

Commendation of the Spokane-Nishinomiya Sister City Association

I. Tragedy

Good afternoon, everyone. I am happy to see you all again and pleased that I could make it to see Spokane's beautiful autumn and harvest season! On April 15th and 16th of this year, my wife and I came to congratulate you on the 50th anniversary of Spokane-Nishinomiya sister city relations. Barely one month before that, Japan suffered a terrible three-fold tragedy. We have received many messages of sympathy, lots of donations and volunteers, from the US forces to private individuals. I continue to be touched by the kindness of the American people.

II. Progress

As I am speaking to you today, more than 7 months have passed since the disaster. Debris has been cleared and Tohoku is on the way to recovery and reconstruction. Roads have been re-opened, supply chains are functioning normally, and the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station is under control. Japan is open for business and leisure!

III. Friendship

Since I saw you last, the Mayor of Nishinomiya paid an official visit to Spokane in May, and your Mayor Verner lead a delegation to

Nishinomiya in September to reaffirm your mutual commitment to continuing your association. The Spokane-Nishinomiya relationship is a model for sister city relations. You regularly engage in student and teacher exchange, investing in the future by creating fertile ground for grassroots ties between your communities.

IV. Exchange Activities

Japanese language programs are thriving at 3 universities and 5 high schools in the area thanks to dedicated educators. This year you successfully held your first Japanese speech contest.

The JET Program recruits and interviews applicants in Spokane and Spokane welcomes about 400 female college students from Japan who will study here at Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute and participate in home stay programs.

These efforts, along with many more over the last 50 years have allowed the bud of your friendship to blossom into a beautiful flower.

V. Commendation

In recognition of your long years of dedication promoting friendship between the people of your two cities, I hereby present the Consul General Commendation to the Spokane-Nishinomiya Sister City Association. Congratulations!