



# The Long and Winding Road

As Canada celebrates the 80th anniversary of the establishment of its diplomatic mission in Tokyo, one of the post's most senior locally engaged staff recalls a career of freedom, change—and musical expression. By Francine Giguère-Misawa

**M**akoto Hirose joined the Embassy of Canada in Tokyo in August 1975 as a mail messenger. It wasn't quite what his studies in the Economics Department at Seijo University had prepared him for. But he was happy to work for an organization that enabled him to go home at the end of the day while his boss was still in the office, something unthinkable in most Japanese companies. He could also advance much faster than in a traditional workplace: within six months he had moved to the finance section as a

high-tech calculator and sends data by computer directly to Ottawa.

Numbers are not this accountant's only love; music is also important in his life. He got his first guitar at age 14 and played with bands in junior and high school as well as at university. Song, he says, has "kept the right balance" in his life. A big fan of the Beatles, 17 years ago he started a four-man Beatles band, called The Liverpool. It plays at small pubs around the Tokyo area and has been part of many

## Celebrating 80 years

The Canadian mission in Japan opened in 1929; it was Canada's first diplomatic mission in Asia. Over the decades, the relationship between the countries has flourished, today boasting political, commercial, defence, cultural and educational ties. Canada will host a visit of their majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan this summer. This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the Emperor's ascension to the throne and the couple's 50th wedding anniversary.



Makoto Hirose outside of the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo and playing in his band, The Liverpool.

junior accountant. Today he is the mission's deputy financial management officer (FMO), the most senior position in the section for LES.

In the early days, Makoto recalls, the finance section was entirely made up of men, all of them clad in business suits and most of them heavy smokers. The only calculator in the office was a mechanical affair used exclusively by the senior accountant; everyone else worked on an abacus. Financial data was sent by telegram to Ottawa via the communications centre. Makoto laughs when he recalls the arrival of the first Canada-based FMO, who was 25 and wore red Bermuda shorts on his first day of work, "quite a cultural shock" for members of the section. Today Makoto, the only man in the (non-smoking) section, uses a

events at the Embassy. Makoto has also started an R&B and rock band with friends from his school days, called The Funk Buddies.

Now 58, retirement is on the horizon for the father of three. After the Embassy, Makoto hopes to fill his life with music and numbers. His dream is to open a small coffee shop where people can come to play music—and he will be the accountant.

*Francine Giguère-Misawa was posted to Tokyo as a Canada-based staff member in 1978, then married and remained there. Over 26 years she has worked in a number of LES positions, currently serving as the physical resources, accommodations and client services officer.*