

Lethbridge Okinawa Cultural Society

SHIMBUN

Winter 2011/2012

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Taka Kinjo, President and the Executive members of the Lethbridge Okinawa Cultural Society wish to extend to all the members and their families, adherents, to our sister organizations, and the extended associations a very happy and prosperous new year.

We have enjoyed a full year of activities in 2011.

- Participation in research projects with: Darren Aoki from the University of London. Katsu Miyahira and Madoka Kanemoto from Ryukyu University in Okinawa, Rev. Fujioka from Shiga Ken, Japan and Mrs. Kiyoko Kozaki also from Japan.
- Lethbridge College's Bridging Cultures Day – Display of Okinawa
- Working together with other Japanese organizations for Japan Earthquake relief
- Joint venture with Nikkei Cultural Society for Taste of Japan for Southern Alberta Ethnic Association
- Visit from the Governor of Okinawa
- Representation for Lethbridge Okinawa Cultural Society in Hinton for the Alberta Japan Twinned Municipalities Association
- Tad Tomiyama goes to Okinawa for the Junior Study Tour
- Annual picnic at Pavan Park
- Thirty eight members, adherents and friends attend the 5th Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival in Okinawa
- Sanshin lessons with Moro Arakaki have begun.
- Students visit from Haebaru, Okinawa

SANSHIN LESSONS

Moro Arakaki has things well underway as students learn the basics of learning how to play the sanshin. The two sanshins given to us by the Okinawa Prefecture Government

are being put to good use. The Lethbridge Okinawa Cultural Society has now purchased another sanshin. If there are others who wish to join the group, please contact one of the board members for more details. It is a drop in format. The group meets Sunday afternoons at 1 pm for a couple of hours at the SANJIA office. Thank you, Moro, for your dedication and commitment to this venture.

5th WORLDWIDE UCHINANCHU TAIKAI 2011

Thirty eight people representing the Lethbridge Okinawa Society made their way to the Fifth Worldwide Uchinanchu Taikai. As we promised, here are comments from some of the participants:

Kevin Higa from Edmonton, Alberta:

The Uchinanchu trip was AMAZING! It was a trip of a lifetime for our family. Seeing distant relatives and being part of all the festivities and celebrations was a real thrill. I was also thankful for your and Taka's work in making all the arrangements for the event. All the assistance helped in making this tremendous experience – we definitely couldn't have done it on our own.

Anne Carson from Whitby, Ontario:

We are very thankful to Marlene & Greg McCaughey for inviting us to go to Okinawa with them. We have traveled to Japan before but Okinawa was very different. For me the highlight was the parade. I had never walked in a parade before and I wondered how that huge crowd would evolve into anything. Finally we were on our way and when we saw the huge crowds lining the street, I had not known what to expect. People seemed so happy to see all of us from around the world. Following Marlene's lead, Bill and I decided to give away our cowboy hats, kerchiefs, Canadian flags, and pins. It was wonderful to see how the people reacted to our gifts; it was heart warming. When the parade neared the end, suddenly we heard the opening sounds of "O Canada" from a loudspeaker. I had tears in my eyes singing our national anthem. I will never forget that moment.

Bill Carson from Whitby, Ontario:

There were so many things I enjoyed during our time in Okinawa; the friendly people, their love of music and dancing, a rich culture and warm welcome we received everywhere we went and the politeness and respect shown to everyone. I have always been aware that Okinawa was a key location during the Second World War for allied

forces to launch their attack on mainland Japan. However, I was not aware of the utter devastation of the island and the hardship the people of Okinawa suffered. This was made very clear to me when we visited the Peace Memorial. One cannot help but walk away in silence and pray that this can never happen again. It also made me understand the Okinawan's sign of peace so often seen and their strong resolve to make this statement to the rest of the world and please, God, let us listen.

Gail Lewicky from Lethbridge, Alberta

The trip to Japan for me was a trip of a lifetime and it was more amazing than I dreamed it would be. The people were so generous and warm and just open their arms and hearts to Canadians. The hotel was just great and easy access to everything and oh, so quiet. The memories and pictures will remind me of the great time I had and all the new and old friends I made. I would go back in a heart beat and I loved trying the different foods. The Festival was so amazing and the energy so high how could one not be happy that they attended; maybe in five years I will be able to go again. Thanks to the people who put so much work into organizing the trip; without them we would never had seen so many wonderful places.

Othelia Jenkins from Edmonton, Alberta:

The Uchinanchu Taikai was fantastic. The Okinawan people are so warm and welcoming- the whole island knew why we were there. They made everyone feel very special. And such comradery – not only within our group but with the Uchinanchu from around the world. The Festival was so amazing – it felt like we were in the Olympics, with the parade of delegates, the opening and closing ceremonies, etc., etc. So much planning and hard work by everyone involved, the entertainment – definitely all a WOW factor. Both my siblings want to attend the next one (as do I). I have to tell you about what happened to me on a public bus ride we were on. A little bachan came aboard and sat beside me. She spoke no English but she understood why I was in Okinawa. She held my hand the whole time she was on the bus and talked to me. Just as she came to her stop, she took my hand and stroked her face with it and told me something. I was so sorry I couldn't understand her. It was quite an emotional moment and one I will treasure. Loved Okinawa – the people-the country-the customs-the food!

Murray & Tracy from Lethbridge, Alberta, Daniel Newton of Red Deer, Alberta, Janay Newton of Fernie, B.C.

We had the most wonderful experience in Okinawa, the people are so friendly and kind. The island is so peaceful. The festival was amazing...first class. Our travels across Okinawa were an experience that everyone should have. Learning about the war and understanding the hardships that those people went through is something everyone should see and hear. We will be going back again. There is so much to see and do.

Our entire family say this is the best trip that we have ever been on. Already planning to attend Uchinanchu Festival next time.

Shirley Petovello from Calgary, Alberta

I really enjoyed the trip to Okinawa. I felt that because Naha is not a huge city and the festival was the biggest thing going on the island, it created a fantastic atmosphere. The people in Naha were so friendly and riding the monorail you were having conversations with people from all over the world. The parade was great fun but definitely need more "give away" items as there were so many people out to support the visitors. I also enjoyed the two days we spent on the bus tours. It was nice to get out see more of the island and learn about the history. Unfortunately we didn't take in too many of the presentations but the opening ceremonies were great and the closing ceremonies were spectacular. I tagged along on this trip as my friends had been five years ago and raved about how much fun they had and the festival and Okinawa did not disappoint. I also believe that had a lot to do with the group linked to the Lethbridge Okinawa Cultural group as everyone made this trip so much fun.

HAEBARU STUDENT VISIT

We had opportunity to be hosts to eight junior high school students from Haebaru, Okinawa at the beginning of November. They were accompanied by two Education department heads as well as the Vice Mayor of Haebaru. The OCS provided a potluck supper for them November 9th at the Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta. Mr. Harold Pereverseff, President of the Alberta Japan Twinned Municipalities was invited as a guest to attend this evening along with David and Carol Ibsen of Edmonton. The flag of Haebaru was presented to Mr. Pereverseff. Haebaru is a twin city to Lethbridge. The flag will be used at official events of the Alberta Japan Twinned Municipalities Association. Thank you to all the members who hosted students in their homes. It is always a great experience for both. We look forward to hosting students again in 2013.

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

ALBERTA JAPAN TWINNED MUNICIPALITIES ASSOCIATION

The Alberta Japan Twinned Municipalities Association presented the City of Lethbridge with a taiko drum from Twinned City Towada, Japan at a special ceremony at City Hall on December 6, 2011. The Consulate General of Japan was present for the occasion.

Our president Taka Kinjo also gave a short address as one of the dignitaries. The drum is located at the main entrance of City Hall.

SANJIA NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION

Southern Alberta New Japanese Immigrant Association will host a New Year's celebration on Sunday, January 22, 2012 at the Coast Hotel. Tickets are \$35 each and are available for purchase from Taka Kinjo or Pat Sassa.

SOUTHERN ALBERTA ETHNIC ASSOCIATION

The Southern Alberta Ethnic Association will host Culture Nights on the last Friday of each month.

January – Taste of Latin America

February – Taste of Italy

March – Taste of Hungary

April – Taste of Germany

May- Taste of Philippines

Come out and enjoy ethnic food from other countries! Tickets are available prior to each dinner from the SAEA office.

DIVERSITY CONFERENCE

The Lethbridge chapter of Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination will be holding their conference February 2 & 3, 2012 at the Lethbridge Hotel and Conference Centre. This is a very informative and worthwhile conference for all minority groups. For more information and registration, you may contact the City of Lethbridge. Phone 403-320-4130 or email: farah.mocquais@lethbridge.ca

NATIONAL ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

May is Asian Heritage Month. This acknowledges the long and rich history of Asian Canadians and their contributions to Canada. It also provides an opportunity for Canadians across the country to reflect on and celebrate the contributions of Canadians of Asian Heritage to the growth and prosperity of Canada. In May, 2002 the Government of Canada signed an official declaration to designate May as Asian Heritage Month. Since then, Canadians have been invited to participate in events that honor the legacy of Canadians of Asian heritage. Your board has elected to participate with the Lethbridge Nikkei Cultural Society's event that is being organized in May. While it is in the planning stages, we will inform you as the event is organized. The event has been scheduled for May 19th. The location is still under negotiation. Please watch for details in the next newsletter.

NIKKEI CULTURAL SOCIETY'S

THIRD ANNUAL GHOST TOWN TOUR

The Nikkei Cultural Society of Southern Alberta will be featuring their third annual ghost town tour. This is a five day tour of WW 2 internment sites of Canadians of Japanese descent and are located in B.C. The tour is scheduled for June 18-22, 2012. For more information please contact: Pastor George Takashima at 403-328-0156 or gptak@shaw.ca. Deadline for registration is end of March.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Lethbridge Okinawa Cultural Society will be held on

Sunday, February 26, 2012 at 3 pm

followed by a supper at 5 pm. The meeting will be held at the **Regent Restaurant**. This is an important meeting for our members and adherents. We welcome your input and support as we make plans for the coming year. Election of officers will take place at this time.