

UPCOMING DATES

SEPTEMBER

- 8 Scarborough Community Council, 9:30 a.m.
- 11 Board of Health, 9:30 a.m.
- 12 Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m.
- 14 Design Review Panel, 1:10 p.m.
- 18 Etobicoke York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.
- 19 Toronto & East York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.
- 20 Infrastructure & Environment Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- 21 Economic & Community Development Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- 26 TTC Board, 10:00 a.m.
- 28 Planning & Housing Committee, 9:30 a.m.

OCTOBER

- 2 General Government Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- 3 Executive Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- 5 CreateTO, 1:30 p.m.
- Design Review Panel, 1:10 p.m.
- 10 Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m.
- 11-13 Council, 9:30 a.m.
- 16 Etobicoke York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.
- 17 North York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.
- 18 Toronto & East York Community Council, 9:30 a.m.
- 19 Scarborough Community Council, 9:30 a.m.



REMEMBERING RAYMOND MORIYAMA

HARNESSING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY



Lana Hall

At a time when there was little attention being paid to the inclusion of nature and the power of the democratic experience in built form, Canadian architect **Raymond Moriyama** had a vision—a vision he remained true to until the end of his life last week. Raymond Moriyama passed away September 1 at the age of 93. He will be greatly missed by the friends and colleagues he touched, the cities he shaped, and the country whose one-time cruelty he repaid with kindness, humility, generosity and architectural brilliance.

Moriyama was born in Vancouver in 1929. His rise to recognition is well-documented: bed-ridden and recovering from a burn injury at the age of four, Moriyama became fascinated watching the activity on a construction site outside his window. This inspired in him a

desire to study architecture. But that would have to wait.

As a teenager, with his mother and two sisters, Moriyama was forced into a Japanese internment camp in British Columbia's Slocan Valley during the Second World War, while his father, a pacifist, was imprisoned for his activism. Later in life as his career as an architect progressed, it became apparent that Moriyama had a uniquely nuanced sense of the intersection of inclusion, democracy and built form, something he attributed to his early experiences of feeling isolated and distrusted by wider society during his time in the internment camp.

After the war, Moriyama and his family relocated to Ontario, and he later earned architectural degrees from the **University of Toronto** and **McGill University**. Moriyama went on to create some of To-

ronto's best known and most widely admired civic and cultural buildings, including the Scarborough Civic Centre, the **Bata Shoe Museum** and the **Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre**. He gained recognition for his work on both the North York Library and the Toronto Reference Library, the latter of which features a central atrium with plant and water features, inspired by the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

"He really was part of establishing Toronto's maturity from a civic institutional standpoint," says **SvN Architects + Planners** director of special projects **Ian Chodikoff**.

Moriyama's gifts lay in understanding how to balance the needs of his clients with the public's desire for spaces they could call their own, in creating civic buildings that not only allowed, but encouraged

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people to experience them.

“He understood how people interact and work with that space, and how it becomes like a democratic manifestation of our society,” Chodikoff told *NRU*. “His architecture deferred to the power of community and democracy. I know that sounds like a lofty goal, and it was a very socially-minded, purposeful approach to creating space.”

Retired architect **Carl Knipfel** worked closely with Moriyama when Knipfel was the director of urban design for the former **Borough of Scarborough** and he continues to consider him a mentor, calling him a “kind and generous” man. He too, recalls Moriyama’s visionary emphasis on creating spaces that were open and democratic, including the Scarborough Civic Centre, which required an amendment to the national building code to allow for the amount of open space it eventually incorporated.

“The whole philosophy [of the Scarborough Civic Centre] was to promote and engage people in government and democracy and debate around those things,” he says. “I think it succeeded. To this day people who worked for Scarborough are very proud that they worked for this institution that

is housed in that building, and there was a lot of pride generated by that building.”

In addition to emphasizing the important relationship between built form and public access in his architecture, Moriyama had a deep respect for the natural landscape and the role it could play in the building of civic and cultural institutions. Nowhere was this more

noticeable than in the creation of the **Ontario Science Centre**, a high-profile project which represented a breakthrough for the young Moriyama. It was 1964 when Moriyama received the commission to design it, and at the time, Moriyama had little experience in the realm of museology and how he could translate this into a building. Undeterred, he spent a year travelling with his team to visit museums across the globe, unpacking how people moved through those spaces and layering that with his own perspective. The bold concrete structure he designed bal-

anced with the fluidity of the surrounding ravine has given North York one of its most well-trafficked cultural institutions.

“[He would] always be concerned with the humanity of projects. That, combined with the fact that buildings shouldn’t be imposing themselves on the landscape, that they should work comfortably with the landscape, and celebrate a kind of commonality and support for the landscape,” says Knipfel. “That’s quite remarkable given the timing in which he operated. It wasn’t a popularly held belief at the time ... He gave it a lot more profile and got a lot of people like me to absorb that.”

This approach has allowed Toronto residents and visitors alike to revel in the unique architectural experience of Moriyama’s Ontario Science Centre for decades.

“Think of that sense of arrival when you cross that bridge and go down those escalators. There’s so much anticipation that builds up just when you get to the place. And then as a kid you’re off running down the hallways and

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Photograph of Canadian architect Raymond Moriyama as a child (left), with his parents and sister Joan in Vancouver, where he grew up. Moriyama was known for designing some of Toronto’s best-known and most beloved civic buildings, including the Toronto Reference Library, the Ontario Science Centre and the Bata Shoe Museum. He passed away on September 1 at the age of 93.

SOURCE: ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

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through the galleries,” says registered professional planner **Gil Meslin**, of the Ontario Science Centre. “There was just such an understanding of how people use those spaces and how those buildings could be positive places for those in them, and it comes through in the experience.”

Meslin grew up spending time in many of Moriyama’s buildings, and he continues to hold those memories close, as well as those he now shares with his own young family when they visit the same spaces. When you were inside any of Moriyama’s building, “You didn’t just enjoy being there,” says Meslin. “You wanted to return to them.”

Throughout his career Moriyama received numerous accolades both from Canadian and international institutions, including Governor General’s Awards for his work on the Scarborough Civic Centre and the Toronto Reference Library, a Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal in 2012 and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) Gold Medal, Canadian architecture’s highest honour. He retired from practice in 2003 and his sons, Ajon and Jason, became principals at the firm, **Moriyama Teshima Architects**.

But Moriyama’s legacy goes

beyond just the physical spaces he’s influenced throughout the city and beyond. It represents a way of being, a sense of being true to a vision and staying the course, say some of his industry colleagues.

“For a Japanese Canadian to practice architecture in Canada in the 1960s was a very different game,” says Chodikoff. “He wasn’t ‘gifted’ diplomacy and the gentlemanly approach to be humble. He earned it. He earned it through difficult circumstances and he earned it through tenacity, and you know, while he was humble on one hand, he was very strict and disciplined on another to get things done. You kind of have to have that to be a really great architect.” 🌱



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