

# Achieving Dreams in One's Post-retirement "Second Life" : A Study of Seniors' Migration from Japan to Canada

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## **Achieving Dreams in One’s Post-retirement “Second Life”: A Study of Seniors’ Migration from Japan to Canada**

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Canada has become a popular immigration destination for Japanese senior citizens in recent years. This chapter looks at the dreams of those immigrants and the difficulties they experience, shedding light on the ways in which seniors in modern Japan define “well-being” as well as their life design.

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### **1. Introduction**

My informants, post-retirement Japanese who are residing in Canada, are acting on a hope of spending a part of their lives in relaxation and leisure overseas. There have recently been more Japanese considering international immigration and residency. As of 2005, approximately six million Japanese people over the age of fifty had traveled internationally (Ministry

of Justice 2008). In particular, international immigration and residency have become increasingly popular choices post-retirement. In 1992, the term “long-stay” (*rongu-sutei*: ロングステイ)<sup>1)</sup> was trademarked, and there are travel guidebooks for retiring to international locales. The increasing interest in retiring abroad among Japanese senior citizens indicates that the Japanese increasingly perceive their post-retirement period as a time to pursue a better “quality of life.” It seems that they are reconsidering their post-retirement period as a time to spend in affluence and comfort rather than in physical decline.

In this paper, I examine Japanese seniors’ overseas retirement in terms of their overall well-being. I conducted my field research in Vancouver with Japanese retirees living there. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, residents from Japan have moved and settled to Vancouver, and approximately 30,200 Japanese now live in Vancouver according to the 2006 Canadian census. Canada is one of the most popular destinations among Japanese seniors. Among popular Canadian cities, Vancouver has constantly ranked in the top tier in the Mercer Quality of Living Survey and The Economist’s World’s Most Livable Cities, and has been evaluated as a safe and comfortable city. Elder care systems in Vancouver also seem to reflect the diversity of its population. Canada’s multiculturalism policy is another factor in the unique nature of its senior care systems. By examining the gap between the dreams of Japanese retirees, their realities, and the shared idea of “Japanese culture” among the Japanese Canadians in Vancouver (such as of a Japanese support organization *Tonari Gumi*), I present an ethnographic illustration of “well-being” among the senior Japanese population.

I examine two patterns of migration from Japan to Canada. The first example is those who moved to Canada after retirement in Japan to pursue a comfort and quality of life they thought would be difficult to achieve in Japan. This trend has increased since the late 1980s and is still on the rise as of 2010. I examine whether or not they have been able to achieve their expectations.

Another example is those who migrated from Japan to Canada in the 1970s when they were relatively younger in their age. They are usually called “new immigrants” (*shin-ijyu-sha*, *shin-imin*) in Japanese. As of 2010, these immigrants are in their 60s and 70s. By focusing on both groups—“new immigrants” and senior residents from Japan—I analyze the idea of the “achieving of the dream” of each generation.

## 2. Achieving the Dream in their “second life”: Senior Migration to Canada from Japan

### 2.1. “Silver Columbia” Program

In 1986, the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) announced its “Silver Columbia” program (*shirubaa korombia keikaku*). In this program, MITI supported the move of retired senior Japanese to other countries. The program’s catch phrase was “Spend your post-retirement time overseas.” After the Plaza Agreement of 1985 to devalue the US currency against the Japanese yen and the Deutsche Mark, the value of the Japanese yen rose to 120 yen/US dollar in 1987 from 240 yen/US dollar in 1986. The rapid raise of the yen’s value—*endaka*—resulted in an economic recession, and the Japanese government reduced its Official Discount Rate to stimulate the national economy. This move directed the

Japanese economy to head towards an asset price bubble—or a bubble economy (*baburu keiki*). The booming economy of the asset price bubble with the rising value of the Japanese yen allowed the Japanese to consider overseas immigration as an option. The media advertised the Silver Columbia program and it became popular among the public. Government officials advertised desirable post-retirement options that would both save Japanese money and allow for a wealthier lifestyle in places such as Spain, Australia, and Canada.

However, local media in destination countries did not approve. They harshly criticized the Japanese government for trying to dump its seniors on other countries. For example, by citing a Japanese folk story, *Ubasute*, in which a family abandons a grandmother on a mountain, the Washington Post critiqued the "Silver Columbia" program as an international *Ubasute* project.

Despite such bitter criticism, MITI continued to promote the project. Even though its rosy image did not last, a certain number of retired Japanese decided to use the program as an opportunity to improve their quality of life.

One of the reasons for people's interest in the Silver Columbia program was the more affluent picture of retirement it painted. One of the conditions for retirement abroad was that the program's participants could not work and earn wages in the host country. In other words, they needed enough financial capital to live self-sufficiently. They had to prove to Citizenship and Immigration Canada that they had the minimum required financial assets or retirement pension. MITI estimated that a retired couple could spend the rest of their life in comfort if they had a net worth of 20 million Japanese yen in retirement benefits in addition to monthly pension payments of 200,000 yen (Ministry of Trade and Industry 1986). The government estimated that it would cost approximately 7–11 million yen to purchase a house (of approximately 200 square meters) and that monthly expenses would be 100–150 thousand yen. Such estimates were made in the 1980s based on differences in currency exchange rates, and they were advertised as adequate amounts to meet living expenses. However, even though the average Japanese income was relatively high in the 1980s, only a limited number of people in the high-income bracket had sufficient funds.

The initial wave of Japanese retirees moving to Canada came prior to the inauguration of the Silver Columbia project. It dates back to when the board members of the Greater Vancouver Japanese Immigrants' Association (JIA) responded to declining membership enrollment. The Association's board members noticed that the number of Japanese immigrants was smaller than those of other immigrant groups. One board member, Mr. A, contributed an article (entitled "Encouragement of retirement abroad") to the February 1983 issue of the Journal of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), *Kaigai Ijyuu* (overseas immigration). Multiple national media outlets such as the *Tokyo Shinbun* (February 25<sup>th</sup> 1983), *Sunday Mainichi* (April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1983), and *Shukan Shincho* (April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1983) wrote special articles on post-retirement immigration, and the prospect of moving to Canada received wider public attention.

The Canadian federal government had a visa category for retirees until 1991 when it was eliminated. It seems that the government and the public started perceiving retirees as a financial burden on its government-funded health care. Since 1991, retired Japanese in Canada have had to use the "long stay" visa category and temporarily leave the country every six

months.

The minimum assets required for residency have also changed over time. For example, the retirement resident system of Australia has two monetary requirements: prospective residents must have either (1) at least 55 million Japanese yen worth of financially transferable assets or (2) at least 3.7 million Japanese yen worth of transferable annual pension or interest-based annual income in addition to over 1.7 million Japanese yen worth of financial assets. Such a minimum asset standard of the Australian immigration system indicate that retirement abroad is not for everybody—neither at present nor thirty years ago. Among various paths towards obtaining their residency, financial affluence is the foremost requirement.

## **2.2. Reasons for Retiring to Canada—Ms. B’s Dream and Reality**

Once fiscal criteria are met, retirees select Vancouver as their destination for various reasons. Approximately 10 percent of Japanese retirees residing in Vancouver had lived in the city for work prior to retirement, and approximately 20 percent moved there only because they liked the city. For example, one Japanese family decided to move to Vancouver after being impressed with it during a stopover, but they did not have any prior history of visiting or living in Vancouver.

For example, Ms. B<sup>2)</sup> traveled to Canada and Germany to visit her children after her retirement. This trip influenced her decision to spend her post-retirement years outside of Japan. German towns were clean, and the locals seemed similar to the Japanese in the sense that they were diligent. However, most European towns—including German ones—had long histories and did not seem like places for newcomers. In contrast, there were no historic buildings in Canada. Instead, Canada had plenty of beautiful nature, and it seemed “incomplete,” by which she meant that there was a place for newcomers. Therefore, as soon as Ms. B returned to Japan, she immediately applied for post-retirement residency in Canada. Since then, it has been thirty years and she is now in her eighties. Ms. B is still active. She enjoys traveling and contributes articles to a local Japanese newspaper.

In her autobiography, Ms. B recalls her life:

Thirty years flew by so quickly. Thirty years ago, when I retired and moved to Canada, I decided that I was going to spend my life in my own way from that point on. Even since I started my days in grade school, I’ve tried to be a good girl, a good wife, and a good widow. I was tired of being someone who paid attention to how others viewed me. In Japan, I had to repress myself everyday, or the society would have knocked me down. When I moved Canada and found out that the Japanese were a minority, my repressed self was suddenly freed. It was as if I were seeing a clear blue sky to think that people were busy in foreign countries and would not be concerned about others. (Nishimura 2007)

I asked Ms. B how she thought about her life in Canada. She commented, “I always appreciate Canada for forgiving me for doing whatever I want to do. For example, there are people who endure reading this kind of thing (Ms. B’s newspaper column). I think that I’m really happy for being able to spend easygoing days in Canada.”

Ms. B’s remarks imply that the interpersonal relationships and the “public gaze” (or

*seken no me*) in Japan were serious burdens for her. Despite some difficulty communicating in English, Ms. B has maintained her privacy by building more relaxed interpersonal relationships (such as getting involved in volunteer activities) after moving to Canada. Ms. B has enjoyed the last thirty years in Canada outside of Japanese community surveillance.

Residents can take more initiatives to choose their lifestyle in a society—like Canada's—in which residents respect each other. One of the most important factors for Ms. B was the ability to be herself (*jibun rashiku ikiru*). In this sense, Ms. B has gained a sense of well-being by migrating to Canada; and achieved her dream by her decision to move to the country.

### 3. Dreams of Immigrant Youth and Female Immigrants

#### 3.1. Two Factors in Youth Migration during the 1970s: Socio-economic Changes in Japan and Canada

The retiree residents are not the only Japanese residents in Canada. There are also groups of "new immigrants" (*shin imin*, or *shin ijuusya*). Most of the new immigrants moved to Canada in the 1970s, and moved when they were much younger in age than retiree residents. The dreams of the new immigrants were also different from those of retiree residents.

In April 1964, six months before the Tokyo Olympics, the Japanese government lifted its restriction on international travel. Prior to this change, the Japanese government had allowed its citizens to travel abroad only for reasons of business occasions. This new policy allowed the Japanese the chance for international tourism. Even so, however, it was still too expensive for average citizens to travel overseas. International travel remained a dream for most people other than the wealthy.

It was approximately six years later that international travel became more feasible for average Japanese citizens. In 1972, over a million Japanese traveled overseas. After the Japanese government adopted a floating exchange rate system, the cost for international travel was lowered as the Japanese yen became stronger against the US dollar. The yen's rising value also made imported products cheaper, attracting the attention of the Japanese public to international travel. In the middle of an international tourism boom, a large number of Japanese chose Canada as a new home. Thus the changes in Japan's international tourism policy coupled with the rise of national economy in the 1970s inspired a new "dream" of immigration in Japanese youth.

On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, the Canadian Federal government revised its immigration law in 1967. Historically, preference had been given to European immigrants, as the Canadian government had provided them with land and financial support for immigration. Meanwhile, the Canadian government had restricted immigration from Asia, as the officials viewed the Asians as members of a different race and different culture and concluded that they would not be able to assimilate into mainstream Canadian society (Yamada 2000). Accordingly different legal standards had existed for Asian immigrants. For example, the Chinese immigrants had to pay the Chinese Head Tax between 1889 and 1923, and immigration from Japan was restricted from 1908 to 1928 under the Hayashi-Lemieux Gentlemen's agreement. Moreover, the Canadian government imposed a mobility restrictions on residents of Japanese descent between 1944 and 1947 (Yamada 2000: 159). Canadian policy-makers

prepared laws based on the popular concept of “race” at the time and excluded Asians from their immigration policy.

In the late 1960s, the Canadian federal government repealed its race-based immigration policy (1967), and changed it to make Canada economically stronger with the policy of “Building a Stronger Canada.” Section six of the new Canadian immigration law places immigrants into the following three categories: 1) Independent immigrants; 2) Family class immigrants; and 3) Refugees. In immigration law reform, the most notable change was in the implementation of the “point system” for skilled worker immigrants (implemented in 1976, and amended in 1978). Under the point system, the experiences and skills of the prospective immigrants are converted into numerical numbers (100 points maximum). The federal government changes the conversion formula every year based on the demands of the national economy<sup>3</sup>. The implementation of this skill-based point system also entailed the termination of the “race-based” immigration policy, leading to a rapid influx of Asian immigrants to Canada. In particular, immigration from Hong Kong increased sharply as 1997, the year of Hong Kong’s return to China, drew near.

Immigrants from Japan, though still far fewer than those from China, also increased in number dramatically after the implementation of the new Canadian immigration policy. Many of the Japanese were from urban areas, had obtained a high level of education, and represented a variety of occupational backgrounds. For example, my informants are a medical doctor, a company manager, an artist, a pastry chef, a government official, a construction consultant, an air traffic controller, a high school teacher, a businessman, a car mechanic, a publisher, a judo instructor, a university professor, a carpenter, an electronic specialist, a tour company worker, a hairdresser, and many others.

### 3.2. Youth’s Dream and Reality: Two Episodes

The young Japanese immigrants of the 1970s are now 60 to 70 years old. I asked some of them what their “dream lifestyles” were. The following narratives are from Ms. C, who moved to Canada after visiting in her twenties, and Ms. D, who decided to move to Canada after her employer sent her there.

#### Example 1: [Ms. C] Achieving her dream in Vancouver

I traveled to Vancouver, and decided to immigrate there. I went on a Norwegian cargo ship from Yokohama, and moved to Canada via the US. I was the only Japanese out of twelve passengers. It took ten days to get to Victoria and it was already 1973. I liked Vancouver because it seemed similar to Kochi, where I am from. There is lots of green and beaches with nice scenery. I was surprised that the houses were so big. I became a Japanese language instructor after I arrived here, and married a year after arrival. My ex-husband and I had two children, but we got divorced when our younger child turned three years old. A year later, in 1977, I started a two-page mimeographed Japanese newspaper, *Vancouver Shinpo* (晩香波 (バンクーバー) 新報). I was interested in the news industry prior to starting this business. Back in the 1970s, there was no newspaper in Japanese around Vancouver, and ours was the first since the end of World War II.

When we started it, we contacted the port traffic control center to obtain the schedule of Japanese ships. A year later, we got a Japanese typewriter, and also, after that, got a larger one that allowed us to publish in tabloid format. Initially, we selected and published what we thought of as interesting stories, and asked Japanese stores around Vancouver to sell our papers. We started printing approximately 500 copies per week, but it was difficult to do this week after week. As Vancouver's Japanese community became bigger, we had an increase of advertisements in our paper, and could expand the contents of our newspaper to 52–56 pages per week. We got more advertising requests after 1986. It was around that time when the Japanese in Vancouver started the Vancouver Japanese Business Association in 1987.

The principle of this business is to "make a quick decision" about what we can do and what we cannot do. Also, we think that another principle is to make some contribution to the community by sincerely serving it. It is important to understand the demands of the local Japanese community but I don't think we should be subservient to it. (Conversation with the author, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2001).

#### Example 2: [Ms. D] Comfortable place for a woman

My company transferred me to Toronto in 1973. I used to work for a Japanese bank, and my bank transferred me to New Zealand when I was in my twenties. I had worked for an embassy for seven years, before the other company headhunted me. In 1973 when I moved to Toronto, I opened an office for my company in Toronto as an assistant manager of the Japanese branch. My assignment was to send news updates to the New York and Tokyo office from Toronto. I worked in Toronto until the company closed its business in 1983, and decided to go back to Japan. On my way back to Japan, I stopped over in Vancouver and was stunned by the nature. It was completely different from Toronto, and I decided to extend my stay in the city. I went to the office of a famous Japanese company in Vancouver and told them that I wanted to work in the city because I was impressed with the natural beauty, the place, and the people. Luckily, they hired me that month. However, I'm facing the difficulty of being a locally-hired employee while I was previously hired as a Japan-hired employee.

I think Canada is a comfortable place for Japanese women. As strangers greet each other taking a walk, I think it is more humane in Canada. I think that the Canadians recognize the value of a person, and I don't think I can experience that in Japan. It is invaluable for me to discover a variety of things by regularly interacting with people of diverse ethnic backgrounds (Conversation with the author, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003).

### **3.3. The Diversity of Immigration and the Reality of Dreams**

Since moving in the 1970s, Ms. E and Ms. F have lived in Canada in an attempt to realize their dreams. However, they have faced some difficulties over the past forty years. One of the most critical problems of immigration is finding a job. Both Ms. E and Ms. F have built and relied on their interpersonal networks for forty years, and their present is the embodiment



of their dreams.

On the other hand, the Canadian government does not allow retiree residents to earn a salary in Canada. Instead, the government grants them their visas for their stay in Canada after reviewing their assets. Retired residents also have to give up their social networks in Japan and build new ones in Canada. Most importantly, they wonder whether or not they can build new social networks in Canada to make their life more “at ease” and “comfortable.” Having a good social network in Canada is one of the main avenues to making their “dream” come true.

## 4. The Dream Continues: Support Groups in Canada

### 4.1. Japanese Support Organizations

According to Canada’s 2006 census, approximately 30,200 Japanese immigrants reside in Vancouver. Though they are commonly categorized as “Japanese immigrants,” they are not as homogenous as this term implies, for their backgrounds and their hopes for the future are diverse. They do have some common concerns, however, including aging and support for senior citizens. Retiree immigrants’ well-being and dreams are based not only on their lifestyles but also on how they help one another in Canada. There are over 200 Japanese groups in Vancouver. To examine how Japanese residents cope in retirement, I review four of these support groups.

#### 1) *Tonari Gumi* (隣組)

*Tonami Gumi* started in 1973 as a Japanese volunteer organization to support Japanese seniors around the Vancouver region (Photo 1). The name *Tonari Gumi* was that of a Japanese administrative unit in the 1940s that officially functioned to promote mutual aid in communities. *Tonari Gumi* in Vancouver functions as a “general consulting office” for Japanese individuals in the region. The organization has full-time staff members and over 100 volunteers who are new immigrants as well as second- and third-generation Japanese Canadians. These personnel help Japanese seniors and new immigrants process social security documents (*e.g.*, health care, unemployment security, and pensions), provide legal translation and consulting services, host various workshops and lunches, organize gateball (Japanese croquet) and karaoke events, give lessons in conversational English, and hold craft classes. *Tonari Gumi* also runs a food delivery program for first-generation single Japanese and second-generation Japanese Canadian seniors, as well as a hospital visitation program. The group is central to the Japanese community in Vancouver, emphasizing well-being within that community as well as encouraging Japanese participation in wider Canadian society.

#### 2) Greater Vancouver Japanese Immigrants’ Association (JIA: グレーター・ヴァンクー ヴァー移住者の会)

JIA was established in 1977. Its purpose is “for the senior members to provide information to newcomers to Canada (in particular to those in Vancouver and its vicinity).” JIA provides its members with networking opportunities and disseminates information in Japanese. It is one of the most active Japanese organizations in Vancouver. JIA provides: (1) monthly bul-



**Photo 1** Tonari Gumi, September 30, 2009

letins (with the Greater Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association (JCCA)), (2) monthly legal support workshops, (3) monthly workshops on international marriage (with JCCA), (4) Japanese movie events (with the Consulate-General of Japan in Vancouver), (5) New Year's parties (with multiple Japanese organizations in Vancouver), (6) mental health support programs, (7) Japanese publications on legal support and general information about Canada, and (8) other cultural events.

### 3) *Nikkei Place* (日系プレース)

*Nikkei Place* opened in the fall of 2000 and is a multi-use facility consisting of a Japanese cultural center (Photos 2 and 3), a senior residence hall called "Sakura sou," a nursing home called "*Nikkei Home*," and a Japanese garden. *Nikkei Place* hosts various athletic and cultural events on a daily basis. Its nursing home, which opened in September 2002, is the second such facility for Japanese senior citizens in Canada (Photo 4). It can be considered an example of the effects of Canada's multiculturalism policy, under which the government funds ethnicity-based organizations and meets with the demands of particular populations.

### 4) *Ofukai* (桜楓会)

As the number of Japanese retiree residents increased, Mr. A, who was the president of the JIA, founded another independent support organization. Mr. A's idea was to make "a social group for members of the same age group," and he named that group "Ofukai." Mr. E explained, "All of our members went from the country where the cherry blossom (*ou*: 桜) is the national flower to the country with the flag of the maple leaf (*fu*: 楓) to spend the rest of



**Photo 2** National *Nikkei* Heritage Centre: inside, September 17, 2010



**Photo 3** National *Nikkei* Heritage Centre: outside, September 17, 2010



**Photo 4** *Nikkei Place* senior care house, September 30, 2009

their lives in relaxation in Canada. Therefore, we named our group *Ofukai*.”

*Ofukai* initially included approximately 20 families. Former president Mr. B stated that these first members had moved to Canada with either a retiree residency visa or a family-based immigrant visa because their children were already living in Canada.

The retirees included 11 businessmen and 9 self-employed professionals, as well as government officials, grade school teachers, and medical doctors. The retired businessmen and self-employed professionals enjoy golfing on sunny days and reading books or playing *go* (囲碁, Japanese chess) on rainy days. Some of the others teach Japanese tea ceremony, calligraphy, and the Japanese language.

The purpose of *Ofukai* is to provide “occasions for the members to socialize and to support one another.” The retiree residents faced common difficulties:

As new residents in Canada, we needed a group to help one another and share information about living in this country because we had disadvantages in our language comprehension and in information acquisition. For example, when some of us found a good and kind plumber, a mechanic, or Japanese-speaking companies, we informed our group members about them. For a while, we circulated a notebook to share such information (Conversation with author, 2003).

*Ofukai* sends monthly newsletters to its members to provide them with such helpful information. It issued its 100<sup>th</sup> newsletter in October 1997. *Ofukai* also organizes events such as golf, fishing, tennis, mahjong, and tours. Some members even moved to Canada because

of *Ofukai*'s activities. In 2008, the group organized a cruise to Alaska in which 71 people participated (57 regular members and 14 affiliate members). Since 1993, *Ofukai* has also held events to celebrate members' 50-year wedding anniversaries, 77<sup>th</sup> birthdays (*kijyu*: 喜寿), 88<sup>th</sup> birthdays (*beijyu*: 米寿), and so on.

#### 4.2. Dreaming Together (Cooperative Life design)

As *Ofukai* provides venues for social and informational exchanges between Japanese retiree residents living in Vancouver, its members consider the role of the organization as that of helping them to achieve their dreams in Canada.

All four organizations described above provide information essential for maintaining stress-free lives. Their members have developed expertise in supporting residents over the years. For example, Mr. H<sup>4)</sup> commented:

It is psychologically comfortable if residents know that there are many Japanese in this city and they can communicate with one another in their mother tongue. For myself, Vancouver is a place where I can enjoy Canada, and where I can be comfortable speaking Japanese. As an editor of a Japanese magazine, I realized that this psychological comfort is what our predecessors, the early Japanese immigrants, had developed over the last century. As an editor, I would like as many new Japanese residents as possible to know about this.

These support organizations are inclusive of residents' cultures and backgrounds, and function with the Canadian government's laws and policies to provide grassroots-level support for new Japanese residents.

### 5. Dreams and Reality of Japanese Retiree Residents

Many Japanese move to Vancouver to enjoy what they cannot find in Japan: comfortable summer weather, a lower cost of living, more living space, and a slower pace of life. Some obtain immigrant visas to make Canada their second home. Others wish to live in Canada as they did in Japan. The latter often experience frustration in interpersonal relationships and communication after moving to Canada. Even those who moved to Canada to be away from prior social networks may feel lonely once they are away from what they thought of as fraught relationships.

Many Japanese retirees moved to Canada wishing to have a "relaxing post—retirement time." Even after the move, however, they retain psychological ties to Japan. Some of them constantly read the latest news on Japan, largely ignoring updates on Canada. And while Vancouver's weather is pleasant in the summer, there are a certain number of people who grow depressed in the rainy, cloudy winter.

Some immigrant retirees remain attached to their former occupations and prefer not to socialize with other Japanese residents of Vancouver. Even though they made the decision to move to Canada by themselves, they do not always find adjusting to Canadian society as easy as they had imagined. They may fail to master English as quickly as they had hoped, making them hesitant to meet with English-speaking Japanese Canadians. The latter, meanwhile,

sometimes feel that the newer immigrants intentionally avoid them.

Some of the retirees chose to return to Japan after spending a few years in Vancouver. Such decisions are often made with regard for health and family obligations, such as the need to care for elderly parents or support children. A spouse who develops an illness, in particular, often triggers a return to Japan, as communication difficulties and anxieties cause further distress. When a spouse passes away, many choose to move to where their children live, whether in Canada or Japan.

Lastly, many new Japanese immigrants and retired residents experience a sense of isolation. There is some uneasiness between old-timer Japanese Canadians (whose families moved to Canada before WWII) and the new immigrants. Some of the former (*e.g.*, *Nisei*: second generation) subtly imply that the new immigrants do not understand the hardship that the old-timers experienced. The new immigrants, for their part, find representations of "Japanese traditional culture" in Canada (*e.g.*, the Powell Street Festival in Vancouver) and the Japanese communities in Canada to be inauthentic, viewing them rather as distinctly Japanese Canadian. As the new immigrants position themselves outside of the "*Nikkei*" (overseas Japanese) culture, they also perceive themselves as "immigrants," struggling to locate themselves at the margins of the local Japanese community.

## 6. Conclusion

I would like to analyze what constitutes "well-being" for senior citizens and what Japanese seniors expect from their lives in Canada by looking into the city's "livability." "Livability" is an indicator that consists of both quantifiable variables (*e.g.*, convenience, safety, health-care, environment, and cost of living) and subjective ones (*e.g.*, cultural factors, identity, affiliation, social space and networks, and amenities). Vancouver has achieved a high standard of quantifiable "well-being" variables, according to its rankings by The Economist and the Mercer Quality of Living Survey. The Province of British Columbia also provides quality affordable healthcare (excluding dental care) by keeping insurance costs low and making clinic/hospital visits free of charge. Moreover, medical care for the elderly is designed to respect patients' independence and dignity, providing psychological comfort. On top of such efforts, the local government is trying to meet with other subjective criteria for "comfortable living" that take into account time-related factors, socio-spatial factors, and aspects of "psychological fulfillment" (*e.g.*, the beauty of natural environments and landscapes) for Canadians.

Vancouver is furthermore an accessible city given its government-funded housing facility especially for elderly Japanese residents—one effect of the national policy of multiculturalism. These Japanese see the system here as one that respects minority populations by allowing them to express their culture freely. They view the Canadian social system in Vancouver as providing them with comfort given the city's nature-based environment and the presence of various support networks. Despite several disputes, the style of "civic cooperation" meets the needs of the residents.

What is important to the well-being of these residents depends on what each individual requires to maintain a "comfortable" standard of living. For example, Ms. B in this paper

pointed out that she sought a lifestyle that was not confined by Japanese gender norms. In a culturally diverse environment such as Vancouver's, the most important factors in the achievement of well-being are freedom of choice (e.g., of community affiliations and individual lifestyle) and the ability to "be oneself."

## Notes

- 1) The Rongu-sutei Foundation (a public-service corporation established in 1992 with permission from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry) defines rongu-sutei as "a lifestyle in which a person stays in a place outside of Japan (while maintaining residency in Japan) to learn its culture and lifestyle, promoting international goodwill by interacting with local residents."
- 2) Ms. B worked for a Japanese research institute for ten years and spent another ten years with a foreign company in Japan. She liked working for the company but decided to retire when she turned fifty.
- 3) According to the Canadian federal government, the number of immigrants from Asia and the Middle East increased after immigration policy reforms in 1962 and 1967. It was believed that such demographic shifts changed Canada's ethnic dynamics and caused tensions between ethnic groups. The federal government concluded that immigration policy should be determined primarily by demand from the labor market (e.g., Canada Department of Manpower and Immigration 1974: 3)
- 4) Mr. H used to volunteer at *Tonari Gumi* and is also an editor for a local Japanese magazine.

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