



SPECIAL FEATURE

Japan Local Government Center Celebrates Fifteen Years

Hello everyone!

It is my pleasure to announce that this year the Japan Local Government Center (JLGC) will celebrate its fifteenth anniversary. JLGC was established in New York City in 1989 as the first overseas office of the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). CLAIR is an organization created by Japanese local authorities to promote local-level internationalization in Japan. Since its inception in 1988, CLAIR has established seven overseas offices throughout the world.

JLGC, NY had a humble beginning with a small office and staff. Thanks to the hard work and effort of my predecessors and their staff, JLGC operations has grown to 18 staff members, including four American staff. The ever-increasing workload includes extensive research projects, arranging appointments for Japanese government officials, event planning and conducting a wide range of public relations to promote our symposiums, seminars, training programs and internships.

Over the years, there has been solid growth in international exchange and affiliations between Japanese local governments and their counterparts in America and Canada. As of 2003, there are 435 international affiliations between Japanese and American local authorities, the largest such relationship in the world,

and 70 between Japanese and Canadian local authorities. My present staff and their predecessors have contributed greatly to this effort by promoting and fostering mutual understanding and cooperation.

This year JLGC will be actively engaged in:

- Research
- Support for overseas delegations
- Fellowship exchanges
- Summer intern program for graduate students
- Three month international study program
- One year overseas study assistance program
- Support for the US and Canada JET Alumni Associations

All of these projects are important and I will continue to work hard to improve upon them by making an effort to:

- Strongly support JET Alumni Association activities and local level relationships. Currently there are 6,569 JET alumni belonging to JETAA chapters in the United States and 1,996 JET alumni in Canada.
- Focus on conducting research on the best practices used by American and Canadian local governments to address important local government issues. As decentralization moves forward in Japan, Japanese local governments will be interested in collecting information on model systems and practices



Mr. Naofumi Hida, Director of JLGC, announces the fifteenth anniversary of JLGC.

used by local governments in Canada and the United States.

- Actively disseminate information about JLGC and Japanese local government activities via the Internet and our updated web site: www.jlgc.org

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Masthead: The sakura, or cherry blossom, is Japan's cherished national flower. Special hanami parties and excursions are held during blossom time each year.



Congratulatory Reflections on the 15-Year Anniversary of JLGC

by Brian J. Nickerson

Director, the Michaelian Institute for Public Policy & Management, Pace University

It is difficult to imagine that 15 years have passed since the creation of the Japan Local Government Center (JLGC) in New York City. I fondly remember being asked in 1994 by Dr. Anthony Cupaiuolo, the former Director of the Michaelian Institute, if I was interested in becoming involved with an international training program for Japanese Local Government Officials. I was thrilled to be asked and began teaching in the program shortly thereafter.

My initial eagerness was quickly met with equal enthusiasm from the many one-year trainees who made my experience one of the most enjoyable teaching assignments that I have ever had. In a true educational and cultural exchange, the program has allowed the trainees to learn about American government and culture while simultaneously providing a valuable learning experience about Japanese culture for Pace University faculty and staff.

Since 2001, I have the great pleasure of overseeing the training program as the

Director of the Michaelian Institute. We have also expanded our relationship to include additional research projects, special staff seminars, an Oxford University study component, and attendance in Masters Program in Public Administration (MPA) classes.

Consequently, Pace University's relationship with the JLGC has continued to be one of the centerpieces of the Institute's professional life and we truly look forward to continuing our long and productive relationship. As one Pace colleague, Dr. Gregory Holtz, poignantly commented at a recent one-year trainee graduation ceremony, "in many ways a seed was planted 15 years ago and that seed bore a tree with productive fruit that we all continue to benefit from."

We are pleased to have been a part of the vital work of the JLGC and I speak for everyone at Pace University when I offer sincerest congratulations on 15 years of dedicated service in the spirit of international cooperation and exchange. We wish JLGC well in all its



The author, Mr. Brian J. Nickerson (left), shakes hands with JLGC staff after a friendly softball match between Pace University and JLGC.

important endeavors and look forward to continuing our mutually supportive relationship.

Comments from other involved Pace faculty and staff:

*Dr. Anthony A. Cupaiuolo,
Professor of Public Administration*

"For 15 years the JLGC has served as a bridge promoting friendship and understanding between Japanese and American local government officials. I am grateful and honored that JLGC selected Pace University to be its partner. Congratulations and much continued success!"

*Dr. Grant Loavenbruck,
Director of Special Projects*

"I couldn't imagine a better professional relationship. I have fond memories of the many local government trainees that have spent time with us. Thanks for the opportunity to grow from our mutual experiences. Job well-done!"

*Lorraine Monaco, Government Specialist, and
Bernice Spina, Program Support*

"We have developed so many deep relationships with the JLGC over the years that we could not overstate how important JLGC has been to us. Best wishes!"

Japan Local Government Center Celebrates Fifteen Years

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I believe that Japan's relationships with Canada and the United States are strong and productive. At JLGC, we will continue to do our small part to contribute to these relationships.

I would like to express my gratitude for

the support JLGC has received over the past fifteen years. We will continue to work hard to promote internationalization at the grass roots level and appreciate your ongoing support and understanding.

Thank you very much.
Naofumi Hida, Director
Japan Local Government Center, New York

Niigata Prefecture

“The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country.” This is the beginning of “Yukiguni” (Snow Country), a novel written by Japan’s beloved winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, KAWABATA Yasunari. You may recall that this great novel takes place in Niigata Prefecture.

Such things as snow, rice, sake (Japanese rice wine), and internationally protected toki (Japanese crested ibis), a new symbol of Japan-China friendship, are thought of as images of Niigata.

Niigata, however, presents much more than just a nostalgic atmosphere. Located at Japan’s gateway to Northeast Asia, Niigata is a pioneering prefecture in the promotion of active exchanges with countries and regions in Northeast Asia.

Northeast Asia, consisting of China, North and South Korea, Mongolia, Russia, and Japan will see dynamic transfers of people, goods, and information as well as extended exchanges in a variety of fields, such as business and culture, in the coming years.

In addition, Niigata will continue to progress in step with this expansion of exchange. I hope that this article will be of great help for you to learn more about Niigata.

The Opening of the Japan Sea

Until the end of Edo period (1603-1867), present day Niigata Prefecture consisted of two regions called Echigo and Sado. The ports in the area prospered as a result of the links to the Tohoku (Northeastern), Kansai (Greater Osaka), and Western Japan regions through various sea lines called Kitamaebune in Japanese.

In 1858, as a result of the Japan-US Treaty of Amity and Commerce, Niigata Port was opened as the sole open port along the coast of the Japan Sea. Great Britain, the United States, and the Netherlands were some of the countries that soon established consulates in Niigata after the port was opened.

After the Edo Shogunate ended, the new government abolished all Edo period feudal domains in 1871 and replaced them with prefectures, which were rearranged and consolidated many times. Niigata prefecture has been in its present form since May of 1886.

Creating a Network Open to the World

In preparation for the Era of Japan Sea Exchange and to facilitate the transfer of people, goods, and information throughout the region, Niigata Prefecture is actively pursuing exchanges with local authorities of the Northeast Asian region, especially with those in Russia, China, and Korea.

We are specifically promoting exchanges with our friendship region, the Province of Heilongjiang in northeast China, by hosting exchange students and technical trainees, and through projects in many broad fields such as economic relations, culture, and sports.

Also, Niigata maintains exchange relationships with the State of Illinois and



Niigata’s New Symbol-Toki Messe

Hawaii, USA, and with the Province of North Holland, the Netherlands.

A base for International Exchanges

As part of a project for the new century, Niigata’s new base for international exchanges, Toki Messe, was created in the Bandaijima area in 2003. Being the gateway to the Japan Sea region, a symbol for Niigata, and a complex for cultural activities, Toki Messe is comprised of the Niigata Convention Center, which houses an international convention hall and conference rooms, and the Bandaijima building, which with a height of 140.5 meters is the tallest building on the Japan Sea side.

The Bandaijima Building houses international facilities such as the Niigata Prefecture International Plaza, the Niigata Passport Center, and the Economic Institute for Northeast Asia (ERINA), as well as facilities such as the Niigata Bandaijima Art Museum and the Niigata Industrial Creation Organization (NICO). Also, located on the upper floors of the building are hotel rooms, and on the uppermost floor lies the observation deck, where you can enjoy a panoramic view of the city.

by Janak Bhimani  

“Crunch; Crack” It wasn’t a tootsie roll but there was definitely something hard in the middle of that seaweed covered three-dimensional rice triangle. It was the first time in my life that I went into a *quickie mart* and didn’t see already-expired hot dogs or bladder busting beverages. There were lots of teas and rice. Rice as far as the eye could see and more than any stomach could digest. It was the first time I ate umeboshi...and not by choice. No one had warned me that these things had hard pits in the middle of the soft rice.

“April is the cruelest month” but a hot summer day in Japan is definitely no picnic. After spending three splendid days in the lap of luxury (i.e. business class on JAL and three nights at the Shinjuku Hilton), I took a short trip to the land of my destiny; a land from which many run and most do not choose to go – Saitama. It was July and I had involuntarily traded in the high life for a mansion (2DK¹ to be exact) and a small toothache.

Saitama is like Nu Jyaji². I have no idea why people think this, but almost every Japanese person I came across kept repeating this mantra to me. It’s hard enough live in a new place by yourself. Everybody telling you that place, as well as the place that you are from, is *dasai*³ really doesn’t help either. But then again, not everybody is me. In the industrialized world, people have a really unique quality of not telling people from where they really come. Many people who reside **outside** major metropolises are very guilty of this passive crime. Just as many of my fellow citizens from the Garden State tell people that they are from

the *New York area*; many of the people in my home-away-from-home prefecture of Saitama were convinced that they lived in a *suburb of Tokyo*.

NO! I live in New Jersey. I lived in Saitama. I love New Jersey and Saitama. Saitama was my destiny. From the lovely landscapes of the Chichibu area to the everyday excitement of school life in my small city, Saitama was, and is, integral in the shaping of my relationship to Japan and Japanese culture.

Saitama is very important. Not only would there be a noticeable hole in the topography of the Japanese mainland if there was no Saitama, but there would also be a lot less JETs and therefore fewer students who would benefit from the interaction and effects of internationalization. Not only is Saitama home to many train lines and the Misato IC (interchange), but it also has the one of the highest populations of residents and the highest concentration of JETs in Japan.

The first day of school is nerve wrecking for any student. It is, however, extremely nerve wrecking for a handsome young man chosen to be an ALT in a small junior high school situated between three rice fields. The JET Program brought me to Japan. My students brought me happiness. From that first day when I was so nervous to the last day when I had to choke back tears during my farewell speech, my school was a major factor in the shaping of my experience in Japan. Like most JETs, I ended up learning much more from my students than I taught them. They taught



The author, Mr. Janak Bhimani, former ALT (Saitama Prefecture)

me that the capital of Brazil isn’t Rio (it’s a different place). They taught me how to simultaneously eat, drink and breathe within a ten minute lunch period. Most of all, my students taught me to be proud of where I’m from, who I am and that a smile is never lost in translation.

“Be careful! There is a *tane* in that onigiri” I said thanks to the student and proceeded to eat my umeboshi rice ball with caution and delight.

¹A 2-bedroom apartment with a dining room and kitchen

²The Romanization of New Jersey after it has passed through the ringer of Japanese

³Dasai has many meanings. In this instance it means corny

National Governors' Association Annual Meeting in Seattle

by Seth B. Benjamin
JLGC Senior Researcher

One of the oldest associations of elected officials in the United States, the National Governors' Association (NGA) held its 96th annual summer meeting in Seattle, WA. Every summer, the governors get together to discuss and exchange views in a bi-partisan forum. Director Hida, assistant directors Masashi Takahashi and Masahiro Nagumo, and senior researcher Seth B Benjamin attended from JLGC. In addition, we were most fortunate to have Mr. Kimitake Kuze, a member of Japan's House of Councillors, join the meeting.

At the annual meeting, the incoming chairman of NGA selects a theme, known as the *chairman's initiative*, which he will pursue throughout the ensuing year. For the 2003-4 year, chairman Dirk Kempthorne (R-Idaho) wanted to raise the governors' awareness of the challenges and prospects of long-term care for the growing senior population in the United States. The culmination of his initiative was presented in Seattle: *A Lifetime of Health and Dignity: Confronting Long-Term Care Challenges in America*, a remarkable presentation by two leading companies at the forefront of technological change and its application for the health industry. The focus of the presentation was to show the governors how the cost of health care for the elderly can be substantially reduced through the use of technology. Governor Kempthorne

gave the governors a CD-ROM on which was included a 'top 20 list' of actions the governors could take to improve long-term care in their respective states. It was all part of the chairman's hope to convince the governors to make their states 'elder-ready'.

As a follow-up to the presentation, many of the governors attending the annual meeting took part in a televised 'town hall' discussion with local residents on this issue



The 96th annual meeting of the National Governors' Association (NGA) in Seattle, WA was a complete success in June 2004.

of looking after the elderly. It was a lively session where the governors explained how they themselves were personally affected by the need to look after elderly parents. The whole thrust of the chairman's initiative was to see how much the elderly, particularly those who have worsening health problems, could live their lives independently and at home in dignity.

At the end of the meeting, the Association chose its new chairman, Governor Mark Warner (D-Virginia) and

vice-chairman, Governor Mike Huckabee (R-Arkansas). It is a tradition of the association to alternate between Republican and Democrat governors. Governor Warner's initiative will focus on the urgent need to improve America's high schools, calling it *Redesigning the American High School*. One concern Governor Warner had was the manner in which school districts wasted the senior year of their students. The new chairman said that only 70 per cent of

the nation's high school students earn a diploma and of those who do only three in ten are ready to attend a four-year college. In a student, he prepared for his initiative, he said, "Students, parents and teachers should no longer consider the so-called 'senioritis' a benign rite of passage. Instead, it should be recognised as a waste of time and resources, not to mention a lost opportunity for learning and preparing for college or for a successful transition to the workforce."

We were fortunate to have Mr. Kuze attend the meeting and JLGC was able to meet many of the governors and continue its fruitful relationship with the National Governors' Association staff. Also, at the splendid evening events, there were many great opportunities to meet the governors' staff from many different states. All in all, it was a most successful meeting for the JLGC and we look forward to the 97th meeting in Des Moines, IA.

Oh, Canadian Municipalities! The 2004 FCM Conference

by Matthew Gillam
JLGC Senior Researcher

Every year, JLGC sends several staff members to participate in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Annual Conference and Municipal Expo™. Attending as both delegates and exhibitors, we find that the conference provides an excellent opportunity to learn about recent developments in the various facets of local public administration, as well as the chance to spend time speaking directly with many politicians and administrators across the country.

The main theme of this year's conference, held in Edmonton, Alberta, was a new deal for cities and communities. This was the first FCM conference in 25 years to take place while a federal election was in progress, and the candidates for Prime Minister from two of the three main national parties took advantage of the opportunity to address the municipal officials gathered there. Each emphasized the vital role that urban areas and governments play in the well-being of the country, and each promised to give them new access to revenue from the federal gasoline tax and to include them in policy discussions at the federal level in matters affecting their communities.

Much of our energy during the first two days of the conference was devoted to speaking with visitors to our booth. It is always fascinating to talk with the many people who have been active in sister city programs or who have children who have taught English on the JET Program. The depth and variety of personal, professional, and civic relationships between Japan and Canada constantly impressed us, as well as the number of people who were interested in developing a new sister city relationship or in revitalizing an existing one.

We also attended many of the sessions devoted to the discussion and dissemination of information among the participants. On Friday morning, Ralph Klein, Premier of Alberta, was the first speaker during the Opening Ceremony. He was followed by Bill Smith, Mayor of Edmonton, and Yves Ducharme, Mayor of Gatineau, Quebec and President of FCM for 2003-2004, who very graciously introduced the international guests attending the conference. This year these included representatives from Mozambique and Vietnam, Charles Lyons, President of the National League of Cities in the US, and our own Mr. Hida, who was asked to stand and be acknowledged by the audience.

After this came Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada and head of the federal Liberal Party, who was in the midst of a desperate race to retain his position as PM. He had taken over from Prime Minister Jean Chretien last December and was facing his first election, confronting a serious challenge by the opposition Conservative Party under Steven Harper. The centerpiece of his speech was the official announcement that, if elected, he would phase in funding to cities and communities from the federal gasoline tax starting in 2005. He said this would eventually amount to up to five cents per liter or two billion dollars a year within five years, out of the ten cents per liter tax that is estimated to raise about \$4.5 billion per year for the federal government. Furthermore, he would require that this money would be distributed to communities specifically for their infrastructure needs. Municipal governments are dependent on property taxes and provincial funding, and have been demanding for years through FCM that they be given new, stable, reliable revenue sources to support their infrastructure development needs. The

speech was well received by the audience, despite some questions and reservations about the amount being promised and the time required to phase in the program. This funding agreement was seen as a significant victory for municipal governments and FCM.

Some of the other sessions attended include:

“Bridging Social Infrastructure to Economic Benefit”, on bringing the arts into communities as one element to strengthen social infrastructure and attract and retain the talented people who are the movers of modern high tech economic development;

“Four Pillars of Drug Strategy” given by Larry Campbell, Mayor of Vancouver, Philip Owen, who worked in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for years dealing with addiction issues, and Donald MacPherson, Drug Policy Coordinator for Vancouver;

“Issues Facing Municipal Governments in North America” a discussion between Yves Ducharme and Charlie Lyons;

“Bridging the Sustainability Gap” given by former British Columbia Premier Mike Harcourt. He talked about the “urban tsunami” which he defined as the combination of massive population growth in urban areas, poverty, health issues like HIV/AIDS, malaria, and malnutrition that threaten to engulf cities around the world, and the need to develop sustainable solutions to address these;

“New Finance Options for Municipal

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Oh, Canadian Municipalities! The 2004 FCM Conference



JLGC participated in Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Annual Conference and Municipal Expo™ in Edmonton, Alberta in May 2004.

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Government”, on the increasing demands placed on municipal government resources and the best way to develop a mix of different taxes, for which governments would have the

tax, in a plan similar to Mr. Martin’s but at a faster rate of phase-in, plus a renewed federal commitment to affordable housing in addition to the promised support of infrastructure projects. Both Mr. Martin and Mr. Layton shifted between French and English during their

authority to set their own rates and distribution of revenues.

The closing Keynote Address was given by Jack Layton, the New Democratic Party candidate for Prime Minister. He also acknowledged the need to give municipal governments a share of the federal gasoline

speeches, to demonstrate proficiency in both national languages.

The broad economic ties between Canada and Japan, the growing number of JET alumni around the country, and ongoing sister city relationships always create a great number of people who look for our booth every year. They are happy to see that we maintain an active interest in Canadian affairs and in working to keep the JET and sister city initiatives healthy and strong. It is a pleasure to be able to speak with so many different people, to be able to help answer their questions about Japan, and to occasionally be of assistance in establishing or renewing the links between the two countries. We look forward to attending the 2005 conference in St. John’s.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Message from USCM on the 15th Anniversary of JLGC

by Thomas Cochran
 Managing Director, Office of Program Development and Technical Assistance

The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) is pleased to congratulate the Japan Local Government Center (JLGC) on the occasion of its fifteenth anniversary. Since its establishment, JLGC has been of a great deal of assistance to the Conference and the nation’s mayors.

It is vitally important that in this day and age, the mayors from all countries have access to information and ‘best practices’ that work in cities. We can all learn from one another, be it how to provide housing for our

senior citizens, operate effective recycling programs, or tackle such health issues as AIDS and obesity.

JLGC has worked with the Conference of Mayors through our meetings, its publications and website, and the Japanese Fellowship Program to provide opportunities for American mayors to learn about the Japanese local government system and innovative municipal programs. The staff has also been very helpful to us in helping to organize our mayoral delegation visits to Japan.

As the Conference of Mayors continues our outreach around the world and through the International Conference of Mayors to learn new ways that mayors can deal with community problems, the work of JLGC will be an important part of our efforts. We look forward to having a long and beneficial relationship in the years ahead.



Mr. Thomas Cochran congratulates JLGC on their fifteenth anniversary.

The United States Conference of Mayors Meets in Boston for its 72nd Annual Conference

by Seth B. Benjamin
JLGC Senior Researcher

This year's annual meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) took place last June in the historic city of Boston. USCM acts as an organization representing the mayors of American cities that have a population of over 30,000. Mayor James Garner of Hempstead (NY) has been president of USCM since June 2003 and handed over the leadership to Mayor Donald Plusquellic of Akron (OH) for the ensuing year at this meeting. The Japan Local Government Center (JLGC) attendees included the director Naofumi Hida, assistant directors Atsushi Fukuda, Yujiro Toi, and Maki Tomikawa, and senior researcher Seth B Benjamin. The many workshops and sessions allowed the staff to learn about many of the issues that urban centers in the United States must face.

A wide range of topics has been covered at previous annual meetings and this year was no exception. From homeland security to city livability, from the progress in post-apartheid Cape Town, South Africa, to faith based prison re-entry programs in Philadelphia, from the arts, cultural and fitness programs to obesity in America, the mayors listened with rapt attention. Keynote addresses included two of special note. The newly appointed Ambassador to Poland and former Mayor of Nashville (TN), Mr. Victor Ashe, gave a thoughtful speech on the importance of international communities and activities as an integral part of American cities. In another speech, the Chinese Ambassador to the United States described what opportunities lay ahead for cities wanting to invest in a relationship with the cities of China.

A fascinating presentation was given on a new initiative that USCM was promoting to help community and brownfield revitalization. Advocating the public-private partnership, Tom Darden of Cherokee Investment Partners explained how blighted sites that mar the quality of urban centers can be brought back to productive use, create jobs and bring economic vitality to American cities. The difference in this program was that Cherokee aims to implement the city's vision rather than the typical developer who comes in with a pre-set idea of what he wants to build. This produces a true partnership between the public and private sectors.

Another subject that has been uppermost in the minds of virtually all mayors is homeland security. Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and Mayor Plusquellic, both members of a federal homeland security task force, described how essential it was for all levels of government to work together on this very important issue. As they so aptly emphasized, cities are on the front line of homeland security. The 'first responders' are the people who are the first on the scene of a terrible event and are almost always city or county officials.



United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) was held in Boston in June 2004.

Of course, the conference is not all work. The evenings offered opportunities for all attending to enjoy the great city of Boston, including the John F Kennedy Memorial Library. For the JLGC staff, the conference was a wonderful chance to make new friends, renew and strengthen old friendships and deepen our relationship with USCM.

