



## National Association of Japanese Canadians

### **SPECIAL ADVISOR FOR NEW IMMIGRANTS REPORT**

**By: Takashi Ohki**

#### **Background**

In September 2016 at the NAJC AGM in Calgary, discussions on NAJC future directions identified several priority issues for the NAJC. The NAJC set up an ad hoc committee, the Future Direction Team (FDT), to examine these priority issues and make recommendations to the NAJC. One of the issues was closer integration of new Japanese immigrants into local Japanese Canadian communities and into the NAJC activities. Since I was a new Japanese immigrant and had been involved in local Japanese Canadian and new Japanese immigrant organizations (since 1975) and the NAJC (since the early 1980s), I joined the FDT in the spring of 2017.

On May 17, 2017, the FDT held a zoom meeting on new immigrant issues. The meeting was attended by the FDT members and representatives of organizations familiar with those issues including Vancouver Nikkei Centre, Japanese Social Services in Toronto, the Japanese Canadian Association of Yukon, the Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society and the Edmonton Japanese Community Association.

On June 27, 2017, the FDT held another zoom meeting on new immigrant issues in Japanese and invited representatives from the Japanese Canadian Association of Yukon, the Edmonton Japanese Community Association, the Japanese Cultural Association of Manitoba and the Victoria Japanese Cultural Society. The discussions focused on new social service need by new Japanese new immigrants, particularly by young women married to non-Japanese Canadians and need for Japanese language sections on the NAJC website and discussion sessions at NAJC AGMs.

In October, 2017, the NAJC created a position of special advisor for new immigrants and advertised the position for competition. An open completion was held and Mr. Takashi Ohki in Edmonton was chosen for the position.

In September 2017, the NAJC AGM in Ottawa held a group discussion on new Japanese immigrant issues and was attended by about 20 people, half of them young people in their late teens and twenties. After the AGM, the FDT decided to conduct a survey of NAJC members about the priority issues for future NAJC activities. The survey included new Japanese immigrant issues. After the survey, the FDT identified three priority recommendations for new Japanese immigrant issues: (1) making the NAJC website bilingual in English and Japanese, (2) conducting a survey of social services available to new Japanese immigrants, and (3) establishing closer relations between the NAJC and new Japanese immigrants.

In January 2018, Takashi Ohki compiled a report, "Demographic Characteristics of Japanese Canadians 2016" from the 2016 Canada Census and circulated it among NAJC members (This report is available on the NAJC website/News/Demographic Characteristics of Japanese Canadians 2016.)

The following three sections are a summary of characteristics of Japanese new immigrants based on "Demographic Characteristics of Japanese Canadians 2016," FDT zoom meetings on new Japanese immigrant and a small discussion group at the 2017 NAJC AGM on new Japanese immigrants.



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### Who are Japanese new immigrants?

- We define Japanese new immigrants as Japanese immigrants who have emigrated from Japan to Canada after 1967 when Canada introduced a merit system to its immigration policy. Japanese new immigrants as defined above have some common characteristics that are different from those of other Japanese Canadians and thus require the NAJC to pay special attention to their characteristics when developing its programs for Japanese new immigrants.
- According to the 2011 National Household Survey of Canada, there were 110,000 people who said that they had a Japanese ethnic origin (Japanese Canadians), out of which 25,000 could be Japanese new immigrants and 33,000 their children. At present, Japanese new immigrants and their children could be about a half of Japanese Canadians. For the last ten years, there have been about 1,000 Japanese new immigrants every year.
- Until the 1980s, Japanese immigrants were mainly people with skills and professional qualifications, and men and women were split more or less evenly. Starting in the 1980s, however, more women than men immigrated from Japan to Canada and in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, roughly three out of four Japanese immigrants were women. They included women with special skills and professional qualifications and also young Japanese women who married non-Japanese Canadian men. This new trend appears to be still continuing until the present time and has changed the nature of Japanese new immigrants over the last three decades.
- There are two groups of Japanese new immigrants: those who came to Canada in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (the “old” new immigrant group) and those who came to Canada in the 1990s and later (the “new” new immigrant group) and they have different characteristics. At present, the ratio between the “old” and “new” groups is 4 to 6. If the present trend in Japanese new immigrant continues, the ratio will further tilt towards the “new” group.

### The “old” new immigrants

- They have adjusted to the Canadian way of life (those who could not go back to Japan) and manage their daily life in English, although they feel more comfortable with Japanese than English.
- They are aging and facing issues related to aging. Some have lost their spouses (more widows than widowers) and are living alone. Often their children have non-Japanese Canadian spouses and are living in a different city. They are concerned with their life when they move into assisted living facilities because they are afraid that they may revert to their mother tongue of Japanese and lose their English speaking abilities and also revert to the preference for traditional Japanese food which will not be available at those assisted living facilities. Some of them suffer dementia and start losing their English speaking abilities, making it difficult for them to communicate with their children whose Japanese speaking abilities are limited.



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- They have their old parents in Japan and feel guilty when they cannot help them in their last years.
- Most of them have been active in their local Japanese Canadian communities and often have been a major source of resources for local Japanese cultural programs. However, they are getting old and need new people who can replace their roles in their local communities.
- Most of them wanted their children to acquire Japanese language skills and sent them to a Japanese language school. The level of Japanese language skills those children have acquired varies from person to person. There are many who can manage basic daily conversations in Japanese. Those children participated in the activities of local Japanese Canadian communities with their parents when they were young (up to grade 6 or so). As they grew older, they stopped participating in those activities.
- The “old” new immigrants used to have their own organizations for exchanging information and feeling comfortable with somebody in the similar condition in Canada. But those organizations have either ceased to exist or merged with a Japanese Canadian organization as they felt that they became a part of Japanese Canadians.

### The “new” new immigrants

- This group is dominated by women who immigrated to Canada in the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. In this group there are many women with non Japanese Canadian husbands. Some met their future husbands in Japan and some in Canada. Most of them were young: among those who came to Canada from 2001 to 2011, a total of 30 percent of them were between 25 to 34 years old and 46 percent were between 35 to 44 years old.
- Some of these women have skills and professional qualifications that they acquired in Japan but have difficulty in making use of these skills and qualifications to find a job in Canada, partly due to their English inadequacy and partly because their skills and qualifications are not formally recognized in Canada.
- Some had hard time adjusting to the Canadian way of life and communicating with their non-Japanese speaking husbands. Some face serious domestic problems such as divorces and domestic violence.
- Some feel they need professional counseling services but are reluctant to talk to an English speaking counselor. Some go to a Japanese consulate for advice but the Japanese consulate does not provide such counseling services.
- Most of Japanese women with non-Japanese husbands are eager to provide Japanese language education to their children and send their children to a Japanese language school. A large percentage of children learning Japanese language schools are now children of mixed marriages. For example, 80 percent of 120 children learning Japanese at the Edmonton Japanese Community School (2 hours every Friday evening) are now children of mixed marriages.
- A Japanese language school is a major community for Japanese women with non-Japanese Canadian husbands. At the school, they exchange information and feel comfortable to see somebody with similar living styles. In some cities, those women form their own organizations to exchange information, particularly about raising children in Canada.



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- Some of them have been actively engaged in local Japanese Canadian community organizations, particularly supporting Japanese cultural programs. Some of their non Japanese Canadian husbands are interested in Japanese culture and help their wives in the local Canadian Japanese communities.

### **New Japanese Immigrant Projects**

The following three projects will be submitted to the NAJC NEB for approval after the 2018 AGM.

#### 1. Making the NAJC Website Bilingual in English and Japanese

##### Project contents

This project is to make the current NAJC website bilingual in English and Japanese. Japanese new immigrants in Canada and the Japanese in Japan and abroad will find Japanese articles easier to read than English articles. The bilingual website will send a message to Japanese new immigrants that the NAJC cares for them.

The current NAJC web site is composed of three types of articles in terms of their updating timings: (1) no updating needed, (2) occasional updating needed, and (3) regular updating needed (see the attached table). This project team starts translating English articles into Japanese in the first category of articles first and proceeds to the second and third category. This project also expands the scope of the NAJC website to include original Japanese articles with their English translations.

##### Current Status

Takashi Ohki has identified those articles in Category 1 above and started to translate them into Japanese. Some articles such as NAJC Vision Statements have been already translated.

#### 2. A Survey of Social Services Available to Japanese New Immigrants

##### Project contents

In the discussions with Japanese new immigrants, the Future Directions Team found that the nature of recent Japanese new immigrants had changed and that they needed social services such as support for the aged and counseling services for family and marriage issues, particularly for couples of mixed marriages.

This project is aimed at:

- Survey needs for social services and services currently offered to Japanese new immigrants.
- Identify any gap between social services Japanese new immigrants need and currently receive.
- Explore means to fill the gaps.

##### Current status



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Some information on social services available to new immigrants in English and other languages have been collected.

Takashi Ohki attended two meetings of Japanese new immigrants organized by the Edmonton Japanese Cultural Association and participated in the discussions about needs by recent Japanese new immigrants.

### 3. A Network of Japanese New Immigrants

#### Project contents

The Future Directions Team organized two Japanese new immigrant forums (online video conferences), one in English and the other in Japanese. Through these forums, the Future Directions Team could learn issues facing Japanese new immigrants. Those who were invited to participate in the forums appreciated opportunities to discuss issues they shared regarding Japanese new immigrants. Japanese new immigrants are now a large component of the Japanese Canadian community and their closer relations with the NAJC and Japanese-Canadians in general will be important for the viability of Japanese-Canadian community today and tomorrow. This project will expand the current membership of New Immigrant Forum to improve its ability to collect and disseminate information on the needs of Japanese new immigrants.

#### Current status

Takashi Ohki has recruited a few Japanese new immigrants who showed interest in joining this network.