



Consulate General of Japan in Seattle

在シアトル日本国総領事館

Greetings from Masahiro Omura

Consul General of Japan

April 25-27, 2014

Just over a century ago, Seattle had its first encounter with the cherry blossom, or *sakura*, when a large shipment of cherry trees from Japan entered the US through the Port of Seattle en route to Washington, DC. This gesture of friendship between Japan and the United States would subsequently be repeated many times as not only the *sakura*, but also the bonds between Japan and the US blossomed. This beloved flower has now become instantly recognizable as Japan's moniker of international friendship. Seattle's own special cherry blossom connection began in 1960 when a commemorative cherry tree was planted in the Japanese Garden at the Arboretum by then-Crown Prince Akihito. In 1975, this tree, now known as the Emperor's Cherry Tree, was relocated to the Seattle Center, which would later become the permanent home of the Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival.

The 2014 Festival celebrates 39 years of promoting Japan in the Pacific Northwest through a wide variety of enriching performances, educational programming, and engaging activities. Each year the Festival strives to become the common thread linking history and traditions to current trends and future visions of Japan.

The Consulate General of Japan in Seattle is proud to be one of the co-organizers of the Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival, as well as the Japan Foundation's traveling exhibit, "Passage to the Future: Art from a New Generation in Japan". Truly one of the highlights of this year's festival, it features an intriguing collection of contemporary works by Japanese artists. We are also pleased to be one of the co-organizers of the 31st Washington State Japanese Speech and Skit Contest and hope that participants and spectators alike will be inspired by the performances to study Japanese with renewed vigor!

I encourage you to visit our Consulate booth to learn about interesting travel destinations like Mt. Fuji (a UNESCO World Heritage Site as of June 2013), *Washoku*, or traditional Japanese cuisine (a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as of December 2013), study and work opportunities in Japan, samurai armor, and more. Our staff will also be happy to point out the new location of the Emperor's Cherry Tree next to Fisher Pavilion.

In closing, I would also like to express my great appreciation for all the hard work and dedication of the individuals and organizations that contribute to making the Festival a success.



Masahiro Omura

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Honorary Co-chair of the Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival Committee