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JAPANESE CANADIAN AND NIKKEI COMMUNITY NEWS

Kids for Kids Project Cloth Quilts at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal



photo credits: Sanae Yamaguchi

In every issue:

Church News	8
Classified Ads	11
Coming Events	12
Cultural Centre Activities	7
Cultural Events	4-5
Drop-In	7
50 Plus	7
Library News	7
Maze Koze	9
President's Report	6
Seniors	
Support Services	7
Subscriptions	11

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

KIDS FOR KIDS PROJECT	2
WASHOKU - UNESCO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE	10

The Montreal Bulletin is an independent publication established in 1946 to meet the needs of the time—the re-establishment of community life for Japanese Canadians after their World War II internment. Published in English, French and Japanese 10 times yearly by a volunteer staff, the Montreal Bulletin's goal is to serve all organizations and interested persons within the Greater Montreal area.

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Kids for Kids Project: A magical display of friendship

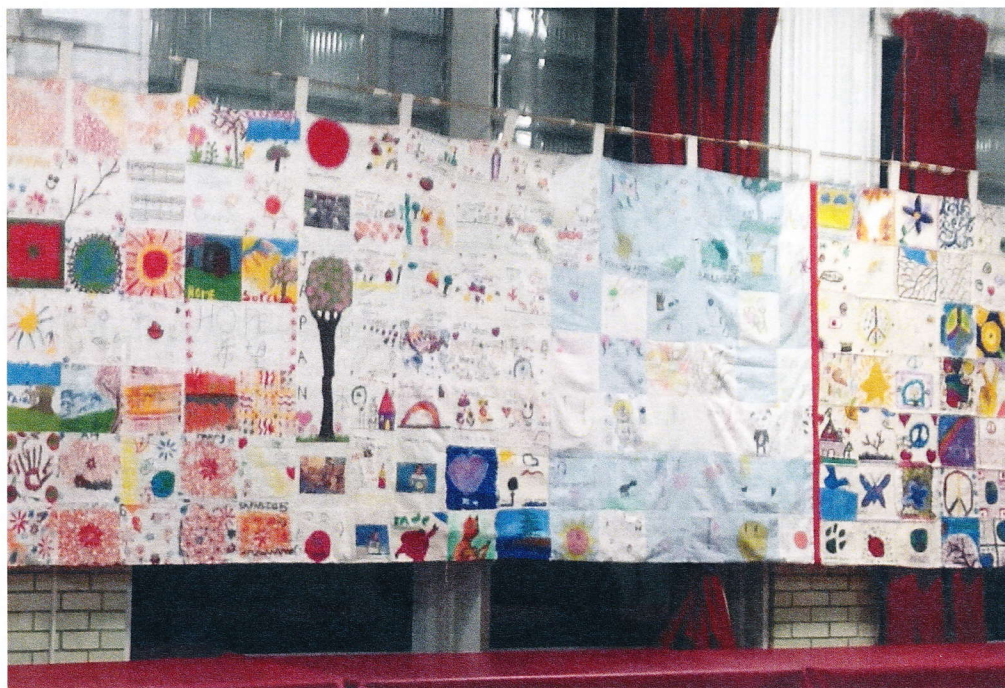


photo credit: Sanae Yamaguchi



In March of 2011, one of the largest earthquakes on record struck off the Pacific coast of Japan. The epicentre being under the sea near the Tohoku region, the quake set off an enormous tsunami, with waves reaching over 10 metres. The effects were absolutely devastating. Entire villages were wiped out.

Commuter trains, normally filled with passengers, were later found completely empty. Cars, boats, trucks and even complete buildings were scattered across the landscape. But the impact on human life was even more staggering. Nearly 20,000 people lost their lives, and hundreds of families were ripped apart.

Vancouver-based Japanese-Canadian artist Linda Ohama witnessed the event on television, and feared for the hundred and even thousands of children who had been affected. The quake and tsunami hit on a Friday afternoon, right near the end of the school day. Many of these children would never see their parents again, and in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, many were in need of food, clothing and shelter. Wanting to do more than just give money, Ohama wanted to give these children a big warm hug, and tell them they were not alone. And she found plenty of other children were more than willing to help.

Ohama asked Canadian children to make 25cm x 25 cm cloth squares expressing words of encouragement to the children in Japan. Each square was sewn into a quilt, which quickly became two giant quilts. These 'cloth letters' were sent to Japan, to huge

response. Soon after that, the people of Japan replied with their own 'cloth letters,' and eventually two quilts became four, which became six, eight, until today, there are now 30 such quilts.

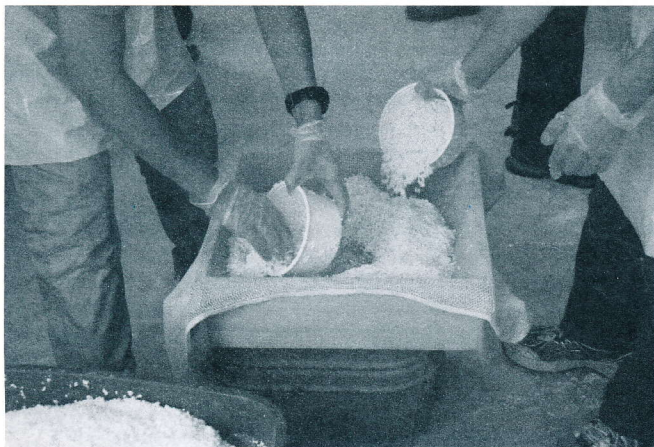


The 'cloth letters' are on a cross-Canada tour and are here in Montreal. With coordination undertaken by the Canada-Japan society, these magnificent creations are being presented to the public to be seen and appre-

ciated. They are on display at a number of locations across the city: Elizabeth Ballantyne in Montreal West, Royal Vale School in NDG, Trafalgar School for Girls in Westmount and Collège Stanislas in Outremont. But the largest display is at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal on Rousselot. The quilts will hang until December 8, after which they will make their next stop on their national tour. Everyone is invited to visit the centre to see these remarkable 'cloth letters', which are a testament to the warmth and creativity that lies at the heart of the enduring friendship between Japan and Canada.

For more details about this project: www.clothletters.com/story.html or www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2013/6/18/cloth-letter-tour-1

photos by Nobuharu Yamaguchi



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