

## 2013 Opinion Exchange Meeting for Foreign Residents in Aichi Held Theme: Improving mutual cultural understanding by reporting on the experiences of foreign prefectural residents

### Informing and connecting to encourage foreigner participation in the regional community

Aichi recently held its OEM for Foreign Residents from July 2013 to January 2014. The theme for this year was “Improving mutual cultural understanding by reporting on the experiences of foreign prefectural residents,” with meeting members deciding to create image presentations to disseminate information. By creating videos themed around language and cultural differences, learning Japanese, and the importance of participating in one’s community, they went through the issues that come with being a foreign resident, as well as the roles foreign residents can perform in their community.

### Informing for participation

This year marks the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting since the OEM for Foreign Residents was established in 2002. The OEM is a conference for foreign residents, selected by application, to discuss the issues they face and propose measures to solve them. 11 delegates from 8 countries including China, Brazil, Peru, and South Korea participated in 4 meetings this year.

Aiming to improve foreigner participation in the community, Aichi wanted this year’s OEM to become an opportunity for its members to come up with their own ideas for taking action rather than just have them voice their opinions. With that goal and by keeping the results of the previous year in mind, Aichi decided to make “reporting experiences” the theme for this year’s meeting.



### Foreigners as members of society



After confirming the objectives for this year’s meeting, the members decided to use image presentations to disseminate information. The presentations will be brief 3 to 4 minute slideshows that utilize pictures, images, and narration, and can be made by computer at home. After they have been completed, the presentations will be uploaded to the Internet and made available on SNS (social networking services), member blogs, and elsewhere.

Across 4 separate meetings, members debated in small groups, interviewed each other, and held general meetings to create their presentations.

During consideration of what exactly the presentations should report on, many members agreed that they wanted to communicate those moments when they felt most like a member of the community, or when they were doing something useful. Members were of the opinion that there are still a lot of foreigners who lack information due to linguistic barriers, and that on the other hand many foreigners themselves are not trying to participate in Japanese society proactively enough.

## Hoping for a more livable community

At the last meeting, members made their presentations. Mena Mendoza de Hayashida, Carmen Rosario described her experiences raising a child with disabilities with limited Japanese skills while receiving community support. She stated, "This presentation has allowed me to reflect. Hearing stories about disadvantaged people overcoming problems is inspiring and informative, and helps improve society overall." Ou yang Wei yi talked about the importance of places for communication saying, "I learned at this meeting that the perspectives and problems of foreigners living in Japan can vary by nationality. Consideration of others is very important as members of the same society. If there were more opportunities to communicate, society would become a better place for foreigners and Japanese alike. By interacting with people with different opinions, your own thoughts and feelings change, making life much more interesting."



## Participating in the OEM for Foreign Residents

At the end of the meeting, members talked about their impressions of being a member of the OEM for Foreign Residents. Alice Murakami said, "I've come to understand the other members are trying their hardest in their own way, and that inspires me to continue working as well." Keika Yoshida said, "I've only been a critic up until now, but since becoming a member of this meeting, I've started thinking about what I would do if I was working for the government."

In regards to the format of the OEM, many members were of the opinion that while it would be difficult to accomplish anything meaningful over only a few meetings, continuing on with new members to increase people with such experience is important.

For more details, please check the Multicultural Society Section's webpage for the OEM for Foreign Residents in Aichi at: <http://www.pref.aichi.jp/0000008604.html>

## Member List for the 2013 OEM for Foreign Residents

Country	Name
China	Ou yang Wei yi, Keika Yoshida
Brazil	Kaneta Tanya Brun, Alice Murakami
Peru	Carlos Rojas, Mena Mendoza de Hayashida, Carmen Rosario
South Korea	Lee Konghyo
Indonesia	Kosugi, Lasmaria
Sri Lanka	Gajanayake Kanthi
Pakistan	Anees Ahmad Nadeem
Tanzania	Lema Terevael Jeremiah Martin

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[www.pref.aichi.jp/global/en/other/news.html](http://www.pref.aichi.jp/global/en/other/news.html)

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