

(Provisional translation: Original in Japanese)

The Canada-Japan Society "Ottawa News" Vol.15

(<https://www.nikkakyokai.org/>)

Hello to all members of the Canada-Japan Society and to all of you who support the Japan-Canada relationship.

Now at the beginning of July, Ottawa's short summers are beautiful with sunny blue skies, white clouds and greenery reflected off the Ottawa River and Rideau Canal. On the other hand, the situation is dire this year, with more than 400 wildfires across Canada taking a long time to be put out. Smoke from wildfires is pouring into Ottawa, turning the sky orange and polluting it with fine particles to the point that warnings are being issued.

Well, this time's "Ottawa News" is about the 2023 Northern Tour sponsored by Global Affairs Canada. Canada is 27 times the size of Japan, but 40% of it belongs to three Territories: Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The vast northern land is about 10 times larger than Japan, and the population is about 120,000. It is a special place where a considerable part is in the Arctic Circle north of latitude 66°33'N. Administratively there are three Territories, but each community is extremely diverse with its own history, culture and politics. The three Territories also really show what Canada is like as a nation. It was only when I actually went there, breathed in the air, smelled it, met people, and listened to their stories that I felt that my understanding had deepened. It is rightly said that "seeing is believing".

Since the early 1970s, Global Affairs Canada has been offering this outreach tour program to ambassadors and high commissioners based in Ottawa. Most recently, it was held in 2018, but it has not been held since due to the subsequent outbreak of COVID-19.

In fact, when I met former Japanese ambassadors to Canada in Tokyo prior to my arrival in Ottawa in May last year, and received various advice, they also told me about the northern tour sponsored by Global Affairs Canada. It was a great opportunity to learn about the diversity of Canada, so I thought I definitely should participate. For that reason, I have been looking forward to it since I took up my post.

Overview of the 2023 Northern Tour

The tour to the north was scheduled, for the first time in five years, for 10 days from June 5th. The participants were 23 ambassadors and high commissioners including myself. From the Canadian government, officials from Global Affairs, Natural Resources, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) accompanied us. A special chartered flight was offered to visit 11 locations, including remote locations in the Arctic Circle that can rarely be easily accessible. Meetings were arranged with the Territorial Premiers, parliamentary officials, government officials, community Mayors as well as local Indigenous leaders, researchers and representatives of local museums and cultural centres. It was an extremely intense 10 days.

If you look at the map that indicates the places we visited, you can picture the geographical spread. Our itinerary was: Ottawa → Yellowknife → Whitehorse → Inuvik → Old Crow → Dawson City → Ulukhaktok → Cambridge Bay → Resolute Bay → Pond Inlet → Iqaluit → Kuujuaq → Ottawa. The total distance traveled was 12,641km.

The purpose of the this tour is to learn about Canada's diversity. However, if we think further in depth, there are five points to consider - Indigenous peoples, global warming, business, geopolitics, and international cooperation. By actually going to the Arctic Circle and other places, I was able to learn a lot that I could not learn from classroom lectures alone. In particular, many meetings were arranged to meet with the Indigenous peoples. Clearly reflected in the tour schedule was the Canadian government's focused efforts for the reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples, I thought.

Indigenous Peoples

In Canada, Indigenous peoples are defined by Article 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act as Indian, Inuit and Métis living in Canada. The Indians, now called the First Nations, are the original inhabitants of the North American continent and are divided into more than 630 tribes. The Inuit, also original inhabitants are a native Inuktitut-speaking people who live mainly in the coastal areas of the Far North. The Métis are descendants of Europeans and First Nations peoples who were involved in the fur trade from the 16th century onwards, forming and preserving their own culture.

Relationships with Indigenous peoples are never straightforward. Each Indigenous group has its own history and culture, and can be said to encapsulate Canada's diversity. At one time, the 11 Aboriginal groups that entered into treaties with Canada shortly after the founding of Canada in 1867 were recognized as Indians, while others were unrecognized. There were also excessive assimilation policies such as overdevelopment of ancestral lands and residential schools. In Canada's history, there is a past to overcome. Currently, Canada is working towards reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples through public and private sector efforts.

Each Indigenous group maintains different kinds of relationships with the federal and Territorial governments. Efforts are made to preserve traditional culture, life and language. On the other hand, the limited opportunities for employment, education, and recreation are also very serious issues. The tour took place during the summer solstice in June, so it is the season of the midnight sun and the sun shines bright even in the middle of the night. During the wintertime, there are periods when the sun does not rise above the horizon and it is dark all day. I also learned that addiction and mental health care are serious issues.

There were many memorable meetings, but the meeting at Resolute Bay at 74 degrees north latitude in Nunavut, the northernmost Territory, was the most special one for me. The site is home to a memorial to the relocation of Inuit of northern Quebec during the 1953 Saint-Laurent administration. Frankly speaking, it describes the dark side of modern Canadian history that should be called abandonment rather than assimilation. Even in June, the temperature was at -10°C with wind chill, and it was snowing. In front of the memorial, the former Resolute Bay Deputy Mayor Allie Salluviniq, who was 3 years old at the time of the relocation, calmly talked about his experience. I will never forget the way he declared, "I

went to university in Ottawa and worked in various places in Canada, but this is my home."



(Cultural Exchange with Indigenous People)



(Resolute Bay)

on due to the lack of ice thickness.

Furthermore, the distribution of plants and animals is changing due to the direct effects of global warming which also affects the diet of Indigenous communities. As there is a need to switch from conventional diesel power generation that emits greenhouse gases, natural energy sources such as solar and wind power are being tested. However, as a realistic option, the possibility of building a small modular nuclear power plant is being considered. In this field, we can expect contributions from Japanese companies with high technological capabilities.

Geopolitical Reality

During our visit to Yellowknife, the capital of the Northwest Territories, we inspected the Canadian Forces Northern Command and received a briefing from Commander Jake French. Its mission is to defend the three Territories that make up 40% of Canada's land mass. On the other side of the once ice-bound Arctic Ocean is Russia. Russia's activities are increasing in the Arctic Ocean, where sea ice has melted due to global warming. Furthermore, China has shown a strong interest in the Arctic Ocean and is stepping up its activities. In the vast Arctic region, the physical presence of the Canadian Forces is adequately demonstrated, while reconnaissance is well-prepared. They are closely monitoring airspace and maritime activities in the region, and are coordinating with the Royal Canadian Air Force to establish a quick response system, such as scrambling of fighter jets.

It should be noted that, from the perspective of ensuring effective activities in the vast undeveloped land with a harsh natural environment, they are working closely with ranger units who are familiar with the local situation, mainly Indigenous people.

The Department of National Defence is currently reviewing its defence strategy. In terms of security, the importance of the Arctic is increasing, and future developments will be watched closely.



(Briefing by Canadian Armed Forces Acting Commander)

Business Potential

Important mineral reserves have been confirmed in the three Territories. Until now, they had been closed off by permafrost and ice and were practically out of development. However, it is becoming possible to develop due to the effects of global warming. In addition, looking at the current international community, there is a geopolitical reality in which there are totalitarian states that attempt to unilaterally change the status quo through force that ignores the rule of law. There is progress in the green economy towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The importance of Canada's critical mineral resources is increasing. The federal government announced its Critical Minerals Strategy in December last year, and the Territorial governments are also showing a positive attitude. However, in order to develop and connect it to business, first, infrastructure development, second, a review of environmental regulations, and third, the engagement and support of Indigenous people are essential.

When I visited Whitehorse, the capital of the Yukon Territory, I met with Premier Pillai. He spoke very eloquently of the great potential that Yukon has. I asked him about the three challenges related to critical minerals. He expressed confidence that while the challenges will not be easy, he is approaching them with a sense of urgency. In addition, the Indigenous leaders who were present also said that they fully understood the significance of the appropriate development of important mineral resources as an opportunity for employment and education for the Indigenous communities, and that they would be actively involved as partners, which made a lasting impression on me.



(Yukon Territory Premier Pillai with Liard First Nation Chief Stephen Charlie)

International Cooperation

Cambridge Bay, Nunavut is home to the Canadian High Arctic Research Station, which was established in 2019. It is the realization of the Canadian government's ambitious initiative to create a world-class research facility for polar research. Various academic studies related to the Arctic are conducted here. Global warming will transform the entire Arctic ecosystem, and medium to long-term overall impacts on the global environment are foreseen. Detailed surveys and research are being conducted on the changes occurring in the polar

regions, from Arctic flora and fauna, microorganisms to ice. This research institute has an accommodation facility, and researchers visit from all over the world, including Japan.

The 23 ambassadors and high commissioners who participated in this 10-day tour shared their valuable experiences. There is an unwavering sense of comradeship among ourselves. As an alumnus of the "Class of 2023 Northern Tour", I think that we can expect to deepen the cooperation between the Embassies and the High Commissions.



(Canadian High Arctic Research Station, a new facility under construction)

Conclusion

This northern observation tour was a valuable opportunity to experience the diversity and inclusiveness of Canada. I learned about Indigenous relations, global warming, geopolitical realities, business possibilities, and advances in international cooperation. Once again, I recognized that there is a wide range of fields in which Japan and Canada can cooperate, and that there is great potential.

(end)