

REVITALIZING JAPANTOWN?

a unifying exploration of
**HUMAN RIGHTS,
BRANDING, AND PLACE**

Project Update – Summary of Activities: November 2013 to December 2014

NOVEMBER, 2013

- Co-Investigators Jeff Masuda, Beth Carter and Audrey Kobayashi participate in the “Post Redress: Research on Japanese Canadians: What are the Challenges? What are the Possibilities?” Panel, Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre, Burnaby, BC
- RJ Partners Meeting and Community Advisory Gathering held at Gallery Gachet, catered by project partner Potluck Café. Minutes and small group discussion notes are edited and sent to participants and community allies, demonstrating the valuable input we have received from our partners and advisors
- Interviews on Human Rights with DTES residents held at project partners Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall, Potluck Café and other locations in the DTES

DECEMBER, 2013

- PACE Society and Gallery Gachet formally join “Revitalizing Japantown?” as full Project Partners, bringing us to eight

JANUARY – FEBRUARY, 2014

- Planning begins for what will become the *Right to Remain Community Fair* (RRCF), the arts-based and participatory community research phase of “Revitalizing Japantown?”
- Assisted by King-Mong Chan, MA students Jenna Drabble and Trevor Wideman interview 10 Chinese Elders (who live in or come to the DTES) on the topic of the Right to Food
- Drabble presents preliminary findings on the Right to Food in the DTES to project participants and other community members at the DTES Neighbourhood House. Following the presentation attendees provided feedback on the project and contributed their own interpretations of the findings

MARCH, 2014

- Staff and members of project partner Gallery Gachet, “Revitalizing Japantown?” Investigator Joyce Rock and Coordinator Aaron Franks solidify plans for the RRCF. Joyce becomes RRCF Director, leading the planning of this phase with Gallery Gachet
- *The Bulletin: a journal of Japanese-Canadian community, history and culture* publishes “The Right to Remain: naming, identity and Japantown, Vancouver” by Project Director Jeff Masuda and Coordinator Aaron Franks <http://jccbulletin-geppo.ca/category/national-feature/>

APRIL – JUNE, 2014

- Joyce Rock, Cecily Nicholson and Kristin Lantz of Gachet work with members of the local DTES arts community to recruit the RRCF Arts Team of community arts researchers. They are: Ali Lohan (Coordinator), Herb Varley, Karen Ward, Quin Martins, Andy Mori (artist-facilitators), assistant Trevor Wideman and documentary filmmaker Greg Masuda

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- MA student Jenna Drabble and RJ Coordinator Aaron Franks present at the Canadian Association of Geographer's 2014 Annual Meeting at Brock University. Jenna focuses on the Right to Food and local activism that breaks the 'food charity' mold in the DTES; Aaron discusses the RRCF and the role arts-based research can play in making links between individuals, organizations, cultural practices and Human Rights struggles
- Extensive transcription of over 40 interviews is concluded at Queen's University, with students overseen by Queen's Geography Project Coordinator Susanne Cliff-Jungling and RJ Coordinator Aaron Franks. Many thanks to all involved!

JULY, 2014

- First Right to Remain Community Fair Events held in July, at Aboriginal Front Door (AFD) and VANDU (Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users). Each workshop features Gachet's renowned Art Cart and a specific creative activity facilitated by an artist supported by the rest of the Team. At AFD Andy Mori led participants in developing storyboards, and at VANDU Karen Ward helped participants develop 3-D dioramas

RRCF Coordinator Ali Lohan:

Artistic outcomes of the AFD workshop were excellent and they included the production of fifteen storyboards with interesting and relevant titles such as, "How did we get from "Everyone is invited" to No One is Allowed" and "Colonized 3 Times"...Everyone seemed invigorated when during the (VANDU) workshop heard the PSF's announcement to support the Tent City camp at Oppenheimer Park. This seemed to strike a chord in many of us. The link between the RRCF project vision and the current climate in the DTES of people protesting and using their voices to speak out against displacement seems to be part of a growing historical and current awareness around 'the right to remain'.

- Director Masuda and Coordinator Franks (and their families!) move from the University of Manitoba to Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario

AUGUST, 2014

- RRCF Workshops are held at the Powell Street Festival (PSF) and at Interurban Gallery. At PSF the Arts Team facilitates a popular exchange of original postcards between the Oppenheimer Park Homeless Camp and PSF participants. 'Campers' and festival-goers exchanged messages of support and identification on the cards

RRCF Arts Team member Andy Mori:

I want to consider this postcard project to be a great success as avenues of history lessons, hand writing support as petitioning and acknowledgement of human rights were touched upon all at once. It also reminded how festival was originally a call of activism and Japanese Canadian redress, and that historic apologies still hang in the air waiting to be said still and their attendant responsibilities.

- At Interurban Gallery, Quin Martins leads participants in site-specific photography and personal reflection on their own Human Rights history with that space.

It was enjoyable for me to see people getting excited about the workshop. I was so impressed that so many participants saw their ideas through to completion. The finished pieces from the participants are all very meaningful in their own unique way. (Trevor Wideman)

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- Spacing: *Canadian Urbanism Uncovered* publishes "The Downtown Eastside's Heart Transplant" by MA student and Research Assistant Trevor Wideman and Coordinator Franks
<http://spacing.ca/vancouver/2014/08/11/the-downtown-eastside-heart-transplant/>

SEPTEMBER, 2014

- Herb Varley with the RRCF Team facilitates an applied theatre workshop on Human Rights in the DTES at Gallery Gachet

Herb Varley led an exciting theatre workshop at Gallery Gachet, engaging participants in creating tableaux vivants ("living pictures") and vignettes. The method was based on a storytelling process where participants describe a human rights experience that has occurred in their lives, here in the Downtown Eastside

- Documentary filmmaker and RJ project liaison Greg Masuda participates in a panel at the National Association of Japanese Canadians Annual General Meeting, discussing the role of Japanese Canadians in Canadian society moving forward in the "Spirit of Redress"

OCTOBER, 2014

- The RRCF Arts Team are hosted by Project Partner Nikkei National Museum (NMN) (Director Beth Carter) in Burnaby. The artists facilitated a postcard exchange as ideas and experiences were shared between current DTES low-income community members and Japanese Canadian (Nikkei) elders who had lived in the Powell Street area

Downtown Eastside resident participants Tina Eastman and Brian Humchitt presented the eldest person from the hosting group with a traditional rattle. Andy Mori facilitated the workshop and guided participants in ways to engage with the flag and the postcards. These were informal elements designed to promote dialogue between the Nikkei and Low-income DTES communities. Particularly interesting was a discussion of gentrification in the neighbourhood, and different perspectives on what it meant for residents.

- Investigators, staff and partners Gallery Gachet and NNM collaborate on a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Connections Grant application to enable enhanced curation and interactive public engagement for upcoming "Revitalizing Japantown?"- RRCF exhibits at Gachet (Mar-Apr '15) and NNM (Oct-Dec '15)

- The RRCF Arts Team leads a creative workshop ('Making the Links') as a central part of the October 19 **SRO Residents Convention** at the Vancouver Japanese Language School. Participants, many of whom are "single room occupancy" (SRO) or residents in the DTES, make mobiles expressing their Human Rights experiences in the DTES while learning about tenant rights and organizing at the Convention

Participants decorated a few hundred cardboard circles with text, poetry and images. These circles were then hung on the Gallery Gachet Art Cart as mobiles and in streams like bunting. All in all, the workshop went really smoothly. People were excited to write messages and decorate the cardboard circles, and the artworks that were produced told a powerful story of resilience in the face of displacement. Furthermore, the convention was extremely fun with great food and good participation. Everyone's hard work really showed!

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▪ Jeff Masuda delivers public lecture in Victoria, B.C. hosted by the University of Victoria's CityTalks series. Jeff discusses 'environmental justice' as a lens for understanding urban inequality in Canada, highlighting the difference between top-down and bottom-up definitions and approaches <http://youtu.be/jJP5mLo-vk8>

▪ Master's student Trevor Wideman facilitates a discussion on "Cross-class alliances" at the Annual Meeting of the Relational Poverty Network in Seattle, WA, using the RRCF postcard project as an example of creating meaningful dialogue between groups that might otherwise not find common ground

NOVEMBER, 2014

▪ Gallery Gachet hosts an RRCF "show and tell" presentation as part of the Heart of the City Festival, featuring the RRCF Arts team, selected RRCF artworks, filmmaker Greg Masuda and speakers from partners Gachet and NNM

It was powerful to hear the artists make the connections and talk about the successes and difficulties from their workshops...Significantly, idea of the "right to remain" seemed to resonate with the audience, and many important dialogues emerged in the question and answer period that followed the presentation ...There was a good turnout and good response to the project! In addition, it was really valuable to have an event where the artists and participants could decompress and review what had happened over the summer. Special thanks to the RRCF Arts Team, Gallery Gachet for their administration of the event, and the Heart of the City for their support

▪ Greg Masuda is a keynote presenter in the "Parallel Paths" series at the Japanese Consulate in Vancouver, speaking about "what Japanese Canadians have done to live up to their vows after winning Redress"

DECEMBER, 2014

▪ Gallery Gachet, the RRCF artists, Masters student Trevor Wideman, and DTES and Nikkei community organizer Kathy Shimizu prepare for the final RRCF arts workshop on January 10. Art forms from Japanese and local DTES traditions will be used, supported by materials from our interviews linking Human Rights experiences across cultures and times.



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