

122 St Andrews Road
Toronto

December 27, 2011

Dear CAF Members

As I was preparing for guests over the holidays, I came across some of my old kyu certificates from the 1970's. One was from the "North American Aikido Federation" and another was from the "Aikido Federation of the USA, Canada, and Mexico". (I guess we were ahead of NAFTA by a few years.) But they reminded me of a meeting at one of the USAF east coast summer camps where Yamada Sensei announced that the Aikikai Foundation (Hombu Dojo) had decided that each country should form a national organisation in order to simplify communication with Japan.

I was among those given the responsibility of creating a new administrative body for Aikido in our country. Our first problem was typically Canadian. There was no apparent unity. In the east there were already strong personal ties to Yamada Sensei in New York (since 1964) and Kanai Sensei in Boston (since 1966). There were also links to Kawahara Sensei who had started out in Montreal (1975), but then moved to Vancouver.

The initial idea was to have all Canadian dojos join together under the shared leadership of the Japanese instructors already mentioned as well as Tohei Sensei in Chicago and later Chiba Sensei in San Diego. Together they would form a Technical Committee for teaching and testing purposes. For many years that was how we operated.

In the west there was some question as to why the CAF was connected to anyone other than Kawahara Sensei. There were many lengthy meetings where delegates from east and west got to know one another and gradually came to understand each others' position. In particular I recall Don Ragush (Saskatoon) working tirelessly to bring everyone together. We were able to consolidate a strong and vibrant organisation.

As the situation evolved, and the USAF went through its own transformation, the Board of Directors of the CAF eventually invited Kawahara Sensei to be our sole Technical Director with the provision that CAF members could still test under Yamada Sensei. That was the situation for a considerable period of time until this year.

The situation now is that the CAF, with the cooperation the Doshu and Yamada Sensei, has developed a special relationship with Osawa Sensei that allows us to carry on the fine tradition developed under Kawahara Sensei. In addition to continuing to take care of our own administrative affairs, we have begun to play a significant role in both teaching and testing on a national scale through the Technical and Examination Committees.

I am looking forward to the CAF Summer Camp in Kelowna, British Columbia, in late June and early July. It is the first time that the CAF has financed and organised a camp. Osawa Sensei will conduct tests for dan grades. There will also be an opportunity for

kyu tests. We intend to have Osawa Sensei a second time in 2012 in a location as yet to be determined. I know that not everyone can attend these camps, but there will be seminars with CAF Shidoins and other instructors where we can be on the mat together. Please try to take advantage of these opportunities.

Of course, due to the passing of Kawahara Sensei, 2011 has been a sad and especially challenging year. I would like to thank all the members of the CAF Board of Directors who have worked very hard to keep us moving forward despite our loss. Many CAF members from all across the country have asked thoughtful questions and provided constructive advice. I would also like to thank them. Furthermore, although I will not mention them by name, I would be remiss in not thanking the new CAF camp organisers, our translation and communications team, and our webmaster.

Please accept my best wishes for a healthy new year with lots of whole-hearted training.

George Hewson
CAF President