

THE CANADIAN

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JAPAN



DOME FROM HOME

Despite virus, Canadian realizes decade-long dream to open Niigata glamping eco-spot

P24



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The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan

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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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HOW WE THRIVE IN A CRISIS

By Alec Jordan
Editor-in-Chief, *The Canadian*



I'd like to start this note by wishing all of our readers the very best as we continue to adapt to what seems to be an ever-changing new normal.

In my own working life and in my communication with friends and contacts, I'm heartened by the fact that connections are being maintained — and in some cases strengthened — despite the continued need for social distancing.

COMFORT AND SUPPORT

During these trying times, it's comforting to know that organizations and entrepreneurs are continuing to thrive as they adjust to changes in markets, customer demand and the needs of their communities. In our look at Canadian companies that have ties to Japan (page 14), three instructive factors stand out in their success: having a reliable partner here, a strong product line pre-pandemic and plenty of patience.

Stephane Beaulieu, co-founder of the Yuzkyu Resort (page 24) in Niigata Prefecture, launched the endeavour as the pandemic was hitting full swing in Japan, but he found support for the project in the form of talented workers from all around the globe. The resort is already off to a great start and has plans to expand.

Bringing interns into a company is a practice that strongly benefits both sides: the interns quickly learn tangible, real-world skills and accrue valuable work experience, while the companies can often pick up out-of-the-box ideas from these new members of the team. When you can add an international element to the mix, it only increases the opportunity for growth and learning. One company that's recently been recognized for its dedication to this dynamic is Curvegrid (page 18), which was honoured with the Co-operative and Experiential Education Employer Impact Award in International Excellence from the University of Waterloo.

POWER OF COMMUNITY

Speaking of schools, they and the communities around them had to respond quickly to the changing circumstances brought on by the pandemic. In talking with three international schools with ties to Canada (page 20), we saw how quick thinking, creativity, flexibility and a dedication to the safety of children, parents and staff have helped these institutions weather the storm and come through the stronger for it.

Finally, as I learned by spending time with some members of the Tokyo Canadians hockey team (page 28), there are few things that rival the power of sports to bring us together across different backgrounds. The team, now in its 25th year, has served as an extended family for its members, and also gives back to the countries it has visited for international tournaments.

Thanks as always for your continued readership, and may you all have a safe and happy holiday season. 🍁

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ALL TOGETHER

By Neil van Wouw

Chair

Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan

As we head into the final stretch of 2020, things are still very challenging. But this is also a time for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ) community to come together and be stronger than ever. It's times such as these when what the chamber needs to do to help its members becomes even clearer.

The big issue that is affecting so many of our members is re-entry (or entry) to Japan. We have been very active in advocating changes to Japan's re-entry rules, especially for foreign residents of Japan — rules that make Japan an outlier as a G7 nation. This is an ongoing issue, and as always we are looking for the best things we can do to make a difference, rather than to make the most noise or beat our own drum.

MEETING UP

Another request we are hearing is to find a way to do in-person events again. Many members have been teleworking since March and are looking for occasional opportunities to safely meet with people. It's clear that teleworking in one form or another is probably here to stay, but at the same time people need direct contact with other people to thrive. Tight communities such as the CCCJ can play an important role in safely rebooting in-person meetings.

We experimented with our first hybrid event for our AGM on July 1, Canada Day — the combined online and offline attendance was quite possibly a record for a CCCJ AGM. Based on learning and feedback from that event, we developed a comprehensive Covid-19 Policy for CCCJ events, and are now looking to do more in-person and hybrid events.

One good example of this was the opening night of the Hibiya Cinema Festival (page 26), which we were proud to cosponsor for the first time. It was held in a safe, responsible manner, and was an incredible opportunity to collaborate with Mitsui Fudosan Co., Ltd., Tokyo Midtown Management Co., Ltd. and Hibiya Area Management Association.

Another was the CCCJ Golf Scramble (page 23). We kept a tight cap on attendance and made a slogan to summarize our approach to safety: "Pod play all day." We encouraged all of the foursomes to travel together, and stay distanced together all day. The event demonstrated once again the chamber's unique formula for fielding foursomes with first-time golfers along with groups that play serious golf in a format that is fun for everyone. Governor Jackie Steele on her first ever golf outing even came up with a closest to the hole award.

We are currently making plans for a small-format, socially distanced Gala in February — more on that soon.

Of course, we will continue to explore a variety of online events. We had several well-attended ones with panelists joining us from various countries and time zones. But we are also looking at much smaller online events that more directly engage our members. To this end, we recently rebooted our monthly Hackathon for the first time in an online format and will be trying out some different approaches to see what works best. Please keep an eye out for these and drop in when you can — your feedback and suggestions are always welcome.

CHANGES

These past months have seen some other important changes in the chamber as well. The board made changes to our by-laws to ensure



that we strive for more diversity in our field of candidates of our annual elections. It was most gratifying to see the membership embrace this choice and bring the number of women on the board to a record 40 per cent from among what was also surely a record number of candidates. Long-time board members have all remarked how the energy of the board has changed in the past two elections, and we have not previously seen this level of engagement.

A recent board email thread on the re-entry issue had more than 100 emails in only a few days, with nearly every board member participating. Although it's an ongoing challenge to find the ways we can all engage, please work with us to make it happen. There has never been a better time to get more engaged with the CCCJ.

Finally, let me give a big chamber welcome to Marie Ohashi in her new role as executive director of the CCCJ and Leah Bowman as our new events and communication manager. Marie is not only the first female executive director of the CCCJ, but also the first Japanese national to hold this title and the first person to be promoted internally to this position. 🍁

There has never been a better time to get more engaged with the CCCJ.



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Suga and Trudeau hold first talks

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau have had their first conversation since Suga took office in September. As reported by *The Japan Times* on September 30, the roughly 15-minute phone call reaffirmed the two countries' dedication to pursuing a "free and open Indo-Pacific."

According to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Trudeau promised to continue to support Tokyo's efforts to retrieve Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s. Trudeau also voiced his commitment to collaborating with Japan on measures to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.



Will famed *tsukemen* come to Vancouver?

Menya Itto is a celebrated restaurant in Shin-Koiwa, Tokyo, that is famed for its *tsukemen*. Directly translated as "dipping ramen," *tsukemen* is eaten by dipping cold noodles into a separate bowl of hot broth.

Considered by many to be the most famous ramen restaurant in Japan, Menya Itto has opened shops in Hong Kong, Thailand and Taiwan. According to an article posted on *Vancouver is Awesome* website on September 4, they have revealed plans to expand to Vancouver — 1479 Robson Street, to be exact. It is reported that the restaurant was hoping to open this summer; however, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, Vancouver noodle fans will have to wait a bit longer.

Bilateral team finds cancer in dinosaur leg

According to an article published by *The Asahi Shimbun* on September 22, a team of Japanese and Canadian scientists have discovered evidence of bone cancer in fossilized dinosaur remains. Scientists from Japan's Okayama University of Science and Canada's Royal Ontario Museum and McMaster University analyzed a leg bone of the herbivorous *Centrosaurus apertus* after discovering that the end of the bone was deformed.

"No such studies had been conducted [before] in which experts, including clinicians, have closely looked at fossilized dinosaur remains and diagnosed the disease using the same standards as for human diagnoses," according to Kentaro Chiba, assistant professor of vertebrate palaeontology at Okayama University of Science.



PHOTO: ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Fashion brand OVO opens Tokyo flagship store

Toronto-based clothing brand October's Very Own, better known as OVO, has opened its first Asian flagship store in the Aoyama neighbourhood of Tokyo, according to an article posted on September 14 by online culture magazine *Complex*. Owned by Canadian rapper, singer and songwriter Drake, the brand was launched in 2011. The location was picked by Drake's business partner Oliver El-Khatib specifically because of its close proximity to luxury brands and retailers, as well as Tokyo's multiple street-style hubs. The store exclusively stocks a black, metal incense holder shaped like a lantern — a product of collaboration between OVO and Japanese incense producer Kuumba.

"We have a lot of people from Toronto who come in, and Canadian people in general," says the store's assistant manager, Chiaki Okuyama.



Mitsubishi to buy Ontario chemical unit

The Observer [Sarnia, Ontario] reported on October 20 that a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Corporation will be purchasing a portion of Arlanxco's chemical production operation based in Sarnia. Arlanxco will sell its olefins unit, which makes chemicals such as butadiene and raffinate, to the Diamond Petrochemicals Canada Corporation for an undisclosed amount.

The sale is expected to close in the first half of 2021, and was many years in the making. "We've been working with Mitsubishi on helping them understand opportunities in the Sarnia-Lambton area for over three years," said Stephen Thompson, CEO with the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership. The area around Sarnia is known locally as "Chemical Valley" due to the number of refineries and chemical plants that have been built in the region, going back to the early 1940s.

YOUR NEW GOVERNORS



MACHIKO ASAI

It is my great honour to have been elected governor of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ). I will consistently commit myself to contribute to the achievement of the chamber's goals. I see my role as threefold.

First, I am strongly convinced that it is my mission to serve as a bridge between the CCCJ and the economic organizations of Japan, such as the Japan Association of New Economy and the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI). I see my main tasks as expanding commercial opportunities and fostering mutual understanding between different organizations.

As a TCCI councilor I am a strong advocate for diversity. Still, despite their importance, diversity strategies are not always easy to implement. For example, both the CCCJ and the TCCI are based in Tokyo and have similar objectives but — as of yet — there has been no active collaboration between these two organizations.

Second, I would like to draw your attention to the changes that Japan is going through. At present, there is an increasing trend among women to set up their own businesses and contribute to corporate social responsibility. At the TCCI Women's Association, we are actively discussing the topics of globalization and innovation, and Canada is a country that is taking an active role in promoting diversity. In view of these facts, cooperation between the CCCJ and the TCCI holds great promise.

Third, Canada is famous for its stunning natural beauty and the warmth of its people. My aspiration is to help Japanese people learn more about the world's most appealing country: "Canada the Beautiful."

Finally, I would like to stress again that I will make every effort to facilitate the CCCJ's mission in Japan. I also hope that being a board member will help me to deepen my knowledge about Canada.

Thank you for your kind attention.



MARC BOLDUC

Dear CCCJ members, I'm honoured to have been elected as one of your new governors. As some will remember, I was previously on the CCCJ Board of Governors from 2011 to 2015 (I was vice-chair from 2012 to 2014). So, it is with great pride that I have seen the CCCJ grow over the years. I have also had the pleasure to serve on other boards, such as the Forum des gens d'Affaires Québec-Japon [The Québec-Japan Business Forum] and the Canada-Japan Society of British Columbia before returning to the CCCJ. This year has been a very challenging time for us and our organization, but in these times it's important to be resilient and continue to nurture relationships between our two great nations. With this in mind I will, over the next two years, continue to contribute to the various CCCJ committees that represent the present and future soul of our organization.

As per my corporate experience, I am proud to say that I have had an extensive career between Canada and Japan that goes back more than 20 years. I have worked for large multinational companies such as Nestlé, Sumitomo Corporation, Hitachi High-Technologies and Fleury Michon. Currently, I am serving as general manager for Intralox Japan. I look forward to deepening business relations between Canada and Japan in the years to come.

On July 1, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ) elected a new Board of Governors for the 2020–2022 term. Among those elected are four new appointees. To help members of the CCCJ get to know them better, we've given each of them the opportunity to introduce themselves.



AI NAKAGAWA

It is an honour to be elected to the CCCJ board of governors and I wholeheartedly look forward to engaging with companies and individuals involved in the Canada–Japan relationship. My primary focus as a governor will be to help generate business development and growth opportunities for CCCJ members by actively connecting companies and individuals.

Covid-19 has affected many businesses in unprecedented ways. As a member of the Board of Governors, it is my mission to bring further value to our members and to help those in need — particularly during this difficult time. During my time as governor I hope to learn more about each of our members and to help identify potential business opportunities. I will be reaching out to you and I would be delighted to hear from you.

Secondly, a sustainable and thriving non-profit organization requires sufficient funding, which is driven through a combination of existing members, new members, sponsors and relevant programming. These are areas I will develop and strengthen during my term. I have more than 17 years of experience in sales, marketing and management for companies in the hospitality, technology and real estate sectors. Currently, I work for Colliers International — a Canada-based global commercial real estate advisory firm — in tenant representation. With over a decade of experience in the real estate sector, I have helped hundreds of international and domestic clients, ranging from start-ups to global Fortune 500 companies, with various real estate requirements.

I am passionate about helping the Canadian and Japanese community and look forward to developing meaningful relationships with all of you.



AARON REIST

I am honoured to have been elected to serve the CCCJ as a governor. I am humbled and excited to be a part of this leadership group as we round the corner of the global pandemic and build a new normal.

I arrived in Japan in 2004 as a part of the internship program at Sheridan College. I fell in love with the country — its culture and its people. Now, in 2020, I am proud to call Japan my second home. Upon completion of the program — I only intended to be here for four months! — I landed a role at Goldman Sachs Realty Japan as part of a new team that would work at the intersection between business and technology. I have been doing this for the past 14 years.

Since arriving in Japan I have spent many years contemplating whether to join the CCCJ. I found myself asking, “What can the CCCJ do for me?” It wasn’t until I met a handful of passionate members who truly engaged with me and mentored me that I pulled the trigger and joined in 2017. Through their teaching and support I realized: you get out what you put in. This inspired me to create the Investing in Innovation Committee.

The committee’s mission is to be the authority on global business in Japan — connecting businesses, investors and most importantly, people. By actively engaging our membership base we give them the inside edge. Leveraging the CCCJ’s expansive network and keeping a finger on the pulse of geopolitical trends we seek and create opportunities to drive growth and innovation. We also want to innovate from within the chamber and modernize our platform.

The key part of our mission lies in actively engaging our membership base. As governor, my goal is to see our membership base double during my first term. This can only be achieved with a “members first” approach, and I am constantly inspired by our new joiners. We are only as strong as our membership and I will do everything I can to grow, engage with and strengthen it. 🍁

FIRMS FIGHT THE VIRUS

Three Ontario companies crack the Japan tech market with niche products

By Paul Kilbank

Although much of the world continues to struggle with Covid-19, there are encouraging signs across Asia that the spread of the pandemic may be slowing in some areas. Were it so, it would certainly be welcome news that would accelerate the pace of business activity and help ease international travel restrictions as we approach the new year.

That said, the pandemic is likely to remain an ongoing public health concern that will continue shaping the business environment worldwide. And as Charles Darwin is often quoted as having said, “it is not the strongest or most intelligent who will survive, but those who can best manage change.”

How well are companies adapting? With the help of Communitech, a non-profit innovation hub that supports more than 1,400 Canadian businesses, we spoke to three technology companies: O2 Industries, Avidbots and Dejero. They are based in the Kitchener–Waterloo area of Ontario, are leaders in their respective markets, and have successfully developed business internationally. And they are passionate about helping the world deal with the impact of Covid-19.

There are at least three common themes related to their Japan business, despite their being in different technology industries and different stages of company development.

First, partners have been a key factor in staying engaged with customers this year. Second, their products and technology were relevant to their customers even before Covid-19. And third, patience has become even more necessary for each of them.

Based on our conversations, the future seems bright for Canadian technology companies, despite the challenges and uncertainty that lie ahead.



PETER WHITBY

Co-founder and CEO
O2 Industries

Respirator products that protect from airborne pollutants

Japan Partner: BrainCraft

O2 Industries, founded in 2014 by Peter Whitby and Rich Szasz, was launched after the two encountered the reality of severe pollution during a trip to Asia. Their O2 Curve Respirator protects the wearer with a tight seal on the face using medical grade silicone, and filters airborne pathogens using electrostatic filters.

When Covid-19 hit, O2 was well positioned with their respirator technology and products. No dramatic pivoting was needed — instead the daunting challenge was scaling the small company to meet a tenfold jump in production capacity.

To put that in perspective, since the outbreak of the pandemic, O2 has produced more than 300,000 respirators and well over 10 million disposable filters. With the need for such a large number of products stressing the supply chain, and “sleeping at the office three nights a week” becoming the norm for employees, O2 leadership rapidly expanded their team to 60 employees from just seven a few months ago.

Poised for further growth, O2 recently announced that they have been selected to join the renowned ScaleUp Program at The Lazaridis Institute for the Management of Technology Enterprises, based in Waterloo, Canada, and part of the Toronto-Waterloo Region Tech Corridor.

Not surprisingly, marketing messages have been kept balanced during the pandemic as they position themselves across more markets, including consumer, healthcare, military, law enforcement and performance sports.

The daunting challenge was scaling the small company to meet a tenfold jump in production capacity.

**FAIZAN SHEIKH**Co-founder and CEO
Avidbots**Autonomous floor-cleaning robot for commercial spaces****Japan Partner: Macnica**

Avidbots designs and manufactures autonomous floor-cleaning robots for commercial spaces. Launched in 2014, after a brief “foray into the robotic snow removal market” about which winter-weary Canadians may fantasize, founders Faizan Sheikh and Pablo Molina set their sights on the more viable commercial cleaning market.

Today, Avidbots occupies a 3,700-square-metre facility in Kitchener, Ontario, where its Neo product is made. Worldwide sales have been doubling annually and their products cleaned more than 92 million square metres autonomously last year.

But what is a commercial autonomous floor-cleaning robot? Imagine an advanced version of the widely used Roomba robot vacuum cleaner that recognizes its environment, chooses a route and moves accordingly.

Besides weighing more than 100 times its distant household relative, Neo has significantly more sensor capability, artificial intelligence, control features and quality reporting ability, making it suitable for working in commercial situations.

Faizan highlighted the fact that the pandemic has put a spotlight on cleaning so that it's now in society's consciousness — which has accelerated the trend for autonomous cleaning as businesses strive to keep facilities safe. He is also seeing more businesses intensify their approach to cleaning after reconsidering what are good cleaning practices and what quality metrics are appropriate.

Frequently this leads to introducing AI-assisted cleaning robots to ensure uniform floor cleaning and provide reliable quality measurements. And, with Neo deployed, the customer can increase the frequency of cleaning for little additional cost.

In direct response to the pandemic, Avidbots has also announced plans to introduce a disinfection add-on module that will enable Neo to disinfect 3D surfaces. It is expected to significantly reduce the manual work involved these days, and to standardize the cleaning of high touch surfaces.

Avidbots has been in partnership with Macnica since late 2017, and this has resulted in 13 publicly announced customers so far. A key factor behind this success in Japan, according to Faizan, is diligent after-sales support which is being led locally by Macnica.

Interestingly, Macnica is also responsible for a fun aspect of the customer experience — providing Neo with customized “skins,” so

The Covid-19 message cautiously says, “if used appropriately in conjunction with other public health hygiene recommendations, it may substantially reduce your risk of receiving or transmitting the disease.” But most important is that O2 openly shares detailed test results, so buyers can see how they outperform traditional industry benchmarks and competing products.

In Japan, O2 has been working closely with local partner BrainCraft, who they connected with through the Trade Commissioner Service in early 2019 well before the pandemic struck.

The initial focus was on the consumer market through Rakuten, Amazon and Yamada Mall, with search and rescue organizations later becoming an important segment. O2 is also looking to expand into healthcare, a segment in which their premium respirator has seen strong success elsewhere.

Towards that goal, O2 and BrainCraft are pursuing industry approvals. “You need to get Japanese medical certifications and respiratory certification, and once you have those you can build ... you definitely need consultants in the medical field and good partners that can distribute,” Whitby highlighted.

While Covid-19 has triggered a surge in the Curve Respirator sales, Whitby is optimistic that new products, such as the recently introduced Tactical Respirator II (TR2), will drive even more success in Japan. The TR2 was originally engineered for the Canadian military and is specifically designed to protect the wearer from airborne pollutants, including aerosolized lead, in high impact environments. O2 anticipates similar use by Japan's military and law enforcement establishments.

Given the recently announced partnership with Ultimate Fighting Championship, the Las Vegas-based mixed martial arts promotion company, it's not a huge stretch to imagine O2 respirators protecting athletes training in close proximity during the months prior to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In fact, O2 already has an eye on this possibility, with plans for a soft rubber respirator and early discussions already underway with the Canadian Olympic Committee.



“Japanese customers have requests that might be ahead of the curve [compared with] the rest of the world.”



Subscribe to the Pacific Solo YouTube channel and follow Canadian and Japan resident Lowell Sheppard as he prepares to cross the North Pacific via the Pacific Garbage Patch to see his mother in British Columbia.



PACIFICSOLO



that robots appear to be wearing the uniform of airport staff, or outfitted in keeping with the design of a shopping center or a railway station.

If you've marvelled at the clean floors while walking through Narita Airport or Shibuya Station, then you can thank the Neo cleaning robots that are used by major Japanese customers, such as Sotetsu Holdings, Inc., Tokyu Corporation and the Mitsubishi Group.

The focus for Avidbots is airports, stations, shopping centres, warehouses and factories that have large floor areas and frequently face shortages of cleaning staff, due to the worsening labour shortage in Japan.



KEVIN FERNANDES

VP Broadcast Revenue
Dejero

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Japan Partner: FOR-A

Dejero was founded in 2008 by Bogdan Frusina, who had a simple vision: reliable connectivity anywhere.

At the time, live news reporting outside the television studio was complicated and costly, given the industry's reliance on satellite and microwave links. So Dejero set about developing a live broadcasting solution that leveraged widely available and inexpensive wireless networks.

Today, if you're watching a breaking news story on television, there's a good chance the remote live broadcast was enabled by Dejero technology.

Highlighting their technical innovations, Dejero was awarded the prestigious Technology and Engineering Emmy Award in 2018 and 2019, in addition to having been awarded 36 patents and having 45 patents pending. As a result, their broad product portfolio, supported by the shift to remote working, is fuelling both sales growth and the hiring of extra employees this year.

Remote working has clearly reshaped how organizations worldwide are conducting business during the pandemic. This has been especially true of the broadcasting world, where anchors, reporters and meteorologists may have been forced out of well-equipped television studios and suddenly need to provide critical live video feeds from a temporary setup in their homes.

Dejero technology has always addressed these remote challenges and so extending their positioning to home broadcasting solutions was easily done.

As part of their worldwide Covid-19 response, Dejero offered free licences of their LivePlus mobile app for qualified broadcasters during the challenging first months of the pandemic. "We have a culture of wanting to help our customers," Fernandes stressed,

More recently, as a result of Covid-19, safety has become a business driver, given that many older workers generally handle these dull, dirty and dangerous cleaning tasks.

Japan is helping Avidbots to improve features of the Neo platform. "Japanese customers have requests that might be ahead of the curve [compared with] the rest of the world," says Faizan. Customers around the world are also benefiting from product ideas originating in Japan. These include a sound capability that verbally announces the robot's approach.

adding that LivePlus has enabled customers to quickly set up and easily deliver content during that critical early period.

In Japan, after building early customer relationships directly, Dejero soon recognized the need for a local partner to represent their business locally. So some four years ago, they signed a distribution agreement with FOR-A, an enterprise that develops its own video equipment and resells complementary third-party products.

As a result, Dejero has been able to leverage FOR-A's customer relationships across the broadcast industry, along with their technical expertise as a product developer.

Moreover, the investment made over several years, that enabled the two companies to work together, has paid dividends during the pandemic. When international travel restrictions prevented Dejero from dispatching experts to Japan, FOR-A was able to leverage their own product experience for testing, demos and support.

According to Fernandes, for Dejero, Japan has become a focus market, where they have deployed solutions with major television broadcasters, including NHK. And, similar to other countries, they are also discovering here that other organizations beyond the world of broadcasters increasingly want that same high level of video quality.

Government customers in Japan have already used their products to stream video from mobile or remote locations. Public safety organizations and transit agencies potentially have similar requirements.

Dejero is also extending their solutions to the enterprise market to provide reliable internet access for remote sites, live video streaming and drone inspection video.

Perhaps, given Dejero's support of the Vancouver Olympics torch relay and sporting events around the world, we'll learn of new applications with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in the months ahead. 🍁



If you're watching a breaking news story on television, there's a good chance the remote live broadcast was enabled by Dejero technology.

DIVERSE LEARNING

Tokyo firm wins award for bringing interns to Japan

By Julian Ryall

A Tokyo-based tech start-up has been honoured for giving undergraduates at the University of Waterloo hands-on industry experience. For this, it has been named winner of the inaugural Co-operative and Experiential Education Employer Impact Award in International Excellence.

Curvegrid Inc., which was set up in 2017 by two former students of the university — located in Waterloo, Ontario — was applauded for giving undergraduates the chance to develop technical skills while living and working in Japan for the four-to-eight-month duration of one of their scheduled paid industry co-op work terms.

GIVING BACK

Curvegrid co-founders Jeff Wentworth and William Metcalfe said they have been motivated to bring Waterloo students to work in Japan by their own experiences on the university's co-operative education program, and they hope that more Japanese companies might now realize the positive benefits that students from another country, culture and background can bring to an organization.

"The reality is that we are living in a global and interconnected world and it is important for both Canadian companies and Japanese companies to find ways to become more diverse because that is a strength for an organization,"

said 39-year-old Wentworth, who is originally from Toronto.

"I think that is especially true in Japan and, as we move towards global experiences and connectivity, it will become more critical," he said. "But we also wanted to give back to the University of Waterloo because, without the experience that we both had there, there would be no Curvegrid," he added.

Co-operative education is a key part of the university's academic program and dates back to the 1950s. Under the program, some 23,000 students — about 70 per cent of the entire student body — take part in paid internships at a number of companies in their chosen field, meaning that they graduate with two years of relevant work experience. Many students go straight into employment, often with the companies where they interned. The reputation of the program is so high that employers aggressively target University of Waterloo graduates.

"We know how the system works and we know how much it helped us, so we wanted to

pay it forward by having students come to Japan and work for us," said Wentworth.

STRONG DRAW

The opportunity to work for Curvegrid is an appealing one, with 80 people having applied for just two positions this year, he said. One student turned down an offer at one of Silicon Valley's Big Five tech firms to come to Japan.

"As well as the job, part of the appeal is definitely the chance to come to Japan and experience life and the culture here," Wentworth added.

And, given that many students are short of cash, Curvegrid smoothes the way by providing successful candidates with flights to Japan, finding them accommodation in Tokyo for the duration of their stay and covering their rent, as well as arranging a working visa. The company even provides interns with paid vacation days to allow them to travel around Japan and learn a little about the country.

Wentworth and Metcalfe took on their first Waterloo interns in May 2018, despite having little in the way of revenue and only one other full-time employee. To date, Curvegrid has taken on 10 interns, but the internships have had to be put on hold as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The company remains committed, however, to having more undergraduates come to Japan as soon as conditions permit — so that more people can develop professionally and discover a country with which both company principals have a long history.

ORIGIN STORY

At Waterloo, Wentworth, who studied computer engineering, met 39-year-old Metcalfe, a computer science major who is originally from Calgary. They bonded during their own year as co-ops, spent working for a subsidiary of Seiko Epson Corporation in the city of Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture.

Returning to Japan after graduation, but this time in Tokyo, Wentworth was a customer engineer and technology consultant at Dell EMC before spending six years at Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., as vice president and global



Jeff Wentworth (left) and William Metcalfe (right) with the award



The Curvegrid team at the Devcon V conference, which was held in Osaka in October 2019

product owner of block and object storage (these storage formats are used with cloud computing). Metcalfe, meanwhile, joined Gilt Groupe in New York and later transferred with the e-commerce site to Japan, where he became the chief technology officer.

But both men had long-standing ambitions to put their skills to the test in their own company.

In 2016, Wentworth and Metcalfe saw the opportunities in blockchain technology and, more specifically, in decentralized autonomous organizations, which are entities that are governed by computer code and programs, and which allow its members to function without the need for a central authority.

The possibilities and potential were immediately apparent, Wentworth said, and they began to explore different applications within the blockchain space.

“We had dozens of different ideas but we often found that, when we started prototyping them, it was just too early, the technology was just too new, and there was a significant degree of complexity,” he said.

The solution was a platform that would make it more straightforward to use, with Curvegrid’s MultiBaas blockchain middleware allowing companies to build decentralized applications on the blockchain quickly and easily.

“We had both always known that we wanted to create a business from scratch, but we never knew that we would end up in Japan at the

“We know how the system works and we know how much it helped us, so we wanted to pay it forward by having students come to Japan and work for us.”

same time and that we would end up working with each other,” said Metcalfe.

AHEAD OF THE PACK

Curvegrid’s products and services, constantly being refined and enhanced, are applicable across all business sectors. And although clients cannot be named, they include some of the biggest companies in the world in the financial services sector, as well as in the online gaming, document management and automotive industries.

Wentworth says they were also motivated by a desire to give smaller organizations better access to financial services and, through decentralization, empower firms that might otherwise miss out on opportunities.

While the big-name tech companies are obviously potential competitors, Wentworth and Metcalfe say Curvegrid occupies a niche and its personnel have sufficient technical skills to stay ahead of the pack. Plus, Wentworth points out, the pie is large and relatively untouched as yet, so there are plenty of opportunities for collaboration rather than competition.

BUILD SKILLS

Announcing the award, the university applauded the commitment of Curvegrid’s founders to encouraging students to develop technical skills at the same time as they build on soft skills, such as flexibility, resilience, initiative, humour, humility and genuine interest in living and working in Japan.

The company has empowered the interns’ integration in the Japanese tech community by supporting them in a number of events, such as the Decrypt Tokyo hackathon, it said. The university also singled out for praise the support extended to co-op students — most of whom were travelling to Japan for the first time — that enabled them to adjust smoothly to the local culture and customs.

Wentworth and Metcalfe were selected for the award “because they believe that co-op students play an integral role in Curvegrid’s ability to stay globally connected because they bring a diversity of perspectives from their personal, academic and past work experience,” the university explained. 🍁

For more information about the University of Waterloo co-op program: www.uwaterloo.ca/hire

CRASH COURSE

Canadian schools in Japan adapt quickly against virus

By Megan Casson

Since the Covid-19 outbreak began, organizations of all types have undergone great changes in order to adapt. Schools across the world closed and switched to e-learning to protect the health of their students, staff and families.

After some months, schools have reopened and staff have had to reconstruct their entire way of working to ensure students can return safely. *The Canadian* spoke with three international schools in greater Tokyo and Kobe, about how the pandemic has affected their usual protocols, and how they are adapting to the new normal.

SHUTDOWN

Earlier this year, the Japanese government requested that all schools close from March 2, a request that triggered the beginning of e-learning around the country. New teaching and learning styles had to be adopted, with many parents having to dedicate extra hours to helping their children.

Bunka Suginami Canadian International School (BCS), located in the Suginami district of Tokyo, was established in 2015 and provides a double-diploma program that allows students to graduate with diplomas from both Japan and Canada. Based on the curriculum taught in British Columbia, the program is approved by the Japanese and British Columbian ministries of education.

BCS principal Riyo Whitney — who is also a governor of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan — explained that they didn't find themselves closed for long. "Our school closed one week before final exams were to start in March. Due to the end of the school year and spring break, our students didn't lose much instructional time. The new school year started online in April, followed by a hybrid schedule in May."

Columbia International School, located in Tokorozawa, Saitama Prefecture, follows an Ontario curriculum and teaches children ranging from those in kindergarten to older ones in grade 12. Principal Barrie McCliggott explained how the school moved to virtual learning from the beginning of March until June 1. From then to July 3 the school transitioned to a hybrid model, providing onsite learning and virtual learning for students who were overseas, outside the local area, or had special concerns. "On August 31 we opened onsite classes for all local students and continued virtual learning for our overseas students," he added.

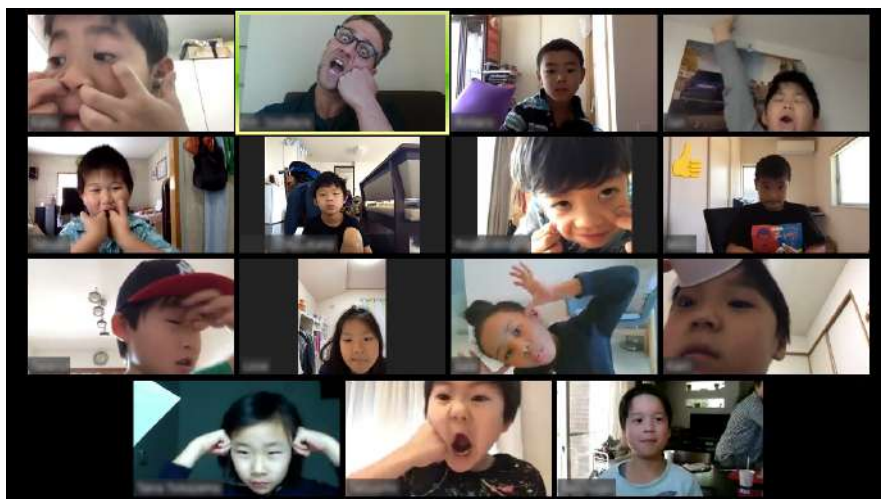
TECH POWER

For BCS, the transition to at-home learning was a swift and relatively easy one. Whitney said

there were a few factors that eased adaptation. "Our students all have school-issued laptops and the use of technology is a part of our program, so we were able to go online with our lessons in the spring without delay. For new students, laptops were delivered to their homes, and technology orientation lessons were conducted during the first week of classes that included technical know-how as well as student responsibilities and expectations." BCS teachers were well prepared to conduct online classes in an interactive way and make sure that group work was supported.

McCliggott said that Columbia also had a smooth transition. "Columbia International School was better off than most schools in that we have a very technologically rich learning environment. We have been a one-to-one laptop school from grades 7–12 for 20 years."

Columbia has also made personal computers available for each student in elementary school. "This has allowed our teachers and students to become very computer literate, making the original transition to online learning easier,"





“All of us, more now than ever, feel a collective responsibility in maintaining the wellbeing of our entire community.”

McCliggott explained. Connected through a closed Google platform, the school uses the Google Education Suite during onsite and online classes.

SAFE SPACES

As schools were given the green light to open, many parents and students expressed concerns about how social distancing and appropriate hygiene could be maintained in schools. In response, they quickly implemented strict social distancing measures to ensure the health and safety of their communities.

Canadian Academy, a pre-K to grade 12 International Baccalaureate school located in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, was one of them. “Canadian Academy reviewed all its standard policies and programs throughout the spring and summer of 2020 and subsequently created and implemented a nearly 50-page safety manual. With its focus on the health and safety of our entire community, many new protocols were adopted,” explained Rob Smailes, the school’s director of admissions and advancement.

The school required students entering the campus to submit a health screening arrival card and made masks and temperature checks mandatory. “Within the school additional hand washing stations have been installed, as well as hand sanitizer outside of each classroom. Classroom layouts were adjusted to increase physical distancing and plexiglass shielding was installed in some areas. Our cafeteria was expanded into our atrium, creating additional space for eating while maintaining physical distance.”

CHALLENGES

The uncertainty and constant change during the pandemic have presented plenty of hurdles. Smailes detailed the problems that arose for the Canadian Academy during the national state of emergency in Japan. “Perhaps the biggest

challenge with the new normal is the fact that schools are social institutions and our school is known for its strong community feel. It has been challenging to maintain that family spirit while limiting who is permitted on campus. The leadership team and our PTA have been exploring together how we can support our students and community as a whole.”

International schools in particular have seen students unable to return to Japan from their home countries due to global travel bans — in particular, Japan’s strict entry restrictions that have been in place since April. Whitney explained that BCS hires teachers directly from British Columbia, so while the new teachers this year arrived in time for the new school year, they had to undergo two weeks of quarantine. Additionally, the cancellation of group activities such as trips abroad has been a recurring theme around the globe, and one that affected the BCS, Whitney explained. “The biggest challenge for us is the inability to send our students on trips abroad. We normally have our grade 10s spend five weeks in British Columbia during the summer, but they weren’t able to do so this year. Therefore, we offered a special summer program here in Tokyo, in lieu. Hopefully, they will be able to go to Canada next year.”

BRIGHT SIDE

However, as with all negative situations, it is important to keep an eye on the silver lining. Smailes mentioned how online platforms and events have made school involvement more accessible for parents. “We’ve found that the community has been very supportive of the new way of doing things — such as our online Back to School Night, PTA meetings, principal’s coffees and parent-teacher conferences. With the added flexibility of being able to access from home or the office, it is wonderful that more parents are able to participate.”

Additionally, the use of online tools, software and resources has presented children with a



new set of skills. McCliggott explained how e-learning has resulted in students of all ages at Columbia being able to develop and grow. “Our students from kindergarten to grade 12 are now very comfortable communicating with teachers and classmates through a variety of applications. Skills related to finding and verifying information found on the internet have improved and the ability of our students to become self-responsible learners who can self-regulate and work independently got a boost.” And Whitney explained that the situation has encouraged BCS team members to think outside the box: “It has certainly brought out the creativity of everyone on staff to create interesting and suitable lessons that combine the best of online with in-person teaching.”

As the pandemic continues and the world remains in a state of uncertainty, there is one thing in which all educational establishments can take comfort during this time, Smailes said. “All of us, more now than ever, feel a collective responsibility in maintaining the wellbeing of our entire community. Students, faculty, parents — all working together to help ensure the health of our children and each other.” 🍁



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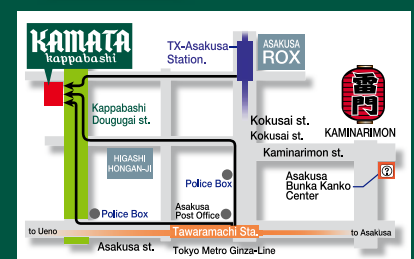
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CCCJ GOLF SCRAMBLE 2020

A group of 54 hardy souls headed out to Tsutsujigaoka Country Club on October 23, a misty day with a bit of rain. But there was no dampening the spirit of the participants in the 19th annual Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ) golf tournament.

As is the tournament tradition, it was played in a team scramble format, which called for equal amounts of teamwork and fun. After the tournament, all of the golfers celebrated at a lively awards dinner.

The prize for best foursome went to Vijay Deol, Jason Lewis, Goh Sugita and Paul Knebel.

Special thanks went to David Anderson, Warren Arbuckle and Kieron Cashell for organizing the event. 🍁



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DOME FROM HOME

Despite virus, Canadian realizes decade-long dream to open Niigata glamping eco-spot

By Alec Jordan



Even in the heart of crisis, opportunity can thrive. For example, while most people would not think of seeing a new business project through during the middle of the Covid-19 outbreak, Stephane Beaulieu did exactly that.

His most recent endeavour, the Yuzkyu Resort, is located near Yuzawa, in Niigata Prefecture. It includes a number of different rental options: geodesic dome tents, spaces for setting up tents and a small cabin. Construction on a larger luxury lodge is also almost completed. The space features opportunities to play games such as tennis, basketball and badminton; a bouldering wall; a trampoline; and indoor activities such as ping pong and electronic darts. And of course, it offers easy access to all of the natural surroundings of the area — nearby Mount Daigenta, as well as hiking and the opportunity to jump in the rivers and small lake nearby.

WINDING ROAD

Beaulieu's journey to developing the eco-tourism destination was nearly 10 years in the making. The entrepreneur has long ties to Japan — he studied Japanese and political science at the University of Montréal, and first came to this country in 1995 to work as a snowboard instructor in Nagano Prefecture. He later joined the JET Programme, serving for three years in Tottori and Shimane prefectures. Following his stint as a JET participant, Beaulieu began a career in public service. This would take him from the Public Affairs Section at the Embassy of Canada to Japan on to Ottawa and the Middle East, before he reached his final position as Counsellor for Natural Resources, Energy and Investment at the Embassy of Canada to Japan in Tokyo from 2011 to 2014.

He then co-founded First Step Japan, a Shinbashi-based market entry company, moved to Echigo-Yuzawa in 2015, and worked remotely from there, coordinating the import and sale of foreign products online. He has served as governor of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ), and earned an MBA from the McGill MBA Japan program





“The wood that has been used on the decks and in the resort’s inside areas — it’s all Canadian spruce, pine and fir.”

in 2019. Towards the end of 2019, he co-founded A Maze KK, which does real estate development in Echigo-Yuzawa.

Many resort mansions were built in the region during the economic bubble of the 1980s, and Beaulieu and his wife rented one for a year in 2011 and 2012. The move was inspired, in part, by Beaulieu’s desire to recapture a bit of the glory of his younger snowboarding days. They were drawn by the charms of the area — hiking, swimming in nearby rivers and exploring the town. But one thing that stuck out to them was that they saw very few people out there during the summer — four million visitors come to Yuzawa each year, but mostly during the winter, drawn to the skiing and the area’s plentiful *onsen*. They started looking for places to buy in the area right after that, but it wasn’t until late 2019 that they were able to purchase the land on which Yuzkyu Resort would be built.

A GLOBAL AFFAIR

He and his business partner had many ideas for projects to build on the land, but recognizing that glamping was a hot trend that was showing no signs of slowing down, they decided to create a space where people could camp simply — or a little more on the upscale side.

They began work on the project in the beginning of this year, but things took an unexpected turn, and the project received support from unexpected sources, Beaulieu explained. “The first employee I was going to hire to start in early March to help us get the project on track

was a snowboard instructor who was working locally, but had her season cut short when the ski resorts started to close because of the uncertainty around what was happening in the world.

“When I asked her to start on April 1, she said she couldn’t because she had a three-week gig volunteering in a hotel in Kyoto that she found on Workaway. Intrigued, I looked and discovered this online platform for backpackers and travellers who want small gigs to support themselves during their travels. I posted the job describing our project immediately and received more than 150 applications from people from around the world, stranded in Japan and looking for a place to hunker down for a few weeks — which would soon become months.”

What struck him was both the sheer breadth of experience of the respondents as well as the strong sense that the project still had the potential to succeed. “Going through the profiles, I found people with amazing skills and all of a sudden, our vision started to feel very much like a real possibility. We hired a few snowboard and ski instructors from Australia and England who had experience in carpentry; an aerospace engineer from Spain just out of an internship at the Japanese space agency who built our website; an architect from Argentina backpacking through Japan; a civil engineer and carpenter from Belgium and his event planner girlfriend who were cycling around the world and who ended up playing a key role in every aspect of the project; a pro climber who built our bouldering wall; a graphic artist who designed a lot of the space; and many more people with skills that I could never hope to master. A total of 15 people came through during the construction process, from 13 nationalities, all making a huge contribution to the project. We still have the original staff from Poland who clued us in to the Workaway platform and another one of our first hires from Australia working as maintenance and operation staff.”

While the team that helped make Yuzkyu Resort a reality was an international one, there are elements to the property that are also very Canadian. One is the wood that has been used on the decks and in the resort’s inside areas —

it’s all Canadian spruce, pine and fir. Beaulieu chalks this up to his previous life in public service, promoting his home country’s forestry products. He also wants to provide his guests with a kind of liberation that comes with wide, open spaces. “The idea of being in the middle of the woods and hanging around a campfire with friends without having to worry about the neighbours is something that I would like to make available to anyone who likes that kind of freedom. I find that it is one of the things I miss the most about being back home.”

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

With a few tents ready just to test the concept and the market, the resort officially launched in August, after the Obon holidays. Although they missed the peak season, Beaulieu says that their site has been getting heavy traffic and a good number of inquiries and bookings — the project was even featured on Niigata television during prime time. They’ve had nothing but positive reviews from guests, which has encouraged them to build a few more dome tents for next year.

And they have other plans short and long term. Yuzkyu Resort is in the process of obtaining its restaurant licence. Beaulieu has hopes of serving up Canadian breakfasts and healthy smoothies to his guests in the near future. And, because the space is outfitted for activities ranging from meditation retreats to corporate events, he hopes that he can bring in whole-resort bookings as it becomes more well known.

They are also working on a partnership with a local backcountry guide to stage heli-ski and snowboarding trips from their lodge during the winter. And, farther down the line, if the business model is successful, they’d like to partner with local landowners and create revenue streams for the community to rent out small parcels of land, and perhaps create a more expansive forest resort that offers even more privacy to its guests.

For now, though, Beaulieu is happy that the Yuzkyu Resort is off to a strong start, and welcomes CCCJ members to come and experience a Canada-inspired oasis, just 75 minutes away by Shinkansen from bustling Tokyo. 🍁



HIBIYA CINEMA FESTIVAL OPENING NIGHT

Photos by Life.14



Over the past two years, more than 2.5 million movie lovers have come to see films screened at the Hibiya Cinema Festival, which is organized in part by Mitsui Fudosan Co., Ltd., Tokyo Midtown Management Co., Ltd. and Hibiya Area Management Association. This year, with Covid-19 restrictions in place, the festival was held on a smaller scale, but the audiences were no less enthusiastic.

The festival has a strong Canadian connection — one of the standout programs during the event features films that are screened with English subtitles at the Toronto Japanese Film Festival. In light of this link between Canada and Japan, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ) decided this year to join the Hibiya Cinema Festival as a sponsor.

The opening night was October 16, and to mark the evening, governors and key members of the CCCJ came to a special reception, where they met with Hiroki Saitou, managing officer and general manager of the Hibiya Urban Planning and Development Department

of Mitsui Fudosan, and Eisuke Toyokura, director and general manager of the Hibiya Management Department of Tokyo Midtown Management. Saitou, Toyokura and CCCJ Chair Neil van Wouw delivered short remarks at the gathering.

These were followed by a video presentation from Mitsui Fudosan that looked back at the cultural and architectural significance of the Hibiya area since the Meiji Period and moved forward to the present day, highlighting the significant projects that Mitsui Fudosan has developed, including Tokyo Midtown Hibiya, which are revitalizing the neighbourhood.



Neil van Wouw
Chair
CCCJ

Following the reception, it was time to head down to the atrium of Tokyo Midtown Hibiya, where comfortable folding lounge chairs had been set up facing the large movie screen. The festival's opening night movie was



Hiroki Saitou
Mitsui Fudosan



Eisuke Toyokura
Tokyo Midtown Management





Maeda Construction Fantasy Sales Department, directed by Tsutomu Hanabusa. Before the screening of the movie, Hanabusa took part in a lively Q&A session, and declared that he was proud that his movie would also be screening in Toronto. In fact, the director hopes to one day be able to shoot a film in Canada.

The movie was a light-hearted look at a team within a construction firm that took on the project of creating a real-life estimate for a structure that originally appeared in the anime, *Mazinger Z*. It was a hit with the

attendees, and after the film some CCCJ members with experience in architecture and computer graphics pointed out how true-to-life much of the material actually was.

The night was a great success, and an excellent way to mark the first time the CCCJ, Mitsui Fudosan, Tokyo Midtown Management and Hibiya Area Management Association had collaborated on this major cultural event for the Hibiya neighbourhood. We hope that it is the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship. 🍁





SPORT SANS BORDERS

Tokyo Canadians marks 25 years

By Alec Jordan

Not enough can be said about the fellowship that is formed through the community of sport. It brings together people — from various occupations, nations, political affiliations and lifestyles.

This was made abundantly clear after an evening with some members of the Tokyo Canadians. This amateur ice hockey team has, in various incarnations, been playing since 1995. At an *izakaya* in Shimokitazawa, I had a chance to find out how the team got started, something about their travels and charity endeavours, and what the team means to individual members.

EARLY DAYS

Joji Hiratsuka, one of the earliest members of the team, came to Japan from St. Albert, Alberta, in 1984. Now well established in the world of finance, his first job was at his uncle's company. He also ended up playing American football with a Japanese steel company. But hockey was his true love from an early age, and he quickly found his way onto a Japanese hockey team, and played with them from 1984 to 1995. In the leagues he was involved with, he got to know many other Canadian players who were playing on other teams.

As Hiratsuka explains, in 1995, a group of Canadians, in part connected with the embassy, were putting together a team to play a Japanese team in Gunma Prefecture. Hiratsuka was asked to join this team, and after the match the group decided to put together the Tokyo Canadians. Their initial goals weren't necessarily to play in Japan, but in tournaments around the world.

"If I hadn't found hockey, I would have gone home in a year"

One of the first tournaments they joined was in Thailand, and it was there — quite early on — that a fundamental aspect of the team got its start. They developed a connection to the community in Bangkok, and started thinking about ways of supporting it. During the year, they would hold parties in Tokyo to raise money, and the proceeds from the parties would go to support children at the Mercy Centre, an organization in Bangkok that includes a school — the institution was founded by an American priest, Father Joseph Maier.

Each year, they would take one or two children as their wards. One particular success story was a girl named Lek, whom the team sponsored, starting when she was nine years old. She later studied in the United States and Norway, and since graduating, has returned to work for the school.

Meanwhile, back in Japan, the team was rapidly gaining new members and were going to as many as three tournaments a year. In addition to Thailand, locations they've hit include Hong Kong, South Korea, North Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Mongolia —



Joji Hiratsuka

where, similar to what they did in Thailand, they started a program through which they donate hockey equipment to players. And they also started playing more locally.

COMMUNITY

Hiratsuka has had a long and successful career in Japan, but what kept him here, particularly in the beginning, was hockey: "If I hadn't found hockey, I would have gone home in a year. I might have gone to live somewhere — Edmonton, maybe — and done something really boring. But it has created a community of people for me whom I consider to be some of my closest friends."

This is a sentiment echoed by Mike LaRose, a native of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. He first came to Japan in 1988, and played university hockey at Toyo University. A member of the team for 22 years, he has gone back to live outside of Japan a couple of times since first coming, but always maintains a close connection to the Tokyo Canadians, wherever he is. "For me, the whole purpose of the team has been to get people together. Obviously, living away from home, having people you're familiar with to talk is a big part of the team. Even though I'm a little older than many of the guys on the team now,



Mike LaRose

coming back to join them and being a part of the group is really important to me.”

As the group explained to me through a number of anecdotes, for many of its members, the Tokyo Canadians has served as an entrée to life in Japan — it has led to jobs, long friendships and even marriages. Aaron Dobrescu, a native of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, has been connected to the Tokyo Canadians for more than 18 years, and he explained that joining up with the team was one of the first things that he did when he got to Japan. Now, running a successful language school business, he has found business partners and employees through his connections with the Tokyo Canadians. A former semi-pro player, Dobrescu applies the ideas of teamwork and camaraderie that he has gained from hockey to all aspects of his life — from how he motivates his teams to how he develops the curricula for his schools.

Kevin Holt, the captain and president of the team, is actually not from Canada. He hails from Rhode Island, and first started playing with the Tokyo Canadians in 2005. He learned about the Tokyo Canadians through an ad in a free magazine, and quickly found a group that welcomed him warmly, and showed him



around the world: “By finding hockey in Japan, it helped me find a family away from home. [Before coming to Japan] I had never really been away from the States, and away from my family. The team really had that family element for me. I was the young guy, but I didn’t feel like I was young and out of place. And now I was on the other side of the world, and I started travelling around Asia with these guys to countries I never knew existed.”

As Holt explained, virtually every job that he has got in Japan — he now also works in finance — has come through connections he has made through the Tokyo Canadians. After having been the beneficiary of so much support from older players when he was younger, he is dedicated to keeping the team successful and providing the same opportunities for new members.

Founding member Brent Carlson, who couldn’t join us that evening, added later: “When we started the Tokyo Canadians, several important founding principles were to have a team on which we could play Canadian-style hockey, build a sense of community that would last long after the founding members left Japan and to ‘give back’ by supporting charitable organizations. I’m happy that we’ve accomplished those goals and that the team is still going strong, giving an opportunity to players who love the game, the camaraderie and helping others. My son, Leon, is the first of the next generation to join the team and I hope to keep playing long enough until my younger son, Quinn, can join the team too! What I’m most proud of is the charitable contributions we have made over the years to support great causes in Japan and around Asia.

GOING STRONG

Currently, the team has 42 registered members, although not all make it to every practice. Membership is about 50 per cent Canadian or Japanese who have studied in Canada, about 30 per cent American or Japanese who have



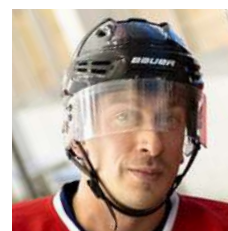
Aaron Dobrescu

studied in the United States and 20 per cent Japanese. There is also one Swede on the team. At any given practice, you can find players in their twenties as well as those in their sixties.

With economic ups and downs, the Tokyo Canadians has gone through periods of relative inactivity, but now in its 25th year, the team has picked up steam and is thriving. They recently received a sponsorship from Celliant, a California-based company that makes high-performance textiles used in athletic gear.

Seth Casden, Celliant’s CEO, explained that he was proud to be able to help the team, financially and with equipment: “Celliant is excited to partner with the Tokyo Canadians. Hockey is an intense, competitive sport and Celliant provides a clear advantage to help the team perform better and recover faster.”

With a limited number of rinks around the greater Tokyo area, the Tokyo Canadians find themselves travelling around to get in their practice time, sometimes even going as far as Sagami-hara in Kanagawa Prefecture. But for the members and the strong sense of solidarity that they develop through their time on and off the ice, it’s all worth it. 🍁



Kevin Holt



Founding member Brent Carlson and his son, Leon



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ACADEMIC



Jennifer Yphantides

Hello everyone! I am from Winnipeg, Manitoba, and I have lived in Tokyo with my husband and two boys since 2004. I serve as a tenure-track faculty member in the department of International Liberal Arts at Soka University. I have been working in the field of education since 1993 and I have taught in North America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Right before coming to Japan, I worked on government-funded peace projects affiliated with the University of Haifa, which focused on the promotion of tolerance of ethnic and religious diversity in the region and on the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

INDIVIDUALS



Yukari Carrie Horiguchi

I'm currently the CEO of CPI Inc., a company that provides training in the areas of presentation and management skills. Our clients include NEC, Saizeriya, Volvo, Toyota, Fox Japan, Showa Shell and Google. I grew up in Toronto and consider myself to be a Canadian at heart. I would like to participate in CCCJ activities in order to help bring Canadian companies to Japan and promote Japanese companies in Canada.



Yeji Olivia Jeung

I am originally from Boston—close enough to Canada—and I have been living in Tokyo for about 15 years. I am working for AoyamaTreehouse, a newly opened membership-based facility, as a corporate sales director. I joined the CCCJ on behalf of my company because they believe my character suits Canada. I've been playing hockey since I was a kid, and I am a big fan of the Edmonton Oilers. I play hockey twice a week in Tokyo and Yokohama. I am looking forward to meeting CCCJ members and possibly welcoming you to AoyamaTreehouse for events and dinners!

McGILL MBA JAPAN STUDENT



Njeri Gachago

Seven months ago, my family and I moved to Japan from the United States, where I was a senior manager of strategic initiatives at The Home Depot. I thoroughly enjoy leading teams that execute strategic projects and use data to drive decisions. I hope to find the perfect place to contribute in Tokyo. I joined the CCCJ as a member of McGill's incoming MBA class, and look forward to making new, lasting connections.

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F IS FOR FOREST

Tokyo-Vancouver graduate publishes children's book exploring B.C.'s green spaces

By Megan Casson

The ongoing Covid-19 quarantine has left many of us with time on our hands. Some people have embarked on new fitness journeys, others have completed chores that they'd put off for months.

For Saya Hatton, this was the perfect time to write her first children's book, *The Alphabet of British Columbian Forests*. She recently spoke to *The Canadian* about her inspiration, and what she hopes children will learn from her book.

EARLY INSPIRATION

Born and raised in Japan and educated at the International School of the Sacred Heart in Tokyo, Hatton recently earned a Bachelor of Science in Forestry from the University of British Columbia. Since graduating during the pandemic this year, Hatton has been applying for master's degrees while working part-time in Vancouver. During her spare time, she decided to write — and then put her artistic ability to the test by illustrating — a children's book.

Having not studied art since high school, Hatton explained, the inspiration for the book's illustrations came after she had bought an iPad to help her study. "During classes I'd be doodling and people started telling me they liked my drawings. So I started to draw more and teach myself how to use the different applications." Hatton's simplistic art style is inspired by the illustrations in Sarah Andersen's book, *Adulthood Is a Myth: A Sarah's Scribbles Collection*, which she had recently received from a friend. "It's the kind of content people like, so I thought it's okay to have simpler drawings ... and I got confidence from that."

"I never imagined that I would spend the months after graduating illustrating a children's book," she explained, and went on to encourage those looking to embark on their own creative projects. "If you have the time and it's something you enjoy doing, then try it. If it doesn't work, that's okay. But at least you know you tried it!"

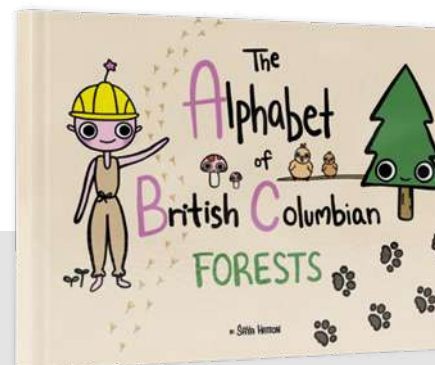
FRIENDLY LESSON

The book features large-font letters of the alphabet, each letter representing a native species of flora or fauna to be found in the forests of British Columbia. Readers can go through the alphabet with the forester Sylvie, named after the practice of silviculture — the control of the establishment, growth, composition and health of forests. "Having Sylvie guide you through the forest, is a way of showing kids that there is such a job as that of a forester, and that one can be a steward of the forest environment."

Hatton wants to use the book to encourage young readers, as well as their parents, to learn more about the environment that surrounds



Saya Hatton



"I wanted to ... make a book that children could use to learn about their own province."

them: "I wanted to use the whole province [of British Columbia] and make a book that children could use to learn about their own province, identify their surrounding areas and understand their environment better."

FOR THE FUTURE

When speaking about her hopes for the book, Hatton mentioned other lessons that she would like children and parents to learn from it. "I hope that both parents and kids become more aware of their environment. To be honest, when I was young I really didn't know that there were so many species of trees and so many things you can discover, even in a small area. I hope that it will make [children] more curious about this. Maybe in the future, kids will do something about protecting trees, or live their lives in ways that care for the environment."

The Alphabet of British Columbian Forests is available as an e-book, found on both Apple Books and lulu.com. The latter site also offers a hard copy version of the book. 🍁



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