

Thank you Shodo Canada for awarding us young calligraphers the Dr. Rick Nishikawa Memorial Award and in a way cheering on this new generation.

I know for me personally; this means a lot as my friends are always very critical of my handwriting. But now anytime they comment about my messy handwriting, I can say I'm an award-winning calligrapher and my handwriting isn't actually that bad.

On a more serious note, I'm very honored to represent this new generation and to give this speech.

While I cannot speak for all the others that have been awarded the Dr. Rick Nishikawa Memorial Award, or any of the other awards given today, I'd like to share a little bit of why I practice shodo and what it means to me.

For a little background about me, I'm Half Japanese, half Canadian, and I moved to Canada when I was 5, after spending my first 5 years in Japan.

It's a sad truth in life that it is hard to retain a relationship with something after being separated from it. Even with important things like close friends or something as integral as one's culture or heritage. When I don't have constant reasons to practice things like my Kanji reading abilities, or opportunities to participate in Japanese holidays or celebrations, it can sometimes feel like the Japanese part of my identity can start to deteriorate.

Thankfully, with active effort I can maintain my relationship with my Japanese heritage, and shodo has been an avenue in which I can meaningfully connect to Japanese culture and maintain this relationship.

Part of why shodo has been that for me, is because of Maeda Sensei's classes and how she will always delve into different aspects of Japanese culture and philosophy.

I don't just learn new phrases or words, but I also get to learn the Japanese philosophy and mindset and history that make up those characters that I'm writing.

She's also helped me realize how shodo as an art form inherently reflects components of Japanese culture, and how by practicing shodo I can engage in fundamental aspects of Japanese culture in a deeper way.

Ten years now I've been practicing shodo and I could not be more grateful for that.

It's almost hard to believe that it's been ten years since I've started practicing calligraphy.

I still feel like I have so much more room to grow and improve. Even after ten years I often still feel like a beginner.

That aspect of calligraphy, that process of continual improvement and growth that will last me a lifetime is another reason why I practice shodo and why I love practicing it.

I look forward to the next ten years, and the ten years after that to see how both me and all the other young calligraphers that have joined us here today develop and grow. I'm so excited to see the great pieces everyone is going to create in the future.

Once again thank you for the award, thank you for giving me a chance to speak, and thank you Maeda sensei for being such an amazing teacher and for always cheering me on.