

THE CANADIAN

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JAPAN

DISRUPTOR ON THE ICE

Yokohama Grits coach Mike Kennedy guides
his team to achieve in sports and business **P10**





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The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan

La Chambre de commerce du Canada au Japon

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan is a private sector, not-for-profit business organization founded in 1975 to promote the development of commerce between Canada and Japan.

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Representing some 35 business industries, the CCCJ is a member-driven, member-focused organization and is the longest-serving Canadian chamber of commerce in Asia. With more than 400 members, the CCCJ represents a broad cross-section of businesspeople, including entrepreneurs, from Canada, Japan and other countries. The membership comprises Canadian companies and individuals with ties to Japan, and Japanese companies and individuals with ties to Canada.

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PEOPLE POWER

By Alec Jordan
Editor-in-Chief
The Canadian



There are strong economic links that unite Japan and Canada, but it's also important to consider the tremendous influence that cultural connections can play in bringing the people of the two countries together.

In this issue, along with insights into how business is helping to strengthen bilateral ties, there are three stories that show the important ways that Canadians in Japan are helping to build bridges — in sports, literature and culture.

TRUE GRIT

Our cover feature gives us a look inside the newest team in Asia League Ice Hockey, the Yokohama Grits (page 10). They're unique in the league because, in addition to their athletic careers, all of their players hold down full-time jobs or are full-time students. It's an approach to

encouraging athletes to look at their careers on and off the ice, and it's already getting attention.

For their first coach, the Grits couldn't have made a better choice than Mike Kennedy. As we see in our conversation with him, Kennedy's playing experience in the NHL and overseas, as well as his own time in the business world, helps him provide advice to his players not just about the game, but about the game of life.

WISE WORDS

Although the challenge of dealing with racism and bullying can be complex, explaining the issue to children doesn't need to be. This is a lesson that we learn from Kinota Braithwaite (page 26), who was inspired to write his first children's book as a result of his biracial daughter having to face bullying at her elementary school because she looked different from her classmates.

Braithwaite comes from a family that has roots in the African-Canadian civil rights movement, and he brings this legacy to bear on

books that can be enjoyed by young and old, and those who speak English and Japanese.

THE WAY OF TEA

Japan is a country that is known for its rich and profound cultural traditions, which have been passed down over the centuries. Perhaps one of the most iconic of these traditions is the tea ceremony, which possesses a rich tapestry of nuances that can take decades — if not a lifetime — to master. And it's quite rare for one of those masters to come from another country. Randy Channell Soei (page 30) happens to be one of those masters.

First drawn to Japan by the martial arts, Channell was exposed to the way of tea as a means of striking a balance in his training. But it turned into a journey of its own, which he continues to artfully walk to this day.

As always, we thank you for your readership, and best wishes for the coming spring. 🍁

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BUILDING MOMENTUM

By David Anderson

Chair

Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan

Dear Members,

As the fiscal year winds down and the weather warms up, I hope this finds you all in good health and optimistic about the spring and summer seasons ahead.

Though it's hard to believe, after checking the calendar I realize I am already entering my ninth month as chair of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ). It has been a very busy time, but with the support of a dedicated Board, committees and a very active and effective office, I am pleased with our performance through three quarters in these challenging Covid days.

On the advocacy front, our main focus has been working to ease heightened border restrictions and pushing for the resumption of international travel with Japan. Many thanks to the CCCJ External Relations Committee for their efforts with the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan, the European Business Council in Japan, Keidanren, the Japan Association of New Economy and other business groups in bringing the voice of the international business community to the attention of the Japanese government. As I write this, I am pleased and relieved to see a plan being laid out to allow inbound international workers and visitors. Let's hope that the Covid-related isolation is soon a thing of the past.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

As I mentioned in my last message, a main priority of mine during my term is to work to bring more attention to, and understanding of, the Canada-Japan business relationship and opportunities therein.

In November, the CCCJ played a major role in the Japan-Canada Chambers Council (page 14), a high-level, well-attended annual event bringing together top executives and diplomats to update the broader community on

bilateral business developments. In December, the chamber was happy to support the embassy with the three-day Canada-Japan Energy Security Forum (page 22), which provided a thorough analysis of the energy map across Canada and the opportunities there for Japan. We will continue our efforts to play a key connector role in facilitating two-way business understanding and expansion.

Of course, business-focused events are important for the CCCJ in carrying out its mandate. But I am also a strong believer in the importance of social networking. Both bring our members together and make our bonds stronger. Though this has been a challenge in Covid days, we were able to put on a fantastic golf tournament in November and a *bonenkai* to remember in December. On both occasions, it was great to see the joyous reconnections of old friends and the forming of new bonds as well. A big shout out to the Events Committee for all the great work they do. Hopefully fiscal '22 will allow our community to gather in person more frequently. A lot's being planned.

EXCITING NEWS

On the membership side of things, I am happy to report good news. Despite this prolonged mess of a pandemic, it is great to see that membership in the chamber is on the increase. As you can see in the New Members section (page 34), the Membership Committee has been working in overdrive. I encourage longer-standing members to take some time and connect with our new members, get them involved and show them just how great a community we have.



Thank you for your engagement with, and commitment to, the CCCJ.

To our longer-term members, and newly welcomed ones, thank you for your engagement with, and commitment to, the CCCJ. As a member-funded, member-driven organization, we are only as strong as our membership and without your support we would cease to exist. The Board, committees and office are always working on new ideas to provide value for our members. During Covid this has been challenging, but please trust that we are doing our best and have great plans for the short- to mid-term.

So, nine months in and what comes next? Well, first off, with the increase in membership, we are finally able to add additional and much-needed staff to the office. Big round of applause for our Executive Director Noriko Ishida, who has been running the show on her own for months now. With more staff, we will be better able to carry out our mandate and provide value to our members.

In other exciting news, we now have our Call for Nominations out, as we move towards the 2022 election. Serving on the Board of the CCCJ is a great way to be engaged and have an impact. We've got six Board seats becoming vacant, and I very much encourage you to participate.

Thanks to you all for your continued support and please never hesitate to be in touch. 🍁

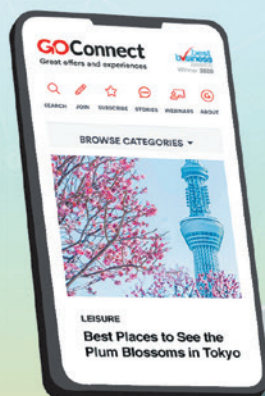
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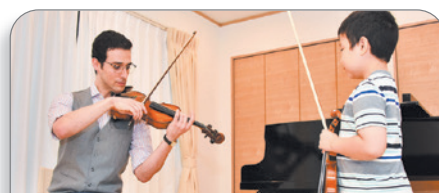
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Sister cities plan for Sooke and Natori

Vancouver Island's Sooke and Miyagi Prefecture's Natori will soon become sister cities. According to a January 14 *Goldstream News Gazette* article, the Sooke council unanimously accepted the agreement between the two areas, with the Mayor of the District of Sooke Maja Tait commenting, "I think just having relations with other municipalities in other parts of the world helps us appreciate and understand one another better." A sister city agreement is usually ceremonial and accompanied by special programs and initiatives; however, this agreement is yet to make any specific commitments.



Three nations ask to join EU's WTO case against China

Canada, Japan and Taiwan have put in a request to join the European Union's case against China at the World Trade Organization. In an article posted on February 10 on *Politico*, it was stated that the three countries would be agreeing with the accusation that China is blocking Lithuanian goods because of that country's relationship with Taipei.



The government department Global Affairs Canada confirmed the request, stating, "Canada opposes economic coercion and stands with like-minded partners in supporting rules-based international trade with the World Trade Organization at its core."



Approval sought for plant-based Covid vaccine

Medicago Inc., a Canadian subsidiary of Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma Corp., is seeking approval in Canada for the first plant-based Covid-19 vaccine, according to a February 19 article by *The Mainichi*. The vaccine is made by using the virus-like particles created from crops grown in greenhouses.

The final phase of clinical trials was carried out in six countries, including Japan, with the results showing a 71 per cent efficacy. Medicago has plans to file an application for approval with Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, with hopes of using the vaccine within the 2022 fiscal year.

Trucker protests hit Toyota and Honda



A bridge between the US and Canada has closed because of trucker protests in Canada. The protests are against Covid-19 vaccine mandates, as well as other restrictions, *The Japan Times* reported on February 11. It was also revealed that the closure is having a direct impact on Japanese automakers, with officials from Toyota Motor Corp. saying that the production at its Ontario and Kentucky plants have been affected. In addition, Honda Motor Co. has had to suspend one of the production lines at its Alliston, Ontario plant.

Watanabe fans upset over G League play

Toronto Raptors' Yuta Watanabe played in the G League with the Raptors 905 for the first time this season, leaving fans shocked. According to a January 26 article on sports news website *FanNation*, supporters were wondering why Raptors coach Nick Nurse made this decision. Nurse revealed that actually Watanabe made the choice to try and get some in-game reps, as lately he had been shooting poorly. "He came to us and asked if he could go play the game to try to speed that up. I certainly thought that was great on his part to do that and certainly was not going to stop him from doing something that he thought would help him get better," said Nurse.

DISRUPTOR ON THE ICE

Yokohama Grits coach Mike Kennedy guides his team to achieve in sports and business

By Alec Jordan

PHOTOS: YOKOHAMA GRITS

Hockey isn't a sport that gets judged on degree of difficulty. But if it were, the Yokohama Grits would be getting some extra points added to their scores.

The team launched at the beginning of the pandemic in February 2020. But what makes them unique is that Grits players all work full-time jobs that they balance with their professional hockey careers in Asia League Ice Hockey.

For some added grit, they offer about third of the salary that other teams can. Consequently, they haven't been able to amass the talent that some of the other teams in the league can muster. However, for players that choose the Yokohama Grits, this means they enjoy the benefit of growing their business careers — while still playing professionally.

For Yokohama Grits head coach Mike Kennedy, these are all challenges that he's taken in stride as he's helped the team develop and improve — on and off the ice.

FINDING AN ADVANTAGE

For Kennedy, the first hurdle was wrestling with the difficulties that the pandemic brought with it. He came to Japan in early 2020, for a planned two-game series and a month-long training session. Although the Covid-19 outbreak put a halt to those games, the season was set to begin in September, and Kennedy, who had since returned to Canada, was meant to return to begin the team's training in August. However, due to Covid-related delays in paperwork, he wasn't able to make it back here until the middle of October.

Kennedy explained that all his contact with the team had to be virtual at the time, and the

team was struggling to compete in the Asia League. "So from August up to the end of my quarantine period, I had to watch my team on Zoom. They were playing their games under the assistant coach. And we're losing games nine—nothing, six—nothing. When we even scored a goal, guys were really, really happy."

By the time Kennedy was able to physically be there, the first season continued to be a struggle. "We managed to play a Covid-shortened season of 18 games, with zero wins. Over the course of our first season, we lost one game in overtime. We lost six games by one

goal, we lost six games by two or three goals, and in six more we got crushed. But the good news is they got crushed mostly before I got here. So you could see the progress."

Kennedy quickly recognized that one of the key areas where the Grits could improve was something that generally is neglected in Japanese hockey on a national level: defense. This unheralded side of the game doesn't get the glory, but it can yield results, Kennedy explained. "It's pretty much the only advantage the Grits have. And it's not fun. So my team knows that every day I will teach them that the only way we can compete in this league is if I continue to develop their defensive skills. The fun part about developing a defensive skill is you have to have an offense playing against you, so we're covering offense too. But my focus is on the defense."

"If we can keep the score close, we have a chance."



He hopes that, by next season, he might be able to add more offensive focus to practices if the team shows further improvement. But Kennedy says that fans are noticing the tough defense. “Our fans look at the game and they go, ‘OK, the Grits get into these formations, like army formations.’ And we don’t forecheck as much and we don’t do some other things as much, but we defend like crazy as a group of five guys, and we keep the score close. And you know, if we can keep the score close, we have a chance.”

In fact, seeing this steady improvement is part of what makes it all worthwhile for Kennedy. “There’s no greater satisfaction in being a coach than taking the weakest team and bringing them up. You can see it happening before your eyes. Boom. Now they’re close in all games. Now teams are only winning by one and empty net goals. You can see that progress. So for me, the challenge was one of the biggest, brightest pieces of why I wanted to come here.”

TEAM OF CEOS

And part of the reason that Kennedy is such a good fit for the Grits is his own experience in sports and business. His playing career has included stints with the NHL’s Dallas Stars, Toronto Maple Leafs and New York Islanders, after which he played in the Deutsche Eishockey Liga, Germany’s top professional hockey league. During his time there, he helped the Munich Barons win the league championship.

Kennedy says that this overseas experience was instrumental in helping him adjust to coaching in the Asia League. “You can’t have just played in the NHL and come here to coach; it wouldn’t work. Playing in Europe was a really eye-opening experience, just in coming from the NHL to



“I truly believe there’s a big gap between where hockey is right now and where it can go.”

experience different styles, philosophies and languages. There are a whole bunch of different things that happen in the game.” Kennedy has also coached at the University of Calgary, as well as at the youth level.

Equally important to Kennedy’s track record is his time in business — he worked in office leasing as a realty advisor back in Canada. This helps him give advice to the players when it comes to the other key element of the Yokohama Grits’ experience: balancing a full-time job (or being a university student) with the demands of playing professional hockey. Kennedy explained: “I say to my players that they have three careers, and in order they are family, work and hockey. I am a coach that understands this basic concept, and if we can

keep the first two working well, then hockey can be an enjoyable experience for them.”

From the beginning, this part of the Grits’ life was something that Takashi Mikoshiba, the co-founder of the team, had insisted on. The connection between Mikoshiba and Kennedy goes back decades, to when the two went to high school together in British Columbia. Kennedy said that Mikoshiba, who came back to Japan after high school and played hockey for Keio University’s team before moving into the world of finance, was someone he has stayed in touch with throughout his life. Even though they weren’t in constant contact, Kennedy said that he wasn’t surprised that the friendship which started back in high school led to him coming to coach the Grits.

Kennedy recognizes that hockey is a secondary sport in Japan, and feels that the model that Mikoshiba has established could be emulated by other teams, given its appeal to the Grits’ players. “In some of the other clubs, maybe not all the players need to have full-time jobs, but half of them could be working towards a career outside of hockey. I think that Takashi has done a good job of getting players from around the league intrigued with the idea.”

The players, who come from a variety of backgrounds, include those who are just getting started, and those who have established careers in areas such as medical sales, or at large companies like Under Armour, Prudential, Salesforce, or SoftBank.

This means that the up-and-coming players on the Grits seek advice from their senior





teammates about hockey and their careers, Kennedy says: “The youngest guys look up to those guys not only for their role on the ice, but for how they’re doing in the working world. Most teammates [in other teams] don’t talk about this kind of stuff; they might be talking to each other about what movie they’re going to watch. But my guys are asking the older guys, ‘How did you ask your boss for a raise?’ or ‘How do I consider going to a new company?’ and ‘What can a recruiter do for me?’”

This focus on combining work and sport also applies to how Kennedy speaks to his players — and how he teaches them to think of themselves. “All of my players are CEOs — they’re CEOs of themselves and their families, and our job as a team is to help them be even better at that. Some guys don’t need as much help. They’re in their 30s, they’ve progressed nicely, but then some of the younger guys are looking for career advice. So I embed a bit of business talk in all the conversations that we have. And I encourage them to take a task-oriented approach to everything, so they can quickly get the most important things done in their life every day.”

MORE THAN JUST HOCKEY

This focus also applies to the efficiency with which practices are run. The Grits usually practice three times a week — in the morning, before work — and because they don’t have as much time on the ice, practices need to be laser focused. Kennedy says he makes the most of it. “I would say we practice about 70 per

cent of the time that other teams do. What we do is plan to get a lot done in a short amount of time, because I’m very respectful of every minute we practice. A lot of teams are able to float around; they have time to do this and that. I get 75 minutes, three times a week. We crush it. And my players say: ‘These are the hardest practices we’ve ever had in our lives.’”

Despite the challenges that come with launching a fledgling team made up of working professionals in the middle of the pandemic, Kennedy gets tremendous satisfaction from his connection with the athletes on the team: “I would say I’m truly proud of my relationships with a lot of the players. They’re deeper than I’ve ever had with any coach of mine. I’ve had many players drop by my house to ask me questions about life outside hockey. Being invited over for dinner is something no coach had ever done for me. I like doing that. I like to keep developing the relationship. And this is something I want to harness and take forward to a higher level. This doesn’t need to be just for the Grits; you’re coaching a human, not just a hockey player.”

“I would say I’m truly proud of my relationships with a lot of the players.”





Kennedy has also been grateful for the connection with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ), which has been a source of fans and social connections. He admits that he wouldn't know a third of the people he does in Japan without his links to the CCCJ. And the fans who make it to the games recognize the team's effort and tenacity. "The CCCJ provides many fans for us, and being good friends with [CCCJ Chair David Anderson] is one thing, but his introduction to many people around Tokyo allows me to have an in-depth look at what [the fans] are seeing and feeling. They know we're the underdog; they know we're the team that won no games last year. In fact, about a month ago I had a group from the top guys at Fidelity come to a game and we were playing the top team — a team would beat us nine-nothing all the time. Well, they beat us by a goal.

"And the people who came to see us said, 'Oh my God, you guys. Yeah, we can just see you working your butts off out there to defend, defend, defend.' Because that's also equally rewarding as a fan. You don't need to see goal after goal. You need to see a team working their tails off. And that's really what the Grits are all about if you look at the name. We've got to be gritty to keep going."

"These are the hardest practices we've ever had in our lives."

KEEP CHALLENGING

As one of the few foreign coaches in the Asia League, Kennedy's insights into the way hockey is played in Japan — and how it needs to change — have put him in a position that he's happy to occupy: disruptor. Through his connections with the CCCJ, he has noticed something similar in the position of many Canadians doing business here in Japan, and encourages them to keep at it. "If you have big ideas," he proclaims, "keep going for them and keep disrupting, keep challenging. Even for me, though all of the ideas I've tried to put into place haven't gone as smoothly as I wanted, a lot of people started thinking about them. So I want to continue to encourage people that are running their companies to just keep pushing — push the boundaries for more creativity. Hockey is a creative, fast-paced game and I am constantly scouring for innovative concepts and anything that might give my team a competitive edge. I think if CCCJ members can bring a bit of a worldly view to business and get to know their peers and team

members by having them over for dinner, that's a way of being a disruptor. Get to know your people organically. And be open to crazy, new, unconventional ideas that may give your company an edge."

Kennedy isn't sure exactly how many years he'll be with the Grits in the long run, but wherever his coaching career takes him in the future, he'll always make room for the team that he helped get its start. "I will support them with everything I know. I'll come back to Yokohama and help with their lead up to the season; I'll give them the plans of what I've been doing at other coaching jobs — anything I can to help this team," he says. "And if they want to share that with the rest of Japan, I say go for it.

"But I will forever be grateful to them for allowing me to experiment and be a catalyst for a bit of disruption in Japanese hockey. And I truly believe there's a big gap between where hockey is right now and where it can go. You've got to treat these guys like CEOs. And once you do, you'll be shocked at how they'll perform." 🍁

ANNAMARIE SASAGAWA

IAN G. MCKAY

DAN WOZNOW

JAPAN-CANADA TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Webinar on market conditions and opportunities in energy and innovation

By Megan Casson

On November 26, the Japan-Canada Chambers Council (JCCC) discussed different ways of bolstering trade and investment activities between the two countries. The JCCC is a joint initiative between the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ) and the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Covering energy, innovation and the benefits of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the event featured insightful comments from a handful of speakers representing organizations that are involved in a variety of industries and are working to strengthen Canada-Japan ties. The webinar was moderated by Annamarie Sasagawa, vice chair of the CCCJ.

STARTING SPEECH

Tatsuo Yasunaga, chairman of the JCCC, opened the event by sharing the topics and goals of the 2021 meeting. "Participants will discuss the traditional five priority areas of cooperation, while placing a special focus on energy and innovation for countries around the world beginning to implement carbon neutrality, and the specific measures used to foster the use of new energy sources, such as hydrogen and ammonia."

ENERGY DISCUSSION

Senior Vice President External Affairs Dan Woznow of AltaGas Ltd. was invited to speak about the operations of his company. Its head

office is in Alberta, but it operates throughout North America and maintains a strong link to Japan. The company has two lines of business. "One is our utility — or city gas as it's known in Japan. We run that business in Alaska and Michigan; and in the Washington, DC, and Maryland areas under the name Washington Gas. We supply natural gas to the White House.

"Our other business is our midstream, natural gas business and that's really focused on the northwestern part of Canada. We have two export facilities that we're utilizing now, one in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, and one in Ferndale, Washington. That's where I am going to focus our discussions on today.

"Although it's a Washington state-based facility, we move a lot of products from Canada — butane in particular. Both facilities are deep-water ports so, unlike some of our competitors, we're able to move barge vessels. These vessels are over 230 metres in length, and they carry about 45,000 tonnes of propane at a time. We move about 60 to 65 of these vessels into Asia every year, so it's a great opportunity for Canada. We supply about 11 per cent of the total propane imported by Japan right now, within two years of starting up," Woznow said.

GREEN GOALS

Referring to charts displayed at the meeting, Woznow also spoke about the future of these exports, and the changes that will come once people start to move away from fossil fuels and look to new transitional fuels, such as hydrogen and ammonia, in which Canada is

already investing. "Both Canada and Japan have committed to being net zero by 2050, which is a real challenge. How can we do that and maintain energy security and affordability for our populations?"

He also addressed the possibilities of working with ammonia, together with carbon capture and underground storage, and how Japan-Canada collaboration is important. "We've demonstrated our ability to provide energy to Japan. What is important to understand is that these opportunities need capital investment. We're talking billions of dollars for some of these facilities to get developed. That is where our Asian partners and Japan can help. If we can get those long-term purchasing commitments, we can build on that substantial investment."

JAPAN'S INPUT

Mitsubishi Corporation Executive Officer, General Manager of Next Generation Fuels and Petroleum Business Headquarters, Petrochemical Solutions Group (Concurrently) Hiroki Haba also spoke about the opportunities that ammonia and hydrogen present, and how Mitsubishi Corporation plans to work on them.

"We will invest approximately two trillion [yen] by 2030 in areas including renewable energy based on rare metals, natural gas and next-generation energy areas, such as fuel ammonia and hydrogen. We set up our fuel ammonia and hydrogen commercialization office two and a half years ago and have been pursuing this opportunity. We have been involved in activities relating to the promotion of using ammonia as a fuel.

STEVE DECHKA

TAKESHI SAITO

TATSUO YASUNAGA



HIROKI HABA

YASUHISA KAWAMURA

SEMINAR

“Canada and Japan are steadfast allies and partners with strong bonds, common values and vibrant people-to-people ties”

[This we have done] through the CFAA [Clean Fuel Ammonia Association], and the Fuel Ammonia Council set up in October last year, in both of which Japan’s Agency for Natural Resources and Energy is taking part,” he explained. “In regard to the CFAA, we are the director and also chairman of the project committee.”

INNOVATION

The Accelerator Centre is a non-profit private business accelerator and consulting company, based in Waterloo, Ontario. The organization can provide start-ups in Canada and overseas with the insight and support to grow their businesses. This provides opportunities for these companies to grow in a sustainable way.

“We don’t take equity from the start-ups that we work with on a fee-for-service model, so these companies are able to keep full ownership of their company,” explained Accelerator Centre Director of Marketing and Communications Tabatha Laverty.

The organization offers some key programs to assist start-ups looking to grow their business. “The first is our start-up visa program. It is a federally funded program that provides an accelerated pathway to permanent residency for successful founders who have founded their business outside of Canada — ideal for companies that are looking to enter, expand or achieve profitability in North America,” said Laverty.

The second of the selection of programs on offer is the Global Hubs program. “This is where we work with communities around the world. We’re interested in helping them build their own innovation ecosystems. We firmly

believe that if people want to replicate what is happening here at the Accelerator Centre, they don’t need to reinvent the wheel. We have a well-established program, and we really want to share it with the world, so we do offer licensing, consulting and partnership opportunities through the Global Hubs program.

“We walk municipal organizations, corporates, academic institutions and other types of organizations through the process of setting up an incubator or an accelerator and creating their own innovation ecosystems,” Laverty explained, adding that partners have the option of working either on an ad hoc basis or on one- or three-year plans.

TORONTO’S ROLE

Takeshi Saito, director at the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Toronto Office, spoke about how the body is helping to promote innovation and the expansion of start-up operations involving Japan and Canada.

“The Toronto office will open a Global Acceleration Hub in June this year for Japanese start-ups considering expanding overseas, and Japanese companies that desire to cooperate with Canadian start-ups,” he explained. According to Saito, there are many talented artificial intelligence (AI) researchers and AI-related companies in the ecosystem of Canada’s start-ups. He said that, while it was common for Canadian start-ups to begin with a view to expanding in the North American market — including the US — these small to medium-sized enterprises should also consider the opportunities that lie in Japan and with Japanese companies.

CLOSING REMARKS

Yasuhisa Kawamura, the Japanese Ambassador to Canada, delivered a keynote speech and spoke about the treasured bilateral relationship. “The economic growth rate, as well as the unemployment rate of our two countries, have shown positive trends. While we are not yet [emerging] from the pandemic, Canada and Japan are steadfast allies and partners with strong bonds, common values and vibrant people-to-people ties. We work closely together in international forums, such as the G7, G20, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and the World Trade Organization [WTO]. Our extensive trade and investment ties are underpinned by the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.”

Ian G. McKay, the Canadian Ambassador to Japan, echoed Kawamura’s sentiments, noting: “Canada and Japan are committed to building upon the success of the CPTPP by leading the efforts on WTO reform and promoting free, fair and sustainable trade. And on climate change, Canada and Japan are committed to achieving 2050 net zero goals and to mitigating climate-related risks in the Indo-Pacific region. This framework is really a terrific step forward in solidifying the significance of our relationship.”

Steve Dechka, co-chair of the JCCC, added to these sentiments with some closing remarks. “I remain encouraged by what I saw today and heard today. And I remain passionate about the potential for new candidate business relationships in the future.”

Perrin Beatty, president and chief executive officer of the Ottawa-based Canadian Chamber of Commerce added, “We’ll be seeking new ways to engage with Canadian chambers abroad, and look forward to engaging closely in the context of the Canada–Japan relationship to see how we can best support the bilateral trade relationship.” 🍁



PERRIN BEATTY

TABATHA LAVERTY

NATURALLY RELAXING RETREATS IN WORLD HERITAGE OKINAWA

Okinawa's rich natural heritage beckons adventurous travelers to sustainably explore the wild, while the southern archipelago's mild climate makes it an ideal place for a seaside workcation at any time of year.

TAKE A WORKCATION ON IRIOMOTE ISLAND

Okinawa's second-largest island of Iriomote is part of a Natural World Heritage Site that was registered in 2021. More than 90 per cent of the island's landmass is an uninhabited national park, with a mountainous jungle core, lush mangrove forests and a subtropical climate that nurtures a unique ecosystem for a trove of endemic species.

In the southeast of the island, Shinminka Villa provides the perfect place for a workcation as the exclusive annex of Iriomote's oldest ryokan. Surrounded by a private garden, the new wooden building is modeled after a traditional Okinawan minka folk house but redesigned with transparent outer walls to

give you an intimate connection with the natural environment.

EXPLORE THE WILDERNESS ON SUSTAINABLE ECO-TOURS

On the northern tip of the island, Villa Iriomote offers visitors 60 sustainable eco-tours. Among their most popular is a trek to the famous Maryudo Falls, Okinawa's largest waterfall by volume, where you can see the ancient geological strata of the rocky cliff and a panoramic view of the island.

Another way to experience Iriomote's World Heritage environment is by canoeing through Japan's largest mangrove forest. On night tours, you can search for rare nocturnal creatures such as endangered coconut crabs, Yaeyama giant eels, dazzling flocks of Yaeyama fireflies in spring, and maybe even catch a glimpse of one of the 100 or so remaining Iriomote wildcats.

Iriomote is home to only about 2,400 residents, and the islanders are fervent advocates of sustainable and ethical tourism. To preserve the island's native wildlife, the number of visitors is capped at 330,000 per year. The Us 4 Iriomote project works with local residents



©US 4 IRIOMOTE

to promote environmental awareness and cultural traditions on Iriomote with the aim of ensuring the island's future.

CHILL OUT ON THE SHORES OF NORTHERN OKINAWA

At Chillma on the northern Motobu Peninsula, you can rent an entire villa for your workcation with a private sundeck overlooking the sea from sunrise to sunset to starry nights and everything in between. Bathe in the resort's iconic curving infinity pool, stroll along its private beach, snorkel in the tropical waters and live the slow life on island time to balance work and play.



©SHINMINKA Villa Takemori ryokan



©VILLA IRIOMOTE



©CHILLMA



Nature of Iriomote Island ©OCVB

RETREAT TO THE REEFS OF KOURI ISLAND AND CAPE HEDO

When you're ready to roll, consider renting a bicycle and going for a refreshing ride along the coast. The further north you venture, the more you will be rewarded with quiet roads, remote seascapes, sparsely populated villages and the thrill of independent adventure on two wheels.

Nearby Kouri Island is an easy excursion and a popular destination for couples, featuring the timeless attraction of a coralline rock formation in the shape of a heart, which is also the setting of Okinawa's own Adam and Eve legend.

After touring Kouri Island, head northward along the wild west coast of Kunigami past jagged concrete sea walls, above stage-like steps down to sandy shores, through rocky mountain tunnels and all the way up to the raised coral reefs of Cape Hedo.

From Cape Hedo, you can see the four rocky peaks of Ashimui, Okinawa's ancient sacred site. Ashimui is part of Daiseikirinzan, the Earth's northernmost tropical karst of eroded limestone, formed by crustal movements in the ocean some 250 million years ago.

HIKE AND PADDLE THROUGH THE PRIMEVAL FORESTS OF YANBARU

Occupying most of Kunigami, the 13,600-hectare Yanbaru National Park covers a mountainous area of ancient forests and rare endemic wildlife. Yanbaru is part of the new Natural World Heritage Site that includes Northern Okinawa and Iriomote Island. Hike up to cloud forests on Mt. Yonhadake, admire spectacular views from limestone cliffs overlooking Shioya Bay, or follow a scenic trail leading to the 26-metre drop of Hiji Otaki Falls.

At the southern end of Yanbaru in Nago, Oura Mangrove Road is a 726-metre path along the Oura River that flows through the natural mangrove forest. You can either observe the brackish water ecosystem from the elevated wooden walkway or get a closer look at the roots of hirugi trees, fiddler crabs, mudskippers and other native fauna and flora from the water-level perspective of a kayak.

However you choose to spend your time, Okinawa's natural heritage invites you to immerse yourself in its ancient wilderness and escape into landscapes and seascapes, where the present moment is all that counts.

This year, the seventh Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival (international gathering of people with ties to Okinawa) will be celebrated in the prefecture.

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of Okinawa's reversion to Japan after being occupied by the US with special Ryukyu exhibitions held in Tokyo and Kyushu. 🍁



Sponsored by the Okinawa Prefectural Government and the Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau



Learn more at visitokinawajapan.com/travel-inspiration/naturally-relaxing-retreats-in-world-heritage-okinawa



Kouri Island ©OCVB



Oura Mangrove Road ©WANSKA OURA PARK



Yanbaru National Park ©OCVB

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CANADA AND JAPAN BY THE NUMBERS

NUMBER OF PEOPLE FULLY VACCINATED FOR COVID-19

(FEB. 7, 2022)

	JAPAN	99,914,638
	CANADA	30,422,243

SOURCE: COUNTRY ECONOMY

PHYSICIANS PER 1,000 PEOPLE

CANADA
2.61/1000

8.3%
more

JAPAN
2.41/1000



HOSPITAL BEDS PER 1,000 INHABITANTS

CANADA
2.7/1000

10.7
less

JAPAN
13.4/1000



SOURCE: VERSUS.COM

JAPANESE PEOPLE HAVE 28.4% FEWER CHILDREN

In Canada, there are approximately **10.2 babies** per 1,000 people as of 2020. In Japan, there are **7.3 babies** per 1,000 people as of 2020.

SOURCE: THE WORLD FACTBOOK, CANADA REVENUE AGENCY, NATIONAL TAX AGENCY JAPAN.

AVERAGE MONTHLY NET SALARY (AFTER TAX)

Canada	¥324,211 (C\$3,567.34)
Japan	¥314,431 (C\$3,459.74)

SOURCE: NUMBEO





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SKILL BUILDER

Temple University, Japan Campus helps organizations keep their staff on top of the game

One thing that the pandemic has made abundantly clear is that businesses and other organizations need to adapt nimbly to change. Over the past two years, countless individuals and teams have had to pick up new skills to help their companies successfully pivot and realize new business plans.

But for people on the job, fitting this training in while working can be a challenge. Luckily, the Continuing Education program at Temple University, Japan Campus (TUJ) understands that challenge and has a long history of supporting local individuals and organizations by providing language and communication skills training, avenues for personal exploration and professional development opportunities in areas such as project management, digital marketing and more.

With a history in the country that goes back more than 40 years, TUJ is the oldest and largest foreign university in Japan. Along with offering full-time undergraduate and graduate programs, since 1996 TUJ's Continuing Education Program has helped working professionals connect with like-minded individuals and learn a wide range of subjects.

MEETING CHALLENGES

As Dr. Justin Sanders, director of Continuing Education at TUJ, explained, this learning environment has proven to be even more necessary in the wake of the new normal. "Covid really highlighted the need for organizations to have staff members who are flexible and nimble and agile, and can make adjustments to new and complex situations," he said. "That's really hard to train for on the job, but that's actually the kind of thing that happens in the classroom all the time. It's not just about receiving the

"It's really about developing the mindset of solving problems when you encounter new situations."

content and saying, 'OK, now I know how to run ads on Facebook, or now I know what some effective negotiation tactics are.' It's really about developing the mindset of solving problems when you encounter new situations, and building the pathways in your brain to effectively deal with these new scenarios."

Over its long history in Japan, TUJ has developed strong ties with the business community, through its vast network of alumni and the many organizations it provides training programs for, including major Canadian companies and many Canadian professionals working in Japan. Its courses offer an excellent combination of professional development, language training and the opportunity to follow personal interests. Moreover, being able to meet English-speaking professionals and Japanese bilinguals who attend TUJ's courses and workshops is an unrivaled chance to build one's network.

Sanders pointed out that TUJ has two approaches when it comes to offering continuing education for organizations. One is to allow them to choose from the hundreds of courses and workshops at TUJ, which can be adjusted according to the organization's needs and delivered in-person, virtually or using a blended model. This is often a cost-effective solution for organizations that can't afford to build their own programs from scratch.

The other is more purposeful and targeted, and involves a thorough consultation that considers the specific contextual needs of the organization, and the individuals doing the training. This allows TUJ to custom design

a training program that will help achieve that organization's needs. The programs are also designed to generate the same kind of diversity of student input that can be expected from the general courses and workshops.

EXPANDED OFFERINGS

But TUJ is also available to help businesses in even more ways. One of them is to harness the university's many years of experience in Japan to help advise businesses that are in the country—or planning to open an office here—on matters related to intercultural communication and operating successfully in the country. The other lies at the core of TUJ's Continuing Education program, and ultimately gives organizations the ability to implement their own leadership and development strategies: "We're experts in training. We can be a partner in helping you develop your own training programs, because we have this deep expertise. We can take what we've done over the last 25 years, and start to help others do it more effectively."

Sanders says that he welcomes any questions from interested Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan members who would like to find ways to help their organizations boost staff development, or individuals who want to build their skills: "I really encourage any of the members—if they have a need, or something that they would like to do, I'm very happy to serve in a consultative, connecting role." 🍁



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CANADA-JAPAN ENERGY SECURITY FORUM

Webinar explores the value of jointly reducing emissions

By Megan Casson

Japan and Canada are engaged in the efforts to actively pursue cleaner energy sources and are committed to working together to achieve carbon net zero by 2050. While demonstrating this through business collaboration, the two governments are also active in showing their commitment to the cause.

A three-day webinar moderated by First Secretary, Trade Policy at the Embassy of Canada in Japan, Lisa Mallin was held on December 14–16, 2021, with insights from leaders of industry, government figures, Indigenous representatives and academics. Written before energy prices soared after Russia invaded Ukraine in February, this article highlights some of the key themes and comments from the diverse and esteemed speakers, but given the extent of the webinar, does not provide exhaustive coverage.



Lisa Mallin and David Bostwick

David Bostwick, Counsellor (Commercial) responsible for investment, energy, natural resources, cleantech, advanced manufacturing and trade policy at the Embassy of Canada, opened the event by telling attendees what to expect throughout the event.

“Over the next three days, we will hear from over 30 speakers highlighting various aspects of the deepening Canada–Japan energy relations, covering capabilities from liquefied

petroleum gas [LPG], liquefied natural gas [LNG] and hydrogen to ammonia. We will be joined by industry leaders, academics and senior Canadian and Japanese government officials to provide their insights. It is my sincere hope that you will walk away from this week’s forum with a greater understanding of Canada’s capabilities, our talent and expertise, and why we are a reliable partner of choice for Japan in the broader Indo-Pacific region.”

OPENING REMARKS

Bostwick then introduced Canada’s Minister of Natural Resources, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, who delivered keynote remarks. “I want to thank Ambassador [Ian G.] McKay and all of those involved in organizing this important forum. It couldn’t be more timely coming in on the heels of COP26 in Glasgow. At that meeting, both important progress and significant commitments were made. There was a clear understanding that the world is at an inflection point as we work to tackle the changing climate. This isn’t a political issue, it is a science issue,” he said.

Minister Wilkinson then spoke on the importance of reducing emissions globally. “In these efforts, Japan and Canada are natural partners. Both of our countries have committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050, both countries see the opportunities that will emerge from being leaders in clean energy and both



Jonathan Wilkinson



Ian G. McKay

countries understand the importance of energy security in maintaining the free and open Pacific region. My message to you today is a simple one: Canada stands ready to contribute to that security. That is why in 2019, when Canada hosted the 12th Clean Energy Ministerial in Vancouver, British Columbia, which is the region I represent in Canada’s federal cabinet, we helped launch a new hydrogen initiative alongside Japan.

“This forum will remind us that while climate change is the greatest challenge of our generation, it can also be the greatest opportunity of our lifetimes if we are thoughtful in our approach and ambitious in our actions. Now is the time to seize these opportunities and enhance Japan’s energy security while advancing our shared goal of a cleaner energy future.”

Canadian Ambassador to Japan Ian G. McKay thanked Minister Wilkinson for highlighting the importance of the energy sector to Canada, and reiterated the significance of Canada and Japan’s shared net-zero commitment, saying that “This is an enormous challenge that must be viewed as the greatest economic and strategic opportunity in the history of our bilateral relationship.” Ambassador McKay also underscored the fact that Canada is a competitive, sustainable and reliable partner in supporting Japan’s economic security and energy transition needs.

ENERGY POTENTIAL

Hikariko Ono, Director General of the Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, spoke on the collaborative actions



between Canada and Japan. “As the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continues, challenges such as the stability of the energy market, and compatibility between climate change and energy transition are becoming more important. Japan and Canada have been cooperating in the energy field for many years, and now it is high time to explore how to continue to include energy security in the Indo-Pacific region,” she explained.

Ono also discussed the recent energy price increase. She explained that “natural gas spot prices in Asia have shot up about five times in November compared to last March. It is concerning that high energy prices will affect the economic recovery from the pandemic, and Japan is working with oil-producing countries to increase production for the stability of the energy market and coordinating with consuming countries and relevant international organizations.

“Japan and Canada can and should contribute to decarbonization in a sustainable manner by making the most of their knowledge, technology and resources. Canada — a resource-rich country — is a great economic partner of Japan. And Japanese companies have long been involved in the energy business in Canada. This year, Japanese companies have been launching fuel, ammonia and hydrogen projects and carbon capture and storage-related businesses in Canada,” she explained, adding that these new ventures cannot be completed overnight. Ono emphasized that long-standing relationships built on trust are important to aid in responding to the challenge of climate change and the challenges that energy transitions will bring.

Dr. Ken Koyama, Senior Managing Director of the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan, was next to speak, elaborating on Japan’s energy security strategy and the geopolitics of energy. “The energy security risk is significantly growing and we will continue to depend on fossil fuels during this transition of energy neutrality or carbon neutrality. So, in order to promote the creation of electricity utilizing decarbonized methods, we’ll have to think about this from the perspective of efficiency and stability. In



other words, we will have to consider gradual transitions,” he explained.

Koyama also mentioned the importance of hydrogen and ammonia, discussing the potential importance of Japan’s import and export relationships between countries across the world. “The big potential suppliers will be the Middle East, Canada, America — so the trade relationship with those critical suppliers will become very important and we must build the international supply chain to guarantee or achieve energy security between supplier and producer, and consumer investment.”

OIL DEMAND

Dr. Jeff Kucharski, Adjunct Professor at Royal Roads University in Victoria, and a senior fellow with the Macdonald-Laurier Institute who has a specific focus on the Indo-Pacific, discussed the future of the global oil demand.



“It would be prudent and realistic to assume oil demand in 2050 will most likely fall somewhere between the levels implied in the net zero and announced policy scenarios. That is between 24 and 75 million barrels a day by 2050. In other words, between about 24 per cent and 75 per cent of what global oil demand is today,” he explained.

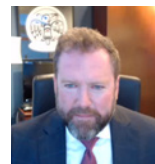
Kucharski discussed how the demand for natural gas is likely to fall less than oil due to its importance as a transition fuel, and as a flexible backup for renewable generation. “Similar to oil, natural gas demand in 2050 will most likely fall somewhere between 1,747

and 4,004 billion cubic metres by 2050. In other words, between about 45 per cent and 100 per cent of what global natural gas demand is today.

“As the world drives to reduce emissions and decarbonize the global economy, we will need all types of fuels to ensure that we maintain energy security and energy affordability while sustaining economic growth. Most countries in the Indo-Pacific realize this ‘all of the above’ approach to energy sources will be critical over the transition. And that’s why their energy policies focus on fuel source diversification,” he said.

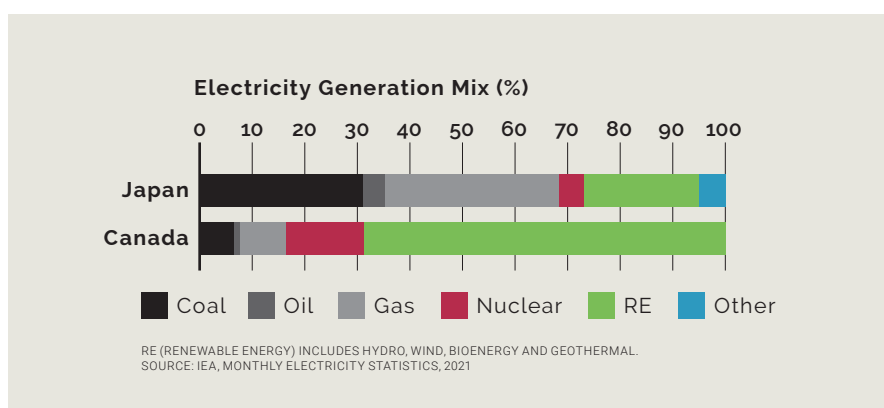
KEY PORT

The second day began with some words from Shaun Stevenson, President and CEO of the Port of Prince Rupert, Canada’s third-largest port. He discussed the



port’s advantages and how it contributes to Canada’s ability to provide energy to Japan.

“Our close proximity to Asia means that we can access Canadian energy production through efficient supply chains across the Pacific to Japan, carving weeks out of total transportation times and taking costs out of that shipping. At the Port of Prince Rupert, we have a safe and efficient harbour. Furthermore, navigational approaches to the Port of Prince Rupert and our terminals are the safest on the West Coast. This means that we can serve vessels efficiently and safely to and from the terminals within the Port of Prince Rupert.”



“Now is the time to seize these opportunities and enhance Japan’s energy security while advancing our shared goal of a cleaner energy future.”



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INDIGENOUS IMPACT

Jennifer Osmar, Manager of Stakeholder Relations at Calgary-based energy company AltaGas Ltd., was invited to discuss the Indigenous partnerships



between the energy industry and First Nations and Métis in Canada. Osmar presented two videos to the audience of the webinar, both of which communicated different messages.

“In Canada, Indigenous reconciliation is a shared priority. Energy projects provide opportunity and responsibility for governments and industry to actively participate in true partnerships with Indigenous communities. Together, we’re learning to build more sustainable and more equitable resource projects. The industry is demonstrating that we can align with Indigenous values to protect the environment, and to provide meaningful benefits to communities, while at the same time delivering security of energy to our global partners,” she explained.

“In the first video, the partnership is at work through indigenous training and employment. When AltaGas built the Ridley Island propane export terminal in 2018, we partnered with the Metlakatla and the Lax Kw’alaams communities to build a training program to be able to hire their community members at our facility. As a result, today, over 25 per cent of our workforce at the facility is Indigenous. And we continue to work together to grow that number.”

In the second video, Osmar pointed out how the partnerships between the energy industry and Indigenous Peoples focused on an Indigenous housing initiative. “Our industry colleagues



Clean, renewable energy at work in a field of wind turbines and solar panels in Ontario, Canada

at Cenovus [an integrated oil and natural gas company] have made the largest community investment in their company’s history, bringing critical housing to Indigenous communities in Alberta. We hope you will enjoy hearing directly from our Indigenous communities, what employment in the energy industry means to them and their families, and what new housing means to community stability.”

NET ZERO GOALS

Tsuyoshi Ogasawara, President of Astomos Energy Corporation, discussed the carbon-neutral goal, agreed by Japan and Canada, for 2050.

“In both countries, private companies will be required to [devise] a series of plans and reports to support accountability and transparency to achieve a prosperous net zero economy. In terms of the long journey to a carbon-neutral society, it is unlikely that we will achieve our goals solely by our own effort. We’d like to keep a close dialogue with others to find effective measures together,” he explained.

AMMONIA INVESTMENT

Masashi Watanabe, Director for Fuel Ammonia, Petroleum, LNG Policy at the Agency for Natural Resource and Energy, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, spoke on Japan’s recently updated Road Map for Fuel Ammonia.



“I think most of the audience already knows that ammonia is a carrier of hydrogen, but we are now trying to utilize ammonia as a recovery fuel for power generation — especially for coal power plants. So the road map shows that we would like to introduce 20 per cent of the coal firing of ammonia in coal power plants by 2020–2030. And we are trying to increase the ratio of ammonia coal firing in the 2030s and change to ammonia fuel generation in the 2040s. This is one way to utilize or decarbonize coal power plants. Some countries have already decided to shut down all coal power plants, but we are trying to utilize them by decarbonizing them,” he explained.

“We are now trying to increase international awareness, including asking the International Energy Agency to analyze the importance of the use of ammonia to decarbonize power generation, and we are now talking to energy-rich countries for [the establishment of] a new supply chain with countries including Canada, the US, the Middle East, as well as the European Union. So from these activities we would like to establish the fuel ammonia supply chain to help promote awareness of fuel ammonia, and to introduce fuel ammonia to power plants.”

As the third day ended, Bostwick returned to provide some closing remarks. “Regarding the Canada–Japan energy security relationship, years ago, we would often think of our relationship solely in terms of political or economic terms. However, today we’re seeing the interplay between these worlds, and how a stronger energy relationship between Canada and Japan can support a free and open Indo-Pacific.” 🍁

“In terms of the long journey to a carbon-neutral society, it is unlikely that we will achieve our goals solely by our own effort.”



Whitehorse hydro power dam spillway in Yukon, Canada

LOOKING BEYOND COLOUR

African-Canadian author addresses racism and bullying in a way all can understand

By Alec Jordan



“I have this belief that all children on this earth are good. And I think if they get the right messages and the right information then they will act in a good way.”

This is a belief that Kinota Braithwaite keeps close to mind and it shaped how he handled a situation that he thought his own children wouldn't have to face.

Braithwaite is African-Canadian, and grew up in the Toronto area. As he explained at a presentation he gave at Tokyo American Club in February, he'd had to face racism from classmates that took a variety of forms, and handled it on his own terms. But he hoped that with the passing years, the stain of racism would be something that could be relegated to the past.

However, when his daughter Mio, who is biracial, was bullied at her Japanese elementary school for looking different from her classmates, he faced the realization that some things hadn't changed.

CREATIVE SOLUTION

He dealt with the situation as a teaching moment — Braithwaite is a Montessori School instructor — and arranged to visit his daughter's class, where he presented a lesson about bullying and racism to his daughter's classmates, which was translated by one of the classmate's mothers. The children took the lesson to heart, and the bullying ended.

However, he realized there might be other children out there, facing the same kinds of issues, whose parents might not be able to handle the situation as skillfully as he did. In a conversation after his presentation, Braithwaite said that he knew he needed to do more.

“I had a feeling that this kind of bullying would continue in Japan, and I needed to do something about it. So I decided to write a book that teachers can read to their classes, and parents can read to their children, as a way to say — ‘This is not the right way: we can do better, and we can treat people with kindness and respect.’”

Mio The Beautiful is the first book that he wrote. The colourfully illustrated, bilingual book tells Mio's story and encourages those who read it to understand that people need to be judged by who they are, not how they look. *Mio the Beautiful* has been followed by two other books — *Kei The True Friend* (based in part on experiences of his son, Kei) and *Mio's Wish: Growing Up Biracial in Japan*. *Mio The Beautiful* was translated by a fellow

PHOTO: BOBBY SCHAUER

[His next book] will give parents and their children ... help in dealing with separation or divorce.

Montessori teacher, while the second and third books were translated by Makiko Shimada, a professional translator.

Braithwaite said that he met the illustrator for all three books — an Indonesian artist named Taiga — on Instagram. He was impressed by the work she was posting on her account and reached out to her. It turned out that Taiga was also a fan of anime and manga, so the Japan connection was easy to make. They've yet to meet in person; Braithwaite sends her the stories along with pictures and descriptions of the scenes and Taiga helps bring the stories to life.

LITERARY ROOTS

Given Braithwaite's family background, it should come as no surprise that he took a literary approach to addressing the situation of racism and bullying. His grandmother, Rella Braithwaite, was an important figure in African-Canadian civil rights. She wrote a regular column about Black history in *Contrast*, Toronto's oldest newspaper for the Black and Caribbean diaspora, as well as several books about the roles that African-Canadians played in Canadian history. This included work that discussed her ancestors, who escaped slavery in the United States by way of the Underground Railroad and joined the first African-Canadian community in Wellington County, Ontario. In addition, she assisted Ontario's Ministry of Education in creating a Black studies guide to be used in the province's classrooms.

In a fascinating parallel, Braithwaite explains that his grandmother was inspired to begin her work in response to her own child: "She started [her work] as a result of her son Cecil, who came home and said, 'There are no Black heroes.' She was taken aback, and she took it upon herself to write books about Black history."

Braithwaite said that his own interest in Japan stems back to his grade five teacher, who did a unit on Japan and Japanese culture that stayed with him for years. As an adult, he saw an ad about teaching English in Japan, and as it is for many expats in Japan, one year turned into several. He has also lived and taught at Montessori schools in the Czech Republic and Austria.

SPREADING THE WORD

Given his experience in Canada and overseas — particularly in Japan — he feels that there is often a difference when it comes to the roots of racism and prejudice here: "In Canada, there's a history of this happening and people know that it's wrong. But sometimes in Japan, people can be racist, but it's out of ignorance. Of course, this isn't an excuse, but it can come from a place of not knowing any better." His books look to shed light on the topic, and share lessons in a way that younger — and older — readers can understand and sympathize with.

Even though Braithwaite had modest hopes for *Mio The Beautiful*, it has been extremely well received, particularly among international schools. It was chosen as a Sakura Medal

PHOTO: YUUKI IDE, TOKYO AMERICAN CLUB



Braithwaite spoke on racial identity in Japan, at Tokyo American Club in February.

nominee, having been recognized by international school librarians across Japan as an exemplary book. He's hoping that this book, and his others, will eventually get attention from Japanese schools.

He regularly gets messages from parents and teachers about the positive influence his books have had on their children — sometimes boosting their self-esteem and in other cases helping to put an end to cases of bullying in the classroom.

Braithwaite's next book, he explains, will touch on a topic that often appears in the foreign press in Japan: what happens when mixed families separate. "In Japan, when you are separated or divorced, there's this sole custody law, and sometimes, one parent doesn't have the opportunity to see their children," he said. "It will be a book that will give parents and their children who are going through situations like this some help in dealing with separation or divorce."

In addition to his books, Braithwaite also gives talks about racism, bullying and prejudice to organizations, and maintains an active presence on social media. But despite the complexity of the problem of racism, he feels that the simple, heartfelt message of a book like *Mio The Beautiful* can have a profound effect on readers of all ages and backgrounds. "This is one children's book that can change the way that you think about the world. And it doesn't matter if you are six years of age or you're 60 or 80. I've written this book with a universal message that all children are beautiful, and that we can unite around this cause of stopping racism, and stopping bullying," he said. "I think if we had everyone working together on one common goal we could make Japan an even better place. I like Japan a lot, but I think we can make it even better for kids coming up." 🍀



PHOTO: BOBBY SCHLAUB

Braithwaite with his daughter Mio and son Kei

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WHEN FEAR IS OUR FRIEND

Expat inspires us to live our dreams

By Shriya Rokade

“It’s never too late” is a familiar and reassuring phrase, reminding us that the things we want to achieve don’t have to be accompanied by a deadline.

Lowell Sheppard has transformed this common expression into a tangible medium — the Never Too Late Academy — which offers a series of courses that guide participants on a journey to realize their dreams. Founded in 2021, the academy combines inspiration with guidance on how to fund one’s efforts and make practical but effective decisions, whether one’s dream is to start a business, write a book, or launch another project.



Sheppard is an ideal example of putting these ideas into practice. The Canadian has cycled across Japan, published several books and has been the Asia-Pacific director of the HOPE International Development Agency, a non-governmental organization dedicated to sustainable development projects around the world. His current endeavour is to prepare himself, and his boat, to cross the Pacific Ocean on a solo voyage.

As his adventures have continued to draw a growing audience on his social media platforms, Sheppard realized he was attracting fellow “never-too-laters.” This sparked his desire to develop practical and affordable resources for the expanding community.

FACING FEAR

Sheppard told *The Canadian* that he approached launching the Never Too Late Academy with a beginner’s mind, or *shoshin* — a Buddhist term meaning to experience the world as if for the first time. Sheppard shared that this approach resonates with him because it requires a “degree

of humility,” and “captures the child-like wonder and excitement in discovering something new.”

He explained that one of the biggest obstacles keeping us from attaining our goal is fear — if we let it. And, he pointed out, we don’t have to succumb to the societal pressure of always remaining tough against adversity. In fact, being vulnerable can help you get closer to your dreams, and can help us be honest with ourselves and others about what we want. This is something that Sheppard has encountered himself, as he has handled the challenges and setbacks that his sailing project has faced, including mechanical problems that have required major repairs.

He adds that he has learned a great deal from facing fear: “Fear can change your course — it can slow you down, and cause you to divert, but it’s never an enemy. It’s a friend. It’s not a wall; it’s a doorway.”

Treating fear as a constant companion can encourage you to manage your relationship with it, which means you can engage with it to help you make better decisions when it comes to your dreams. That, he believes, can act as a source of guidance for carrying out actions practically, or it can be the motivating force you need when you know you’re only scared to do something because it means that much.

SMALL STEPS, MAJOR LEAPS

Sheppard explained that people need to be aware that insights can often spring from single moments, which — no matter how brief they might be — can lead to transformative results. But they’re often preceded by steady movement that can feel routine. He described these moments as “jack-in-the-box spiritual experiences,” because “they only happen when you’ve got a regular cadence in your life, and you’re just turning the handle.” But the effects can be profound: “Occasionally, and quite magically, something dramatic may happen that will change you and alter your

“Fear can change your course ... but it’s never an enemy.”



environment and your self-perception and others’ perceptions of you.”

Along with inspirational discussions, the Never Too Late Academy features content from speakers who are not only knowledgeable about helping people realize their dreams, but also planning the logistics to get there. One course soon to be launched will include tutorials outlining how to monetize projects, to help people find ways of financing their dream projects — an essential aspect that most motivational speakers and guidebooks brush over. Sheppard is also considering live events and possible private coaching as part of the effort.

He added that another crucial aspect which platforms often lack is a sense of community. With that in mind, Sheppard hopes the Never Too Late Academy can be a place that unites dreamers, so they can share stories, knowledge and resources to support one another. 🍁

For more details:
www.nevertoolateacademy.com

STEEPED IN MASTERY

Canadian in Kyoto has delved deep into one of Japan's most respected traditions

By Julian Ryall



Randy Channell Soei was in search of balance when he discovered tea.

Born in Victoria, British Columbia, Channell took a roundabout route to the traditional Kyoto townhouse just a stone's throw from Nijo Castle where today he hosts tea events and demonstrations. He is a professor of *chado*, or the way of tea, in the *Urasenke* tradition.

Channell had a conventional Canadian upbringing, he agrees, having moved to Edmonton and attended Concordia College, but never in his formative years did he take classes in any way related to Asia.

WAY OF THE WARRIOR

"When I was very young, I did some judo at the YMCA and later started taekwondo, but as I was a big fan of Bruce Lee, I began

studying kung fu. So I would say that, originally, I was more interested in China," he told *The Canadian*.

Channell left Canada for Hong Kong in 1977 to study his chosen martial art. While there, he first came to Japan to watch a friend do a kendo grading, a visit that he believes "planted a seed" of interest in living here. He returned several times over the next few years before moving here permanently in the early 1980s.

After a few months in Tokyo — "I loved the city because it had such a different feel to Hong Kong, which by that time I was having a love-hate relationship with" — he moved to Matsumoto, in Nagano Prefecture, and took a position teaching English that, most importantly, also gave him plenty of time to devote to *budo*, or martial arts.

WAY OF TEA

And it was here, he said, that the concept of *bunburyodo* really took hold. Handed down through the centuries, the phrase embodies the belief that a warrior should be just as accomplished in the cultural arts as in the skills required to defeat an enemy. It teaches that refinement and education are an important part of the balance.

"At that point, I really only knew that there was a tea ceremony, not really anything about it," he said. "As my training was focused on *budo*, I felt an imbalance. I needed to represent the cultural side to achieve the balance I wanted with my martial skills. To that end, I began studying calligraphy and *koto*, but I quickly realized I had absolutely no talent for either.

"The woman who lived next door to me [Murakami Sodaï] was a tea teacher and one day she invited me for a bowl of *matcha* with her," he said. "That was the beginning of my own journey."

Channell immediately sensed the perhaps surprising parallels between martial arts and the refined and elegant "way of tea."

"It was the way that she held the bowl and other implements, the way she moved, her posture," he said. "There were clear similarities, but it went beyond that. It was the respect that was being shown, the precision of the movements. It was graceful, fluid and she made it all look so easy. I was enthralled by it all."

Soon, the way of tea became the balance that Channell needed for his martial arts. In time, however, it became the main focus of his studies.



PHOTO: RUSSEL WONG

“At the very heart of the way of tea are the four principles: harmony, respect, purity and tranquility.”

LIFETIME OF STUDY

In 1993, he was given permission from Dr. Sen Genshitsu, the then-Grand Tea Master of the *Urasenke* tradition, to study at the prestigious Urasenke Gakuen Professional College of Chado in Kyoto. Over the next three years, his studies took in the history behind the tea ceremony, including its connections to Zen and other traditional arts, as well as the practical skills required to become a master.

These include the actual procedures for serving tea, how to make the sweets used as accompaniments, and how to prepare and serve the traditional *cha-kaiseki* cuisine. There are two different types of *matcha* used in the way of tea — thick and thin — and the serving procedures vary accordingly. There are countless other important details that similarly need to be memorized.

Asked the most difficult skill to master, he does not hesitate: being able to sit in *seiza*, or on one's knees, for hours on end.

At the beginners' level there are 16 “small teachings,” Channell said, as well as a myriad detailed procedures for serving tea in both summer and winter.



Celebrating with Murakami Sodai on her 99th birthday. She introduced Channell to the way of tea.



Channell delivers a “TAC Talk” at Tokyo American Club in November.

Becoming completely competent in every facet is, he admits, “daunting.”

Channell completed the course in 1996 and, three years later, was given the honorary “tea name” Soei. In 2011, he received his *kyoju*, or professorship, from the current Grand Tea Master, Sen Soshitsu XVI, Zabosai. Since becoming a tea master, Channell has given countless lectures and presentations at gatherings, conferences and demonstrations — yet he insists that he does not know everything about the “way of tea,” and he never will.

“It is a lifetime of study,” he said.

TIMELESS TEACHINGS

His shop, named ran Hotei, is a Kyoto *machiya* built in 1910 that had been converted into a pet shop with a private residence when Channell obtained it. Extensive work revealed the original wooden beams and earthen walls, in addition to a well and an air raid shelter beneath the floor.

Renovated throughout, it is now a combination of Taisho Roman era design (Taisho-style architecture and design with European elements) with a touch of Art Deco, serving as a café, gallery and art space that brings together East and West. Channell also uses ran Hotei for introductions to the art of tea, his visitors being both Japanese and from overseas.

In addition, Channell lectures at Doshisha University in Kyoto, instructs at Nashinoki Shrine to the east of the Imperial Palace and was appointed an Ambassador of Hospitality for Kyoto City in 2016. In the same year, he published *The Book of Chanoyu: Tea the Master Key to Japanese Culture*, which is going into its fourth printing.

In 2010, he launched his own line of *matcha*, with four varieties of both thick and

thin tea, all produced from tea plantations in Kyotanabe, just south of Kyoto.

And Channell insists that the way of tea is just as relevant in the 21st century as when samurai were striving to master its intricacies.

“At the very heart of the way of tea are the four principles: harmony, respect, purity and tranquility. First described about 500 years ago, they were as valid then as they are now and will be 500 years in the future,” he said.

“They show the timelessness of the ideology of the way of tea. Striving to put the four principles into everyday life is a rewarding challenge, especially in these uncertain times,” he explained. “If we can add some serenity to our shared outlooks on life, that has to be positive.”

STAR TURN

Asked which Canadian he would most like to share a bowl of *matcha* with and, perhaps, coax into the mysteries of the way of tea, he instantly names actor Ryan Reynolds.

“Several years ago, I was going through a rough time physically,” Channell said. “At around the same time, I was asked by the grand master to give a lecture just outside Tokyo. As luck would have it, there was a movie theatre complex right next to my hotel and the superhero film *Deadpool* was being shown.

“I hadn’t seen a film in years, so I wanted to give myself a break,” he said. “I was crying into my popcorn right from the opening credits, both out of laughter and nostalgia. Very Canadian. So I’d like to repay the momentary escape as well as the joy and healing Ryan Reynolds brought me.

“I believe he would be interested in the refined nature of the serving. I’m sure he would enjoy the challenge of giving it a go himself and the complexities involved,” Channell said. “I think we would have an interesting conversation.” 🍵

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Masao Kumori

I am a founder of KWBS Marketing and Trading Co., Ltd., a business growth consulting company, providing a range of practical services to help companies grow globally. For 23 years until May 2011, I worked for the UK government agency One North East. I graduated in marketing from the

University of San Francisco in 1984. Given the increasing number of businesses with a Canadian connection in recent years, I decided to become a member of the CCCJ. My favourite memory of Canada is when I went back, including to Niagara Falls, to celebrate my 30th wedding anniversary.

INDIVIDUALS



Adrien Caron

I was born in France, lived and worked in Australia, and have lived in Japan for almost 10 years now. I am currently in charge of business development and marketing strategy at RealCRO, a performance-oriented

branding and creative marketing agency based in Tokyo. I decided to join the CCCJ network because we work with an amazing client from Canada and I believe that we can create reciprocal opportunities with CCCJ members.



Kayo Ito

I am a global IT professional at NTT who grew up in Saskatoon. I attended the University of Saskatchewan before escaping the cold winters to work in New York and now Tokyo. At NTT, I support our clients in adapting the latest technologies to help them transform their

businesses. Recently, Canada has become very strong in technology and innovation, and I hope to learn more about these capabilities and help share technologies between Canada and Japan. I am very excited about joining the CCCJ and I look forward to getting to know everyone.



Shailesh Shukla

Hi everyone, I'm a Canadian working in Tokyo as president of Reckitt Benckiser Japan, a multinational consumer goods company with global brands such as Lysol, Muse, Veet, Finish, and Mediqto. I have lived in multiple countries but it is in Tokyo that I found this wonderful chamber, which

I believe is one of the oldest in the Indo-Pacific. I hope to contribute to the CCCJ by enhancing Japan-Canada commerce and further strengthening ties between the peoples of Japan and Canada through CCCJ endeavours, events and outreach.

NON-KANTO INDIVIDUAL



Max-Larsen Rabines

Salut Canadiennes, Canadiens et amis du Canada! Hello fellow Canadians and friends of Canada! It is an honour to be part of the CCCJ. Four years ago, I started consulting for a well-known Japanese company listed on the Tokyo Stock

Exchange. From Montréal, we succeeded in developing strategic partnerships in Europe as well as Latin and North America. Currently, I believe the Canadian approach to energy can lead to a mutually rewarding partnership with Japan.

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL



Mizuki Ode

Originally from Tokyo, I came back to my hometown after five years of enjoying the beautiful nature in Victoria, Calgary and Vancouver, and committing myself to studies at the University of Victoria. I now work for a

sustainability consulting firm in Tokyo. I am excited about joining the CCCJ and I look forward to meeting inspiring members and expanding my connections amongst the Canadian community in Japan.

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