On May 6, 2017 approximately 700 people returned to the site of the Portland Assembly Center, now the Portland Expo Center, to honor and remember the victims of Executive Order 9066. From May to September, 1942, nearly 3,700 people lived there in animal stalls before being moved to permanent camps where they continued to be subjected to ongoing violations of their civil and human rights.

The event featured performances by the Minidoka Swing Band, Unit Souzou, a presentation by Oregon Poet Laureate Lawson Inada with actors and community members dressed in period clothing, and moving speeches and recollections by keynote speaker Dale Minami, George Nakata, Jim Tsugawa, and Weston Koyama. In addition, oral history interviews of internees were shared to paint a picture of life in the space where people were seated. Mini exhibits featuring historic photographs of the Portland Assembly Center were setup throughout the cavernous space to again, help people imagine what existed there during that dark period in history.

Senator Ron Wyden was in attendance to give his remarks and commitment to make sure that atrocities like what happened in 1942 never happen again. He also presented the official Congressional Record he submitted in Washington DC on May 2, recognizing the 75th Anniversary of Executive Order 9066 and our event. He graciously made beautiful gold embossed copies of the Congressional Record for all the victims of EO9066 who were on hand at the event. Another memorable highlight was the reading of Governor Brown’s proclamation that issued a formal apology “to the Japanese American community in Oregon and to all Oregonians for failing to defend the civil and human rights of its citizens and legal residents in 1942,” along with resolve to never let what happened to the Japanese community, happen to anyone again. Metro President Tom Hughes was on hand to read the proclamation and Jagjit Nagra, a field representative from Senator Jeff Merkley’s office read a letter from the Senator honoring the day.

We wish to give special thanks to the Portland Expo Center for their tremendous support and cooperation; our Sustaining Sponsor, the Japanese Ancestral Society of Portland; Supporting Sponsors, Oregon Historical Society and Metro; Contributing Sponsors, Eisaku “Ace” Hiro-mura and Shiuko Sakai; and Community Sponsor, Janice Okamoto and Family. In addition, we wish to thank the Portland JACL for their partnership and hard work co-presenting the event, Dale Gronso for his in-kind services designing the print program and collateral materials, Chisao Hata for the incredible Remember Us tag project and performance and the tremendous work and dedication of the organizing committee and volunteers that made the event possible.

The event closed with a procession of the Remember Us community tag project that had the names of every internee at the Portland Assembly Center written on tags similar to those worn by all the internees. The tags were tied to a rope to create a stirring work of art that wound its way through the crowd and onstage, accompanied by the powerful sounds of Unit Souzou.

Volunteers in 1940s period clothing stand behind artist Chisao Hata (fifth from right) as they recreate the day Portland’s Japanese American community were forced to leave Nihonmachi due to Executive Order 9066.
This spring presented quite a challenge when we were forced to close the museum for five weeks due to debris falling into our offices and galleries from remodeling being done to the 2nd floor above us. We received many concerned calls and inquiries about our temporary closing. It definitely presented a hardship and had financial impact on the organization. This time our closure was temporary, but imagine if we had to close our doors permanently.

What if there was no place for people to learn about how and where the Japanese American community began in Portland and the Pacific Northwest? What if there wasn’t a place to see Portland’s missing Japantown and surrounding communities that disappeared overnight? What if there was no place to learn firsthand about the injustices of an unconstitutional executive order that resulted in the forced removal and mass incarceration of innocent men, women and children? Or more importantly, hear their voices and learn the stories behind their faces? What if there was no place to preserve the artifacts and historical documents that interpret this important history? And how would people authentically connect with this past to help ensure the future?

The Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center and the Japanese American Historical Plaza are not just remembrances or vestiges of what once was. They are statements of resilience, courage and a reminder of how we must stand to fight fear and prejudice in our world today. Our exhibits, programs and events remind us of the past, as a call to action today.

A call to action like requesting a formal apology from both the City of Portland and from the State of Oregon for incarcerating its Japanese American citizens and legal residents during WWII, a gesture of great significance, long overdue, and with a pledge to never let it happen again. Our request resulted in Mayor Ted Wheeler reading a proclamation with an apology on Minoru Yasui Day and Governor Kate Brown issuing a similar proclamation that was read on May 6th at our Return and Remembrance event commemorating the 75th Anniversary of EO9066. With their response, we were assured that Oregon’s leadership recognizes its mistakes of the past and is committed to stand today for justice for all, not justice for some.

If you recognize the importance of our work and the importance of having a museum dedicated to this history, please show your support through becoming a Friend of Oregon Nikkei Endowment or giving a financial contribution. We depend on your support to keep our doors open and ensure the future of the organization. Your donation, in any amount is needed and greatly appreciated!

—Lynn Fuchigami Parks

Oregon Nikkei Endowment
2017 Annual Banquet
Wednesday, October 4, 2017
Multnomah Athletic Club
1849 SW Salmon Street in Portland
Cocktails 5:30 PM Dinner 6:30 PM
$125 per person ($50 tax deductible)
RSVP by Thursday, September 28th
Business Attire

Featuring Keynote Speaker:
Simon Tam, Author, Musician, Activist and founder of the all Asian American music group, The Slants

Honoring:
Shiuko Sakai: Heart of the Community Award
Ota Tofu: Paving the Way Award
Inspiring Action Award: Carol Suzuki and Representative Brian Clem
Proclamations from the State of Oregon, signed by Governor Kate Brown, and the City of Portland, signed by Mayor Ted Wheeler

These proclamations serve as official apologies for the lack of political leadership at the local and state levels during World War II. The decisions and actions by many political agents and community leaders at the time led to the unconstitutional incarceration of many thousands of local people of Japanese descent. It took 75 years, but those affected by EO9066 finally got their overdue apology.
This year’s Minoru Yasui Day, March 28th, was celebrated at City Hall with a proclamation read by Portland’s Mayor Ted Wheeler, that issued an “official apology to its Japanese American community for failing to defend the civil and human rights of its citizens and legal residents in 1942.”

The event was presented by Oregon Nikkei Endowment and the Minoru Yasui Legacy Project, and was co-sponsored by the ACLU Oregon, Oregon Asian Pacific American Bar Association and the Portland JACL.

Jeff Selby, from the City of Portland’s Office of Equity and Human Rights, served as Master of Ceremonies for the event that included an exhibit about Minoru Yasui along with the display of his Presidential Medal of Freedom. The program opened with a film clip from the documentary about Min that was produced by his daughter Holly Yasui, who was also in attendance.

Guest speakers included City of Portland Commissioner Nick Fish, Jessica Asai, Civil Rights Investigator at Oregon Health & Science University, Dante James, Director of the Office of Equity and Human Rights, City of Portland, and Jann Carson, Associate Director, ACLU Oregon. The program concluded with a dramatic reading of words of Min Yasui, by actor Heath Hyun Houghton.

Photograph courtesy of Kay Endo
Our current exhibition, *American Obon: Dancing in Joy and Remembrance* opened on July 29th to coincide with the summer Obon celebration, an eagerly awaited event for Nikkei communities throughout North America. While Obon is a memorial observance it is also a joyous occasion with cultural performances, food booths, games and most notably, the bon odori, circle dance. Our exhibition traces the history of this beloved dance tradition in North America with archival photographs, audio, and rare video footage on loan from Visual Communications in Los Angeles, dance scholar Linda Akiyama, and the Buddhist Churches of America.

The bon odori tradition was brought to America by Yoshio Iwanaga (1900-1950) a Japanese Buddhist minister who moved to California in 1930. Known for his “light feet”, Iwanaga taught obon dances in California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. He established a bon odori ritual for the American obon festival. The continued popularity of this beloved tradition is due in large part to his pioneering activities.

Wynn Kiyama, guest curator for the exhibition, has done extensive research on the bon odori tradition, collecting photographs, rare footage and songs from up and down the west coast. He worked with Linda Akiyama who wrote her thesis on Reverend Iwanaga and he also interviewed Iwanaga’s family members.

Portland’s bon-odori tradition is represented with photographs from the Frank C. Hirahara collection and the Oregonian archives. One of Portland’s most beloved dance instructors, Sahomi Tachibana, attended the opening reception on July 29th.

*American Obon* includes everything from rare home movie footage of dancers at the 1934 Los Angeles Nisei Week, color photos of dancers in Minidoka concentration camp during WW II; to contemporary photographs of bon odori dancers dressed as Elvis. It is not to be missed.
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NOVEMBER 1, 2016 TO JULY 31, 2017

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Correction: In the Autumn 2016 newsletter, The Frank C. Hirahara collection was incorrectly listed as a Donor ($1,000–4,999). The entry should be listed as Mrs. Frank C. Hirahara.

Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center’s first 2017 donation was this collection of carvings from Amy Barnhart. The carvings were gifted to Amy’s grandmother and aunt when they left Gila River Camp at the end of World War II. The family spent many years trying to find a good home for the carvings before learning about O.N.L.C. this February.

The carvings—47 birds and one sailfish—were made in the Gila River Camp in Arizona (1942-1945) from scrap wood and materials. The artist is unknown, but their talent is readily apparent.

Due to rust and the caustic nature of the framing material, the carvings and the cloth they were pinned on were separated from the wood frame they came in. Once conservation is complete, we will rehouse the pins in the frame and display them at the museum. This is one more beautiful example of camp art and the spirit of gaman. We are honored to have this as part of our collection.

Note: We make every effort to keep accurate records. Please help us to correct any errors by calling 503.224.1458.
There’s an APP for That
A New Tour of the Portland Assembly Center

2017 marks 75 years since President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 authorizing the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. In the summer of 1942, many Nikkei from Portland, northern Oregon and central Washington were held at the Portland Assembly Center, now site of the Portland Expo Center. Prior to serving as a detention center for Japanese Americans, that facility had been the Pacific International Livestock and Exposition Center. In that large eleven-acre space, livestock were housed in corrals. The facility's central arena was used for livestock shows and rodeos.

Those who are interested can access the tour by downloading the Aurasma application on their phone or tablet, creating an account, searching for and following the (O.N.E.) Aurasma account, and scanning any (O.N.E.) logo. Access to the tour can also be found by following this link, http://auras.ma/s/cNpsU. Once you have opened the link, follow the directions on the right, and then scan the O.N.E. logo. You will now have links to O.N.E.’s Public Auras.

The five tour stops include segments of interviews of people who were detained at the assembly center, historic photographs, documents, and maps. Stop number one provides background on the Japanese American community that existed in Portland prior to 1942.

The second stop shows events leading up to the removal of that community and their arrival at the assembly center. Stops three and four describe life inside the Assembly Center. The final stop tells of the departure from the center to the Minidoka and Heart Mountain camps, and ends with an interview with Valeri Otani and photo of her art installation at the Max Light Rail stop at the Portland Expo Center.

Colin Takeo, an intern at ONLC, and Heather Rees, a project consultant, helped to create the Portland Assembly Center Tour. The project was part of the Digital Citizenship & Japanese American History project funded by the Collins Foundation.

—Cynthia Basye

This year’s Cherry Blossom Bazaar, our highly anticipated 5th annual rummage sale of Japanese collectibles, was held the weekend of March 11th–12th and was once again a wonderful success. “Treasures” of all kinds were snatched up by people that queued up before the doors opened—dishware, artwork, ikebana supplies, dolls, kimono and yukata were just a few of the categories of items that filled the large space, whose use was generously donated by the Portland Chinatown History Foundation.

The popular fundraising event has something for every age, taste and budget. It has become so popular, one person even called months in advance to find out the date, as she was booking her vacation for the coming year and didn’t want to miss the sale!

Special thanks to the Portland Chinatown History Foundation for donating their wonderful space for the event and for the tremendous leadership of the event Co-Chairs, Jere Okada, Marilyn Sholian and Cherie Yokota. Thanks again to their efforts, the hard work of our dedicated volunteers, and the generosity of donors that dropped off boxes and car loads of items, the event was again a successful fundraiser, grossing close to $9,000 proving true the saying that one person’s junk is another person’s treasure!
It is with tremendous gratitude that I write this letter of thanks to the ONLC and Jane Comerford for the return of my great-grandfather’s suitcase that he packed to Tule Lake internment camp. My great-grandfather, Hidehiko Morioka, was Issei generation and immigrated to the Hood River area in the late 1890s from Haga, Japan, in Okayama prefecture. He came to this country as a bachelor, and it is believed that he had no intention of staying in the U.S. his entire life. He started out working for the railroad and eventually married Fuku (Ikemoto) Morioka. They had 4 children...my grandfather, Takeshi “Harry”...twin sisters, Yoshiko and Toshiko, and Ken. They settled in The Dalles, Oregon and worked a small farm owned by the Seufert family close to where The Dalles dam is now located.

My grandfather, Harry, would drive their produce, mainly vegetables and fruit, into Portland every weekend along the old scenic highway. Like most Issei and Nisei, they worked long, exhausting days. The family made only one trip back to Japan in 1929. They went to visit with relatives and the twins, Yoshiko and Toshiko, remained in Japan for their education until 1938.

With the onset of WWII and Executive Order 9066, the family was reduced to a number. Hidehiko’s family number was 16380. This was the number that was on the suitcase that was recovered along Killingsworth St. by Jane Comerford. The writing on the suitcase is certainly in my grandfather’s hand, as Hidehiko never learned how to write in English. My grandfather was recently married when Executive Order 9066 was authorized and he was issued family number 16381. The entire Morioka family was relocated from The Dalles, OR to the Portland Assembly Center, then sent to Tule Lake. From there, my grandfather, Harry, joined the US Army to get out of internment camp while the rest of the Morioka’s were sent to Minidoka in Idaho.

Harry eventually entered the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) and was stationed in Japan in 1945-46 after the surrender. I always thought it ironic that he had to go all the way to Japan to own a camera, carry a gun, and explore the countryside (while Hidehiko and the rest of the family in the US was behind barbed wire)! He was able to locate and provide aid to the relatives that were still living in Japan.

After WWII, my family returned to The Dalles, Oregon. Hidehiko enjoyed fishing and gardening and was known for his roses. My grandfather, Harry, started his own business, “Harry’s Radio and TV”. My grandparents never discussed internment. It wasn’t until they were in their early 80’s that they started sharing information with me regarding their experience. The suitcase that was found is such a powerful tool in telling my family story. It is a story of immigration, civil rights, racism, perseverance, and great sadness. It was a suitcase that was packed with dreams, pride, uncertainty, and hope. Executive Order 9066 had a huge impact on my family that is still felt to this day. The suitcase is a reminder of the incredible sacrifice that my family went through to be here in this country. They gave everything they had, and by some means, this small suitcase survived as a reminder of the struggle for freedom.

Upon return, the suitcase has been put to use in Central Oregon. It was on display at a 4th-5th grade “storyline” on Japanese American internment at Kenwood Elementary School in Bend, Oregon. It is currently part of the High Desert Museum’s WWII exhibit that runs through September 2017. This suitcase has come full circle and has finally found its way home. It is helping tell a story that my grandparents could hardly share. For that, my family is forever grateful for the return of this precious item.

Sincerely,
Eric Ballinger
Tell us a little bit about yourself. Tell us about your studies and time in Japan.

I recently graduated from University of Oregon with degrees in history and music. My time in Japan has been for tourism and to visit family, so it has yet to be directly tied to my studies. In the future, my trips to Japan will be for academic and travel purposes, but I need to improve my Japanese before that.

You have been spending a lot of time volunteering at O.N.E. What inspired you to become involved?

I wanted to use my degree immediately in a way that could help the community I came from. I am interested in exploring my own identity and its relation to other Japanese Americans since my father is Japanese and my mother is Caucasian. Interning at the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center has been a very nice melding of all of those things.

What has been a highlight about your involvement with O.N.E.? Please tell us about working with our Educational Manager Cynthia and the mobile tour app that utilizes augmented reality that you are working on. What did you learn in the process?

One highlight so far has been elementary school groups that tour the museum. The students have been very engaged. Seeing them puzzle over the material in the Yellow Terror exhibit, material that is difficult for people of any age to understand, has made me more confident about future generations’ ability to confront racism. Before working on the mobile tour app, I had a little experience with iMovie. I knew how to record voiceovers, research the narrative that we wanted to tell, but everything else was completely new. I learned how to use new programs, edit photos, and craft a narrative through video. We also had to learn how a video tour would work at such an expansive site like the Portland Expo Center where over 3,700 Japanese Americans were incarcerated during the summer of 1942 prior to them being sent to internment camps.

How would you encourage others to become involved with O.N.E. and other organizations? What advice would you give others that are thinking about volunteering?

I think that there may be other people like me who feel particularly compelled right now to engage with their ancestry and with the history of civil rights. Volunteering at O.N.E. is one way to do that. Consider what skills you have already and what you want to learn or improve about yourself, and see how that can be applied at O.N.E. Just about any skill or viewpoint is helpful.

Please let us know anything else that you wish to include in the spotlight.

I want to thank the staff at O.N.E. for making me feel welcomed. They are all super rad. I also want to thank them for the wonderful work they do, especially the work that takes place behind the scenes.
**YES, I WANT TO JOIN!**

My support will help ensure that the history, art and culture of the Nikkei are preserved and shared with the community for generations to come.

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**Have you considered putting Oregon Nikkei Endowment into your will?**

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MISSION
The mission of Oregon Nikkei Endowment is to preserve and honor the history and culture of the Japanese Americans in the Northwest, to educate the public about the Japanese American experience during World War II, and to advocate for the protection of civil rights for all.

The Oregon Nikkei Endowment newsletter is published to inform the Japanese American community, its friends, supporters, and the general public of its ongoing work in promoting an appreciation of the culture and historic legacy passed on to us by our immigrant forebears.

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