

a Japanese exodus

"My grandmother's life shows that where a person is born and grows up always stays a part of them," Ohama said. "In recognizing that, we all have a responsibility and connection to each other."

One of the extraordinary moments that follow in *Obaachan's Garden* suggests that Ohama's grandmother may not have been a model parent. Ohama's own mother bursts into tears, complaining bitterly about the neglect she suffered as a child. In addition, Ohama, who is in her 50s, links four generations by introducing her own daughter, Caitlin, Murakami's great-granddaughter, who retraces Murakami's journey from Japan.

"Last summer, I became an obaachan myself—birth, life, death—that's what it's all about," Ohama said. "Everything changes. But I think the Japanese Canadian community will always have a future and continue to evolve."

Ultimately, the small, wizened figure of Murakami herself provides the film's most enduring images. At her bedside in a voice no more than a rasping croak, she confides in Ohama or crankily orders the camera away. Finally, in her old garden once more, Murakami, confined to a wheelchair, is reunited with her surviving daughter from Japan, Chieko, who has flown to Vancouver to meet her. It is a wonderful, touching scene, one unique in film.

"I feel very privileged to have witnessed it," Ohama said. "It was like seeing a 101-year-old woman giving birth to an 80-year-old baby."

Nationwide screenings through Nov. 30.

For more information go to

<http://homepage3.nifty.com/acchiyo/english.htm>.



From "Obaachan's Garden"