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Collaborative historical project shortlisted for Governor General's Award

Initiative between Nikka Yuko Japanese Gardens and University of Lethbridge and University of Plymouth Nikkei Memory Capture Project earns national attention

An innovative project that shares the histories of Japanese Canadians in the post-war era has been shortlisted for a [Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Community Programming](#).

Japanese Canadian Histories in Southern Alberta: Time Map, Audio Journey, Memory Booth is a collaborative project between Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden and the [Nikkei Memory Capture Project](#) (NMCP), itself a joint initiative between the University of Lethbridge and the United Kingdom's University of Plymouth.

"This project centres the histories of Japanese Canadians in southern Alberta and was only possible because of the community members who have shared their stories and memories with us," says Dr. Carly Adams, co-director of the Centre for Oral History and Tradition (COHT) and one of the project leaders. "We are very excited that our collaboration with Nikka Yuko has been recognized as part of this outstanding shortlist of projects."

[Launched in 2017](#), the NMCP is a transnational oral history collaboration exploring the stories of Japanese Canadians after the Second World War. The study sought to analyze the cultural and social history of Canadian Nikkei (people of Japanese descent) in the second half of the 20th century.

Dr. Darren Aoki (BA '90), a southern Alberta-born Nikkei and associate professor in World History and Oral History at the University of Plymouth, says, "This was a very challenging but also potentially innovative period for Canadians of Japanese descent. It saw them rebuild their lives, families and communities, whilst creating opportunities for future generations as well as wider southern Alberta society."



With this background in mind, Aoki initiated a pilot project that laid the foundation for the Nikkei Memory Capture Project, which he co-leads. Since then, the project has met with over 100 people and accrued hundreds of hours of interviews.

“Their stories and memories have painted a vivid picture of their sense of identity and place,” says Aoki. “It is this critical focus that continues to define the project to this day.”

Adams came on board in 2017, and the project took off. In early April 2022, the results of the project were [unveiled](#) at the new Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden Bunka Centre. The exhibit includes a time map exhibit that features the stories of the waves of migration of Japanese Canadians into Alberta; digital audio journeys that weave in oral histories; and an immersive memory booth, where visitors can opt to leave their own memories and experiences and contribute to the collection of stories.

"Collaborating with the Nikkei Memory Capture Project (NMCP) and hosting the Memory Capture Booth, Time Map, and Audio Journey in our brand new Bunka Centre has greatly expanded the ability of our visitors to connect and engage with the history of Japanese Canadians in southern Alberta," says Rhys Winder, education and program manager for Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden. "We are proud to support these initiatives and the ongoing research projects and workshops that are shining a light on the history that has shaped not only our garden, but the southern Alberta Nikkei community as a whole. We look forward to many more years of fruitful collaboration with the NMCP. Congratulations to all members of the NMCP past and present, and especially co-project leads Drs. Carly Adams and Darren Aoki."

The Governor's General award recognizes community organizations from across Canada for their exceptional work in the field of Canadian community programming. Sponsored by the National History Society, the award will honour two recipients, one French and one English, for innovation in community programming. The winners will be revealed later this fall with each winning organization receiving a cash prize of \$2,500 and a trip to Ottawa to receive the award.

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/collaborative-historical-project-shortlisted-governor-general%E2%80%99s-award>

Attached photos:

Nikkei Memory Capture Project logo

Time Map on display at Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden Bunka Centre

Memory Booth at Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden Bunka Centre

Contact:

Trevor Kenney, News & Information Manager

403-329-2710

403-360-7639 (cell)

trevor.kenney@uleth.ca

@ULethbridge

Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.