and delayed completion. While the initial schedule was to have the renovations completed before the World Buddhist Women's Convention in May 2015, the building was not finished in time for the Convention. Many people attending the Convention toured the partially completed building, including the Gomonshu. A number of delegates from Japan were amazed and delighted to see Kokei Eri's standing Amida Buddha sculpture; they did not know that this sculpture was in Canada.

The building was finally ready for occupancy in August, 2015. The Sangha celebrated completion of the renovation with a Public Open House held on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, and the Grand Opening for Sangha members on August 30<sup>th</sup>, held in conjunction with Obon.

Since then the Sangha has continued to thrive and grow in the new facility, under the guidance of James Sensei, Ken Sensei, and Robert Gubenco Sensei who had also received his tokudo designation. The Dharma School was reinvigorated with the work of dedicated parents, and volunteers instituted a number of fund-raising and social events, including gyoza and mein making, the annual chow mein dinner, participating in the Calgary Japanese Festival, the annual Grey Cup party, an annual garage sale in conjunction with the local community's parade of garage sales, and ikebana classes.

In 2018, the Temple hosted a very successful JSBTC AGM, and in 2019 it hosted the fall meeting of the JSBTC Board of Directors and the Ministers' Association.

2019 was a momentous year for Temple. Robert Sensei successfully completed his Kyoshi training in November, 2018, and began working as a full time minister at CBT. This enabled James Sensei to retire in April, after serving as CBT's minister since 2008. CBT held a very well attended dinner retirement party for James Sensei (including a video of his greatest hits), celebrating his tireless work to spread the dharma in Calgary, across Southern Alberta and Canada.

Also in 2019, the Temple successfully resolved its litigation with the contractor over the temple renovations, after nearly four years of dispute. Due to cost certainty that came out of this settlement, the Temple was able to pay down the majority of its loans and is nearly debt free.

The Sangha Engagement Committee, ably led by Susan (Takeda) Huntley began a series of events ranging from manju making to Japanese belly dancing to taiko drumming and more. These proved so popular that monthly events were planned for all of 2020. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic halted all the numerous activities at the Temple, with the Board closing the Temple in mid-March.

At the beginning of April, Robert Sensei started live-streaming Sunday services on the Temple's Facebook page, with much positive feedback. While people miss meeting in person at the Temple, the online services make everyone feel less isolated and more connected to the Sangha. As one person commented: "I love the calmness this service gives me from the comfort of my own home. Sensei Gubenco's services have also been a great way of reflection during this pandemic. His words help me to put things in better perspective."

Robert Sensei also started live streaming a daily evening service starting at 9:00 pm each night. The tradition of the evening service is a reflection in gratitude and appreciation for the day and the Compassion of Amida Buddha.

The pandemic has forced many changes, but it has also spurred creativity and encouraged greater connection in the Sangha. The Sangha is learning and growing from these changes. August, 2020 will mark the fifth anniversary of the opening of the renovated Temple. Although a special service marking this event will probably not be possible this summer, the Sangha continues to grow in through the adversity and to persevere, just as those who founded the Calgary Buddhist Temple did in other difficult times.

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## **OKAGE SAMA DE**

“I am what I am because of you”

This is certainly true for the Manitoba and Calgary Buddhist Temples - they are what they are because of the actions of those whose lives were forever changed by the disruption, dispossession, and dislocation of World War II. Those people lost the what they had on the West Coast and had to start over again, in the sugar beet fields of Manitoba and southern Alberta. They built new lives for themselves and their families, facing discrimination and poverty. And out of the misery and the injustice of relocation and internment, they created two strong, thriving Buddhist communities in Winnipeg and in Calgary. What the Winnipeg and Calgary Sanghas have today is founded in the determination and courage of those Issei and Nisei.

Rev. Kodani in his book Cocktails says that the literal meaning of okagesama is “Thanks to the many causes and conditions known and unknown, I have the privilege of coming to this moment”. He goes on to say that “it is an expression of the interconnectedness of things, especially the unknown influences on our lives”.

The events of 80 years ago helped establish the foundations of two communities that are now supporting another generation facing uncertainty and economic upheaval, in a new time of disruption and discrimination. May this generation be as strong.

Namo Amida Butsu

For more information about the Japanese Canadian experience in southern Alberta, go to the Galt Museum (Lethbridge) website, Nikkei Tapestry:

<https://www.nikkei-tapestry.ca/home>



## ONLINE SERVICES INFORMATION

### BUDDHIST TEMPLE OF SOUTHERN ALBERTA

Some services are being live streamed on Facebook.

Dr. Roland Ikuta (President, BTSA) has posted short ten short videos on “**10 Things to do to cope with COVID-19**” Videos can be found on the BTSA Facebook page.

BTSA Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BuddhistTempleOfSouthernAlberta>

### CALGARY

Sensei Robert is live streaming a **daily evening service starting at 9:00 pm MDT** using **Facebook Live** from the group: [Calgary Buddhist Temple Group on Facebook](#). The Temple holds regular online **Sunday Services** starting at 10:00 am (MDT) by streaming using **Facebook Live** from the group: [Calgary Buddhist Temple Group on Facebook](#). If you're not a member of the group, you may be prompted to request to be added to the group before you'll be able to join.

You can also view **Sunday Services** on **YouTube** at: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtW0VjcC02o98KL\\_EWF8wrg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtW0VjcC02o98KL_EWF8wrg)

### STEVESTON

Rev. Grant is holding a Zoom service every Sunday morning at 10:00 am PDT.

To receive an invitation to participate in the Zoom call and receive reminders, email: [info@steveston-temple.ca](mailto:info@steveston-temple.ca)

Website: <http://steveston-temple.ca/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Steveston-Buddhist-Temple-136413149761882/>

### VANCOUVER

Rev. Aoki is uploading regular Dharma messages to YouTube:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_-Gw4NTDSEjB9Skua6TMLg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_-Gw4NTDSEjB9Skua6TMLg)

### BUDDHIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA

<https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org>

### HAWAII HONGWANJI TEMPLES

<https://hongwanjihawaii.com>

Also check individual Temple websites for US and Hawaii temples

## GINGOLX JAPANESE CANADIAN MEMORIAL

The BC Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temple Federation (BCJSBTF) is joining with the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), the Nikkei Museum, and the Nisga'a First Nation to promote interest in and seek information about Japanese graves and memorial obelisk at Kincolith (Gingolx), BC.

The obelisk and adjacent Japanese graves located in the cemetery of Kincolith, B.C. (now a part of the Nisga'a First Nations Gingolx Village) were discovered in September, 1995 by archeologist Dr. Richard Garvin of the University College of the Cariboo (now the David Thompson University). Subsequently, this discovery was reported to the Nikkei National Museum in Burnaby, B.C. by Dr. Garvin. As Dr. Garvin noted, it is not a surprise that there was a Japanese Canadian community located in this area because there were at least eight salmon canneries located at the mouth of the Nass River from 1890 to 1950, and it was known that families from Steveston would travel up to the Nass river canneries for temporary summer employment.

He was surprised, however, by the 1.5 metre high granite obelisk. The three sides of the obelisk are engraved with Japanese characters which translate as: *Namu Amida Butsu* on the south side, *Dedicated by the Nass River Branch of the Japanese Association; erected in Taisho, Year 7, June* on the east side, and *a Monument to the Victims of Drowning and the Brave Soldiers who Died in the War* on the west side. "Taisho, Year Seven" dates the Obelisk to 1918, which is two years earlier than the Japanese Canadian war memorial in Stanley Park, Vancouver. Dr. Gavin commented that the Nass River Branch of the Japanese Association must have been well organized and with significant resources to enable them to erect such an impressive monument.

After reading about the discovery of the monument in the Nikkei Bulletin, Roy Akune Sensei followed up with Irene Kawamoto Reid, the curator at the Nikkei National Museum, which led to a meeting with Ms. Reid, Rev. Grant Ikuta and Roy Akune Sensei, and which in turn led to a broader discussion with the NAJC (Irene Kusada who lives in Terrace), and the BCJSBTF. Roy Akune Sensei then contacted the Nisga'a First Nations asking about visiting the site and performing a memorial service there. The Chief Administrative Officer, Gingolx Village Government, responded positively, inviting the ad hoc group to visit the Nisga'a community and to recognize and honour the Japanese Canadian deceased. Because of the current pandemic, plans to respond have been curtailed. It is expected, however, that in the near future Jodo Shinshu followers and friends will be able to engage with them.

In discussing the history of the Japanese Canadians in this area, Roy Sensei said that he knows that Japanese Canadian fishermen from Steveston established a camp at the head of Nass River during the fishing season, usually June to September. Most would return to Steveston in the off-season. It is possible that some may have set up permanent homes in the area, but that seems unlikely since the area was so remote. The boat trip from Prince Rupert to this location can take 12 hours from Prince Rupert. Roy Sensei wondered if the obelisk was built in Prince Rupert and shipped to Kincolith. He also wondered if some of the families who lived in Prince Rupert had information about the Skeena Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temple. He has attempted to trace the history of the Skeena Temple, which burnt down. He could not find anything other than a reference to a Mr. Sakamoto of Lethbridge, who is now deceased.

The ad hoc group hopes that they will be able to plan a trip to the Gingolx cemetery at Obon time, to conduct a memorial service and to share Buddhist information and get an understanding of the Nisga'a culture and the relationship between the Nisga'a and the Japanese Canadians who fished and lived in the area. While it is very unlikely that a trip will take place this year, hopefully something can be planned for 2021.

If your family has any historical information or links to this area, please contact Roy Akune Sensei at the Steveston Buddhist Temple or through email at [royakune@gmail.com](mailto:royakune@gmail.com).

Photos: Irene Kusada



Namo Amida Butsu



<https://www.blue-moon.ca/gingols/graveyard.html>



## PRESS RELEASES FOR VESAK DAY, MAY 7TH, 2020

May 7, 2020, Leela Sharon Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, issued the following statement on Vesak:

“Today, Buddhists in Alberta join the Buddhist community around the world in celebrating Vesak, also known as Wesak or Buddha Day.

“This day commemorates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama.

“Buddhism has a long and rich history in Alberta. The first Buddhist temple in Alberta opened in 1929 and became the longest continually used Buddhist sanctuary in all of Canada.

“During World War II, because of the internment of Japanese Canadians, many Buddhists moved from British Columbia to Alberta. This resulted in Alberta becoming the North American birthplace of the academic study of Buddhism.

“We continue this legacy by protecting the right of Albertans to practice their faith and share their traditions with all Albertans.

“Publicly recognizing and sharing important dates such as Vesak helps us understand each other better and work together to build a better province for all.”

May 7, 2020

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today issued the following statement on Vesak:

“Today, we join Buddhists in Canada and around the world to celebrate Vesak, the most important of the Buddhist festivals.

“Vesak is an occasion to commemorate the birth, enlightenment, and passing into Nirvana of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

“Traditionally, Buddhists would visit their local temples to pray, and offer gifts to show respect and gratitude for the Buddha’s life and wisdom.

“This year, as we celebrate differently because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are reminded of the importance of the Buddha’s universal teachings of peace, selfless service, and compassion to those in need. Now more than ever, we see these teachings put into practice as we take care of one another during this pandemic. We will get through this together.

“On this occasion, I invite all Canadians to honour our Buddhist communities and to recognize their important contributions to our country.

“On behalf of our family, Sophie and I wish everyone celebrating a happy and peaceful Vesak.”