On Tuesday, October 28, almost thirty MacKillop Japanese students gathered at C3 Convention Centre, joining hundreds of similar students from all over Tasmania to take part in the annual Japanese Speech Competition. For the Year 7s, or those who were otherwise participating for the first time, the experience was especially exciting -- but even competition veterans felt the nerves.

We spent a few progressively tense hours stewing in the waiting room with competitors from several other schools, using the time to rehearse speeches and prepared responses. The atmosphere among the year levels was fairly even; Taylah Lowry from Year 7, who had never participated in the speech competition before, told me she had been very nervous when she was waiting to be called and frantically practised her speech, but began to feel much more confident when her time came to deliver. Afterwards, she was mostly very happy with her achievements that day. Congratulations, Taylah!

Ellen Noye from Year 9 told me shortly before it was our turn that she “doesn’t get nervous”, which sounds enviable, but is apparently a tough break, since she feels out of place when everyone else is looking grey-faced and clammy. Since I personally know Ellen is a fantastic Japanese student, I’m sure she did an awesome job!

As one of only two Year 10 MacKillop students at the competition, the other being my mate Olivia Lord, I felt some kind of additional pressure since it would be the last time I’d represent MacKillop there. Even so, I was determined that the outcome of the day would be a good time and a sense of achievement for all. Having fun and speaking Japanese are by no means mutually exclusive!

I’d like to give a special mention to Olivia, who was last in our category’s alphabetical order and so had to stand and wait for all of us, which must have been almost as nerve-wracking as it was boring. Olivia’s relieved expression when she met us on the bus afterwards was great to see. Congrats, Olivia!

As always our beloved Sullivan Sensei provided us with a sushi lunch, which was highly effective at calming jitters both before and after making speeches. And as usual any fears about facing the three judges were found to be completely unfounded, since they were all lovely and kind and sympathetic, and included our very own Hardman Sensei. It’s my hope that such high interest in the competition will be maintained, and the Japanese community will continue to join with language teachers to host such an exciting and fulfilling event. Many thanks to all those involved.

By Miriam Boulton (10 White)
A Very Proud Japanese Teacher
Since the competition on Tuesday I have been contacted by many people in the Japanese teaching and speaking community wishing to offer their compliments to our participants not only for their language competency, but also for the excellent manners and behaviour they exhibited throughout the event. I would like to thank and congratulate all members of our MacKillop College 2014 Japanese Speech Contest Team. Their commitment was truly outstanding. It was as always wonderful to hear our students speaking Japanese so beautifully. Thank you all for so clearly “being your best”. It was a pleasure for both myself and Mrs Hardman to work with you in this endeavour.

Special congratulations go to the following members of our team:

**Year 7 Category**
Taylah Lowry - Third Place
Laura Monty - Honorable Mention

**Year 8 Category**
Laura Cruise - Honorable Mention
Lily Fitzgerald - Honorable Mention
Meg Francis - Honorable Mention

**Year 9 Category**
Claire Callan - Honorable Mention

**Year 9 and 10 Extended Category**
Miriam Boulton - First Place
Ellen Noye - Honorable Mention

Catherine Sullivan
**Head of Department (LOTE)**

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Enjoying a sushi lunch

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The 2014 Team
Kyoto
Situated in the middle of Honshuu Island, Kyoto is one of Japan’s most famous cities. A past Imperial capital for over 1000 years, the city is rich with history. Affectionately known as the “City of Ten Thousand Shrines”, our time in Kyoto was packed with experiences.

Kinkakuji
Whilst in Kyoto we visited the Golden Pavilion, traditionally known as Kinkakuji. It is a Zen temple in northern Kyoto, and has its top two floors completely covered in gold leaf. Although built in the early 1400’s, it has been burnt down many times; twice during the Onin War, a civil war that also destroyed most of Kyoto, and much more recently in 1950, by a crazed monk. Thankfully, this beautiful building’s present structure was rebuilt in 1955. After washing our hands and mouths to cleanse ourselves we walked towards the temple. The closer we got to the main building the more and more crowded it became. There were so many people, especially Japanese school groups! The day we went to Kinkakuji was slightly overcast, and the temple didn’t look as bright and vibrant as it usually does. However, that didn’t stop everyone taking snaps of the iconic structure.

Karaoke
One night whilst in Kyoto we got to do one of Japan’s favourite activities - Karaoke. After having dinner out and about we went to a Karaoke bokksu, which is a very big place full of Karaoke rooms for hire. We were given two hours to perform and listen to what Mr Dilger described as some of the worst singing he had ever heard. That didn’t stop us though, and time flew by way too quickly for us all. Some of our many song choices included “Low”, “Bohemian Rhapsody” and “Under the Sea”. No one was immune to the enjoyment and everyone sang along. We were all thankful the words were in English, not Japanese!

Fushimi Inara
We also got to visit a Fushimi Inari. It was the most orange place I have ever seen. When we first got there it wasn’t too orange. We walked through some orange Torii gates and past huge temples. However, as we advanced into the grounds we received a small taste of just how big and orange the Fushimi Inari is. There were rows after rows of orange Torii gates. The ones we went through had businesses and business owner’s names written on them as a sort of huge good luck charm for themselves. Businesses pay to have their name on a Torii gate. We didn’t get to see all the gates, as they went all the way up the hill. It would have taken us around a day to get to see them all. However, that didn’t stop the thousands of other tourists making their way up to the very top.

By Claire Callan (9 White)

Nijojo Castle
We caught yet another packed Kyoto bus to the impressive Nijojo Castle. The first things to catch our eye were the high stone walls and the huge moat filled with Kyō fish. Originally home to the Shoguns of Kyoto, construction on the castle began in 1603 and finished in 1626. The castle later became home to the Imperial family who donated it to Kyoto City. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
World Heritage Site in 1939. We continued across the moat and through an extraordinary Torii gate, carved intricately with cranes and flecks of gold. This Torii gate was the entrance to the castle. We were warned not to take photos and had to remove our shoes when we toured the interior of the castle. The first thing you notice when you walk through the entrance is the sound of the nightingale floors. The floor boards make a chirping (sort of squeaking) noise, when walked on. This was so that intruders could not sneak into the castle. There were many rooms in the castle, retainers’ waiting rooms, formal reception rooms, grand rooms, inner audience chambers, Shogun living quarters and more! From the hallways you can see into the rooms and view the paintings, all painted with some gold, depicting so many different scenes. One of the rooms had false walls where guards could hide to protect their Shogun in case of an attack. The castle was outstanding.

**Kyomizudera**

Our next stop was Kyomizudera (pure water temple). When the bus dropped us off all we could see were market stalls leading up to the top of Otowa mountain where the ‘Pure water Temple’ is situated. We could buy anything from fine crockery to Kimonos, Yukatas, fans and food. The pavement was crowded with people. After a long hike up the hill we reached the steps to the Torii gate leading to the temple. Kyomizudera’s main hall extends onto a balcony over the trees with spectacular views of Kyoto City. Beneath the main hall is the Otowa waterfall. The waterfall has three streams each with their own properties. One is for a long life, the next success in school and the other for a fortunate love life. You can drink from one stream but drinking from all three is considered greedy.

**Shabu-Shabu and Sukiyaki Restaurant Visit**

After a big day sightseeing we dined at a fine restaurant, serving two famous Japanese dishes, Shabu-Shabu and Sukiyaki. We were all seated at tables with a pot with a separator in the middle. The separator allowed for two different flavoured broths, one seaweed based and the other soy sauce based. We were served with thinly sliced meat, vegetables, noodles, dipping sauces and mushrooms. To cook our meal we used our chopsticks to dip the meat and other ingredients in our choice of broth for around 30 seconds until it changed colour. Then we dipped the steaming meat into our whisked raw egg or other dipping sauce. This dinner was quirky but absolutely delicious!

**Gion**

After our gourmet meal we were tired, but marched on through the streets of Gion. Gion is most famous for their Geisha girls. It also has lots of shops, restaurants and Ochaya (tea houses). Gion Geisha’s are not referred to as ‘Geisha’ but ‘Geiko’, meaning ‘a woman of the arts’. Unfortunately we were only able to catch the briefest glance of Geiko during our visit, but the street scape with its old buildings and lanterns was beautiful. Afterwards we caught a bus and walked back to the hotel exhausted, but happy to start packing for Tokyo.

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by Ellen Noye (9 Green)