

► News

# Open to the alternatives

What started out as a cure for her daughter, now a home-based biz

By MIKE CHOUINARD

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**M**ari Okazaki is of Japanese descent but did not set out to study the Japanese healing practice of Reiki. It was only after she was motivated by family concerns that she took up the practice.

Both of her parents died, she says, because of medical accidents and after her three-month-old daughter started suffering from eczema, she started looking for answers.

"People said, 'You're from Japan and Reiki's from Japan,'" she says from her home-based clinic in Chilliwack.

Okazaki was actually born in Montreal but her family soon returned to Japan. Later, as a mother, she had looked to strict diet and herbal remedies to help her daughter but it was only when she started using Reiki that the rash disappeared.

"We were really open to the alternative method," she says. "Five months later it was completely clear."

Okazaki had come back to Canada in 1999 as a gymnastics coach, later married and started a family. It was her family—specifically her daughter's ailment—that pushed her towards Reiki. The practice involves using the hands to clear up blockages in the body's energy paths that result from stress, chemicals or other factors.

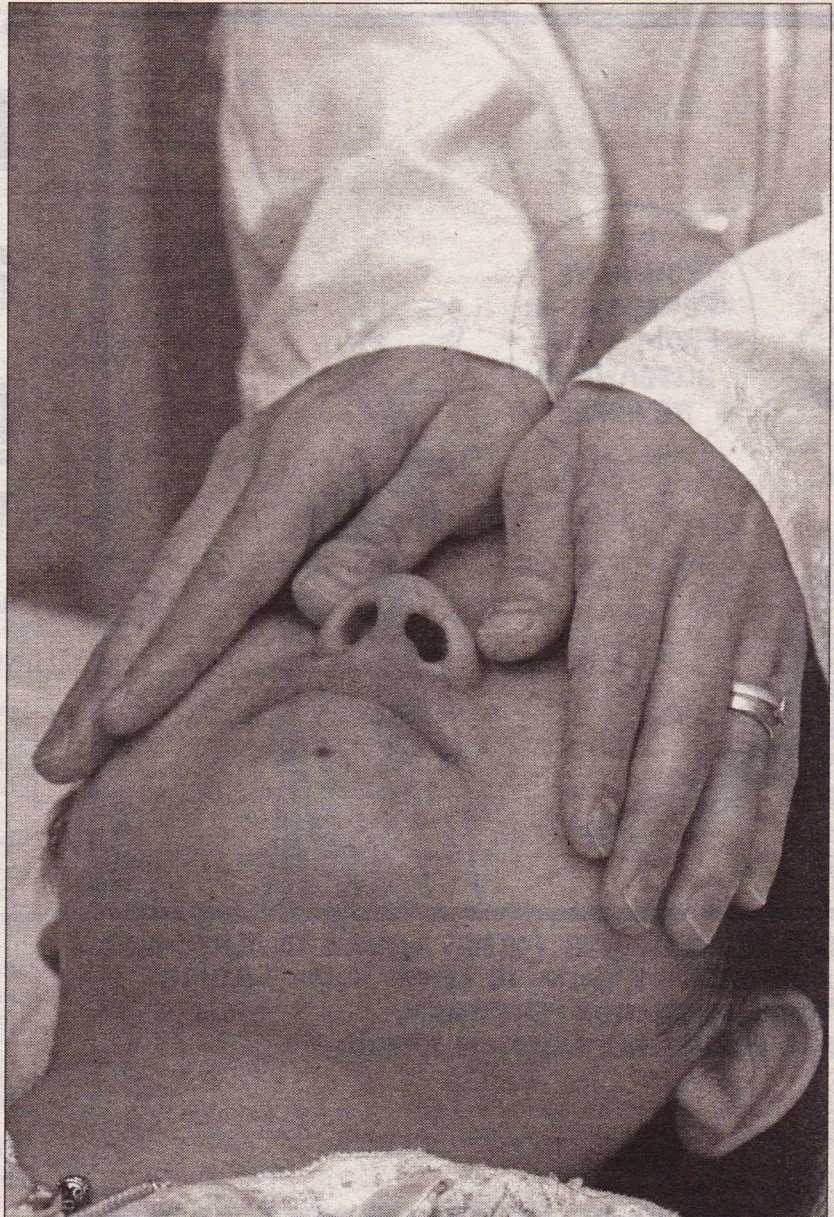
"I see the body. I can feel the energy blockage," Okazaki says.

Her home-based clinic in Chilliwack is calm and meditative, and she says it is normal for some people to fall asleep during treatment. The candles, Japanese prints and quiet music only add to the relaxing atmosphere.

Okazaki trained with a Reiki master in Japan in 2005 but didn't set out to become a teacher herself.

"In the beginning, my intention was to cure my baby," she says.

She became an assistant teacher two



Teresa James/For the TIMES

**Ritsuko Uehara feels the healing hands of Mari Okazaki during a Reiki treatment.**

years ago and a full Jikiden Reiki teacher last year. Many of her clients are local but some come from as far away as Vancouver or Seattle. She even had one woman from Wisconsin come for a visit.

Okazaki teaches new practitioners, many of whom practise other alternative methods. Some are massage therapists or Shiatsu practitioners who

incorporate Reiki into their own techniques.

► This Saturday, she will give a free talk on Reiki at 12:30 p.m. at Amethyst Books & Essence (8985 Young Rd.). People can then experience mini Reiki sessions for 15 minutes (by donation) from 1 to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call 604-792-3730.