



Interview with Sandy Chan from the Japanese Canadian Culture Centre

I recently had the privilege of interviewing Sandy Chan from the Japanese Canadian Culture Centre on their efforts to achieve a high standard of protection. The Japanese Canadian Culture Centre is located in the heart of Toronto. We are so pleased to have the Japanese Canadian Culture Centre as a member of Plan to Protect®.

Melodie: Sandy, can you tell us about the vulnerable sector that you serve, including the type of programs you offer?

Sandy: Aside from our festivals scheduled throughout the year which attract over 10,000 visitors from all walks of life, the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC) offers classes in Japanese culture (crafts, language, music, traditional arts, martial arts) to all age groups from children to seniors, men and women, including people with physical challenges. JCCC has thrived because of its inclusiveness. Given the heightened awareness and acknowledgement of hierarchy in certain disciplines of cultural activities, the JCCC is mindful that each individual could be in a position considered vulnerable because of that power dynamic, and our staff and instructors are vigilant about treating everyone with respect, while maintaining those cultural structures in our programs.

M: What is Japanese Canadian Culture Centre doing to achieve a high standard of protection?

S: The programs have always been carefully planned, and the instructors are carefully selected. Even then, the JCCC realizes we need to better protect our members as well as offer support and guidance to our volunteer instructors. Therefore, we are working with a professional organization like Winning Kids Inc to help us do this properly. Achieving and maintaining a high standard of protection has also been acknowledged as a top priority on all levels of operations, from front line work, to administration to leadership at a board level.

M: What is your biggest challenge in achieving this standard? How are you overcoming it?

S: Our frontline workers are largely made up of volunteers, who are busy people and they may not see the time and value in participating in the training, or implementing any necessary changes to their programs to align themselves with the protection policies.

We hope to overcome this firstly through board endorsement. Communicating to them that the board views this as a top priority will hopefully open their minds to the training. Once at the training, we hope that through education, it will bring awareness. Since many of the oversights are a result of people just not being aware of the need and risks surrounding these issues

M: We had the privilege of listening to the practicum training of the Japanese Canadian Culture Centre (which is part of the Train the Trainer course we offer), and Sandy you, Christine and Elizabeth did a fantastic job of training. Your passion and commitment to communicating this to your staff and volunteers really came through in the training. Good job! Sandy, why do you think this is so important?

S: People come to the JCCC for a positive experience. We must make sure that is what they receive. The centre has thrived, and we just celebrated our 50th anniversary recently. This is testimony that members trust us with their children, and their endeared family members. We hope to continue to grow in our offerings and our membership, and more importantly, we hope that our programs are always guided by best practise principles in every regard, including protecting our vulnerable population.

The JCCC also represents the community to the broader community. We have to ensure that we are one that is respectful of all.

M: How has Plan to Protect[®] and Winning Kids Inc. been able to help you achieve this standard of protection?

S: Rather than doing all the work for us, Winning Kids Inc. has given us the tools to deliver this and teaches us how to use them. Winning Kids Inc. also made sure that staff and those charged with the responsibility of implementing it to the organisation are part of the process, so together, we do not only develop a set of policies that's appropriate for the JCCC, but the staff also receive training in communicating and implementing these policies. It's a great working partnership!