



www.vjls-jh.com

VANCOUVER JAPANESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL & JAPANESE HALL
バンクーバー日本語学校並びに日系人会館

475 Alexander Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6A 1C6
t 604-254-2551 f 604-254-9556 e vjls@vjls-jh.com

VJLS-JH's LONGSTANDING HISTORY

It is important for our members to be educated and knowledgeable about our resilient and venerable history. We have faced diverse experiences since our founding in 1906, which is a testament to our resilience and strength as a community organization.

From a governance perspective, an abbreviated general history follows:

1906: 'The Vancouver National Japanese Schools Maintenance Association' (The Vancouver Kyoritsu Nippon Kokumin Gakko) formed. The 1906 building was erected. This was a regular academic school from 9:00am-3:00pm during weekdays with all subjects taught in Japanese. The purpose was to educate children of immigrants in exactly the same way as in Japan, so that children could return to Japan at any time without gaps in their education.

December 10, 1912: The organization officially registered as a charity with the federal government.

September 10, 1920: The legal name in our bylaws was changed to "The Vancouver Nippon Kyoritsu Go Gakko (Japanese School of Languages) Maintenance Association." The organization became a second-language school with classes after regular public school held from 4:00-5:30pm on Monday to Friday. This reflected a philosophy change to reflect the importance of Canadian citizenship and giving children the option to build a life in Canada. The leaders at the time felt that this change was best for positioning the organization for the future.

1928: The Japanese Hall was built. At this time, leaders recognized that the organization could not fundraise alone and be financially sustainable only as a second-language school, so they expanded the positioning of the new building to be a community hub.

"Let us build not only a school building, but a Japanese community centre. In addition to teaching Japanese, in order to improve Japan/Canada relations, it (the Japanese Hall) has important significance."

– Sato, Tsutae & Hanako, *Kodomo-to tomo-ni Gojyuu-nen*
(*Teaching Japanese Canadian Children for 50 Years*)

1942-1949: Internment Era. The organization's buildings were confiscated by the Canadian government. Although forcible attempts were made to sell the properties, it was not sold due to the Society's community ownership of it. The strategic leadership of the board of directors even while scattered in internment camps was able to prevent the sale of the 1928 building.

1952: The building was reclaimed after the Society reverted to "good standing" with the Company of Registrars in 1951, as due to the internment, the Society had been in default by not being able to submit their annual filings from 1942-1949. Classes reopened in 1953.

November 29, 1960: In recognition of our diversifying mission, our legal name in the bylaws was changed to "Vancouver Nipponjinkei Kaikan (Japanese Hall) Narabini Nippon Go Gakko



www.vjls-jh.com

VANCOUVER JAPANESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL & JAPANESE HALL
バンクーバー日本語学校並びに日系人会館

475 Alexander Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6A 1C6
t 604-254-2551 f 604-254-9556 e vjls@vjls-jh.com

(Japanese School of Languages) Maintenance Association.” There were both education and community focuses, giving the organization a diverse revenue base. Members partnered with Japanese Canadian community organizations that were housed in the facility.

Mid-1980s: The board of directors recognized that Japanese needed to be taught as a second or foreign language, and that the community base needed to diversify outside of solely-Japanese ethnic boundaries. The following is a quote from the Bylaws Amendment Committee, Report II, June 12, 1985:

The most of the Japanese language schools in Canada still have a tendency to cater to the children who come from Japan. In other words, the school's curricula are still not geared for the children for whom the Japanese language is the SECOND language.

Indeed, there are relatively strong ethnic odour of a "Japanese School" which has no longer been synchronized with not only the new breed of children but also the Niseis, Sanseis, or the inter-married parents, who will be more and more predominant in our school from now on.

A private Japan language school can keep its preference to be a Japanese school mainly catering to the children to whom Japanese language is their MOTHER TONGUE. However, for non-private school like ours, the basic conception and structure must be set forth under the awareness of the fact, i.e., we are teaching a FOREIGN LANGUAGE to the Canadian children in Canada where almost no Japanese language is used in their daily life.

However, the effectualization and implementation of the need to change did not occur under the governance umbrella until 1994.

June 27, 1994: The constitution and name was changed.

The constitution was updated to (the current one):

- 1) To promote and foster the study of the Japanese language and culture;
- 2) To provide adequate physical facilities and academic instruction for the study and understanding of the Japanese language and culture;
- 3) To advance multi-cultural and multi-lingual understanding;
- 4) To assist interested persons or groups in encouraging all of the above;
- 5) To pursue any other objective that may be incidental to any of the above.

The name was changed to (the current one): The Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall (Vancouver Nihon-go Gakko Narabi Ni Nikkei Jin Kaikan, or VJLS-JH).

1997: VJLS-JH received Municipal Heritage Designation and protection.

2000: The Y2K wing was completed.



www.vjls-jh.com

VANCOUVER JAPANESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL & JAPANESE HALL
バンクーバー日本語学校並びに日系人会館

475 Alexander Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6A 1C6
t 604-254-2551 f 604-254-9556 e vjls@vjls-jh.com

2012: The Heritage Daycare Renovation of the Japanese Hall building was completed and licensed Children's World Childcare Centre facility was launched.

March 25, 2014: Strategic Planning Committee recommended transition to governance model.

The report of Mar 25, 2014 stated:

"From the interviews of stakeholders, it was clear that VJLS-JH serve three important functions: 1) to preserve and promote Japanese language and culture; 2) to preserve and promote our organizations' history and the history of Japanese Canadians; and 3) to maintain a grassroots tradition of volunteerism and openness to cross-cultural and neighbourhood relationship building."

2017: VJLS-JH received Provincial Historic Site Designation.

2019: VJLS-JH received National Historic Site Designation.

November 2020: Unsuccessful ratification of 2020 Bylaws, updating them to ensure organizational sustainability and compliance with the B.C. Societies Act.