

CALGARY BUDDHIST TEMPLE – 2016 IN REVIEW

2016 was our first full year back in our completely renovated temple. After years of making do with the old building, we are enjoying the improvements and making use of all the space. During the past year, we have had several fun volunteer sessions of making mein noodles, mochi, and gyoza –fun AND profitable. We held a successful second annual fundraising dinner and a to-be-annual Grey Cup party. As well, we had our regular potluck lunches after special services, including a special first anniversary dinner at Obon which was attended by members of the Lethbridge Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta. We were fortunate to have Rev. Yanko attend and speak at our Obon. We were excited to have an infant presentation (Hatsu mairi) in November, and we have a dedicated group of parents who are working on developing the Dharma School for our children. One of our Sangha members is teaching ikebana.

In addition to our weekly Sunday services, we have regular Buddhist discussion groups and Buddhism 101 classes during the week. Sensei Ken has been running a Temple Refuge Circle since last fall; this is a small, meditation and awareness-focused Practice ‘circuit’.

We are working with BTSA to share speakers, and in July Rev. Makino from Hawaii stopped in Calgary to give a Saturday morning Dharma talk on his way to BTSA’s Obon. We are looking forward to ongoing coordination with BTSA this coming year.

Our Board has continued to work on board development and strategic planning. A full day session produced a detailed strategic plan; one initiative from the plan is the creation of a Sangha Engagement Committee. This group has started a number of out-reach programs to our seniors, including providing rides and offering tea and conversation after services. They have also organized several evenings with special speakers: a representative from the Calgary Catholic Immigrant Aid Society who spoke about Syria and Syrian immigrants, and priests from the Sikh Temple who shared their faith through spiritual music and song and then spoke about their religion. They also held our first movie night (with udon and popcorn) which was a big success and which will surely be the precursor of more such evenings.

Mrs. Teruko Ikuta generously donated a beautiful new scroll of Prince Shotuko, in memory of her husband, Rev S.K. Ikuta, giving us the official Hongwanji set up of four scrolls. In addition, Mrs. Ikuta’s nephew in Japan donated a lovely antique uchishiki (altar cloth), which is now in regular use. Thank you to Mrs. Ikuta for her generous donation and for the years of service she has given to the Calgary Buddhist Temple.

Our sensei have been very active in the community this year. Sensei Ken has been participating in the six month long interfaith series at Beth Tzedec Synagogue. James Sensei was the featured speaker at the Lil Faider Scholar-in -residence speaker series talking about death customs and the difficult for others to understand Jodo Shinshu concept of what happens after death. In addition, James Sensei has continued his regular trips to the Drumheller Institution, which is a medium security prison. Both Sensei Ken and Sensei Robert participated in the Ministerial Assistants program in Vancouver in January, with thanks to Socho Aoki, the LDC, and the JSBTC Board for organizing.

In addition to all of this, the three sensei have hosted numerous religious/school classes and open houses in the community, such as Open Doors YYC.

We had a lot of press this past year. First, our Buddhism 101 classes garnered a positive article in the Calgary Herald's Swerve magazine: <http://calgaryherald.com/life/swerve/our-town-in-this-buddhism-101-class-your-god-wont-eat-your-homework> . Then, the Temple got more good press with an article on the renovation and Jodo Shinshu Buddhism: <https://www.pressreader.com/canada/calgary-herald/20170304/282587377765998>. In December, James Sensei provided the Buddhist concept of *dana* (giving) for the Calgary Herald Christmas Fund: <http://www.islamicsupremecouncil.com/calgary-herald-faith-leaders-sing-praises-of-philanthropy/>. And in February, James Sensei was profiled in the Calgary Herald: <https://www.pressreader.com/canada/calgary-herald/20160730/282291024604371>

Regrettably, we are still involved in a law suit with our construction contractor over the renovations to our building. Last fall, we commenced remediation of the many deficiencies in the contractor's work, and most of the interior work is finished. However, there is still exterior work which will have to be done in the spring/summer. It is fortunate that we stopped payment under the construction contract so we have the funds needed to do the remediation work. This has been very frustrating and time consuming for the Board. We did very thorough due diligence in retaining professionals and hiring the contractor, but the fact that we are a volunteer organization ultimately made it easy for the contractor to fail to provide appropriate construction management on site and to try to take advantage of the Temple.

However, we fortunately found another contractor who has worked closely with us on the remediation. As well, he is now designing cabinetry and starting the construction of our columbarium, which is work being led by James Sensei.

We continued to raise funds to pay for the costs of renovation as well as operating costs. Thanks to the generosity of our members, our capital campaign has raised approximately \$1.82 million of our \$2 million goal. Regular fundraising and our capital campaign will continue in 2017. As well, the building is being rented by several groups on an ongoing basis, including the Calgary Shambhala Meditation Group which helps cover operating costs.

Running a temple is not an easy job. A successful temple requires effort from many people, and events take a lot of time to plan and organize. Thank you to the organizing committees and the small army of volunteers (the *tobans*) for all their hard work and dedication: organizing events, teaching Dharma School, cooking, and cleaning the temple.