



Japan Now: March 2018

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Prime Minister's Cabinet News

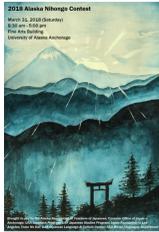


Photo: Prime Minister's Cabinet Public Relations Office

On February 7, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe received a courtesy call from the Honorable Mike Pence, Vice President of the United States. Prime Minister Abe and Vice President Pence held a small-group meeting and later an expanded bilateral meeting where regional issues were discussed, as well as North Korea. After a Joint Press Announcement, Prime Minister Abe and his wife Akie held a banquet.

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15th Annual Alaska Nihongo Contest



The 15th Annual Alaska Association of Teachers of Japanese (AKATJ) Alaska Nihongo Contest will be held on **Saturday, March 31, 2018**, at the Fine Arts Building on the University of Alaska Anchorage campus. Any Alaska residents enrolled in a Japanese language class at an accredited educational institution (grades K-12 and university) are eligible to participate. Spectators are welcome to watch student performances.

Alaska Nihongo Contest is also a day-long celebration of Japanese language and culture. There will be food, games, and entertainment, including taiko drumming, ikebana, and kendo.

For more information, please visit the [AKATJ website](#).

Cultural Notes: Ramen



Sapporo miso ramen

Ramen is a Japanese dish consisting of Chinese wheat noodles and a flavorful broth, normally topped with various vegetables and meat. While the exact origins of ramen remain unclear, it has been consumed in Japan since at least the early 20th century. It has distinctive noodles because of the addition of [kansui](#) (an alkaline mineral water that gives the noodles a firmer, less absorbent texture). Ramen broth is made in countless different ways, with many different ingredients simmering for weeks, and for many ramen chefs their broth recipe is a closely guarded secret. The broths can widely be classified into four styles, shoyu (soy sauce), shio (salt), miso and curry. After that, ramen toppings can include chashu (sliced braised pork), scallions, egg, beans, bamboo shoots, and seaweed among many others.

Many regions of Japan have their own distinctive style of ramen that reflect to local available produce and meat. In Hokkaido, where many of Alaska's sister cities are located, the famous Sapporo ramen is a miso based broth with corn, butter, and crab among its toppings. In Tokyo, the local style includes both chicken and pork in its broth, and includes a noticeable dashi flavor. Ramen can also be either an expensive sit down restaurant meal, or a quick inexpensive bite before catching the next train. Across Japan you can find small ramen huts at train stations and businessmen noisily slurping their noodles (remember, slurping helps cool off the noodles and is not considered impolite).

In 1958 Japanese inventor Momofuku Ando invented freeze dried instant ramen noodles. In the United States this was how ramen noodles first became popular, via Instant Noodles (Cup of Noodles) in 1971 by the Nissin Corporation. Cup of Noodles and Top Ramen are now the most recognizable brands here in the US, but there is a world of difference between a bowl of fresh ramen at a restaurant and the freeze dried instant noodles one buys at the store. Instant noodles are a great quickly made lunch, but a well-made bowl of ramen is a full experience not to be missed.

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Featured Interview: Ms. Caryn Bromirski



Caryn as a JET hosting the "What's Happening Hiroshima" radio program

Ms. Caryn Bromirski is a Japanese teacher and alum of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. After spending a year at Waseda University in Tokyo and working as a Japanese speaking guide in Alaska, Caryn joined the JET Program as a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) for the Hiroshima City International Relations Division.

After earning a Master's degree at the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor, Caryn returned to Alaska to teach. She completed the UAA Teacher's Certification Program and has taught Japanese at Chugiak High School and the University of Alaska - Anchorage. She continues to privately tutor students and her children.

Q: When did you begin studying and teaching Japanese?

A: I began taking Japanese language classes as a freshman at the University of Redlands in California. I had taken three and a half years of Spanish at Bartlett High School, but Japan was rising to prominence in the world news and sparked my interest.

During my junior year, I earned a scholarship for a study abroad program from the Japan Business Association in Southern California. I spent a year studying at Waseda University in Tokyo. While pursuing my studies at Waseda, I found opportunities to teach English, and work on English Conversation software.

[Read Full Interview](#)

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