



# JSBTC NEWSLETTER

FROM THE JSBTC BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Momji Park walkers on the PNE grounds, Vancouver, BC (during the JSBTC 2019 AGM)

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second issue of the JSBTC newsletter. We hope that this newsletter will be a voice for Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in Canada, keeping you up-to-date on what the JSBTC is doing, sharing information about the JSBTC and the Temples in Canada, and connecting us all. Our goal is to send out three issues each year.

## 2019 AGM REPORT

The 2019 JSBTC AGM and WF Annual Meeting was held at the Vancouver Buddhist Temple, April 25<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the VBT and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the current building. Attendees included all the Canadian ministers, delegates to the AGM from the Canadian temples (except Montreal and Ottawa), delegates to the WF Annual Meeting from the temples, Dr. Kent Matsuda (incoming President of the BCA), and a number of observers.

Although we were missing three Board members for health reasons (Larry and Amy Wakisaka and Debra Campbell

Hayashi), we managed to get a lot accomplished over the course of four days. The Board and the Ministers' Association met on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and then on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the Board, MA, LDC, and WF had joint meetings to discuss mutual areas of concern. The formal AGM was held on Friday night and Saturday morning, while the WF met Friday night and Saturday.

After the conclusion of the AGM, delegates from the various temples shared their temples' success stories. Of particular interest and challenge is the work being done by Vancouver, Toronto, and BTSA on developing videos and expanding to broadcasting as part of outreach to their respective communities. These efforts, together with the presentation on *Ripple* the proposed documentary on Jodo Shinshu in Southern Alberta, generated a lot of conversation about the use of social media, including Facebook and You Tube. From recording and broadcasting dharma talks to providing basic information such as entering the hondo and how do to oshoko, delegates could clearly see the benefits of sharing this work across the country. We looked as well at efforts by some of the US temples. For example, Orange County Buddhist Church has a very active online presence, offering online *Everyday Buddhism* classes for free or at minimal cost, as well as posting dharma talks. Because all the temples are gradually losing their older Japanese Canadian members, if temples and Jodo Shinshu are to stay active and relevant in Canada, we must find ways to reach the broader community and attract new non-Japanese members.

After the success stories, Professor Jessica Main from UBC spoke on Socially Engaged Buddhism, providing an overview of engaged Buddhism around the world and what it means. She defined it as "instigating systemic changes in social, political, and economic institutions and policies to further the well-being of people and other beings". A follow up panel discussion lead by Trudy Gahlinger with Rev. Yoshi Ouchi, Rev. Robert Gubenco, and Rev. Grant considered what Canadian sanghas could do to be social engaged: do what needs to be done, e.g., work in soup kitchens, help with housing, offer a smile.

Sunday morning's Tsuito Hoyo Memorial service was also VBT's 115th/40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service, which was reported in the Vancouver Sun: <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/dan-fumano-lessons-not-relegated-to-history-as-b-c-buddhist-temple-marks-milestone>.

Also at the Sunday morning service, Mrs. Terrie Ikuta was presented with a Certificate of Commendation for her years of service to Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in Canada, and we bid a formal farewell to Rev. James Martin who has now retired.

Sunday finished with a great celebratory anniversary lunch with VBT members. The JSBTC gives thanks to all the volunteers who helped make the weekend a great success.

## WOMEN'S FEDERATION UPDATE

The Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada Women's Federation (WF) held their annual meeting over the weekend of April 26th in Vancouver. Highlights of the meeting include:

- WF Dana Day funds are collected by Temples across Canada to go towards social welfare initiatives. This year, \$2,000 was allocated to Blankets for Canada and \$2,000 to Indspire (helping indigenous students in Canada complete their secondary education).
- The used stamps collected across Canada for 2018 raised \$255 for the International Save the Children's Fund (\$75 to provide a child with a uniform, text books and stationary for a year, \$75 to stock a medical clinic, \$50 to provide clean water, \$30 to provide medical care – to protect against parasites and vitamin deficiency, and \$25 for fruit trees that will provide food for the family and a crop to sell).
- Last year, 12 pounds of coins were given to Air Canada, to assist with their charity program.

- Youth Sponsorship Funds are available from the WF. Temples should encourage their youth to apply for these funds to attend the Japan youth tour or other Buddhist youth-related activities.
- 26 people and 4 ministers are currently registered to attend the World Buddhist Women's Convention in San Francisco later this year. A song and dance routine will be Canada's entertainment piece.
- The WF Terms of Reference were approved and work will start on Policies and Procedures documentation.




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Guided by the teaching of Shinran Shonin, we shall listen to the  
compassionate calling of Amida Buddha and recite the Nembutsu.

[Rennyō Shonin's Gobunshō]

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## LIVING DHARMA CENTER

The Living Dharma Centre (LDC) was conceptualized in 2005 to be a center for the forwarding of Shin Buddhist scholarly works as well as being a support for the temples in Canada. It was to be led by a paid director who was given enough capital to organize the structure as well as put a fundraising framework in place within a 3 year time frame. The organizing committee did not find a successful candidate to become the paid director, and the directorship was assumed at times by the Bishop and eventually by Dr. Leslie Kawamura on a volunteer basis.

Dr. Kawamura gathered volunteers from parts of the national membership across the country and put a "grass roots" structure in place for the LDC to fund small projects which were local and informal. After Dr. Kawamura's passing, the LDC was a loose group of individuals without structure or a leader. The JSBTC Board wanted to monitor the activities of the LDC and have a more formalized structure in place for financial and organizational oversight. A Board Liaison was appointed and after analysis and discussion with the JSBTC President, Board and the Bishop, the LDC Program Director became a portfolio of a National Board Director with a formalized structure in place for funding and accountability to the JSBTC.

The LDC drew its *raison d'être* from the phrase: "To increase the understanding of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in Canada by strengthening temple resources and promoting Shin Buddhist scholarship", found in part of Dr. Kawamura's writings and in the original proposal of the creation of the LDC. A budget for spending on projects was created and

approved by the JSBTC Board and ratified at the AGM by the membership with the same financial procedures and protocols followed by all JSBTC Board and Committees. The LDC took guidance and direction from and with the Bishop, gradually adding committee members for Dharma School Resources (Brenda Ikuta), Books and Education (Barb MacCarl) and Ministerial Assistants and Lay Leaders Development Program (Roland Ikuta) to help develop new projects and bolster existing programs.

The LDC provides partial subsidies for various projects, course fees and conference and travel expenses. Due to its limited income stream, it does not fully fund projects, and as well, the applicant must have a vested interest (investment) in their project. Also, with this approach to its limited budget, the LDC can help more projects instead of a few expensive ones, and it tries to preserve the principal investment. Successful applicants must submit a written report (with photos if possible) suitable for the JSBTC website of their project/course/conference. In the case of modules, a report accompanied by a repeatable procedure is needed for submission to the JSBTC AGM.

Some of the programs, projects and assistance extended by the LDC to temples and individuals have been:

1. Travel, registration and accommodation expenses to conferences such as: Techno Buddha, Federation of Dharma School Teachers League Conference, Eastern Buddhist League Conference and the Young Buddhist International Study Cultural Exchange (YBICSE) reunion in Berkeley.
2. Upgrade of audio systems at Calgary Buddhist Temple and Toronto Buddhist Church.
3. Subsidy for the two year Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course (a very high demand on-line course offered by Hongwanji through the Center of Buddhist Education). Bishop Aoki has facilitated access to this limited enrollment course (15 students in total per semester) to 2 approved Canadian applicants.
4. Further study for the ministerial assistants and Dharma lay leaders (both through financial assistance for study or by creation of LDC sponsored workshops).

The LDC has created a resource for Dharma School teachers and leaders in the restricted access Facebook group where ideas for lesson plans, crafts, projects, children's books and other discussion of topics for Dharma School teachers and leaders can take place.

When the LDC finds a book that is a worthwhile read, it will offer a book "gift" to all temples to share among their members. To date, the LDC has distributed a book with a compilation of Buddhist quotes, a book of essays and poems by a pioneering Canadian minister who became the first North American born Bishop of the BCA as well as an English Seiten compiled and translated by our Rev. Miyakawa (minister for the BC Interior temples). This past AGM the LDC gifted "Leaves of My Heart" a newly published and translated compilation of the writings of the Lady Takeko Kujo, daughter of the 21st Gomonshu, Buddhist activist and women's right advocate. We will continue to be on the watch for further books of interest and welcome any suggestions.

To embrace the huge geographic nature of our country and the difficulties of some to attend their local temple, the LDC Virtual Book Club was created. In this on-line group, a book is chosen as a group read with questions and discussions on an on-line forum is conducted. To date we have read six books in total with four Buddhist scholarly works and two being general insightful books. This Virtual Book Club has expanded beyond our country's borders and has embraced Buddhists from the BCA, Hawaii, U.K., Germany, Nigeria and Central America.

The LDC is always looking for ideas for developing programs, new book ideas and people to help us grow existing programs and create new ones. If you are interested in helping support our temples, furthering access to the Dharma to yourself or others, please contact the LDC Program Director, Amy Wakisaka at: [aw.livingdharmacentre@gmail.com](mailto:aw.livingdharmacentre@gmail.com) .

"Each and every one of us is a Living Dharma Centre." Bishop Tatsuya Aoki

*From the LDC: Save the Date*

*Our faith community is looking for ways of being more engaged in issues that impact our neighbours and global community. We find direction at the upcoming LDC sponsored Human Rights' Conference: "Humanity through a Buddhist Eye", which is scheduled for June 12 – 14, 2020 in Winnipeg, MB.*

**JSBTC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



Back row left to right: Trudy Gahlinger, Greg Chor, Rev. Grant Ikuta, Kent MacCarl  
 Front row: Larry Wakisaka, Laura Sugimoto, Amy Wakisaka, June Asano (WF), Socho, Debra Campbell Hayashi  
 (missing Harvey Kaita)

**JSBTC Board of Directors 2019:**

Larry Wakisaka, President  
 Debra Campbell (Hayashi), Vice-President  
 Greg Chor, Treasurer  
 Trudy Gahlinger, Secretary

Amy Wakisaka, Director, LDC  
 Laura Sugimoto, Director, WF  
 Harvey Kaita, Director  
 Kent MacCarl, Director

**Board of Directors' Advisors 2019:**

Rev. Tatsuya Aoki, Bishop of Canada  
 Rev. Grant Ikuta, Ministerial Association Chairperson  
 Dave Otori, JSBTC Past President

**Amy Wakisaka, Director (LDC)**

Amy Wakisaka has been a JSBTC Director since 2013 and has been assigned the portfolio of Program Director of the Living Dharma Centre since 2014. Amy basically felt that she grew up at the Toronto Buddhist Church as her parents were very involved at the local, regional and National level of the then Buddhist Churches of Canada (now the JSBTC). The Dharma has always been a pillar in Amy's life as observed in the practices and upbringing through her grandparents and parents. Amy has served in many areas at the Toronto Buddhist Church such as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Treasurer, Religious & Education Chair, Membership Chair, Future Planning Committee member, Eastern Buddhist League Conference 2017, JSBTC AGM Planning Committees 2010 & 2017 and Committee member of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary TBC New Building Celebration. Amy's previous work experience range from management in a retail children's educational toy store, retail lease and financial control accounting in a national clothing chain, accounts payable, buyer's assistant and inventory control clerk. Amy is currently retired and married to Larry Wakisaka. They have three wonderful adult children ranging in age from 33 to 27. Amy enjoys reading, having meals with friends and family, trying new restaurants, listening to salsa music while planning and taking cruises to the Caribbean with Larry.

**Kent MacCarl, Director**

Kent MacCarl is a past Director of the Kelowna Buddhist Temple (KBT). He has four decades of experience in the industrial and mechanical vocations. Most recently, 23 years with Cummins Inc. presently leading strategy for the high horsepower filtration business in North America. Kent is a graduate of the Faculty of Commerce from The University of British Columbia and holds an MBA in International Management from Asia Pacific International Institute in Auckland New Zealand. As a community advocate, Kent has served in various functions on boards and committees in many non-profits sectors including; RCMP community policing, Salvation Army Christmas Kettle Campaign and The Central Okanagan Hospice Association. Kent is married to Barb and they have two grown children Morgan and Brady. Kent and Barb enjoy traveling and express appreciation to Canada's great outdoors through hiking and skiing.

**Laura Sugimoto, Director (WF Rep)**

Laura Sugimoto is a retired senior commercial lawyer in Calgary. She and her husband, Tom, have been members of the Calgary Buddhist Temple for over thirty years. She has been a director of the Calgary Buddhist Temple for the past ten plus years and is the Vice President as well as chair of the Temple's Building Committee. She has been involved in other volunteer activities; most notably she was a Trustee of the Calgary Public Library for ten years and is currently on the Council of Champions advising the Calgary Public Library Foundation.

**Trudy Gahlinger, Secretary**

Trudy has provided consulting services to non-profit organizations across Canada for more than 20 years. Her major areas of expertise include: Board governance, strategic planning and organizational effectiveness. In addition to her consulting services, Trudy has taught courses in non-profit management and governance at the U. of Calgary and Mount Royal University. She has a Master's degree in Education. Trudy joined the Calgary Buddhist Temple in 1998 and was privileged to serve the Temple in a number of roles, including providing governance training to the Board of Directors and serving on the Fundraising Committee for the new Temple. Trudy has also assisted the national Board of the Jodo Shinshu Temples of Canada (JSBTC) with Board development. She has been a Director of the national Board for 4 years and now lives in Victoria, BC. Trudy is the President and Owner of Gahlinger Consulting Inc.

**DHARMA MESSAGE****A long night**

**by Rev. Yasuo Izumi**  
(BTSA)

There is a Correctional Centre which is located not far from our temple. I have visited there to talk to inmates every other Wednesday for the last 10 years. One day a prison chaplain came to me and asked if I could visit inmates at the Correctional Centre because some inmates requested a Buddhist minister to visit from time to time. He said if there are no requests from inmates, you do not need to come. So, I started visiting the Centre. I thought it was an easy thing to do because I would visit there only when I was requested. But since then the prison chaplain has called me every other Wednesday. There were always requests. Buddhism is getting popular even at the Correctional Centre.

At any rate, a few days ago I went there. It was a very cold day. There were two female inmates waiting for me. They seemed to be about 25 years old or so. They looked tired. I asked them "Are you able to sleep well during the night?" I often ask this question to inmates. Usually they say they are not sleeping well. These two inmates also said one after another, "No. we can't sleep well. We feel night is long."

Many of us also have such experiences when we have something to worry about. Perhaps these inmates regret what they have done. Shakyamuni Buddha said: "A night seems long to a sleepless man and a journey seems long to weary travelers; so the time of delusion and suffering seems long to a man who does not know the right teaching." Thus, he encouraged us to listen to the right teaching. For us the right teaching is the teaching of Amida Buddha of infinite wisdom and boundless compassion which was left by the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni.

All Inmates have done something wrong against society, whether abusing or trafficking in illegal drugs, stealing or other punishable activities they regret. These two female inmates said, "We were selfish. We did not think of others and harmed them. We shouldn't have done that." Their words reminded me of a passage in the sutra: "We harm ourselves. We harm others. We harm both in our everyday life." When we honestly look inside ourselves deeply we realize we are also selfish. I do not think anyone lives completely unselfishly throughout life.

Shinran Shoinin says that it is human nature when the conditions mature that we do not know what we will do against our mind. Is this not our true nature? It is easy to point out other's selfishness while we forget our own.

There is a funny proverb: “Saru-no-shiriwarai”, a monkey laughs at others’ buttocks. The monkey is unable to see his own. So, he laughs at others’ buttocks. When we find our own selfishness we, for the first time, understand others and cry together over our imperfections and failings. In this sense, there is no concept of “to forgive or to be forgiven” in Buddhism. We are both selfish foolish beings.

Prince Shotoku who supported Buddhism when it was introduced to Japan in the 6th Century wrote his 17 articles in which he said: We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary men. Yes, we are simply ordinary beings with blind passions.

Amida’s vow is called tariki, powerful working beyond our world based on our ego-self. In his wasan-poem Shinran said “Amida Buddha of unconditional vow is a great torch in the long night of ignorance.” We must live on the ground not of our ego-self but of Amida Buddha’s vow expressed in namo amida butsu which will never be shaken through the long night of ignorance of our selfishness.

In Gassho, “Amida’s compassion is a great torch in the long night of ignorance; do not sorrow that your eyes of wisdom are dark. Amida’s call is a ship on the vast ocean of birth-and-death; do not grieve that your obstructions of blind passions are heavy.”

### **Rev. Yasuo Izumi**

Reverend Yasuo Izumi came to Canada, from Japan, as an ordained Minister of Jodo Shinshu (Shin Buddhism) in November, 1970. His first ministerial assignment was in Lethbridge and he later served in Vancouver, Toronto and Richmond. Reverend Izumi continued his religious studies at the Vancouver School of Theology and later received his Master’s degree in Buddhist Studies from the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California.

In November of 2002, 27 years later he was reassigned to temples in southern Alberta where he is now the minister of a new temple, Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta (BTSA). This conglomeration of five temples conducted a dedication ceremony of April 26, 2009. In February of 2018, he received a Commendation of Consulate General of Japan.

Reverend Izumi is married to his wife, Sachi, and is the father of five children and grandfather of 9 grandchildren.

## TEMPLE STORY



April, 2019, marks the 10th anniversary of the dedication of the Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta (BTSA), but its visibility, stature and reputation rest upon a bedrock of area Jodo Shinshu history extending back nearly a century earlier in the Raymond Buddhist Temple in 1929. It, along with six other area temples were incorporated formally in 2007 to found the BTSA.

The Raymond temple and fellowships in surrounding communities were augmented by those established by Japanese-Canadians forcibly removed to Alberta: Calgary, Coaldale, Lethbridge, Picture Butte, Rosemary and Taber during World War II. In time, the Lethbridge Honpa Church was founded in the 1960s. Calgary remains a separate JSBTC member temple.

The seven temples propagated and nurtured Jodo Shinshu through to the early years of the 21st century individually, collectively and, eventually, in a Buddhist Federation of Alberta (BFA), that encouraged cooperation and



foreshadowed BTSA. This brief telescoping of the many years of existence and activities of the seven temples is hardly meant to minimize their major contributions, but to give a historic context to BTSA's deep gratitude to them and to build upon their dedication forward.

A site for a new structure was found in the eastern end of Lethbridge and ground was broken on a chilly Remembrance Day morning in 2007, as part of the 29th annual Alberta Buddhist Conference. Construction proceeded through January, 2009, when the new structure was completed to allow furnishings stored in the Coaldale temple to be moved in. A grand dedication ceremony was held Apr. 26, 2009, in conjunction with the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada annual general meeting which BTSA coincidentally hosted.

Since its inception, guided by Jodo Shinshu principles, the temple has been a busy and thriving venue for Buddhist as well as community activities. Major Jodo Shinshu commemorations of Ho-onko, Hanamatsuri and Obon are augmented by numerous temple programs and activities that sustain its membership and Dharma friends. The bon odori aligned with the mid-summer observance of Obon has evolved into an annual civic celebration at Lethbridge's downtown Galt Gardens.

Looking forward, BTSA's young, energetic board members have outlined challenging programs for the temple. Central to their efforts will remain the Jodo Shinshu principles to keep constantly in mind: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

## LIVING TREASURE OF CANADIAN JODO SHINSHU BUDDHISM

The JSBTC wishes to acknowledge and honour those who have made, and continue to make, a significant contribution to Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in Canada. This is the second in our Living Dharma series.

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### ROY AKUNE

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Roy Akune was born on March 20, 1936 in Steveston, B.C. and graduated from Richmond High School in 1954 and then the University of B.C. in 1958 with a B.Sc. degree in Chemistry and Zoology. In 1961, three years after working as a Research and Quality Control Chemist at Reichhold Chemicals and Canada Packers, he entered the Faculty of Education and received his teaching certificate from the University of B.C. In 1967, Roy received his Master of Education degree in School Administration and Supervision from Western Washington University.

Roy's career in Education began in 1962 as a science teacher at Eric Hamber High School (Vancouver); in 1964, he transferred to Richmond High School where he taught Chemistry and was Boy's Counsellor. His career continued into administration when in 1968, he was appointed Vice-Principal at Hugh Boyd Jr. Secondary School. Subsequently, his first principal-ship came in 1970 at Howe Sound Secondary in Squamish, B.C. This was followed in 1973 with the assignment of designing and opening the new London Junior Secondary School in Richmond. This experience, in 1978, led to an appointment by the B.C. Provincial Government as District Superintendent of Schools of the Cariboo Chilcotin School District in Williams Lake, B.C. After one year, he returned

to the Richmond School District as an Assistant and Deputy Superintendent of Schools. In 1980, he was appointed Adjunct Professor in Educational Administration by Simon Fraser University. Eventually, in 1987 he returned as Principal to his alma mater, Richmond High School, and retired in 1994.

Roy's interest in Jodo Shinshu began in 1943 in Raymond and grew under the influence of both his parents and Rev. Shinjo Ikuta, then resident minister of the Raymond Buddhist Temple. In 1952, his family returned to Steveston, B.C. where he continued his association with Jodo Shinshu and temple life by assisting with the Dharma school under the mentorship of Rev. Shinjo Ikuta, who had transferred to Kelowna, B.C. and assumed the role as minister of all temples in British Columbia, including the Steveston temple. As a member of the Steveston Buddhist Temple, Roy became much involved in its organization and assumed leadership positions as a Dharma School teacher and member of the Board of Directors. He was elected President from 1980 - 1986.

Concurrently, he became involved in the British Columbia Jodo Shinshu Buddhist organization and was elected to the Presidency. During this period of fervent activity of the Provincial organization and through the efforts of Reverends Shinjo and Kyojo Ikuta, the Board of Directors were able to purchase the rare Collection of the Tripitaka and donate it to the University of B.C. This was indeed a major accomplishment.

It was at the 1980 BCC (prior to the renaming of the association as JSBTC) Annual General Meeting in Montreal, Quebec that he was provided with the opportunity to assume a broader leadership role in Jodo Shinshu as President of the National organization. He served in this capacity for six years. During his tenure, the BCC Board of Directors had made the change from part-time Bishop to a fulltime position and moved the Office of the Bishop from Toronto to the Vancouver Buddhist Temple. Eventually this led to the construction of the BCC headquarters in Steveston on property donated by the Steveston temple and with financial assistance of the Nishi Hongwanji and donations from members and friends of Jodo Shinshu. Roy was instrumental in affecting the zoning, the design and construction of the Headquarters. He continued to serve with the BCC in the capacity as chairman of the Annual General meetings.

Roy's next step as a follower of Jodo Shinshu was to enroll in the original Nishi Hongwanji Tokudo (minister's assistant) Programme. In May 1999, with the approval of the Bishop, he and Dr. Tony Barber, a member of the Calgary Buddhist Temple, enrolled in the Nishi Hongwanji Tokudo programme. On achieving Tokudo status, Roy was designated to assist at the Steveston Temple. In 2002, with the change in Bishop from Rev. Kyojo Ikuta to Rev. Orai Fujikawa, he was transferred to the Vancouver Buddhist Temple. During his time in Vancouver, his initiative led to serving as Buddhist Chaplain at the University of B.C. for four years.

Currently, he is the Minister's Assistant at the Steveston Buddhist Temple. As a Minister's Assistant, Roy has been involved with:

- Conducting services in the absence of the temple minister,
- Giving talks on Buddhism, leading group discussions and sharing the Buddha Dharma with visitors,
- Chairing the Religious Committee,
- Organizing the Buddhist Fellowship in Victoria in 2017; this endeavor was dropped after a year with the lack of followership,
- Providing Chaplaincy work at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Richmond and Surry; this initiative did not materialize due to scheduling difficulties.
- Organizing very successful Buddhist Pilgrimages to India.

Roy Akune has committed himself to fostering and engendering followership in Jodo Shinshu. The sharing of the Jodo Shinshu doctrine has been his prime endeavor.

With gratitude, we can all say a very heartfelt thank you to Roy.

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Do you have comments or suggestions about the newsletter? What would you like to see in the newsletter? Send your comments to [jsbtcnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:jsbtcnewsletter@gmail.com). We would love to hear from you!

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## TECHNO-BUDDHA CONFERENCE, BCA, BERKELEY

Attended by Kyle Rathgaber (Manitoba Buddhist Temple), sponsored by the Living Dharma Centre

### INTRODUCTION



The Techno Buddha conference is an annual conference hosted by the Center for Buddhist education in Berkley California for people between the ages of 21-39. It at first was a conference for networking within the Sangha communities but has now become an event where likeminded people of the Jodo Shinshu communities come to hear dharma talks and discuss social issues that affect Sangha's across America. I was fortunate enough to go and represented the only Canadian. There were several workshops available, each discussing aspects of Jodo Shinshu and the hurdles that are faced within the organization as previously mentioned. The two I attended were "Discovering our Authentic Self" by Rev. Dr. Kenji

Akahoshi, and "LGBTQ Buddhist Experiences and discussion" C.J. Dunford and Akiko Rogers.

The keynote for the event was "How Do We Find Self in the Context of No Self" by Dr. Kenji Akahoshi. The event took place between March 22-24/19 in Berkley California.

The keynote was an uplifting talk, with the main emphasis on the self. With no self, there is no problem, but if there is no problem are you really living? We know that life is suffering, that's how you know you are living. With understanding suffering, Dr. Akahoshi discussed the 'mind', but he also distinguished how there are different interpretations of what the mind is between western and eastern cultures. In Western culture we think of the mind as our brain essentially but in eastern cultures it can be thought of as the 'body, mind, spirit'. These two different ways of interpretation may lead someone to a different understanding of self. He discussed the ego, and the importance of practicing the teachings. When practicing he emphasized that instead of saying 'please' to people (in regard to asking), we should emphasize on receiving 'Thank You'. Understanding the teachings essentially helps our 'selves'.

The workshop on discovering ourselves was also done by Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi and was an extension to his keynote. He discussed in life as three stage: Childhood, Initiation, and Adulthood. He provided the example of Siddhartha: he was once a child, but he went into the 'initiation' of enlightenment, he became the Buddha. That allowed him to become his authentic self.

Because I am a member of the LGBTQ community, I went to the workshop on America's perspective on the relationship between Jodo Shinshu and LGBTQ community. I also wanted to go to this workshop because currently in

JSBTC does not focus on this community, and I often find it hidden in Canada, either because Canada's Temples are spread out so the community does not get together or because there is a fear of coming out to individual Sanghas because the perceived lack of support.

The workshop was a safe space for those wanting to know more or wanting to explain their experiences with Jodo Shinshu. The discussions we had within the group were surrounding the idea of whether Jodo Shinshu is open. There was consensus that Jodo Shinshu is open, but that it is dependent on who you are. Caucasians have the privilege of being able to express their queer self. Most couples accepted are usually white in appearance, whereas those who are Japanese American face prejudice within their own community. Some may face the issue within families, or even

from within the sangha. Ministers for the most part have promoted LGBTQ, but there have been instances where LGBTQ Japanese Americans have not been a part of that, and in fact there has been a denial of there being any LGBTQ Japanese Americans. Although, the tone has become more progressive, there is still a feeling that LGBTQ Japanese Americans are not accepted.

It is important the organization is involved in understanding LGBTQ issues, and that the knowledge gets spread out across Sanghas. Much as the individual has to process their identity, the workshop discussed how parents and the Sangha has to learn to process who this person is. We self-impose identities on one another, in most cases a heteronormative identity. By imposing that narrative to the individual, it causes the person to question who they are. This questioning about what is acceptable causes doubt and can increase higher risk of depression, suicide, drug use etc. Parents must have the resources to grieve for the child they thought they knew and to be able to have a new relationship with their child.

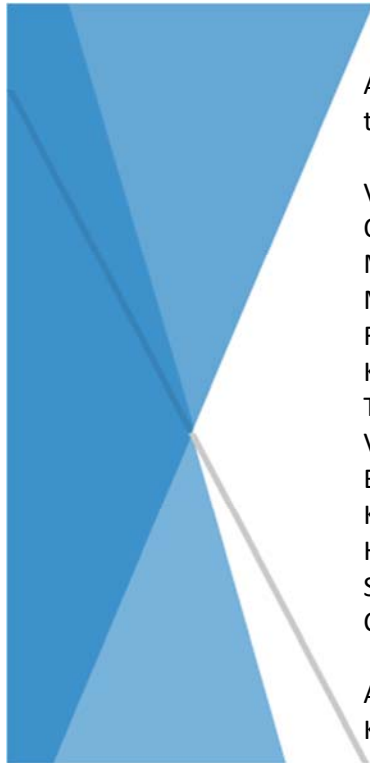
The BCA, with assistance from individuals like C.J. Dunford and Akiko Rogers, have done amazing work on expanding Queer knowledge to the Sanghas. Allowing members to hear panels, discussion groups, and asking questions so members can learn and not be afraid of something they don't fully grasp has had an impact on families in general. They are identifying the Sangha issues and beginning the conversation which is the first step towards LGBTQ communities on feeling accepted by their peers in the Sangha.

The point in the workshop was to understand the hardships people in the LGBTQ community face in the macro level. Understanding general queer theory is important, such as definitions, family dynamics, sexual orientations etc., can have a huge impact on how a member reacts to a situation. I believe the JSBTC should be looking into how leaders of the BCA are confronting this issue. I believe having workshops, like the one we had in Techno Buddha can bring people together and can make people of the LGBTQ community who may have felt uncomfortable to come to the temple. Focusing on implementing simple changes like pronoun name tags, focusing on having the discussions and continuing to understand the academia of Queer theory, as well as connecting with other LGBTQ Jodo Shinshu members across Canada and America so we can feel more connected. Canada doesn't really discuss this enough and I believe we should be, not only for Sanghas but also to help spread the teachings of Amida Buddha. This means accepting what we have done wrong in the past, learning from it, and practice the Amida's teachings of accepting as you are.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of my trip was to learn to take back to my temple. I also wanted to discuss various subjects with my peers that I believe need to be discussed and from that I gained new friends within the Jodo Shinshu community. Besides the serious topics, there was plenty of time for socializing and bonding. I was able to explore the Jodo Shinshu Centre, was able to represent my country as now being the supreme ruler "Mr. Techno Buddha 2019" which won me some monies. I signed up on the committee to assist with miscellaneous events for next year, hoping that I will be able to travel again to meet up with my new friends and discuss topics that are relevant and timely to the matters we face now and in the future.

## OBON SCHEDULE



Are you travelling in Canada this summer? Here's the schedule for Obon services across the country:

Vernon: June 23  
 Ottawa: June 29 at 2:00  
 Montreal: June 30 at 2:30  
 Manitoba: July 7  
 Fraser Valley: July 13  
 Kelowna: July 14  
 Toronto: July 14  
 Vancouver: July 14 at 2:00 (Bon Odori at 4:00)  
 BTSa: July 21 at 2:30  
 Kamloops: July 21  
 Hamilton: July 21 at 2:00  
 Steveston: July 28 at 10:30 (Bon Odori July 27 at 5:00)  
 Calgary: August 18 at 3:00

Also, don't forget the BC Jodo Shinshu Federation is holding their fall conference in Kamloops Sept 27 – 29. Dr. Ken Tanaka will be the guest speaker.

## REMINDER

All operational queries, updates and cheques for Health Benefits should be directed to:

Kari Natsuhara 295 Desert Cove  
 Vernon, BC V1H 1Z1  
[kipnip17@gmail.com](mailto:kipnip17@gmail.com)

All other correspondence and cheques are to be directed to: Attn: Joanne Yuasa

80 Acton Ave.,  
 North York, ON, M3H 4H1  
[Jsbtcheadquarters@gmail.com](mailto:Jsbtcheadquarters@gmail.com)

JSBTC Correspondence that is received at the Vancouver Buddhist Temple 220 Jackson Avenue, Vancouver, B.C will be redirected as appropriate.

Escalation of operations issues may continue to be directed to [Greg.Chor@gmail.com](mailto:Greg.Chor@gmail.com) Treasurer

We would like to share special temple events, dates, anniversaries, etc. Please send us your Temple highlights and special dates, anniversaries, etc., with pictures. Comments or questions about the newsletter?

Please email [jsbtcnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:jsbtcnewsletter@gmail.com)