



JLGC NEWSLETTER

Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR, New York)
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JAPAN DAY 2014 IN NY

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A Greeting from the Executive Director

My name is Yasuo Tatsuta. I am the new executive director of Japan Local Government Center (JLGC), CLAIR New York. I am originally from Niigata Prefecture. Tokyo Metropolitan Government, where I now work, sent me to take over from my predecessor, Mr. Takaaki Ogata. I started my work here from April of this year.



Mr. Yasuo Tatsuta

First of all, I would like to take this occasion to express, on behalf of all staff members at JLGC, our sincere gratitude for your continued support for and cooperation with our office. I believe that strong, close friendships between nations can generate peace, development, and prosperity on both sides, and I look forward to establishing and strengthening closer relationships between Japanese communities and ones in the US and Canada.

**JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTER
(CLAIR, NY)**

3 Park Avenue, 20th Floor
New York, NY 10016-5902
212.246.5542 office • 212.246.5617 fax
www.jlgc.org

We mainly have three core aims at JLGC: Firstly, to strengthen grass-roots relationships and co-operation by state/provincial/local governments between North America and Japan; secondly, to support the activities and research carried out by Japanese local authorities in the US and Canada; and thirdly, to support the Japan Exchange & Teaching (JET) Program and the JET Alumni Association. I will do my best to achieve these goals during my time and would greatly appreciate your kind understanding and cooperation.

Japanese municipalities have about 440 sister cities in the US and about 70 in Canada. This spring, a friendship delegation from Nagaokakyo City, Kyoto Prefecture came to the U.S. to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the sister city relationship between Arlington, MA, and Nagaokakyo. To my surprise, this delegation consisted of 61 people, including 26 students and 30 citizens who spontaneously participated in this ceremony. In addition, some other delegations are going to come here after this. I think this means that many Japanese local governments and their people put importance on their relationships with the US and Canada, and I hope that grass-roots exchange and mutual understanding may become even deeper in the future.

Recently, various aspects of Japanese culture, commonly called “Cool Japan”, including anime, manga, J-pop (music), foods, and traditional culture, are very popular around the world. And in Japan we have not only sophisticated traditional handicrafts and food, but also many kinds of beautiful scenery and finely crafted products. In addition, Japanese culture values mutual consideration and support. Japan is made up of many different prefectures, from Hokkaido in the north, wide open and rich in nature, through the main island of Honsyu, along with Sikoku and Kyusyu and on to Okinawa in the far south. surrounded by beautiful ocean. I hope people from all over the world will come and visit these beautiful and wonderful areas of Japan and develop lasting relationships with them. I am sure you will like the people and regions wherever you go.

One of our main activities is supporting the JET Program and the JET Alumni, as I have mentioned. As you probably know, the JET Program makes it possible for Japanese local governments to invite young people from around the world to live in Japan, teach English in public schools, and interact with their communities. About sixty thousand people have participated in this program up to now, and over half of them were from the US and Canada.

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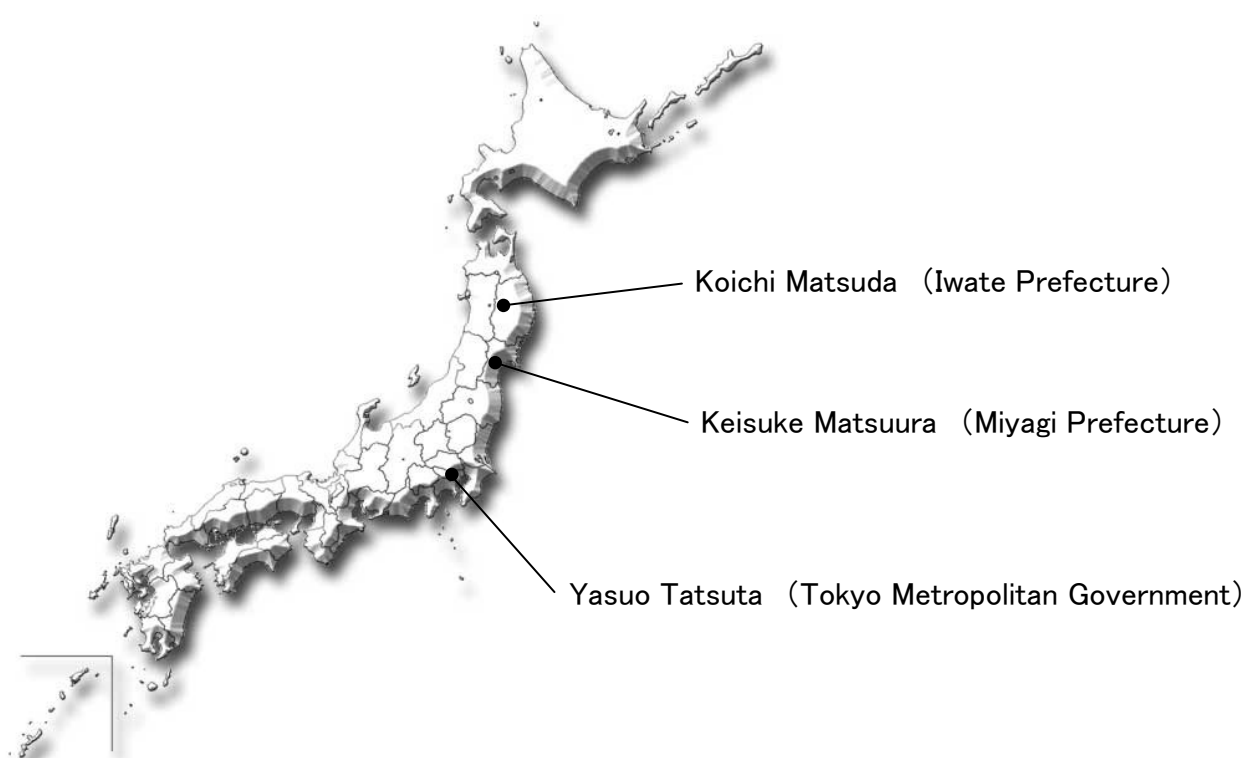
After JET, their experiences in Japan stay with them and contribute to enhancing their careers and their personal lives. These alumni then contribute to strengthening relations between Japan and their home countries. I wish continued success and prosperity for all the JET Alumni.

Now there is a new wave in Japan, which seeks more active exchange with the world, and JLGC will try to contribute to this by strengthening relations at the local level. I would like to say thank you to all of our readers and to the various government officials in the US and Canada as well as the JET Alumni for all the help and support you have given us. I know that your cooperation will make the relationship between Japan and the U.S. and Canada even more wonderful.

Yasuo Tatsuta

Executive Director

Introduction of New JLGC Staff



Koichi Matsuda, Assistant Director, Representative of Iwate Prefecture

Hello, my name is Koichi Matsuda from Iwate prefecture government.

Iwate is one of the largest prefectures in Japan, blessed with fertile land and beautiful nature and has various historical sites, such as those representing the world heritage site of Hiraizumi. Also the Morioka Sansa Odori Festival is one of the main festivals in the Tohoku region, held from August 1 through 4. It is a traditional art form whose roots stem from the happiness of people after driving away demons. It is a very large group dance performance of over 30,000 people accompanied by flutes and drums down the main street of Morioka City. The event set a Guinness World Record for “World’s Biggest Drum Parade”.



Mr. Koichi Matsuda



The Morioka Sansa Odori Festival

While I’m in New York, I’d like to convey the attractions of Iwate to as many people as possible. And I’m looking forward to meeting and talking to people all over the United States and Canada. Also, I should like to learn a lot of things through my work at Japan Local Government Center.



The Golden Hall of Chuson-ji Temple in Hiraizumi

Keisuke Matsuura, Assistant Director, Representative of Miyagi Prefecture

Hello. I'm Keisuke Matsuura from Miyagi Prefecture in Japan.

I'm very surprised I have been in New York from this April and will work here for two years, because it is my first trip abroad. Everything here is new and special for me, and I would like to find many interesting things.

I'm mainly in charge of the JET Program at JLGC. For example, I'm responsible for making Certificates of Participation for former JETs, supporting JETAA(JET Alumni Association) in the U.S., preparing JETAA meetings and so on. It is also the first time for me to handle JET. I would like to do my best in all these things.



Mr. Keisuke Matsuura

As you may know, Miyagi Prefecture, where I'm from, suffered great damage from the March 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami.



Matsushima islands

However, many people helped us, not only Miyagi Prefecture but also all the affected areas. Thanks to your help, it is getting better every day. I'm very glad if you come to Miyagi Prefecture to see the scenery, like Matsushima that is said one of the most beautiful places in Japan, and to eat Miyagi's cuisine, like Zunda-mochi, and to feel our energetic atmosphere. I'm looking forward to seeing you in Miyagi in the future.

Japan Day 2014 In Central Park

Japan Day 2014 was held on Sunday, May 11 in Central Park. There were many food tents and activity tents for Japanese things, such as Okonomiyaki, Tonkotsu Shoyu Ramen, Kabuki Face Painting, origami, and so on. Stage performances, like Taiko, also played to large audiences. I felt the high interest about Japan from visitors, because there were many people who stood in long lines at every tent, and some people who painted their faces like Kabuki actors.



Many people were waiting in line

Japan Society and JETAANY hosted the Yo-Yo Balloon (water balloon) tent in this event. In this tent, visitors could play the 'Yo-Yo fishing game'. It is a game to pull up a Yo-Yo Balloon from a pool full of water like fishing, using a little hook whose fishing line consisted of paper.



Visitors played 'Yo-Yo fishing game'

The trick is how deep you put your hook into the water so as not to dissolve the fishing line. JLGC members joined this tent as volunteers to help make Yo-Yo Balloons and assist children playing the game. After starting the event there were also many people visiting our tent, so it was a vibrant place. Although it is difficult to make a balloon, because JLGC members had never made Yo-Yo Balloons until this event, in the end all members could make them more beautiful and more quickly than the first one they made. I was impressed by how many visitors played the game and were happily walking with Yo-Yo Balloons we made. I hope this event can be an opportunity for more people to be interested in and love Japan.

An In-Depth Look Into the 2014 JETAA Canada Conference

Each year representatives from the seven Canadian JETAA chapters come together for CanCon, which is a conference hosted annually by chapters on a rotating basis that gives delegates a space for discussing the successes and hardships faced by individual chapters. It is also a great time for idea sharing and networking amongst the JET Programme alumni across the country and building better bridges among Canadian JETAA chapters. The 2013 CanCon was held and hosted by the Quebec/Atlantique chapter in Montreal, with the 2014 CanCon scheduled to rotate to the Manitoba/Saskatchewan chapter in Winnipeg. Due to limited capacities, though, the conference was re-scheduled to be hosted by JETAA Toronto at the Japan Foundation, in coordination with the Consulate-General of Japan and CLAIR New York. The conference was held Friday June 6th to Sunday June 8th, and focused on career development and mentorship initiatives. This article gives a quick summary of what the event was all about and what was discussed throughout the weekend.

Friday, June 6th

On Friday evening, CanCon kicked off with delegates from all over the country flying in to Toronto, who were then welcomed by a MOFA reception dinner hosted at the Official Residence of the Consul-General, Eiji Yamamoto. The Honourable Mr. Yamamoto, welcomed delegates and started the conference with an encouraging speech that recognized the efforts of the JET alumni, including their dedication to their respective JETAA chapters and to the local Japanese communities in their home cities.



MOFA reception at the Official
Resident of the Consul-General

Yamamoto-san brought to everyone's attention the networking possibilities that JET alumni have between JETAA chapters and with Japanese companies and corporations that are looking to expand their ties with Canada and are seeking people with an awareness of Japanese culture. JET alumni are ideally placed to help as bridges on the path to mutually beneficial partnerships and prosperity between our two countries. JETAA Toronto is very grateful to the Consul-General for giving all the JETAA delegates a very warm welcome to the city.

Saturday, June 7th

The main day of the conference was on Saturday, where a ton of information and ideas was shared among the chapters. Jeff Minthorn, the keynote speaker, set off the day by narrating his own experiences after JET, in his escapades that led to his founding of Verge Magazine. Some advice given by Jeff was to reflect on our motivations and values in what we are currently doing and ask ourselves, "Is it working?" He also expanded upon the notion of networking, and how you only get out what you put in. You have to grow your networks and build a relationship with those people. In the end, the network won't come to you, you have to take the initiative, be proactive and actively seek out those networks. Jeff's stories of how he has engaged with people and kept his consistency and motivation for cultural learning and travel was a great encouragement to all present, and we hope to hear from him again at future events.

The morning sessions also featured an update from MOFA and one from CLAIR New York on Grant-in-Aid. Following these discussions, a delicious bento lunch was accompanied by music from local Japanese artist Chihiro Nagematsu, of the Creator's Lounge.



A discussion in the conference

The afternoon sessions were broken down into reports and presentations from individual chapters. It seemed that most chapters host the standard key JETAA events such as pre-departure orientations, Japanese language lessons, natsu matsuri summer festivals, and networking events. Some of the more interesting updates included Ottawa's report on how they are in the process of becoming a registered not-for-profit and are re-writing the chapter bylaws, and how well they are doing with their annual

dragon boat team. The Quebec/Atlantique chapter has also been expanding, and for the first time last year was able to add an additional pre-departure orientation in Halifax run solely by alumni living there. They have also had success in their apple picking networking event and sending care packages to JETs in Japan. The BC/Yukon chapter has succeeded in their goal of centralized hosting. The past two years there have been focused on promoting the JET Programme in the region. Their current sempai programme is also a great example of JET alumni mentoring. Southern Alberta is doing well with their biggest board yet, is striving for membership participation, and is making membership retention a priority. Throughout the session a lot of networking and information sharing was achieved.

Jessie Zanutig, representing Northern Alberta, presented one of the last sessions of the afternoon, "Pitching Your JET Experience with a Professional Voice." Jessie, as a professional educator and career counselor was nice enough to share her professional advice on how JETs can use their experiences in Japan and put them into resume form.

In the evening, after the conference, delegates were able to discover Toronto on a walking tour around the lovely downtown. Delegates also had the chance to experience Toronto's diversity by sharing a Brazilian barbeque dinner at Copacabana, hosted by CLAIR New York, and many continued the night singing karaoke in KoreaTown.

Sunday, June 8th

CanCon wrapped up on Sunday with idea sharing on professional development events, inter-chapter communication and collaboration, strengthening ties to the JET desks, and the Canada Representative election process. The possibility of the 2015 CanCon being hosted by Northern Alberta was also discussed. Wherever CanCon is hosted next year, we hope all chapters are able to come together again and update everyone with all their great ideas.

CanCon 2014 was a huge success and could not be possible without support from CLAIR New York, the Japanese Consulate General in Toronto, JETAA Toronto's organizers, volunteers and support staff, the Japan Foundation, and of course all the chapter delegates who took time from their schedules to come to Toronto.

JETAA Toronto



Downtown in Toronto

New JLGC Staff visit Novi, Michigan



In Providence Park Hospital

Koichi's Comments

During my stay in the city of Novi, I was so impressed with the comfortable living environment and the hospitality of officials in Novi. The officials of public facilities like the city hall, the library and the fire stations provide flexible service in many different situations. I was able to understand why foreign companies decided to establish their offices in Novi. I want to make this great experience useful for my work in the future. Thank you so much for everything!

JLGC's new assistant directors, our Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Atsushi Inumaru, and Director, Rie Imazeki, visited the City of Novi, Michigan, on May 12-15, 2014.

Novi is located in southeastern Michigan and has a population of about 55,000. There are many numbers of Japanese companies doing business in Novi, resulting in a strong relationship with Japan.

Every year, Novi is kind enough to host JLGC's new staff to help us learn about American local government.

Keisuke's Comments

Visiting Novi was my first trip out of New York in the US. It was an excellent experience for me, and I was impressed the most by Providence Park Hospital. They have a system, like Skype, called MARTTI, so that a doctor can speak to a patient who can't speak English very well through an interpreter who is available anytime. This is one example of multiculturalism I have found in the US. I would like to say thank you to all the staff in Novi, and I hope the good relationship between Novi and JLGC will continue long into the future.

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3 Park Avenue, 20th floor, New York, NY 10016 / Tel: 212-246-5542 / Fax:212-246-5617 / E-mail: jlgc@jlgc.org / <http://www.jlgc.org>