

Sakura-Con Receives the Foreign Minister's Award

Good evening. Thank you very much for gathering at my Official Residence today.

I. Welcome

Today we are pleased to have 26 guests from ANCEA, the Asia Northwest Cultural Education Association, including Chairman Christopher Louck, and many other core members. As you know, a lot of work goes into bringing Sakura-Con to life each year, and these dedicated people manage this enormous task outside of their 9 to 5 jobs! They are drawn together by common passion, so I feel like I am hosting a family gathering tonight!



II. Sakura-con

Sakura-Con is named after sakura cherry blossoms, and is a Japanese anime, manga, game, and Asian-culture convention, which is held at the time of year when cherry trees bloom in Seattle.

It began in 1998 with just 313 people, and grew each year, especially in the last 5 years. 2012 saw 20,214 attendees!

For many, it is a rare chance to transform into their favorite characters and enjoy themselves in a fantasy world come to life. They join like-minded cosplayers walking around, not only the convention center, but also on the streets of Downtown Seattle, bringing curiosity and enjoyment to passersby.

In 2009, the then-Mayor Greg Nickels recognized the importance of this convention and designated April 9th as Sakura-Con Day.



III. Foreign Minister's Award Recipient

Sakura-Con attracts the younger generations to Japanese anime and manga, thereby getting them interested in Japanese culture and language. We are very thankful that Sakura-Con opens the eyes of the younger generation to Japan.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the gift of cherry trees from Japan

to the United States. 3,000 cherry trees were shipped from Yokohama to Seattle on February 14th, 1912, and then were transported by rail to Washington DC where they enjoy great popularity to this day. Cherry blossoms are a beautiful symbol of friendship between our peoples.

Sakura-con, as I mentioned before, is named after the cherry blossom, and the Sakura-Con logo also reflects this. Sakura-Con presents Japanese pop-culture as well as traditional culture to attendees, bringing in guest presenters from around the US and Japan. In these ways, Sakura-Con makes a great contribution to deeper understanding and friendship between Japan and the United States. Sakura-con, like the sakura trees it is named after, is a praiseworthy representation of the friendship between our peoples.

Our Foreign Minister, Mr. Gemba appreciates and recognizes this and bestowed this award to honor your hard work.

