

# Mosaic - Мозаика



Shohei Miyajima is a student from Keio University, Japan, who came to our city in August 2010 to make a documentary on the Russian community in Edmonton

Series 1: “Between Alex and Sasha”

## **Why is a Japanese student making a documentary on the Russian Community?**

*“The temperature in Edmonton is 12 degree Celsius.”*

When I heard this announcement on the plane of Air Canada, I regretted not bringing warm clothes. I’ve been totally forgetting the severe weather here. However, I had not been forgetting about a piece of mosaic with a healthy color – the Russian Community in Edmonton. I came back here to film the Russian community and how it had been integrating into Canadian society.

I lived with the Voloboevs, a Russian family in Edmonton, as a high school exchange student from Japan for one year from April 2005. If you grow up in the Japanese educational system and its society, your concept of “foreign culture” would be coke and hamburger at the unconscious level because you come into contact with the first different culture when you start learning English at school. We learn American English at school, so, needless to add, the textbook contains tons of texts about US culture and

history such as Martin Luther King Junior or the verbal culture of America. Therefore, daily borscht, attending weekly choir and service in the Russian Orthodox Church in Canada were quite fresh, new and shocking experiences for me. The experience of living with a Russian family for a year broadened my horizons.

What was surprising for me was not only the Russian community but many other immigrant communities living together peacefully without any big conflicts. In a history class back in Japan, I was repeatedly taught about ethnic conflicts over and over the centuries. That learning formed my thought that different races and cultures cannot easily co-exist in the same space. So I was impressed by the multicultural state of this country called a “mosaic.”

After returning from my unforgettable days in Canada, I decided to publish my diary that I had been keeping almost every day and started studying

multiculturalism more precisely even though my major is in a different field.

Every year the working population in Japan and other developed countries is decreasing. Therefore, in order to maintain our economy we have to accept immigrants and foreign workers. However, the word “immigrants” is often associated with a negative image in our country since the news through the media news reports on immigrants is always about insurgency or terrorism such as the 2005 civil unrest in France.

Before fixing the “hardware” - that is the immigration program in Japan, I want Japanese people to change somehow their prejudice against immigrants by filming a healthy, culturally rich and highly educated community. What came to my mind was the Voloboev family and the Russian community which surrounds them here in Edmonton.

To be continued...

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