

Session IV: Canadians Learning About Japan/Japanese Learning About Canada

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I. Learning about Canada (Look Canada)

Japan's modernization since the Meiji era (1868-1912) has been the result of learning from Europe and the United States. Even after the Second World War this trend remained unchanged. However, since the 1990's in the midst of the trend toward globalization, we have switched from this unqualified reliance on Europe and the United States to learning from a variety of nations, including Canada. We believe that as we enter the 21st century Japan must contribute to the advancement of solidarity and harmony in international society.

I believe that Japan and Canada as North Pacific Basin nations can establish a common ground for cooperation and collaboration starting with reciprocity of interaction in culture, society and technology and align their efforts as they attempt to understand and deal with economic and political issues with regard to the United States and international society. Beginning with trade and business and moving on to issues such as developing advanced technology, protecting the environment, and developing natural resources, there are many areas where we can establish joint endeavors.

II. Japanese learning about Canada: the Status Quo

1. Pre-university education

Junior High School: The social studies curriculum of junior high schools introduces Canada as a nation of broad territorial expanse and abundant resources located in North America. It is a member of NAFTA and its historical heritage is reflected in the use of two official languages, English and French. (*Our Junior High School Society*, 2004, Nihon Shoseki Shinsha.)

High School: The high school geography curriculum offers more detail. It picks up lumber, paper and pulp production as forestry industries, copper and nickel production as mining industries, and wheat production in the three Prairie Provinces as an example of agriculture. Mention is given to Southern Ontario and Quebec as centers of heavy industry and to the advanced state of the automobile industry. Brief attention is also afforded to Canadian history, including such points as the strong influence of Great Britain on the political and social structure, Quebec as a center of French influence and approximately one-third of the population being of French heritage. Multiculturalism and the Quebec secessionist issue are also touched upon. (*Geography A*, 2004, Dai-ichi Gakushusha. *Geography B*, 2004, Tokyo Shoseki.)

General Knowledge

Anne of Green Gables may be selected as an example of an image of Canada that has a strong influence on children and students. This children's tale has been serialized as an animated movie and broadcast on television. The story it portrays of a pastoral, rural people and their warm-heartedness strikes a sympathetic chord with the Japanese and has made it very famous. Celine Dion, Avril Lavigne, the Cirque de Soleil, as well as ice hockey and winter sports, and the Toronto Blue Jays and Montreal Expos major league baseball teams are well known to us. Television travelogues have introduced to us the wonder and beauty of Canadian nature as exemplified by the Rocky Mountains and Niagara Falls.

Some high school students travel to Canada for summer home-stay visits and study, others participate in tourism or brief sojourns. These activities are a step removed from book learning and promote a fresh interest in things Canadian.

2. University Education and Research

As an example of Canadian studies at the university level in Japan, allow me to introduce the case of my own university, Meiji University.

Meiji University has since 1989 with the financial support of the Government of Canada and the assistance of Canadian scholars and others conducted an annual program that we title, The Meiji University Canadian Studies Lecture Series. This is an extracurricular series of lectures presented in English or French without translation by Canadian scholars and other experts as well as scholars from Japan and other nations who have knowledge of things Canadian and is offered to all members of our university community and the public at large. To date some 120 speakers have offered 320 lectures and classes to a total of more than 5,000 participants. In addition, as accredited courses at our university, there are various programs offered by the Department of Geography in the School of Arts and Letters and the American (Canadian) Culture Major in the School of Political Science and Economics. Moreover, from this past year, the School of Political Science and Economics with support from the Government of Quebec has begun to offer a lectures series entitled "Contemporary Quebec."

Regarding faculty and student exchanges, Meiji University has active programs of exchange with York University, The University of Alberta, and the University of Victoria. Each summer we send some 40 of our students to York University for intensive English training. We are also participating with the University of Alberta in an accredited program of Canadian Studies offered to our students weekly via real-time, two-way, Internet teleconferencing.

Now, let me turn to some of the programs being undertaken by universities other

than our own. Unfortunately, I cannot introduce them all, but Obirin University offers classes in Canadian politics, economics, society and culture as a part of its Pacific Region Cultural Course in the College of International Studies and its Graduate School. Tokyo University offers lectures on Canadian politics as part of its (North) American Studies program in the School of General Education. Tokyo University of Foreign Languages has classes related to Canadian history and politics. And under the title of "Introduction to Canadian Studies," Ritsumeikan University offers a lecture series taught by a faculty member invited from the University of British Columbia.

In this way, universities are attempting to capture along with its history and geography, the broad nature of Canadian politics, economics, culture, and society through their research activities. Not content with a mere surface understanding, they hope to communicate Canada's distinct identity vis-à-vis the United States, as well as its multicultural heritage and the strength that springs from it.

It goes without saying, that the various activities mentioned above are all possible because of the constant support rendered by the Canadian Embassy in Japan and representative offices of the various provinces such as the Quebec Provincial Office, not only financially but also through the implementation of various events and introduction of scholars and people of culture.

III. Things to consider for the future and a proposal

It is essential that Japan and Canada learn from and about each other by continuing the activities referred to above. Japan is not simply Mt. Fuji and cherry blossoms, nor is Canada simply maples and the Rocky Mountains. It is vitally important for each to learn of the other's true nature through a variety of exchanges. Put differently, an exhaustive examination of Canada's unique history and society provides a background that makes it imperative for Japan and Canada to actively cooperate in dealing with issues such as promoting world peace and protecting our global environment that affect all of humanity. Following the end of the cold war, a new outlook has begun to bud in Japan, one that sees traditional values and standards for establishing international relations and friendships as needing to be broadened and made more flexible. As regions unify economically and socially and globalization advances, the Canada/Japan relationship becomes increasingly important. For nations who have a leadership role in world affairs the broad-mindedness and generosity that a multicultural heritage brings to Canada is perhaps essential. From that perspective, I believe that Japan has much to learn from Canada.