

2004 International JET Alumni Association Conference Report

Tom Kawasaki attended the International JETAA Conference in New York from February 26 to 29, 2004. Below his is report of the events. For the full notes of the conference please visit www.jetalumni.org.

The New York chapter of JETAA hosted our annual international conference.

Speakers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and CLAIR announced where they viewed the future of the alumni organization to be. Of note, MOFA, along with the results of the participants' survey, said that the international conference format would be changing. MOFA would continue to support the alumni but would limit future international conferences with full delegate participation to every five years. The conferences would coincide with the 5-year anniversaries of the JET Programme. Annual meetings of country representatives and JETAAi executive members would continue to be funded. MOFA continued by reiterating that one of the goals of JET alumni should be to continue to educate people in our home countries about Japan and Japanese culture. Since alumni members now number in excess of 30,000 worldwide, we are a force that should be utilized. CLAIR stressed that the continued support of JETAA was important, but that chapters should begin preparing for the possibility of reduced or no Grant-in-Aid funding in the future.

Several chapters expressed concerns regarding contact with returning JETs. CLAIR will continue to send names of those who volunteer information regarding their return dates and locations. However, the information flow is not perfect. If alumni choose to not submit their return details, JETAA will continue to have problems finding them. Being proactive in educating departing JETs about JETAA, keeping contact with them while they are in Japan, and stressing the importance of staying in touch with their chapter is the best way of ensuring continued participation in JETAA.

Criteria for the JET Programme selection have once again been widened in an attempt to attract more qualified applicants. The maximum age has been increased to 40 from 35. Former JETs may now reapply after being out of JET for 10 years. Applicants for JET may now apply so long as they have spent less than 3 out of the past 8 years in Japan.

Improving the JET Programme was a topic that was discussed. CLAIR now includes a team teaching demonstration at the Tokyo Orientation. The language classes are being expanded to include more people, and are slated to start much earlier to help JETs to adapt to living in Japan. More JETs are being invited to participate in the Returnees Conference. Now, 2 and 3 year JETs may attend. Recruiting is to expand to include smaller, less accessible universities. Salary increases for 4th and 5th year JETs is also being investigated.

The Keynote Speaker was a Japanese woman who organizes a volunteer group in New York. She said that in order to attract and retain volunteers, it is important to share your mission with them. Make sure that people are happy. Negative people can undermine the happy group dynamic.

It is important to outline your expectations as well as their wants. If the goal of the group is understood, then the results are much easier to achieve. Payment isn't always monetary. The satisfaction of the group is something that volunteer organizations must focus on.

She also stressed that it was important to work with nice people. People are far more likely to volunteer their time if they are surrounded by nice, positive people. She also said that to attract Japanese people, it was important to have something Japanese (in your name, activity etc.) that they could immediately identify with.

One very contentious issue was the creation of a database of all former

JET participants. Although CLAIR maintains a database now, JETAA felt that it was important to keep better records concerning its members. Several countries pointed out that the danger of keeping such a list is that it could be used for malicious reasons. Japan has passed extremely strict legislation concerning the use of such information. This assures that the Japanese chapters of JETAA will not participate for fear of legal recourse. A committee has been formed to study cost, practicality and implementation of a JETAA database.

With our new membership list topping 400 members, we may qualify for higher Grant-in-Aid amounts. Although I am still looking into the logistics of this, it may mean that funds will be made available for a sub-chapter to form somewhere in Atlantic Canada.

O-Hanami

The Montreal Botanical Garden is hosting their annual O-Hanami picnic. The event is going to take place on Sunday, May 16, 2004.

Please see the enclosed pamphlet for more detailed information.

As an incentive, JETAA Montreal is going to refund \$5 to the first 25 JET alumni who attend.

Your name must be in our JET database to qualify. Also, keep your bento receipt as it will serve as a proof of attendance.



Welcome Words

A new JETAA Montreal Executive Committee was elected at the beginning of the year. Since most of us are new to this, we've been meeting monthly to organize ourselves and get the ball rolling.

Our first big accomplishment is putting together this brand new quarterly newsletter. We hope that the next one will be filled with YOUR contributions. We welcome your JET stories, your travel journal entries, your recipes, your job postings, your ads, etc.

We are also in the midst of setting up a new Montreal JETAA Website. It will feature the same info found in the newsletter, but also interesting links to other

JETAA chapters and Japan-related topics.

On the social front, we intend to organize several activities for JETAA members and local members of the Japanese community. There seems to be more and more young Japanese people in Montreal studying or on work-holiday Visas etc. We would like to invite all to participate in those activities so we may all continue to enhance the cross-cultural relationships between Canada and Japan.

Feel free to share any ideas or suggestions you may have with us. JETAA will be what we all make of it together.

Call for Articles

Do you have memorable JET stories?

Do you know of great travel destinations?

Do you know an exquisite yet simple to prepare Japanese recipe?

Do you know where to find a panoply of anime stuff?

Why not share them with all of your JETAA fellows?

Submissions for the newsletter are more than welcomed so send them to us at: montrealjetaa@hotmail.com

Our next issue is going out in August so send in French or English articles before July 15, 2004!

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Logo Contest

We are currently looking for a new JETAA Montreal logo. It will be used on our newsletter, website, stationery, etc.

Why should you put pen to paper? Because fame and glory will be yours!!! Well maybe not, but we do have a **50\$ gift certificate at Katsura** for the creator of the chosen logo. How does that sound to you?

So start thinking folks... What imagery do you see when you mix Montreal with Japan?

Please send submissions to our email address or snail mail them to us. Thank you in advance for submitting your creations. Note that artwork will not be returned. Indicate "logo contest" on the envelop or in the subject line.

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montrealjetaa@hotmail.com

Great creative opportunity!

Deadline is May 15, 2004

Meet the 2004 JETAA Montreal Executive

Who are these crazy people volunteering to make Montreal JETAA 2004 the next big thing? Read on to find out!

Carl Delaney
President

As one of the more "mature" JET participants (wink wink), I am pleased to become President of the Montreal Chapter of JETAA. It's nice to see how much our ranks have grown since my return from Japan in 1995. On JET, I was located in Maki-machi, Niigata-ken, where I spent 3 fun, weird, exiting, boring, crazy, enlightening, educational and wonderful years. You might be interested to know that a group of us ex-JETs from Niigata became such good friends that we hold reunions every 2 years. Since we are spread out around the world, choosing venues is always difficult. So far we have held these ESOL reunions (you can ask me about ESOL if you're curious) in Bar Harbor, Maine, Whistler, BC, Hawaii (Oahu and Hanalei Bay, Kauai) and the last one in 2003 was in Airlie Beach Australia (Queensland). The next one in 2005 will be either in Mexico, Belize or Costa Rica. We're going to have to have one in Japan at some point!!! We fly in for these reunions from all over (Hong Kong, Italy, Australia, Canada, Japan and the USA). Our numbers vary each time. From 7 to 17 people... Some of these people I met in Niigata on JET in the early 90s have become my closest friends. It's pretty interesting what can develop from the JET Program, wouldn't you agree?

Tom Kawasaki
Treasurer

I'm Tom Kawasaki, and I will be the Treasurer for Montreal JETAA in 2004. I was in Yamagata Prefecture from 1996 until 1999. Since then, I have been living and working in the Montreal area. If anyone has some great fundraising ideas, please get in touch with me and we will try to implement them together!

Jodi Pichovich
Newsletter & Website Coordinator

I'm Jodi Pichovich and my blood type is O negative. My favorite character is Miffy. I was my city's first ALT when I arrived in Mihara-shi, Hiroshima-ken in 1997. I adored every minute of my three years there. I came away from Japan with a love of *tako*, Kimutaku, the bands Kiroro and Yuzu, and the students and staff of my two base schools.

Working with Khoi as Newsletter Editor seems like a natural thing to do. We left from Montreal together, part of a close-knit group, in 1997. We both worked on the *GaJETte*, a newsletter we created to help keep the 1997 group in touch while in Japan. As the JETAA Newsletter contents editor, I look forward to seeing lots of participation and I hope that, as a group, we can make this newsletter an interesting one. Please don't hesitate to write about your experiences, your travels, reintegrating into Montreal culture... Anything at all.

I currently work as manager of a houseful of boys (my husband, my teenage stepson, and my two toddlers). When not searching for misplaced blankies and basketball jerseys, I spend my time dreaming of *hanami* parties, outdoor *onsen* and *momiji* in the fall.

Khoi-Nguyen Truong
Newsletter & Website Coordinator

My name's Khoi-Nguyen Truong, but my hanko only reads "koi"... Not as in "love", but as in "carp". Every time I used it, Japanese nationals would giggle a little bit and say "*omoshiroi desu ne*". While on JET from 1997 to 1999, I lived in Hitachi-shi, Ibaraki-ken, also known as the Land of *Natto*. I didn't particularly like *natto* even though I've tried it served in many different ways. The smell didn't bother me as much as the gooeyness factor. But I digress.

I joined JETAA upon my return to Montreal and reunited with the people from the 1997 group. While in Japan, the bunch of us kept in touch via a newsletter. It was a fun but a arduous process because everything was done manually. I don't know *kanji* so using the Japanese computer for layout was quite challenging, to say the least. With those fun memories in mind, I decided to join the Executive Committee in 2001 as Newsletter Editor. Technology wasn't a problem anymore, but getting people to contribute to their JETAA newsletter was more difficult than expected. Now I'm back again in the same position and with Jodi's help, we hope to stuff the 2004 newsletters and website with YOUR articles, stories, reviews, recipes, you name it!

Joanne Bonnici
Social & Cultural Events Coordinator

Hello all you former JETs.

My name is Joanne. After spending two crazy, funny, different, exciting years missing my last train home from Tokyo to Saitama, I have finally settled back home. I must admit readapting to -40 C was a way bigger challenge than I had anticipated. My 7 months transition period following the sun up the Australian coast probably didn't help me appreciate our ever changing Canadian weather, but after almost two years, I am finally happy to be back to my roots. Although I love many aspects of my life here, I must say I still miss those *karaoke* years. Especially on the days when my 11-12 years old students are bouncing all over the classroom... It's hard not to get nostalgic for the good old AET days. So I decided to bring a bit of Japan into my life in Montreal by joining JETAA. All this to say that I am glad to be your new Social & Cultural JETAA Coordinator.

Hope you will all join in the many Japan-related events and looking forward to seeing you all.

[Insert YOUR Name Here]
Social & Cultural Events
Coordinator

Who wants to work with Joanne on making this year's social & cultural events out of this world? Apply today and join us!!!

Karaoke, OK?

JETAA Montreal is going to be hosting a karaoke night! What better way of starting a year full of fun social and cultural activities?

The tentative date is Saturday, June 5, 2004.

We are currently working out the details so be on the lookout for more info.

Upcoming Events

Here is a tentative list of events we would like to organize for the rest of the year.

- Hanasukai
- Family Picnic
- Hiking
- Taiko
- Paper Dolls Making
- Sushi Night

Survey

We would greatly appreciate it if you could take the time to let us know what you would like JETAA Montreal to offer in terms of activities and information.

1. What kind of social events would be of interest to you?
2. Would you be interested in attending cultural workshops such as cooking or calligraphy classes?
3. What articles would you like to see in the JETAA newsletter/website?
4. Would you be interested in contributing (articles and/or artwork) to the newsletter/website?
5. Any other suggestions?

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Thank you for your writing us!

The new JETAA Montreal website is going to be ready in mid-May. We will email you the link when it is up and running. Stay tuned!

2004 JET Orientation Weekend

Again this year, Montreal JETAA and the Japanese Consulate will be jointly hosting the 2004 JET Orientation Weekend. This will make the third year that our alumni will be helping to train the departing JET participants for their upcoming careers in Japan.

The weekend will take place on June 19th and 20th at Thompson House. We are asking you, our fellow alumni, to step forward and volunteer to help to make this weekend as successful as the previous 2 years.

Who is interested in presenting workshops for this year's departing JETs? Last year, these workshops covered many interesting topics, such as team-teaching, Japanese cultural activities, Japanese self-study, as well as many other aspects of the JET Programme. We are looking for people to present dynamic and interesting workshops. If you have retained your *genki*

nature, and want to share your Japanese and JET experiences, please write us at montrealjetaa@hotmail.com.

We also need volunteers for billeting those JET participants from Atlantic Canada as well as the rest of Quebec. Last year, we were lucky enough to host 4 JETs from outside of Montreal. If you have a spare bed/sofa/floor, and want to meet a new JET, please let us know.

I sincerely hope that Montreal JETAA will be able to surpass previous year's weekend orientations and send our new JETs off with as much confidence and preparation as possible.

More specific details will follow!
Thanking you in advance,

Tom Kawasaki, JET Orientation Weekend Organizer