



THE RICE PAPER

A newsletter of the Twin Cities Chapter

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website: www.tcjacl.org | @TwinCitiesJACL

October 2025

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PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

秋になりました。
Fall is here

As you read this, the autumn leaves are beginning to spread their way across the Minnesota landscape. And just as the seasons keep changing, so do our lives and community. The past few months have brought many happenings: some joyful, and some tragic.

We have witnessed continued attacks on the most vulnerable members of our community by the current administration, targeting those with recent immigration history regardless of current status. We have also been jarred by the shocking imagery of armed ICE agents occupying the plaza in front of the Japanese American National Museum in LA Little Tokyo, evoking painful memories of US soldiers corralling our ancestors during World War II. We have also seen Fort Bliss in Texas being used as an ICE detention center, again reflecting when it was used by the Department of Justice to imprison first-generation Japanese Americans following the attack on Pearl Harbor by invoking the Enemy Aliens Act. But while things seem grim, we remain optimistic that the tide will turn.

Early last month, the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled against the most recent invocation of the Alien Enemies Act by the current administration. While not the final word on the matter, it supports what our community knows all too well, that our "inalienable" rights are too often and too easily set aside under the guise of "security." We remain committed to one day repealing this dangerous and increasingly easily abused act. Toward that end, we ask anyone whose family was personally impacted by it during World War II (being detained prior to Executive Order 9066) to please reach out and share your testimony.

We continue to organize our community and build supportive connections wherever we can. Over the next few pages, you'll see pictures and stories of beautiful moments, including our recent Summer Picnic, Obon Festival, and much more! We are also looking forward to our annual Chrysanthemum Banquet the first weekend of November. This year, our keynote speaker is David Ono, a primetime news anchor in Los Angeles and tireless community advocate. David will be sharing with us some of his latest work telling the Japanese American story, as well as his own career and identity journeys! I can't wait to see many of you there and watch his latest documentary together.

またお会いしましょう。
Looking forward to meeting with you.

Vinicius Taguchi
Chapter President

UPCOMING EVENTS – Save These Dates



**TC JACL Chrysanthemum Banquet will be held Saturday, November 1, 2025,
at the Minnesota Humanities Center in St. Paul**

4:00 p.m. – Doors open for registration

4:20 p.m. - Viewing of David Ono's Documentary

6:15 p.m. – Dinner and program

Our chapter is very fortunate to have as our speaker, **David Ono**, anchor of ABC7 Eyewitness News, the top-rated newscast in all of Los Angeles, on any channel and time slot. David joined ABC7 in 1996 and has witnessed history worldwide. He has traveled across Europe and Asia chronicling brave acts of the Nisei soldiers from World War II.

He has produced multiple award-winning documentaries, two of which have made their way to the Smithsonian Institution. He's the creator of the multiple award-winning series, about promoting a better understanding of each other and **Defining Courage**, a stage show that David created about the legacy of the Nisei soldier in World War II. We will be viewing one of his documentaries with us and sharing some stories about his life and work.



We warmly welcome David as he shares his incredible life story with us.

Registration information will be US mailed by the end of September.

Responses are due by October 17.

Other Events through Spring 2026

- October 18-CAIR Banquet-Seats still available to fill JACL's table; contact President Vini is interested
- This fall, chair of Nominations, Amanda, will be request names of those interested in serving of the Board
- December 13-Dawn Wing's presentation at the Minnesota History Center of her book on Jun Fujita who lived on a small island, in a small cabin, on Rainy Lake. Steve Ozone is also making a film about Mr. Fujita.

- February 19, 2026-Day of Remembrance program will be a screening of a movie, One Fighting Irishman. The movie is about civil rights attorney, Wayne M. Collins, who represented more than 5000 Japanese Americans interred at Tule Lake.



10th Wave Concerts for 2025 and 2026

Eri Isomura, a member of TCJACL, is a member of the 10th Wave Chamber Music Collective and wishes to share its upcoming performance with you.

The group is presenting East Meets West: India America on November 15. The music is a collaboration of table, Hindustani singing, and Western music fused together.

Eri plays the marimba, along with others who play the violin, viola, and cello. November's concert is at 4 pm at the University Lutheran Church of Hope, 601 13th Ave SE in Minneapolis.

In January, the Collective will play with a puppet artist in a world premiere event of music and puppetry. Performances will be on January 10 and 11, 2026 at the Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Ave S.

Find all program and ticket details at www.10thwave.org/events

Dancers Needed for Japanese Cultural Performance at the International Festival (I-Fest) on April 10-11, 2026

The Festival of Nations will be resurrected as I-Fest on April 10-11, 2026, as a 2-day event on Friday and Saturday. Eight adult and eight teens are needed for the World Stage Performances.

Free lessons in Classical Japanese dance will be provided by Linda Hashimoto van Dooijeweert.

No prior training is needed. Kimonos will be provided if needed for cultural performances. Lessons will start weekends in mid-October 2025. Bring a friend or relative.

Contact Linda at linda@urbantraveler.com or at 651-503-7995 if interested.



Twin Cities JACL Scholarship News

Undergraduate / Graduate TCJACL Scholarship Applications Due 1 November 2025

Applications for Twin Cities JACL undergraduate/graduate level scholarships are due 1 November 2025.

Scholarship applicants must be JACL – Twin Cities Chapter members (active as of September 1, 2025) currently enrolled in a post-secondary educational program or graduate level program.

Applications can be found at <https://www.tcjacl.org/scholarships/apply/> . Only one scholarship may be received during a degree program.

2025 TCJACL high school graduate receives JACL National Scholarship

We recently learned Romare Onishi was awarded a 2025 JACL National Scholarship! Congratulations, Romare!

2026 High School Graduate TCJACL Scholarship Applications Available Soon

Twin Cities JACL scholarship applications for 2026 high school graduates will be available at <https://www.tcjacl.org/scholarships/apply/> in January 2026. Applications will be mailed to the following candidates no later than January 31, 2026: Cooper Daikawa (Centennial High School), Raegan Dean (Prior Lake High School), Cale Marella (Woodbury), Maxwell Murakami (Byron High School), Addison Neitz (Wayzata High School), Kiyoshi Pellinen (Golden Valley), Ryan Shiroma (St. Paul), Marco Takekawa Litgen (Woodbury High School).

In addition to completing the application form and submitting a transcript, students must write a short essay entitled “The Relevance of JACL Today.” Applications will be evaluated based on scholastic achievement, extracurricular activities, community service, and essays.

In addition to other available scholarships, students may apply for the Twin Cities JACL Service Scholarship. This scholarship will be awarded to a student who has demonstrated outstanding Twin Cities JACL volunteerism. Students may choose to apply for this specific scholarship. If applicants are not selected for this scholarship, they will be considered for other awards.

Scholarship applicants must be current Twin Cities JACL members (individual student membership or family membership is required). Membership information can be found at www.tcjacl.org.

Completed Twin Cities JACL scholarship applications must be postmarked by April 1, 2026.

Additional Scholarship information

Information about the history of the Twin Cities JACL scholarship program can be found at the following link: <https://www.tcjacl.org/scholarships/history/>



Japanese American Citizens League
Twin Cities Chapter

Who Do You Know?

Help us identify young people between high school and pre-school for our scholarship program!

Send the following:

Name, address, expected graduation year

to: scholarship@tcjacl.org

Names will be added to our database and applications sent to individuals to apply their senior year!

Submitted by Pam Ohno Dagoberg

Recent Events

Snow Country Prison Memorial Pilgrimage

September 5 – 6, 2025

On a rain-swept September morning in Bismarck, North Dakota, over 300 people gathered on the campus of United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) to witness the long-awaited dedication of a memorial titled “Snow Country Prison.” The event was the culmination of a 15-year collaboration between descendants of Japanese Americans incarcerated at Fort Lincoln and Native American leaders from the UTTC tribal nations. The result is a powerful and visually striking memorial honoring 1,850 Japanese American and Japanese immigrant men imprisoned at Fort Lincoln during World War II—on land that is now a site of learning, sovereignty, and cultural preservation for Native nations.

Historical Background: Fort Lincoln’s Wartime Role

Fort Lincoln was originally established as a U.S. Army post in the early 20th century. It served as a mobilization point for troops heading to the Philippines and to the U.S.-Mexico border. But with the outbreak of World War II, the site was transformed into a wartime internment and detention center, operated under the Department of Justice’s Alien Enemy Control Program.

In 1942, 1,100 Issei (first-generation Japanese immigrants) were forcibly removed from their homes along the West Coast and sent to Fort Lincoln, many of them prominent community leaders. These men were classified as “enemy aliens,” though they had broken no laws and were not afforded due process. Later, in early 1945, the camp received another group: approximately 750 Nisei and Kibei (U.S.-born or raised Japanese Americans, some of whom had studied in Japan), many of whom had been labeled “disloyal” for protesting the government’s incarceration policies or for having renounced their U.S. citizenship under duress at Tule Lake Segregation Center.

Though the war ended in August 1945, some men remained imprisoned at Fort Lincoln into 1946. A haiku written by Itaru Ina, one of the incarcerated Issei, poignantly captures the despair:

*“The war has ended
but I’m still in
the snow country prison.”*

This poem gives the memorial its name—and its spirit.

In addition to Japanese Americans, **German nationals** were also imprisoned at Fort Lincoln, reflecting broader policies of wartime xenophobia and mass detention based on race and national origin.

From Confinement to Sovereignty: The Transformation of Fort Lincoln

After WWII, Fort Lincoln was used intermittently by various government agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Job Corps. But in 1969, a historic transformation began. The land and buildings were gradually transferred by the federal government to Native American stewardship, and **United Tribes Technical College** was established by five federally recognized tribal nations in North Dakota:

- Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
- Spirit Lake Tribe
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
- Three Affiliated Tribes of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa

By **1973**, the college had acquired 87 buildings and over 100 acres of the former military site. Today, the land that once held people in confinement is being actively reclaimed as a space for education, cultural revitalization, and tribal self-determination.

A Memorial Rooted in Healing and Remembrance

The “Snow Country Prison” memorial, located in a courtyard near the original barracks building that housed internees, is a symbolic space of remembrance, education, and healing. Descendants of internees—led by Satsuki Ina, daughter of Itaru Ina—worked in close collaboration with tribal leaders and artists to create a design that reflects the shared legacies of trauma, resistance, and resilience between Japanese American and Native communities.

Key features of the memorial include:

- A drum circle in the shape of a Native medicine wheel at the memorial’s center
- Slate walls constructed from salvaged materials of former prison buildings
- Two interpretive walls:
 - One inscribed with the names of all 1,850 Japanese and Japanese American internees held at Fort Lincoln
 - Another presenting timelines and interconnected stories of Japanese American incarceration and Native American displacement and confinement

The memorial cost \$1.3 million to build and was funded through a mix of public and private support, including:

- Grants from the National Park Service Japanese American Confinement Sites program
- Support from foundations
- Individual donations from families and community member including Judy and George Murakami

Dedication Ceremony: Voices, Rituals, and Performances

The dedication ceremony on September 5, 2025, featured blessings and reflections from both Native and Japanese American communities. The program opened with a Native ground blessing and included a blessing by Reverend Duncan Ryūken Williams, creator of *Ireicho: The Book of Names*, a sacred record of every person of Japanese ancestry incarcerated during WWII.

Denise Lajimodiere, North Dakota’s Poet Laureate, read her original poem honoring Snow Country Prison (printed in this issue on page 9). The event featured dynamic and moving performances:

- A collaborative dance titled “Say Something” by Janet Aisawa and Osamu Uehara of Ai Dance Theater (New York)
- Drumming by Taiko Arts Midwest (TAM), based in the Twin Cities, included Native drummers, weaving together Japanese and Native rhythms in one of their selections

Throughout the day, descendants placed cranes and prayer ties into the memorial’s symbolic “cracks.”

Educational and Community Events Throughout the Pilgrimage

In addition to the dedication, there were a series of educational and cultural events:

- A screening of “Defiant to the Last”, a documentary by Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Emiko Omori, highlighting Japanese American resistance during internment
- A reading and book signing by Satsuki Ina, author of *The Poet and the Silk Girl: A Memoir of Love, Imprisonment, and Protest*
- A site tour led by Dennis Neumann (UTTC Archivist) and Brian Ninja (Densho historian)
- A reflections gathering facilitated by Satsuki Ina
- A book signing by Elaine Koyama, former TCJACL treasurer and author of *Between Two Freedoms*

- Participation in the Irei Project, where attendees had appointments to hand-stamp names in the Ireicho Sacred Book of Names

Finally, visitors were invited to experience the 55th Annual International Powwow hosted by UTTC. Included in the dance contests were the “Tiny Tots” who took the arena floor in traditional regalia. TAM performed at the Powwow’s evening programs on Friday and Saturday. They also performed for an audience of students on Friday morning. Although it was raining, the drumming performance was well-done and well-received by the students.

Legacy of Snow Country Prison

The memorial embodies a powerful convergence of histories: those of Japanese Americans incarcerated during WWII and Native American Nations who experienced generations of displacement and assimilation policies. Now, the land that once held people in confinement serves as a living educational and cultural space, under the stewardship of Native communities and in solidarity with Japanese American descendants.

Personal Reflections of Attendees:

Judy Murakami: George's father, Yoshiaki Murakami, who had been born in Japan, was living in Guadalupe, California, with his wife and five children. He was working in the fields as a farmhand when he was picked up by the FBI and taken away. His family did not know what had happened or where Yoshiaki was until they received a letter from him while he was imprisoned in Bismarck, North Dakota. He was asking them to send him some warm clothes. Because Yoshiaki never spoke about his time in camp, attending the Bismarck pilgrimage was an important way for us to honor him and to gain a small sense of what his experience was like.

Carolyn Nayematsu: Shortly after Pearl Harbor, my grandfather Yoshiaki Amatatsu, who was a strawberry farmer on Bainbridge Island WA, was rounded up and taken to Seattle. My grandmother and mother visited him, and my mother described it as a prison. From Seattle he was sent on to Fort Missoula and later Fort Lincoln. The dedication and talks at Fort Lincoln made me realize how little I know about my grandfather’s WWII experience. I knew more about my mother’s experiences at Manzanar and Minidoka because we have photos, many books and articles, and oral histories. I went to Bismarck primarily to stamp my family in the Ireicho. I was able to honor my family, find my grandfather’s name on the wall, and gain a better understanding of the experience of my grandfather and especially of the Tule Lake renunciants.

Peggy Doi: The trip to Bismarck and Fort Lincoln piqued my interest as I was unaware of the DOJ camps; I was only familiar with WRA camps. Also, I was interested in the connection to Tule Lake where my families were incarcerated, and the renunciants incarcerated when Tule Lake was renamed a Segregation Camp with No-Nos (renunciants) from all camps brought in. This meant at least some of the current residents of Tule Lake would be moved to other places. My mom’s mom moved to Minidoka. Many of those incarcerated in the Segregation Camp were then later moved to a DOJ camp, Fort Lincoln being one of them. So, what started out for me was, what I thought was a further learning experience turned out to be that and much more. It was an incredibly moving experience, seeing and learning how the memorial to the Japanese interned at Fort Lincoln early on, now the campus of the United Tribes Technical College came to be. It was inspiring to see how the programs melded the Native American and the Japanese stories and music. Both groups suffered and want our stories to be told and remembered. I also, loved the way the groups honored each group. Of course, one of the most moving events was being able to stamp the names of my parents and relatives and reverently rub the tile containing ground of all the camps and assembly centers in the cover of Ireicho Book of Names. In addition to these things, I was awed by the stories about the renunciants and what they suffered and continued to suffer after the war that others who were incarcerated did not have to suffer. I enjoyed meeting people with a different story than my family’s and to see my first Powwow. In all a most memorable few days which I will remember and cherish for a very long time.

Gloria Kumagai: In June, Jen Wier, Executive Director of TAM shared that the group would be playing in Bismarck for a memorial dedication to those persons of Japanese ancestry who were imprisoned there during WWII. I told her that my grandfather had been in prison at Fort Lincoln, and she connected me to one of the taiko drummers, Kimi Aisawa Romportl, whose grandfather was also imprisoned there. Thus began my journey to Bismarck. The

pilgrimage was an amazing experience for me. My Grandpa Kumagai was a respected community leader in Sacramento. On February 21, 1942, he was arrested by the FBI under the Alien Enemies Act and taken to the Sacramento County Jail. Five days later, he was sent to Fort Lincoln. His family only knew he was sent to Bismarck. We found Grandpa on a WWII German prisoner of war roster and obtained his FBI records where he is listed to be picked up by the FBI. Upon release from Fort Lincoln, Grandpa was placed on parole and joined his family in Tule Lake in July 1942. He never spoke about his time in Bismarck. One thing he did bring back, however, was his rock collection — the rocks carefully sorted into compartments in a cardboard box. Sadly, that box was discarded after his death. Seeing my grandfather's name inscribed in the memorial wall and having the opportunity to stamp his name in the Ireicho Sacred Book of Names was deeply moving. The pilgrimage was a powerful and emotional experience that strengthened my connection to my grandfather. It was truly life-changing.

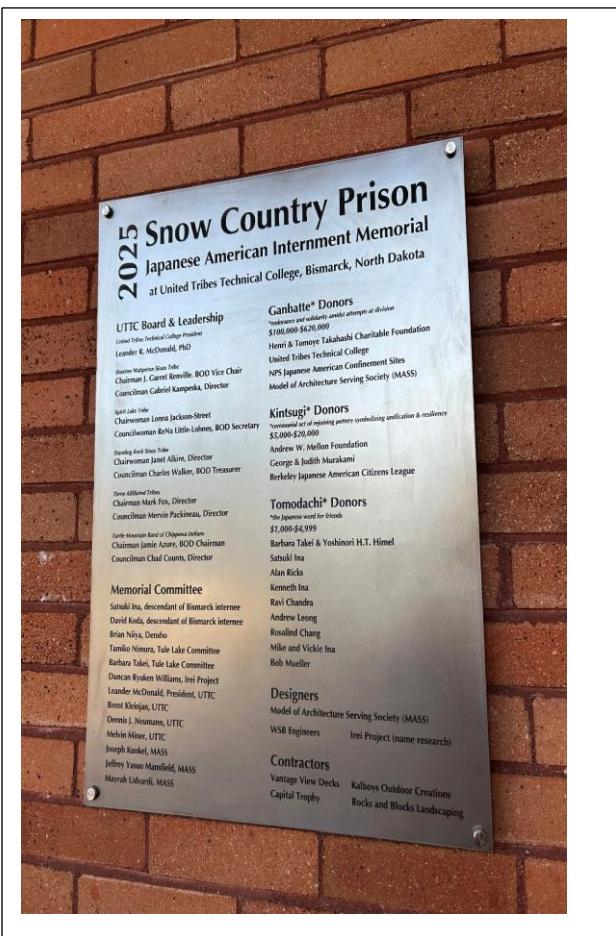
Submitted by Gloria Kumagai

Snow Country Prison by Denise Lajimodiere, North Dakota's Poet Laureate

As North Dakota's Poet Laureate, I was invited to speak at a United Tribes memorial on September 9, 2023. The buildings were once a Japanese internment camp but are now a tribal college. After a short speech, I read this poem to an audience of Fort Lincoln Japanese prisoner survivors' children and grandchildren. I had found the haikus of a man interned at the camp. After I read the poem, Itaru Ina's daughter came up to thank me. I hadn't known she was in the audience, and I was in tears.

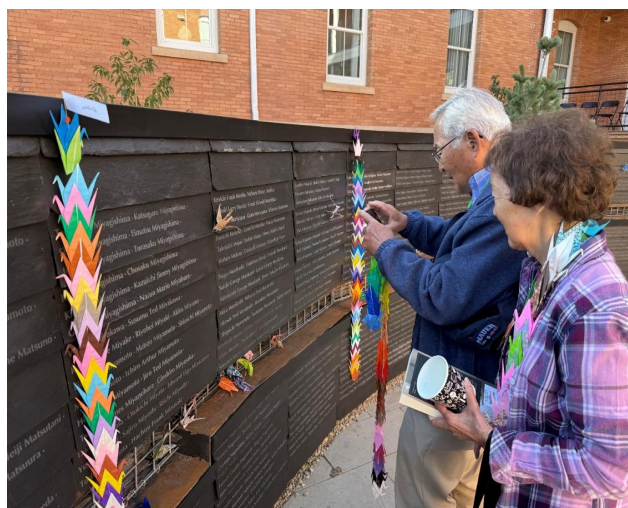
At the memorial's dedication on September 5, 2025, I was invited to read the poem again. (As poets do, I've edited it a bit.) The entire poem is reproduced on the next page, page 9.

Photos from the Bismarck Pilgrimage



TOP: George (left) and son, Steve, Murakami at the entrance to the Snow Country Prison Memorial BOTTOM: View of the memorial from its entrance. On the left wall is a timeline of events. On the right wall are the name of the internees.





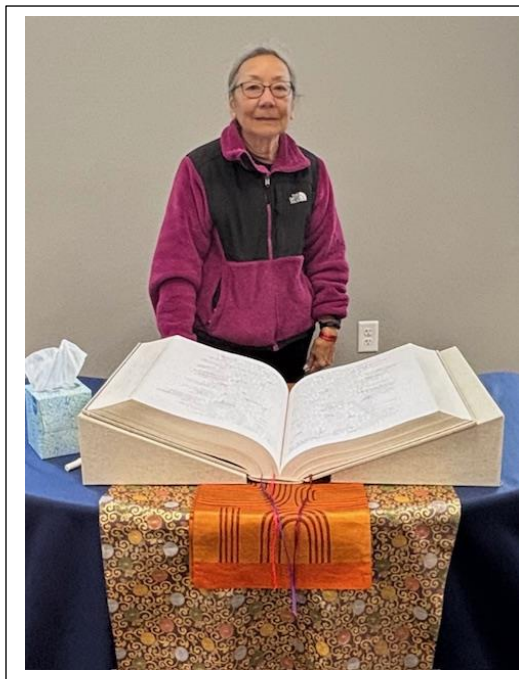
George and Judy Murakami and Carolyn Nayematsu at the wall listing the names of all of the internees.



Taiko Arts Midwest (TAM), based in Minneapolis.
performing at the memorial's entrance.



Peggy Doi stamping the Ireicho, the Book of Names



Gloria Kumagai with the Ireicho, the Book of Names.
Note the beautiful fabrics that the Ireicho is placed upon.

Snow Country Prison

The men arrived at Ft. Lincoln.
They called it Snow Country.
Along with heart aching loneliness
they suffered the bone cracking
North Dakota cold

A daughter said when
her father arrived
home from Ft. Lincoln
he was not the same man,
"Something terrible happened to him in North Dakota"

*Autumn grief
Unbearable-
I look at the children's photo (Itaru Ina)*

An elder survivor of Ft. Lincoln
took us on a tour that summer day.
He stopped at a place in the middle
of the road, surrounded by houses
now occupied by Native students.
This where the guard tower stood.
Their guns were aimed inward at us."

*The station is hot-
There's hatred
In the eyes looking at me. (Itaru Ina)*

Each family assigned a number,
Each interned assigned a number
He showed us the building
he was housed in, a long wide porch in front,
now he porch I sign up for my
pow wow contest,
a number pinned to my shawl.

*Wild chrysanthemums bloom
in the Dakota fields
for prisoners. (Itaru Ina)*

He showed us the names of fellow
internees still carved into walls
And closets. Then to a brick
here he had carved Japanese
letters the name of a club
he had started to stave off
interminable boredom.

*On a long day-
internee
Just keep on walking (Itaru Ina)*

He recalled the original arch
Over the entrance to this campus.
Dave Gipp led us to a field
out back to that very same
Wrought iron gate that proclaimed
this is Fort Lincoln.

*in the snowy spring
a vagabond
devastated by the war. (Itaru Ina)*

*The war has ended
but I'm still in
the snow country prison. (Itaru Ina)*

Generations of Japanese American
Internment survivors
seek to find what healing looks like
from historic and generational trauma.

September 9th, 2023,
A sunny early fall day
a healing ceremony was held
for Japanese internment survivors.
A Wiping Away the Tears Ceremony.

Smudging.
Prayers.
Song.

The drum sang
out across the fields and buildings that
once held prisoners surrounded
by barb wire.

Now survivors are surrounded
by healing song as each is wrapped
in a star blanket signifying
safety,
protection,
warmth.

Something healing is happening in North Dakota.

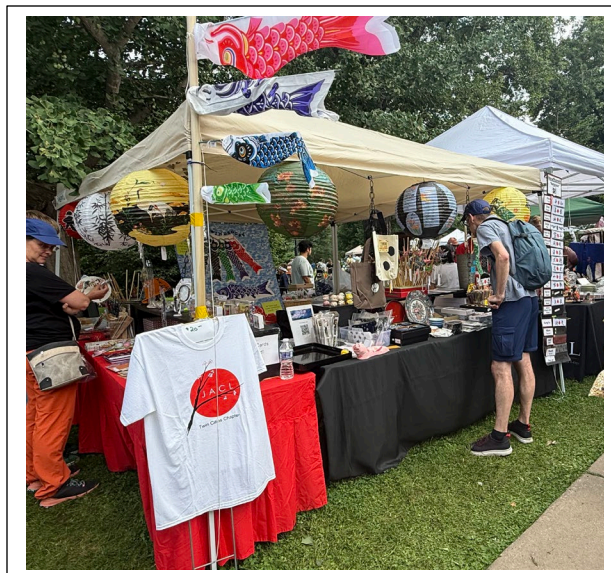
This poem may not be reproduced nor distributed without
the consent of Denise Lajimdiere.

2025 Obon Festival and Thanks!

This year's Obon Festival was held on Sunday. Festival goers said they like our booth and were excited about finding things they wanted. And the customers also said that the deals they got were great! The festival added more food vendors. People dressed in cosplay and ethnic attire and were fun to watch. Attendance was 6712.



The TCJACL made a little over \$2000 this year. The things that sold well were headbands and cranes on a stick. Also popular were items that were only one or two dollars.



Thank you to those who gave the chapter donations to sell at the festival. The donors included Chris Noonan, George and Judy Murakami, Diane Pike, Mari Ito, Carolyn Nayematsu, and Gloria Kumagai.

THANK YOU to all of the volunteers that helped make the 2025 Obon Festival a success – those who set up, those who took down, those who staffed the booth, and the countless other tasks that are essential to this project – Lani Bennett, Carolyn Nayematsu, Lisa Tsuchiya, Laura McClean, Lyn Yamanaka, Kendal Takeshita, Phil Nomura, Yuki Kato, Claire Biolo, Dallas Cordahl, Haruka Yukioka, Steave Lucas, Mike Dickerson, and the leadership of the co-chairs, Karen Tanaka Lucas and Amy Dickerson. We hope we didn't miss anyone!

And an additional **THANK YOU** to those who were able to get everything packed before the heavy rainstorms started. The threat of rain, thunderstorms, and flood watches resulted in having to close up earlier than planned.

Submitted by Amy Dickerson. Photo credits to Amy Dickerson.

In Memoriam

Edward Katsushi Hara

At age 81 years, of Golden Valley, MN, Ed Hara passed away on July 27, 2025. He was born in the Minidoka concentration camp during World War II where he overcame early injustice with quiet strength. He was raised in the Bronx and graduated from New York University. Ed served 23 years in the U.S. Air Force, retiring as a Lt. Colonel. He also worked with his father in New York, but built his career as a CPA in Minneapolis. He served on the Golden Valley Human Rights Commission and was past president of the Twin Cities chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League.

Ed was preceded in death by his parents, George and Komayo, and his brother, Davis. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Kathy, children, Michael (Ali) and Kristen (Jamie), brothers, Martin (Yasuko) and Gary (Andrea), as well as seven grandchildren.

Services were held on August 16. Donations preferred to the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation.

Ed will be remembered for his integrity, quiet strength, generosity, and compassion.

Carol Elizabeth (Sliper) Hirabayashi

Carol Hirabayashi, age 80, passed away peacefully in Eden Prairie, MN, on July 16, 2025. She is survived by her husband, Ron, two sons, Glen and Mike, daughter-in-law, Mari, and grandson, Thomas.

Services were held on August 24, 2025.



Information gathered from the Minneapolis Star Tribune July 20 (Carol) and August 3 (Ed)

2025 JACL Summer Picnic

Many thanks to Asia O'Neil, who showed her dynamic organizational skills once again, planned this year's summer picnic which was held on July 27, 2025, at Rosland Park in Edina. Although it was a VERY HOT day, 138 people, including members of JASM, Cha-Ami, and 47 children, enjoyed the delicious food and activities. The Nakasone family again showed their skills at the gill and the community brought their appetites to enjoy the mouth-watering potluck items that families shared. There were crafts (rock painting was a big hit) and games (the 3-legged race) plus demonstrations of Kendama and sword ability. And of course, there was the traditional Japanese dancing (led by Sansei Yonsei Kai), Bingo, and Tug-Of-War.

Even though the activities were lots of fun, there could be some different FUN things to do. If you have any ideas for different games, demonstrations, or WHATEVER, for next year's picnic, please let a member of the TCJACL Board or the picnic committee members know.

APOLOGIES!! Your editor has encountered some problems in publishing the many photos taken at the picnic. Hopefully they will appear in the next issue (January 2026) of The Rice Paper.

Minnesota Nikkei Project Celebrates 47 Years

The Minnesota Nikkei Project, Inc. was incorporated and registered in Minnesota in June 1978. After attending a Midwest Nisei Aging Conference in Chicago, Bill Doi brought back the idea of making the remaining years of the elderly Issei as enjoyable as possible through the volunteer efforts of the Nisei and Sansei.

Bill gathered a founding board that represented various organization and churches. I was a member of that first board, along with Dr. Gladys Stone, George Ono, George Shiozaki, Dave Matsumoto, Ed Sako, Reverend Andrew Otani, Sam Honda, Nami Oshima, Hatsumi Takashima, Susan Tsuchiya, Yoshio Matsumoto, and Phyllis and John Takekawa.

Through the volunteer efforts of the Nisei, the Issei enjoyed a wide range of activities, including outings to museums, live performances, fishing trips, meals at Japanese restaurants, picnics, and regular gathering featuring crafts, exercise, and lunch.

Today, our Issei have passed on, and it is now the Sansai who volunteer their time and efforts to provide meaningful activities and lunch for the remaining Nisei.

This year, Minnesota Nikkei celebrated its 47th anniversary with an all-family gathering at the Westwood Hills Nature Center on August 10. About 80 people attended the indoor picnic, which was catered by JK's Table. Picture boards featuring photos of participants through the years were displayed along with books and donated Japanese items for the taking.

The program included President Rosie Iverson sharing the history of the Nikkei Project, Peggy Doi presenting information on the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) and encouraging younger attendees to explore their family histories, Anna Murakami recounting her memories of surviving the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and Cameron Asao, a Yonsei volunteer, reflecting on his journey of embracing his identity as a Japanese American/Asian American through volunteering for Nikkei, and the challenges he has faced as someone who doesn't appear as Asian/Japanese.

The 47th anniversary celebration marked a significant milestone in the history of the Nikkei Project. It offered families a chance to connect with the organization and witness firsthand the important role it has played – and continues to play – in the lives of their elders.

Submitted by Gloria Kumagai

Minnesota Japanese American Veterans Historical Commemoration

The Twin Cities JACL continued the tradition of honoring Minnesota Japanese American veterans around the Memorial Day holiday.

On Saturday morning, May 17, 2025, family members and volunteers braved the windy and cold weather to decorate the gravesites of the one hundred Japanese American veterans who are buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. Also honored were 35 Minnesota Japanese American veterans buried at other locations.

Thank you to Marcus Syverson and Jason Casselius, Fort Snelling National Cemetery staff, and to the families of veterans who attended the commemoration. We also acknowledge volunteers who helped distribute flowers and decorate the gravesites of veterans whose families could not attend:

Lani and John Bennett, Jane Brodie, Tim and Pam Ohno Dagobert, Kat Dalager, Jon and Amy Dickerson, Heather Dopkins, Cheryl Hirata-Dulas, Ann Iijima and Myles Bakke, Wes, Sylvia, Wes Iijima, and Aaron Soderberg, Chris, Trina, and Vivienne Iijima, Lucy Kiriara, Jan Kiriara Monson, Toyo Land, Mara Lindberg, George and Judy Murakami, Chris Noonan, and Dave and Lisa Hintermeister, Rick and Sandi Doi Paulbick, Mike and Diane Vipond, Ben and Gail Wong.

The event was made possible by the Twin Cities JACL and generous donors who provided support:

Anonymous (2), Terry Kiriara, in memory of Jim Kwanichi Kiriara, Kent and Helen Kosobayashi, in memory of Tom Kosobayashi and Shiro Kosobayashi, Fumi Kyono and Sandra Yep, in memory of Warren T. Kyono, Jan Kiriara Monson, in memory of Mikio Kiriara, Anna Murakami, in memory of James Murakami. George and Judy Murakami, Thomas and Donna Utsunomiya, in memory of Tom Utsunomiya, Steve and Nami Vizando, in memory of George M. Suzuki, Tim and Pam Ohno Dagobert (In-kind)

To add a veteran's name to the Honor Roll list, please contact Cheryl Hirata-Dulas at chiratadulas@tcjacl.org or Lani Bennett at lanib@tcjacl.org.



Flower Power 2025

On August 2, 2025, the Twin Cities JACL participated in Flower Power IX, presented by Oyate Hotanin (Voice of the People), an Indigenous peoples-led arts and social justice organization. The “Day of Artful Goodness, Truth and Connection” was held from sunrise to sunset at the sacred Dakota Wicahnakapi (Dakota Burial Mounds) in St. Paul.

Patti Kameya, accompanied by Emily Harada and Cheryl Hirata-Dulas, taught attendees how to fold origami peace cranes. The cranes were strung up with flowers and displayed in the trees. Floral design artists decorated the park with flowers brought by participants.

In the afternoon, Laura LaBlanc, who cofounded the Flower Power collective with her husband Strong Buffalo (Tom LaBlanc), invited participants to join a circle of introductions and thank yous. Crystal Wiyaka Napin Norcross, a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, received the 2025 Strong Buffalo Award for preserving Indian Mounds Park as a sacred burial ground. A community dinner potluck and traditional Lakota story performance and open mic followed.



Cheryl, Emily, and Patti

