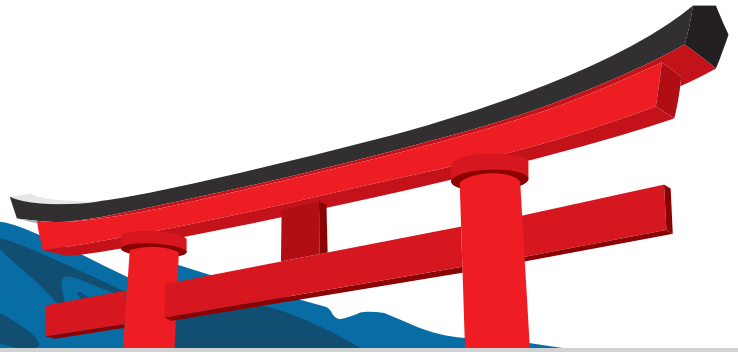




PORTLAND JACL NEWSLETTER

Portland JACL - Supporting Civil Rights Since 1928



• APRIL 2026 | VOLUME 32 ISSUE 04 •

Board Member MESSAGE

By Sean Egusa

My dad was born an American citizen on American soil behind barbed wire. I didn't know this until I was in my 20s and honestly is a bit puzzling how well my dad and his parents kept this history in the shadows. I mean their story isn't important to anyone but them right? To have everything taken away and then be spit back out upon society in the wrong direction with \$20 and a bus ticket.... That isn't the type of story that would survive the times or be relevant one or two generations later, right??

Growing up in Lake Oswego, I didn't have access to a community that protected, curated and celebrated my heritage. But I also didn't really know exactly what my heritage was. My nisei grandmother's favorite places to take us for treats were McDonald's and a local ice cream shop, no mochi, no ozoni, no takoyaki or yakitori. For the holidays, we would celebrate with a well-presented Christmas tree and a family dinner at a local Chinese restaurant, never experiencing Oshougatsu with my grandmother and extended family. Never knowing what I was missing...

For them, being American was all that was important. Even beyond the barbed wire with the gift of freedom, they wore the mental yoke instilled upon them during their three years in detention. If you celebrate your heritage, you are at risk.... And so they began and continued the process of assimilation and their heritage and culture was lost to generations, and to me.

Continued on Pg. 2

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

April 11

Japanese American Cemetery Clean up
930am

April 17

Japanese American Cemetery Clean-up
930am

April 18

Unite People
Epworth United Methodist Church | 630pm

April 26

**Japanese American
Cemetery Clean-up With Shokookai**
10am

May 3

Graduation Banquet
DoubleTree by Hilton | 1pm

Continued from Pg. 1

So as college was winding down, I found an unexpected gift, the Japanese language. As I practiced the formation of words, my professor asked where I had studied Japanese before. "I haven't," I responded. I still remember the physical disbelief in his expression as he sat me down and forced me to review my own history, which then exposed questions and clarifications of my own family.

I got curious. What did it mean to be Japanese? And then came the question that would become my own personal journey - What did it mean to be Japanese-American?

So fast forward 20 years or so and I've got two sons who have graduated from the Japanese immersion program and know more about the Japanese language and culture than I ever will. I've volunteered in post-Tohoku earthquake disaster efforts. Over 40 trips to Japan in the passport. I've been on the board for the Japanese-American Museum of Oregon and Oya no Kai and, now, the Portland chapter of the JACL.

Earlier I mentioned not having access to a certain community while I was growing up, but those fortunes have flipped and I have found myself joyfully partaking in most any opportunity to celebrate and advocate for my heritage from both sides of the Pacific. From Oya no

Kai benefits to JACL picnics to JASO new years to JAMO osechi to taiko drums, there is a tremendous community here in Portland that has helped me pursue my own curiosities and is a true communal treasure.

And all of this experience and participation has helped bring me not just resolution but resolve in my Nikkei-ness.

Knowing your history and the prevailing lessons is healthy and wise, but when a time comes to utilize that history to protect and preserve others, then it is up to us to become the Advocate and bring that history from the shadows into the light to stand up and fight for others. That is what the JACL is all about.

My journey to joining the JACL board is not the same as everyone's but I hope my story gives you more confidence in the importance of your story, no matter what heritage you call your own. We are all citizens and at the end of the day, the JACL is here to protect that citizenry, using our history to matter.

Thank you to the JACL board for having the trust and confidence in me and I look forward to serving the local chapter and the local community.



Yes! I want to help!

Your generous donations help fund cultural events, youth programming, community partnerships and social justice causes. We appreciate your support of our work.

You can make a tax-deductible donation online through:

Paypal



Check

Portland JACL
PO Box 86310
Portland, OR 97286

Venmo



❖ New Board Member Greeting ❖



My name is Connor Wakayama. I'm a Yonsei originally from Honolulu, Hawai'i and a new member of the Portland chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League board.

I joined the Portland JA CL board not only to spend more time with the stellar individuals who make up the board, but also because I believe JA CL has an important role to play in stewarding a strong and connected Japanese American community and defending our civil rights, especially in the current political moment.

Some of my earliest memories are of spending time at my Nisei grandparents' home while my parents were at work. I remember having miso soup for breakfast, eating azuki bean mochi for dessert, and sitting with them on their covered patio while my grandmother practiced ceramics and my grandfather pruned his many fruit trees in the garden. It was such a peaceful environment. I didn't realize it at the time,

but looking back I now see how they were modeling values deeply rooted in Japanese culture: caring for one's surroundings, dedication to craft, and cultivating balance and harmony in daily life.

Since moving to Portland, I've felt warmly welcomed by the Nikkei community and have been fortunate to find many meaningful ways to connect. I enjoy attending the Iko no Kai senior lunch program whenever I can to spend time with community elders and learn from their life experience. I also train several times a week at Portland Aikikai, a dojo in Northwest Portland. Practicing aikido has been a deeply grounding and meaningful way to connect with my heritage in a physical manner.

I've also spent time learning about the history of the Japanese American community in Portland—through my own research, visits to the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, and conversations with people who have deep roots here in Portland. Last spring, I launched a walking tour exploring the area where the city's historic Nihonmachi once stood in Old Town and Japanese American Historical Plaza along the waterfront. Through the tour, I hope to help more people learn about the rich history and resilience of Portland's JA community. People can learn more at kizunatoursportland.com.

Looking ahead, I hope to see younger generations of Nikkei continue to engage so that our community and culture remain vibrant into the future. I also hope our community continues building solidarity with other immigrant and diaspora communities, recognizing that our collective flourishing depends on how we stand together and support one another.

❖ Mental Health & Community Programs ❖

Coming This May: Mental Health & Community Programs

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month, we're planning a few community programs focused on mental health, connection, and care within our community.

While details are still being finalized, we're exploring offering a **suicide prevention training** designed to help community members recognize signs that someone may be struggling and learn simple, supportive ways to respond. Trainings like this can help

normalize conversations about mental health and give people practical tools to support friends, family members, and neighbors.

We're also considering a **community book group** centered on *Permission to Come Home* by Dr. Jenny Wang, an Asian American psychologist who writes about mental health, identity, and healing in Asian American communities.

Keep an eye on our social media and the May newsletter for more details. If you're interested or would like to stay in the loop, please reach out to spencer@pdxjacl.org.

❖ Cemetery Clean-up Schedule ❖

The toban duties consist of opening/closing the storage shed and dumpster, and providing cleaning guidance to volunteers who show up.

All times are 9:30 am to noon, except for 4/26 and 5/25, see schedule. Toban's names are shown in parentheses.

For Questions Please Reach Out to **Kenji Yamasaki (503-330-3327)**.

- Sat, 4/4:** Inspection only (Kenji)
- Sat, 4/11:** Cleanup #1 (Kenji)
- Sat, 4/18:** Cleanup #2 (Kenji)
- Sun, 4/26:** Cleanup #3, jointly with Shokookai: 10 am to noon (Mike/Rich)
- Sat, 5/16:** Cleanup #4 (Terry)
- Sun, 5/24:** Prep for Memorial Day Service (Chip)
- Mon, 5/25:** Memorial Day Service (Mike/Rich): Starts at 1pm?
- Sat, 6/6:** Flower pickup (Kenji)
(Schedule is Tentative)

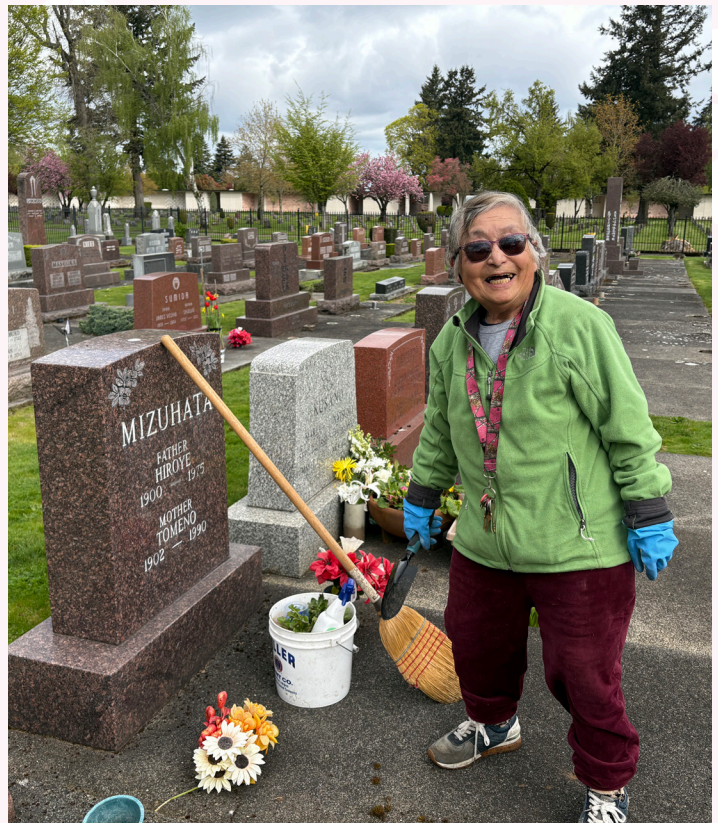


Photo Corner



Portland JACL and Tsuru for Solidarity Rallied Against Ice on February 22nd at Elizabeth Caruthers Park followed by a march to the ICE Field Office on the south waterfront. *Photos by Rich Iwasaki*



Murder mystery writer, Naomi Hirahara share passages from one of her books featuring the Japanese Kibei gardener Mas Arai. Thanks to Val Itamura for arranging Hirahara's visit to Iko No Kai. They met on a tour of the battlefields in Europe of the Nisei soldiers.

The Japanese American Museum of Oregon shared the story of the temporary detention centers as part of the programming for the Minidoka Exhibit. Sharon Yamato, filmmaker, Brian Nikita, historian, and Stan Honda, photographer traveled to all 15 sites on the west coast. Sharon also shared her film the Misadventures of a Nisei Week Queen. You can see the preview here: <https://tinyurl.com/niseiweekqueenvideo>



"I Am An American: The Nisei Soldier Experience" exhibit opened in San Francisco. National Veterans Network Committee Members were (L to R): Linda Tamura, Lynn Fuchigami Parks, Mari Watanabe, General Eric Shinseki, Christine Sato-Yamazaki, Donna Cole, Howard Hieshima. *Photo by: Setsy Larouche*

❖ Signing the Ireichō ❖



Judy Furukawa is stamping the Ireichō Janice Okamoto (left), Richard March (without his head), Mary Crull, Nikki Mandell look on.

The Japanese American Museum of Oregon had the honor of hosting the Ireicho, the sacred book of names that lists all of the Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during WWII.

The Ireichō serves as a living monument. People are honored by placing a stamp under their name. The goal is to have every person listed recognized.

As a volunteer (check-in [two times], usher,

photographer), it was great sharing and connecting with other families and friends-- remembering loved ones we knew and didn't know.

A teary-eyed mother with two young daughters had an emotional and touching moment when stamping their family's names. They all wore beautiful Japanese shawls and carried small, battery-operated lights in memory of their loved ones.

It was also nice to hear the families express fond memories, e.g., "Uncle Tohoru was always funny."

Everyone expressed their appreciation, too.

Kudos to JAMO and Irei team.

❖ Min Yasui Day: Then and Now ❖

Tiffany Koyama-Lane arranged a pre-gavel ceremony to highlight Min Yasui Day at City Council meeting on March 18. Min Yasui Day, which falls every year on March 28, honors the inspirational work and legacy of Minoru Yasui, who challenged the incarceration of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II.

It's important to remember that years prior to and during World War II, the City of Portland actively contributed to the racist, unjust removal of Japanese Americans in our city. While we're ashamed of that history, it's vital to learn from our past and recognize the patterns of that past happening in our community and our country today. Now, more than ever, we should look to emulate heroes like Min Yasui, whose legacy of advocacy and fighting against all forms of racial injustice serves as an inspiration.



Tiffany Koyama-Lane addresses the audience. On the left are archival records of city council resolutions that called for the removal of the Japanese from Portland. Photo by Marleen Wallingford



Photo of the participants in the ceremony to remember Min Yasui Day.



Iko no Kai - APRIL 2026

1333 SE 28th Ave / 503-238-0775

MON	TUES		THURS	FRI
		X	2 Tofu and Lobster Sauce お豆腐の ロブスター餡かけ 11am Haiku 11am Blood Pressure	3 Sweet & Sour Spare Ribs 甘酢スペアリブ 10-11:30am Shigin
6 Pepper Beef Yakisoba 牛肉の黒胡椒 焼きそば 12:30pm Mahjong	7 Shrimp Fried Rice エビ炒飯 10:40am Reiki 12:45pm Sing-along	X	9 Gyoza 餃子 10:30am Ukulele	10 Furikake Salmon ふりかけサーモン 10-11:30am Shigin 12:30pm Bingo
13 Tonjiru Udon 豚汁うどん 11:30am Chair Yoga 12:30pm Mahjong	14 Chicken w/ Mushroom Sauce 鶏肉のきのこダレ 11am Blood Pressure 11:30am Aikido Stress Relief 12:45pm Sing a Long	X	16 Panko Fish 白身魚の パン粉揚げ 11am Haiku 11am Blood Pressure	17 Meat Jun ハワイの韓国風 豚バラ炒め 10-11:30am Shigin
20 Chicken Katsu Curry チキンカツカレー 12:30pm Mahjong	21 Cod w/ Miso Sauce タラの味噌ダレ 12:45pm Sing-along	X	23 Egg Foo Young 広東風カニ玉 10:30am Ukulele	24 Miso Pot Roast 味噌ポットロースト 10-11:30am Shigin
27 Birthday Sushi お誕生日寿司 *Reservations required (suggested donation \$12) 12:30pm Mahjong	28 Sweet & Sour Pork 酢豚 11am Blood Pressure 12:45pm Sing-along	X	30 * Lemongrass Chicken 鶏肉のベトナム風 レモングラス炒め 11am Blood Pressure	

Chefs:

Naomi Molstrom-M Kyoko Adcock-Tu Justin Sato, Jeff Higa and Andrea Hoyt -Th/F

Suggested Lunch Donation: \$9 for seniors 65+ / \$12 for adults under 65 / \$ 6 kids

Reservations preferred / Indoor Dining Limited

For reservations please call and leave a message or email:

(ph) 503-238-0775 (email) ikoinokai7@gmail.com

Seating at 11:30 am with lunch served promptly at noon

* vegetarian option available on that day - please reserve two days in advance



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PORTLAND, OR 97286

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If you would like to contact the Board, their email address is *First Name@pdxjacl.org*

Edited by Chong Sim (simc0186@gmail.com)