

Local seniors enjoy firsthand experience with Japanese culture

BETHANN G. MERKLE

For the past month, Quebec City seniors have enjoyed hands-on workshops exploring several aspects of Japanese culture. Led by Miyano Saki, Masami Gauvin and Tomako Kurokawa, the workshops provided tangible experience with Japanese calligraphy, the elegant Japanese tea ceremony, and the complex colourful delights of kimonos and origami. Highlights included learning to handle sumi (ink) and bamboo brushes, watching and then trying to duplicate the subtle motions of the tea ceremony, and grappling with the complex folding required to make origami cranes. Perhaps the most unique aspect of the series was the opportunity to try on one of the twenty authentic summer kimonos which were loaned for the occasion by the Japanese embassy in Montreal.

The Japanese Cultural Series was offered as part of the Autumn 2012 programming organized by the local Lifelong

Learning Program. According to the program's website, "The Lifelong Learning Program (LLL) offers an ongoing series of peer-led, informative, and informal learning opportunities. LLL is a collaborative effort of several community organizations and individuals, and is jointly administered by the Quebec City Reading Council and Voice of English-speaking Quebec."

Further, "LLL provides English-speaking adults in Quebec City with opportunities for idea exchange, peer learning, and active participation. The program is ideal for those who enjoy taking part in lively discussions, learning about a variety of topics, and meeting new people." Open to all English-speaking adults, regardless of mother tongue, the program offers daytime activities which include computer workshops, literature discussions, cultural topics and more. Annual membership fees are \$10 per person, and members may choose to receive information by phone or email about upcoming programs.

Participants of the Japanese Cultural Series agreed that this set of workshops exceeded their expectations, and met the program's objectives of offering interactive and interesting learning opportunities. Sandra Blouin said, "It has been a wonderful experience to be able to see and feel different aspects of this culture. The clothes, the people; it was all great because I will probably never go to Japan. Even if I did, it probably wouldn't be so hands-on and personalized."

Some participants remarked on specific aspects of the series as well. Katherine and Keith Burgess said, "We really appreciated the hands-on activities," and Monique Girard added, "I most enjoyed learning about Japanese traditions like the tea ceremony, origami, the kimonos, and meeting people." A new participant, Sanda Husaru, indicated the series even inspired an interest in travelling to Japan. She said, "I most enjoyed the beautiful kimono, and seeing the different parts of Japan (in the videos). I hope to go there



Photo by Bethann G. Merkle

Participants pose on the stairs of Eastern Quebec Learning Centre during a workshop about Japanese kimonos.

some time in my life."

Program organizers are equally pleased, as the series represents the highest consistent participation rates since the program was founded four years ago. The LLL steering committee, comprised of several LLL members and staff

from QCRC and VEQ, meets approximately four to six times a year to plan programming and review participant feedback. The committee is already discussing ideas to capitalize on the momentum, and to offer equally stimulating programming in 2013.

Readers interested in participating are encouraged to contact the Lifelong Learning Program at 418-681-1258 or learninglaterinlife@gmail.com about the final 2012 series (a literature discussion to be led by Meb Reisner).

Prime Minister Harper announces support for reconstruction of the Grande Allée Armoury

ADAPTED FROM A PRESS RELEASE BY SHIRLEY NADEAU

Prime Minister Stephen Harper was in Quebec City on Friday, November 16, to announce financial support for the reconstruction and development of the Grande Allée Armoury which was destroyed by fire in April 2008.

"Our Government is proud to support the reconstruction of the Grande Allée Armoury, a centrepiece of Quebec City's rich architectural and historical landscape with a proud military past," said the Prime Minister. "The reconstruction of this National Historic Site of Canada will generate jobs in Quebec and culminate in an exciting new space that will host cultural and community activities, government offices and a tribute to the Voltigeurs de Québec, which this year celebrates the 150th anniversary of the current regiment and also perpetuates the history and heritage of the Canadian Voltigeurs from the War of 1812."

Built in 1887 and expanded

in 1913, the Armoury has been a prominent feature of Quebec City. Owned by the Government of Canada, it was designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1986 because of its unique Château style of architecture and its function as the drill hall of the Voltigeurs de Québec, which this year celebrates the 150th anniversary of the current regiment.

The Armoury will be rebuilt as a multi-functional building with federal government offices, a multi-purpose hall for community, cultural and social activities, and space set aside to commemorate the military history of the Armoury and the Voltigeurs regiment. The restored Armoury will be able to stage events attended by up to 1,300 people in public areas available for rent.

The architectural design is based on sketches prepared by Eugène-Étienne Taché, the architect of the original building. The components of the original Armoury that still exist will be integrated into the new building. The building will be expanded through the addition of annexes

on the western side and the southern side in order to maximize use of the facilities.

The reconstruction of the Armoury represents an investment of approximately \$104 million under Canada's Economic Action Plan, notably \$93 million expected for the reconstruction and \$11.3 million invested towards consultations, the development of a plan for the future of the Armoury, a feasibility and cost-effectiveness analysis, the development of the concepts, and work towards the rehabilitation and preparation of the site.

Following the fire in 2008, the government took action to clean up the site and protect what remained of the building. This major task, carried out by the Department of National Defence and Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), was completed in October 2009.

In 2009, a plan for the future of the Armoury and options for reconstruction was developed. Consultations were held in May and June, 2009, to obtain feedback and suggestions from the



Photo by Danielle Burns

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, flanked by Les Voltigeurs and accompanied by Mayor Régis Labeaume (far left) and Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Bélanger (right), outside the Quebec Armoury which was gutted by fire in 2008.

public regarding the future of the Armoury. The results of these consultations were announced in October 2009.

In October 2010, tenders called for the preparation of architectural designs and sketches

for the reconstruction of the Armoury. In June 2011, it was announced that a contract had been awarded to Arcop/DFS/STGM architectes en consortium through a competitive and transparent process. It is expected that

the architectural plans will be completed by 2014. A separate call for tenders is planned for 2014 to hire a construction firm to carry out the reconstruction work which is expected to begin in 2015.



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