Intermarriage and the Transformation
of Canadian Nikkei Identity

DE SOUZA Lyle Francis *

Abstract

This article investigates the transformation of Canadian Nikkei identity through intermarriage, exploring historical, political, social, cultural, and media influences. It analyses the documentary *One Big Hapa Family* and interviews its director, Jeff Chiba Stearns, to understand contemporary Canadian Nikkei perspectives. The article traces the impact of pre- and post-World War II events, examines the development of multiculturalism and the redress movement, and considers the concepts of home and belonging within the Japanese diaspora community in Canada. It reveals how these have combined to shape Canadian Nikkei cultural identity, contributing to a deeper understanding of its complex nature and its place within contemporary Canada's multicultural society.

Keywords

Canada, Nikkei, intermarriage, identity, multiculturalism, redress

INTRODUCTION

In the opening segment of his award-winning 2010 documentary film *One Big Hapa Family,* director Jeff Chiba Stearns notices at his 2006 quadrennial family reunion in Kelowna, Canada that nearly all of his extended Canadian Nikkei family have married interracially (loc.00:04:14-00:04:40). Researching further using the Canadian Census, Chiba Stearns finds an astonishing 95% intermarriage rate for Canadian Nikkei which is in stark contrast to other ethnic groups in Canada such as Chinese Canadians (17%) and Southeast Asian Canadians (13%) (loc.00:04:33-00:05:11). The rest of the documentary attempts to discover the reasons behind this incredibly high 95% intermarriage rate which entails understanding Canadian Nikkei history.

This article explores how intermarriage has affected the transformation of identity among Canadian Nikkei. It analyses the concept of intermarriage (国際結婚 kokusaikekkon), using Merton's definition of marriage between individuals from different in-groups and out-groups,

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＊　京都ノートルダム女子大学・英語英文学科・准教授

and its impact on the identity of Canadian Nikkei. The article also examines how historical legacies, political shifts, and evolving social and cultural dynamics have shaped the identity of Canadian Nikkei. By examining these factors, we can better understand Canadian Nikkei identity and its place within the broader Canadian multicultural mosaic.

This exploration will include a critical analysis of the documentary *One Big Hapa Family* and an interview with its director, Jeff Chiba Stearns, both of which extract insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of contemporary Canadian Nikkei. We look back at the historical backdrop, tracing the impact of pre- and post-World War II events on the formation of Canadian Nikkei cultural identity. The political landscape, marked by the development of multiculturalism and the redress movement, will be critically examined. Finally, we will consider the social and cultural dynamics within families and communities, acknowledging the concepts of home and belonging in shaping Canadian Nikkei cultural identity.

HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND THE SHAPING OF CANADIAN NIKKEI IDENTITY

The history of Canadian Nikkei (inter)marriage combines immigration patterns, social norms, and the tumultuous events of the 20th century. From the early days of Japanese immigration to Canada, marked by a stark gender imbalance and the practice of Picture Brides, to the postwar era of increasing assimilation and shifting attitudes, marriage has played a central role in shaping the evolution of Canadian Nikkei identity.

1. Early Japanese Immigration and the Picture Bride Phenomenon

The first wave of Japanese immigrants to Canada in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were exclusively male, driven by the desire to find work and establish a new life in a foreign land (Got 6). Many Japanese men hailed from relatively deprived agricultural areas of Japan and held a correspondingly low social status within Japan's feudal society. This gender imbalance created a significant challenge for Japanese men in Canada seeking to establish families and maintain cultural ties with Japan. The practice of 'picture brides' emerged as a solution. Japanese men in Canada exchanged letters and photographs with Japanese women in Japan. Eventually, if such contact proved promising, a woman would have her passage to Canada arranged as well as her union with a Japanese man. Like the men who preceded them, these women often faced limited opportunities in Japan, so they embarked on their journey to Canada filled with both hope and uncertainty, seeking a better future and the chance to start a family (Makabe).

The picture bride phenomenon had a profound impact on the early Canadian Nikkei

immigrants. First, it helped to address the gender imbalance. By 1941, a population of 23,149 Canadian Nikkei (both men and women) had settled mainly around the British Columbia coast (Oiwa in Adachi 122). It also reinforced traditional Japanese family structures and cultural practices. Had there not been this migration of picture brides, Canadian Nikkei men might then have had a very different trajectory in terms of their cultural identity. We can only speculate, but they may have had to follow the path of assimilation during this early period of their history. Certainly, the reinforcement of traditional Japanese family structures and cultural practices would have been far more difficult to attain.

Immigration from Japan to Canada created unique issues for these picture brides, significantly impacting the development of Canadian Nikkei cultural identity. Uprooted from their familiar surroundings and often with limited English language skills, these women faced isolation and the daunting task of adapting to a new and very unfamiliar culture. They often bore the weight of their husbands' expectations, shaped by traditional Japanese gender roles and societal norms based on the notion of "good wives, wise mothers" (Ayukawa). This contributed to the reinforcement of these traditional Japanese gender roles and cultural practices within the early immigrant community, shaping the experiences of both men and women. For the men, the presence of picture brides allowed them to maintain a connection to their Japanese heritage and establish families within a familiar cultural framework. However, it also perpetuated a patriarchal structure that limited women's autonomy and agency. For the picture brides, navigating the complexities of cultural adaptation and fulfilling traditional roles within the family often led to isolation and marginalisation. Nevertheless, their resilience and determination played a crucial role in shaping the early foundations of Canadian Nikkei identity, creating a unique blend of Japanese and Canadian cultural influences.

2. Pre-World War II Attitudes Towards Intermarriage

Prior to World War II, intermarriage between Canadian Nikkei and members of other ethnic groups including the white majority was rare. Strong social and cultural barriers discouraged such unions, both within the Canadian Nikkei community and in the broader (white majority) Canadian society. Within the Canadian Nikkei community, traditional values and family expectations often prioritised endogamy, or marriage within the same ethnic group. Maintaining Japanese bloodlines and cultural traditions was seen as essential for preserving community cohesion and identity. The narrator's grandfather in *One Big Hapa Family*, reflecting on this pre-war era, says of mixed unions between Japanese and whites in that time that: "No, not then. [Was it pretty bad to do that, if somebody married a white guy or what?] Not bad, but I guess it wasn't the custom to do that" (loc.00:22:50-00:23:06). The

prevailing Japanese norms emphasised racial purity and the preservation of distinct cultural identities. Both of the narrator's grandparents shared the traditional Japanese view that "In Japan they wanted to keep the bloodline true" (loc.00:08:00-00:08:26), thus making intermarriage taboo.

Not that intermarriage would have been an option for Canadian Nikkei men or women anyway during this period which was marked by white racism and discrimination towards Asians (P. M. Ward). Racism manifested itself in many ways, including government policy, the anti-Asian riots in 1907 (Kobayashi), and in everyday life. The narrator's uncle, Suey Koga, gives an example underscoring the social stigma and disapproval associated with intermarriage within both the Canadian Nikkei community and the broader Canadian society during that time: "Uncle Suey being a 20-something local Japanese at that time, could recall the hostile climate living in Kelowna during those war years… I think, there was a mayor here that was a—he was a real racist as far as Japanese were concerned" (loc.00:27:26-00:27:47). The racism started as early as in elementary school, with Suey and other Canadian Nikkei in the documentary recalling examples such as school textbooks that clearly othered and denigrated those of Japanese ancestry, incidents with parents who reacted with hostility upon discovering their children being friends with Canadian Nikkei, and name-calling (Suey eventually reclaims the 'chop suey' label affixed to him by his elementary school classmates).

The fear of discrimination and social ostracism further deterred many from pursuing interracial relationships. Beyond internal community pressures, the broader social context of pre-World War II Canada also discouraged interracial relationships. The prevailing societal attitudes were marked by racial prejudice and a strong emphasis on maintaining distinct ethnic boundaries. Canadian Nikkei, already facing discrimination in various aspects of life, were acutely aware of the potential social ostracism and stigma associated with intermarriage. The fear of further marginalisation and rejection from both their own community and the wider Canadian society served as a powerful deterrent, pushing many individuals to seek partners within their own ethnic group.

3. The Impact of World War II and Incarceration

The outbreak of World War II and the subsequent incarceration of Canadian Nikkei had a profound and lasting impact on their attitudes towards intermarriage and identity. During the war, Canadian Nikkei experienced heightened racism and discrimination mostly since they were viewed with suspicion due to their potential allegiance with Japan. The forced relocation and dispossession of Canadian Nikkei, fuelled by wartime hysteria and racial prejudice, disrupted family structures and social networks. The incarceration experience also

led to a sense of disillusionment and alienation from Canadian society, prompting some to question the value of maintaining distinct cultural boundaries. While incarceration aimed to segregate and control Canadian Nikkei, interracial families were often exempted, highlighting the role of intermarriage in navigating the complexities of racial categorisation and citizenship during this period (Vallianatos).

In the aftermath of the war, many Canadian Nikkei sought to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society. The trauma of incarceration had instilled a sense of vulnerability and a desire for acceptance, leading some to view intermarriage as a means of assimilation and protection against future discrimination. Suey Koga suggests that the incarceration led to a conscious effort to assimilate: "The federal government came down... they wanted to see complete assimilation with the whites, and I think we did a—we probably—the Japanese people, especially in Kelowna—did a really good job of that. And we broke all the—well, a lot of our roots with Japan" (loc.00:29:25-00:29:53). It should be noted, however, that Canadian Nikkei are not a monolith and that some were not inclined towards assimilation due to language barriers and a desire to maintain cultural purity.

The dispersal of Canadian Nikkei across the country, a deliberate government policy aimed at preventing the re-establishment of ethnic enclaves, further facilitated intermarriage by increasing contact and interaction with other ethnic groups. This led to their integration into larger cities or rural areas across Canada. Many third-generation and subsequent generations grew up in predominantly mixed or Anglo-Canadian areas thus increasing their social interaction with people from other ethnic groups, leading to more frequent intermarriages. Roy Inouye, another uncle of the narrator, states: "With the war, we got scattered across Canada... and so of course, we would eventually become more close to the Caucasian people, and we would also date them. Therefore, when they decided to get married, they'd be marrying Caucasians" (loc.00:12:35-00:12:55). Inouye further explains the changing attitudes of the Issei (first-generation) parents: "They more or less accepted that their children will intermarry with other nationalities and also colour" (loc.00:09:07-00:09:29).

4. Postwar Shifts in Marriage Patterns

Postwar Canada saw a significant shift towards greater social equality and inclusion, with movements for women's rights, Indigenous rights, and LGBTQ+ rights gaining momentum, plus a greater acceptance of mixed-race relationships. This shift, coupled with the rise of multiculturalism and the celebration of diversity, created a more inclusive environment where intermarriage was no longer viewed as a taboo. The influence of globalisation and increased mobility further contributed to this trend, exposing Canadian Nikkei to a wider

range of potential partners and challenging traditional notions of cultural boundaries.

The narrator's parents, for instance, exemplify this shift. The narrator's father states that his parents accepted Kathy, his wife, simply "as just a person, not as a mixed race or Japanese" (loc.00:38:16-00:38:32). The narrator's mother further supports this by stating that they were "both raised to look past that" (loc.00:42:58-00:42:59) indicating a generational shift in perspective. The normalisation of interracial marriages is further evident in the narrator's aunt and uncle's nonchalant attitudes towards their own mixed unions. They "don't even think about it as a mixed marriage" (loc.00:42:16-00:42:18) and emphasise that "love is love" (loc.00:24:10-00:24:11) highlighting the prioritisation of personal connection over racial considerations.

The youngest generations of Canadian Nikkei possess a heightened awareness of ethnicity, mixed-race identity, and intermarriage, likely influenced by the evolving social landscape and increased representation in media. This awareness, coupled with access to platforms like social media and university discourse, empowers them to actively engage in discussions surrounding these complex topics, utilising a nuanced vocabulary that encompasses terminology related to race and identity, as well as social justice concepts. The interview with Chiba Stearns emphasises this point, as he reflects on the generational differences in attitudes towards intermarriage within his family, noting that while his parents' generation did not see themselves as being in an interracial marriage, younger generations are more conscious of their mixed heritage (Chiba Stearns). He also highlights the importance of community support and storytelling in fostering a sense of belonging and identity affirmation: "The Japanese-Canadian community… they've given me some grants. Each of the films I've made they've given a little bit of money… to show, you know, we support you. And I think that, to me, means the most" (Chiba Stearns).

Chiba Stearns acknowledges the significant societal changes that have occurred since his grandparents' time, stating that "it was a different time in Canada 70 years ago" (loc.00:36:46-00:36:49). The concept of Canadian identity is no longer static; it's dynamic and inclusive. As the narrator's aunt suggests, it's about moving beyond simplistic labels and embracing the diverse experiences of all Canadians. This shift is particularly evident in the younger generation's assertion of individual autonomy in shaping their own identities (De Souza, *Matrilineal Canadian Nikkei Generations: Representations of Belonging and Transnational Nikkei Identities*). The narrator's cousin's pizza analogy underscores the freedom to embrace a multi-faceted identity without being confined to a single label: "I just find it [identity] as a pizza, and half of the pizza I'm Japanese…a quarter French and a quarter Swedish… It's true, even though we are 100% Canadian pizzas, we're always dividing our toppings up into

sections instead of spreading them all over the pizza" (loc.01:05:43-01:06:12). The cousin also reflects on how growing up in a Western civilization has piqued his interest in exploring his Japanese heritage, indicating how exposure to different cultures can lead to a deeper appreciation of one's roots. With fewer Japanese immigrants arriving in Canada and no such thing as picture brides in the modern era, intermarriage became more common, even necessary.

The historical context of marriage and intermarriage of Canadian Nikkei is therefore a powerful reflection of their journey through adversity and change. From the early days of picture brides, driven by necessity and hope, to the present day, where intermarriage is a testament to individual autonomy and evolving social norms, marriage has been a central force in shaping Canadian Nikkei identity. It is a complex mix of tradition, assimilation, and the ongoing negotiation of cultural boundaries, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of this group in the face of ever-changing circumstances.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES OF INTERMARRIAGE

Intermarriage amongst Canadian Nikkei has been significantly shaped by government policies and evolving societal attitudes. From restrictive immigration laws to the embrace of multiculturalism, and from shifting social norms to the power of representation, these factors have collectively influenced intermarriage rates and attitudes towards mixed-race relationships within the Canadian Nikkei community.

1. The Role of Government Policies

In the early 20th century, discriminatory immigration laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923 to 1947) and subsequent restrictions on Asian immigration, created a stark imbalance in the demographics of Canada's Asian origin population (Kelley and Trebilcock; Stoffman). This, in turn, limited the pool of potential partners for Canadian Nikkei, contributing to the prevalence of endogamy. Furthermore, the government actively segregated minority groups, creating social and cultural barriers to interracial relationships and further isolating the Nikkei community. This segregation was compounded by the fact that people of Japanese origin often had no choice but to live together in areas like Powell Street in Vancouver, where they could access crucial Japanese institutions and resources (De Souza, 'Canadian Nikkei Institutions and Spaces'). This geographic concentration, while providing community support, further limited their interaction with other ethnic groups. The forced removal and incarceration of Canadian Nikkei in inland camps during World War II

exacerbated this separation, creating divisions even within the Nikkei community. As Roy Inoue recalls, those who had been integrated into broader Canadian society prior to the war sometimes shunned those forcibly removed from the coast, labelling them "coastal Japs" (loc.00:20:41-00:21:38).

The postwar era, however, witnessed a gradual shift in government policies towards greater inclusivity and openness. The dismantling of discriminatory immigration laws and the subsequent influx of immigrants from diverse backgrounds transformed the demographic makeup of Canada (Roy). This increased diversity created more opportunities for interracial interaction and fostered a greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures. The liberalisation of immigration laws in the 1960s, which resulted in large-scale immigration to Canada from around the world, not only expanded the pool of potential partners for Canadian Nikkei but also signalled a gradual shift in societal attitudes towards mixed-race relationships. Stearns observes that Canadian Nikkei have become "more and more diverse" and that "mixed race is the future" (Chiba Stearns). He also notes that his own documentary, *One Big Hapa Family*, reflects this reality, showcasing the prevalence of intermarriage today.

The official adoption of multiculturalism as a national policy in 1971 further fostered an environment of acceptance and inclusivity (Jedwab). By celebrating diversity and promoting the preservation of cultural heritage (as opposed to the assimilation model in other immigrant-accepting countries such as the United States), multiculturalism encouraged a more open-minded approach to intermarriage. While the policy has faced criticism from some Canadian Nikkei for its potential to gloss over systemic inequalities and perpetuate cultural stereotypes including the myth of the model minority, it has undeniably played a role in normalising mixed-race relationships and challenging traditional Japanese notions of cultural purity (De Souza, 'The Ambivalent Model Minority'). In my interview with Stearns, he discusses the evolving concept of Canadian Nikkei identity suggesting that it is becoming more fluid and inclusive. He also emphasises the importance of individual choice and self-identification, stating that "people can identify however they want" (Chiba Stearns). This suggests that multiculturalism, by celebrating diversity and promoting individual expression, has contributed to the normalisation of mixed-race relationships within Canada. That said, multiculturalism has come under increasing criticism in recent years in countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom for apparently being more theoretical than practical and for papering over the difficulties of immigrant assimilation. Although the Canadian Nikkei partners and even their families and friends might acknowledge, accept, and even celebrate the union, this does not mean that all society does so too. Chiba Stearns mentions the sometimes superficial representation of multiculturalism in Canada such as the performance

of 'Japaneseness' through the three F's (food, folk, and fashion) (Chiba Stearns).

The 1988 Redress settlement, which acknowledged the historical injustices inflicted upon Canadian Nikkei during World War II, also likely had a subtle yet significant impact on attitudes towards intermarriage. By recognising the contributions of Canadian Nikkei and affirming their place within Canadian society, the Redress settlement helped to dismantle some of the social barriers that had previously discouraged interracial unions (Miki). It fostered a sense of belonging and empowerment, allowing individuals to make choices about their relationships based on personal connection rather than fear of societal judgment (Omatsu). While we did not explicitly discuss the Redress settlement in our interview, Stearns' focus on the Canadian Nikkei journey towards acceptance and empowerment aligns with the idea that Redress played a role in dismantling social barriers and fostering a sense of belonging, which in turn may have encouraged interracial unions. He states that "there's still a lot of healing to do… but I think we're getting there" (Chiba Stearns). This suggests that the diaspora has moved towards a place of greater acceptance and openness, which includes embracing interracial relationships.

2. Social Attitudes and Evolving Norms

The latter half of the 20th century marked a turning point, as rigid social hierarchies gradually eroded, giving way to an increasing emphasis on individual rights and freedoms. This cultural shift, propelled by powerful social movements such as the civil rights movement and second-wave feminism, challenged traditional norms and paved the way for greater acceptance of diverse lifestyles and relationships. By now, Canadian Nikkei had lived in Canada for multiple generations and the younger generations had a very different lived experience of intermarriage compared with the first generation (Spieldenner). Indeed, their identity had changed so much that new labels (or even no labels) to signal a shift away from previous rigid ethnic labels such as 'Japanese-Canadian" were now required: "I think we have to move beyond it. I mean, you can't go on calling yourself a Japanese Canadian after you've been here for how many generations" (loc.00:48:23-00:48:32).

The changing demographics of Canada, fuelled by waves of immigration from around the world, further contributed to this transformation. As society became more diverse, so too did its understanding and appreciation of different cultures and perspectives (Abu-Laban and Gabriel). This growing exposure to different ways of life fostered a greater sense of empathy and understanding, challenging the prejudices and stereotypes that had long stigmatised interracial relationships. As Chiba Stearns notes of the present period (in comparison to the past as experienced by his extended family) "Things are a lot more open now" (Chiba

Stearns).

In this evolving social context, intermarriage gradually shed its taboo status and became increasingly normalised. The visibility of mixed-race couples and families in everyday life challenged the traditional Japanese notion of racial and cultural purity, promoting a more inclusive and accepting diaspora. Younger generations of Canadian Nikkei, raised in this environment of increasing diversity, were less likely to internalise the biases of the past, further accelerating the acceptance of intermarriage. This shift towards greater openness and inclusivity reflects a broader societal recognition of the value of individual choice and the richness that diversity brings to Canadian multicultural life.

Younger generations of Canadian Nikkei growing up in this context of increasing diversity were less likely to internalise the prejudices and biases of their predecessors. Exposed to a wider range of cultures and perspectives from a young age, they developed a more nuanced understanding of identity and belonging. This generational shift led to a further decline in opposition to intermarriage, as younger Canadians embraced the idea of love and partnership transcending ethnic and cultural boundaries. The normalisation of intermarriage thus signifies a broader societal movement towards acceptance, reflecting a growing recognition of the value of diversity and the richness it brings to Canadian society.

While the progress towards acceptance is undeniable, it is crucial to acknowledge lingering problems. The acceptance of intermarriage, while widespread, is not universal, and subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination continue to cast shadows on the lives of mixed-race individuals and couples of Japanese descent in Canada. Microaggressions, often unintentional but nonetheless hurtful remarks or actions that convey bias, can create a pervasive sense of otherness and exclusion (Sue). Stereotypes about mixed-race individuals, perpetuated in media and casual conversations, can limit their opportunities and reinforce harmful assumptions about their identity. Unconscious biases, deeply ingrained societal prejudices that operate below the level of conscious awareness, can subtly influence interactions and decisions, perpetuating systemic inequalities.

These lingering forms of prejudice and discrimination highlight the ongoing need for education, awareness, and open dialogue to achieve true inclusivity of minorities such as Canadian Nikkei. While legal and policy changes have laid the groundwork for progress, the battle for hearts and minds continues. It is imperative to create spaces where mixed-race individuals and couples feel safe, valued, and empowered to challenge stereotypes and share their experiences. Only through continued efforts to foster understanding and empathy can Canada hope to build a society where all forms of partnership are embraced without reservation.

THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA AND CULTURE

As we saw in the previous section, a battle for the hearts and minds of Canadians is underway in the pursuit of a harmonious society. This is truer than ever in a world where both the left and the right of the political spectrum seem to be witnessing increasing polarization. Media and popular culture wield immense power in their ability to mediate public perceptions and attitudes (Schildkraut and Elsass), shaping hearts and minds, and their influence on the discourse surrounding intermarriage and mixed-race relationships is undeniable. This influence extends to fostering greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures (Chen), combating prejudice and stereotypes (Mastro 660-674), and even promoting civic engagement among minorities (Mcleod et al.). By showcasing positive and relatable portrayals, media can contribute to improved self-esteem and well-being, particularly among minority adolescents (L. M. Ward). It begins as early as childhood, with children's literature having a profound effect upon later attitudes to race, minorities, and diasporas (De Souza, 'Contesting Canada's Narrative of Nation through Canadian Nikkei Children's Literature'). The portrayal of diverse couples and families in television shows, movies, books, music, and other forms of media acts as a mirror reflecting societal values and beliefs, but also as a catalyst for change, challenging stereotypes and promoting understanding (Edwardson).

Positive and authentic representations of interracial love stories and mixed-race individuals can be profoundly impactful. For those navigating the complexities of mixed-race identity or interracial relationships, seeing their experiences reflected on screen or in literature can be both validating and empowering. It provides a sense of belonging and affirms the legitimacy of their lived realities. Moreover, such portrayals contribute to the normalisation of these relationships for the wider audience, fostering empathy and challenging preconceived notions about race and identity. The power of storytelling lies in its ability to humanise complex issues and create connections that transcend difference. The Canadian television series *Kim's Convenience* portrays a Korean-Canadian family with heartwarming authenticity, normalising interracial relationships like Janet's with her white boyfriend, Raj (Yu). Meanwhile, the film *Double Happiness* offers a nuanced exploration of a young Chinese-Canadian woman navigating family expectations and pursuing a relationship with a white man, highlighting the complexities of interracial love within the context of cultural identity. These examples demonstrate the power of Canadian storytelling to reflect diverse experiences and foster greater understanding of interracial love and mixed-race identity (Hanley).

Conversely, negative or stereotypical representations can perpetuate harmful biases and

reinforce social divisions such as the aforementioned experiences some Canadian Nikkei had when at school with teachers, parents, and even school textbooks: "I still remember there was one poem that— it was in one of our early schoolbooks too, and it said, 'Little Indian, Sioux or Crow, Little Frosty Eskimo. Little Turk or Japanese, oh don't you wish that you were me'" (loc.00:25:38-00:25:56). This example highlights how even seemingly innocuous educational materials can subtly reinforce the idea of Japanese people as others in Canadian society, potentially shaping early perceptions of race and identity. Even seemingly benign and outwardly accepting contemporary culture can be harmful when their true meanings laden with hidden racial biases are uncovered. When media portrays mixed-race individuals or interracial couples through a lens of exoticism, fetishisation, or conflict, it reinforces harmful tropes and perpetuates the notion that such relationships are inherently problematic or unusual. Examples include the weak, annoying, nerdy, Japanese man; or the submissive, docile, sexually available Japanese woman (although, oddly, an alternative fierce 'dragon' oriental lady stereotype also exists). Such portrayals can contribute to the marginalisation of mixed-race individuals and create a hostile environment for those navigating interracial relationships.

The impact of media and culture extends beyond individual perceptions and attitudes. It has the power to shape public discourse, influence social norms, and even inform policy decisions. As such, the responsibility of creators and producers to engage in responsible and inclusive representation cannot be overstated. The stories they tell and the images they project have the potential to either perpetuate harmful stereotypes or foster a more just and equitable society. By embracing diversity and showcasing the richness and complexity of human experience, media and popular culture can play a vital role in promoting acceptance and understanding.

The evolution of media representation of Asian diasporas in Canada in recent years offers hope. The growing demand for authentic and diverse storytelling has led to an increase in the portrayal of mixed-race individuals and interracial relationships across various platforms. The Netflix series *Kim's Convenience* about the lived experience of a Chinese diaspora community in Canada would have been unlikely to make it beyond a niche viewership a decade ago, and certainly not the mainstream worldwide audience it reaches now. While there is still a long way to go in achieving truly inclusive representation, this shift signals a growing recognition of the importance of reflecting the lived realities of all members of society. As media continues to evolve and diversify, it has the potential to be a powerful force for positive change, challenging stereotypes, promoting understanding, and ultimately contributing to a more accepting and inclusive social climate for all.

The influence of media and popular culture on perceptions of intermarriage amongst Canadian Nikkei has become increasingly significant in recent decades. The global rise of 'Cool Japan', with its celebration of Japanese pop culture, anime, manga, and cuisine, has sparked a renewed interest in Japanese heritage and identity. For Canadian Nikkei, this resurgence of cultural pride can have a complex effect on attitudes towards intermarriage. On one hand, it can strengthen their connection to their ancestral roots, potentially leading to a greater desire to preserve cultural traditions through endogamy. On the other hand, Cool Japan can foster a sense of openness and inclusivity, promoting greater acceptance of intermarriage and mixed-race identities that embrace both Japanese and Canadian heritage, as well as any other ethnic backgrounds their partners bring. Ultimately, the impact of this cultural phenomenon on individual perspectives will likely vary depending on factors such as generational differences, regional variations, and the individual's own sense of cultural identity and connection to their Japanese heritage.

The Internet and social media have revolutionised the way individuals connect and form communities, offering new platforms for Canadian Nikkei to share their experiences, challenge stereotypes, and find a sense of belonging. Online communities and forums provide safe spaces for individuals to navigate the complexities of their identities, connect with others who share similar experiences, and advocate for greater acceptance and understanding. The power of these digital platforms lies in their ability to transcend geographical boundaries and foster connections that may not have been possible in the past, creating a virtual space for solidarity and empowerment. Chiba Stearns notes of media and cultural platforms that: "The more we share our stories, the more we create opportunities for connection and dialogue. Media can be a powerful tool for social change:" (Chiba Stearns) suggesting that films like *One Big Hapa Family* can play a crucial role in fostering a more inclusive and accepting society.

CONCLUSION

The historical trajectory of Canadian Nikkei intermarriage is a testament to their resilience, adaptability, and the profound influence of societal forces. From the early days of picture brides, driven by necessity and cultural preservation, to the present day, where intermarriage signifies individual autonomy and evolving social norms, marriage patterns have mirrored the complex journey of Canadian Nikkei identity. The interplay of historical legacies, political shifts, and changing social dynamics has shaped attitudes towards intermarriage, creating a landscape where mixed-race relationships are increasingly accepted

and normalised.

Canadian Nikkei intermarriage is a narrative of cultural fusion, of navigating the complexities of belonging to multiple cultures, and of challenging traditional deeply ingrained notions of race and ethnicity. The complexities of intermarriage and its impact on Canadian Nikkei identity are evident in the diverse experiences and viewpoints within the community. While some view intermarriage as a means of strengthening their connection to their Japanese roots, others see it as an opportunity to embrace their multiracial identity, and some express concerns about the potential loss of cultural heritage. These contrasting perspectives underscore the heterogeneity of the Canadian Nikkei community and their diverse experiences with intermarriage.

The impact of intermarriage on Canadian Nikkei identity is multifaceted, encompassing cultural practices, traditions, and values. The incorporation of non-Japanese traditions and customs into celebrations, the shift towards English as the primary language spoken at home, and the blending of faiths or adoption of different religious practices illustrate how intermarriage has led to tangible changes in cultural practices, traditions, and values within the Canadian Nikkei community, shaping their identity in the process.

Looking ahead, it is essential to continue fostering understanding, challenging stereotypes, and creating spaces where all Canadian Nikkei, or other minorities, regardless of their heritage or chosen partnerships, can thrive and feel they belong. This involves promoting open dialogue, supporting mixed-race individuals and couples, and celebrating the diverse experiences within the Canadian Nikkei community. It also means recognising the ongoing impact of historical injustices and systemic inequalities, and working to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all. By embracing the richness and complexity of Canadian Nikkei identities, and valuing the contributions of all individuals, we can build a stronger, more vibrant, and truly multicultural Canada.

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