



*Presents*

**Japan-Alaska Photo + Essay Campaign**  
日・アラスカ姉妹都市フォト・エッセイキャンペーン

**Theme: "a heartwarming experience achieved through Japan-Alaska sister city exchange."**

テーマ:「日アラスカ姉妹都市交流を通じて得られた心温まる出来事」

**October 2021—March 2022**  
2021年10月～2022年3月



**Congratulations!**  
to all our winners

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## **Acknowledgements**

### **Judges**

Chitose City, Akita City, Saroma City

Rachel Tussey, Tony Hatano-Worell, Hiroko Harada, Masaru Aniya, Kenichi Nishizawa, Michael Hughes

Naoko Shimosaka, Junko Suzuki

The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage would like to thank all participants in this Photo + Essay Campaign for making it the most successful sister city campaign yet. Judges were moved by all submissions, which in different ways showed the strength of friendships over time and young people's passion for cultural exchange. Thank you, again, to all who submitted.

The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage is committed to building friendships between the people of Japan and Alaska. If you would like to work with us on a future event, feel free to contact the Consular Office at [inquiry-ak@se.mofa.go.jp](mailto:inquiry-ak@se.mofa.go.jp).

## 主催者からのメッセージ: 在アンカレジ領事事務所長 安仁屋 賢



皆様はご馳走が並ぶ文化行事や表彰式などの夕食会レセプションに招かれたことはありませんか。食事が始まる前のひと時の友人たちとの会話は楽しいものですが、寿司、ステーキ、ラザーニアなどの美味しい食事を前にして主催者からの挨拶が延々と行われるのはあまり歓迎できません。スピーチは退屈だし、お腹は空くし、待たされている間、閉口することが多いです。主催者の方はそういう事情は察しながらも、言いたいこと、言わなければならないことが色々あるので、遠慮しつつも延々とスピーチは続く。誰もが脱したくなるジレンマです。

そういうジレンマの経験を持つ私はこの挨拶を短くしようと心がけています。それでも皆様に申し上げたいことがたくさんあります。どの作品も読む者をして感動させるものばかりだからです。まるでレセプション会場にずらりと並べられた、美味しそうなお馳走の数々のようです。料理の専門家でもない私が、素人ながらもそれを味わった感想を、来客の皆様の一つ一つ説明したくなる、そういう作品ばかりなのです。

私はベートーベンの「魂より出づる。願わくば魂に届かんことを。」という言葉が大好きです。どの作品も姉妹都市交流で出会った状況が上手に説明されていて、そこで得られた感動や貴重な体験が臨場感ある表現や生き生きとした写真で描写されています。魂と魂が響き合う、そういう作品ばかりなのです。日本語の「一期一会」です。

世界は予測不能な悲慘な事件で溢れています。その中でこの冊子を読んだ皆様が姉妹都市交流を体験した作者たちが得た感動を共有し、そして日アラスカ間の姉妹都市交流にまた一歩、踏み出して頂ければ幸いに存じます。

### Message from the Host: Mr. Masaru Aniya, Head of the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage

Have you ever been invited to a reception such as a cultural event or awards ceremony with a buffet of great food? It is fun to have a conversation with friends before the meal starts, but it is not so enjoyable to stand through endless greetings from the event organizers as delicious food such as sushi, steak, and lasagna sits there waiting. Speeches are boring, you get hungry, and the situation can become unpleasant. The organizer has many things to say, and even though he/she is aware that everyone is waiting, the speech goes on endlessly. It's a dilemma that everyone wants to escape from.

Having experienced such a dilemma myself, I will try to shorten this greeting. Still, I have a lot that I want to say. This is because I thought that all works were very impressive. It's like standing in front of delicious foods lined up at the reception venue. Even though I am not a culinary expert, after tasting each food I still want to give my impressions of each one to other guests.

I love the Beethoven quote that goes, "From the heart - May it go back to the heart". In each of these works, participants described the situations of their sister city exchanges very well, and these emotional and valuable experiences were depicted in a realistic manner with lively photos. All of these works resonate from soul-to-soul. In Japanese, we call this "Ichigo Ichie".

The world is full of unpredictable and tragic events. We hope that all of you who read this booklet can share the excitement of the authors who experienced sister city exchange, and take another step towards deepening sister city relationships between Japan and Alaska.

# “Adult Category” Winners

## 1st Place: Mako Haibara

日・アラスカ姉妹都市フォト・エッセイキャンペーン

「日アラスカ姉妹都市交流を通じて得られた心温まる出来事」

日本語イマージョンプログラム  
2021-2022年インターン 生原 真湖

日本からおおよそ17時間、5500キロの旅。やってきたのは広大な北国の中にある、小さな日本でした。

サンドレイク小学校を中心とする「日本語イマージョンプログラム」を知っていますか？幼稚園から高校までの13年間、子どもたちが日本人の先生と、日本語で、日本語とほかの教科を勉強します。33年前に設立された歴史あるプログラムには日本語の教材はもちろん、日本の伝統や文化が詰まっています、そこは疑うことなく、「小さな日本」です。



私がアラスカにやってきたのは、このイマージョンプログラムを支えるインターンとして活動するためです。1年ごとに変わるインターンは今年は5人、幼小中高それぞれに派遣されました。私たちの役割は担当の先生の授業をサポートすること、プログラムのなかで行われる様々なイベントで地域に日本を届けることです。代わりにイマージョンの皆さんは私たちにそれぞれ3軒の温かい家族を提供してくださり、いろいろな方法でアラスカの魅力を教えてくださいます。



8月にアラスカに着いてから半年、私のファミリーは黄金色の唐揚げを作れるようになり、いただきますを言ってから食べるようになりました。私は道にあらわれるムースに動じなくなり、今までやったことのないウィンタースポーツにもたくさん挑戦させてもらいました。一緒に日本の料理、アラスカの料理を作って食べたり、節分には豆まきをしたりもしました。クリスマスツリーには折り紙のオーナメントが飾られ、私がファミリーにプレゼントした日本語の名前もいつも授業で使ってくれています。お互いにどんどんいろんなことをやってみたい!という姿勢でなんでもトライできる毎日が最高に楽しくて幸せです。



大自然が魅力のアラスカによろやく春が来ました。皆さんが長い冬の終わりをよるこぶ一方で、あたたかい春は学校の1年が終わるしるしでもあり、私は少し寂しさを感じています。楽しい毎日があっという間に過ぎ、子どもたちとの学校での日々もあっという間に終わってしまいます。6月の帰国が少しずつ近づく中、まだやりたいことが山ほどある！時間が足りない！と思ってしまいます。でもこれは裏を返すと、アラスカと小さな日本が大好きという気持ちの表れなのかもしれません。この機会に出来なかったことはぜひもう一度、いえ、何度でもアラスカにきて挑戦したいです。

私にこんなにも楽しくて幸せな機会を与えてくださる皆さん、そしてここまで33年間「小さな日本」を作り上げられた皆さんに、感謝の気持ちでいっぱいです。素敵なプログラムの一員として力になれて本当に幸せです。そしてこれからもっとすばらしいプログラムになっていくよう、心から願っています。

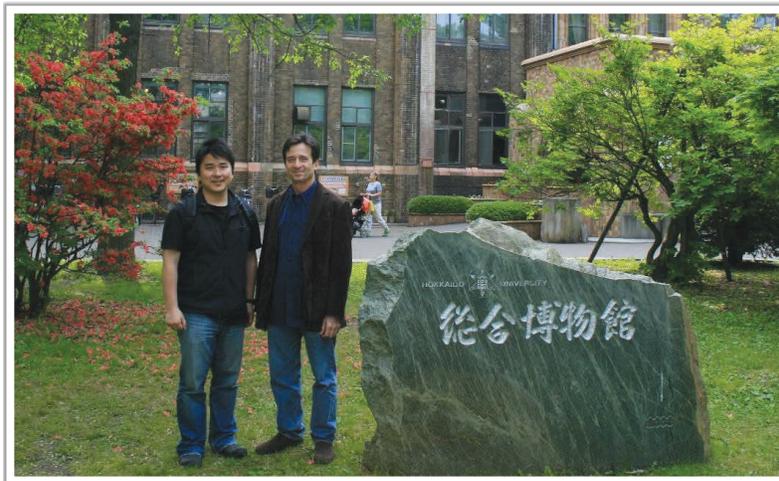
さいごに、日本語イマージョンプログラムのみなさん！みなさんのおかげでアラスカが大好きになりました、いつもありがとう。来年はぜひ、日本で会いましょうね！

## 2nd place: Professor Anthony Fiorillo

Japan-Alaska Sister Cities Photo + Essay Campaign

I share a story not so much about any physical sister-city relationship but rather a friendship that has spawned deeper relations between our cultures and our interests. It includes my good friend, Dr. Yoshitsugu Kobayashi and some of what we've learned about the paleontological connection between Japan and Alaska.

I am a paleontologist by training who has spent over two decades exploring for dinosaurs in Alaska. Among the highlights of my career is having the opportunity to mentor many students, and among those former students is Dr. Yoshi Kobayashi of Hokkaido University in Sapporo. Our work together has lasted nearly two decades, and spans Japan, Alaska, and Mongolia. We have shown through the record of dinosaurs that the relationship between Japan and Alaska is rooted in deep geologic time.



While Yoshi spent several years in the United States studying paleontology, my first trip to Japan was in 2010 where I helped the Hokkaido University Museum organize a special exhibit on Alaskan dinosaurs. I have visited Japan several times since 2010, and most of those visits have been to Hokkaido. Despite all the years I had known Yoshi when he was in Dallas, and all the times we spent talking about dinosaurs, remarkably, it was during the preparation for that first trip that we discovered another shared passion...baseball. Yoshi took me to my first Japanese baseball game. I've gone to baseball games since I was a little boy and I quickly learned during my first Ham Fighters game that even though I did not understand exactly what the Ham Fighters fans were yelling during the game, because I am a big US baseball fan, from their body language I knew exactly what those fans were feeling during the game. To this day, I remain a fan of the Ham Fighters.

Our routine of going to baseball games continues when we are in Alaska together, where we go to watch the Glacier Pilots or Pirates in Anchorage when they are in town.

Through the close connection to Yoshi and Hokkaido University, I became the first person to receive the title of 'Invited Professor' as a paleontologist for the Hokkaido University Museum, a title I carry proudly. And through my later trips to Sapporo, I became a mentor for many of the students at the university who were interested in paleontology. The nature of work in paleontology includes spending time in the field, living under primitive conditions which can deepen relationships.



Some of the results of our science include the discovery and naming of the most complete dinosaur skeleton known from Japan. This specimen was discovered by an amateur fossil hunter at Mukawa Town. The original fossils were very interesting and we discussed whether or not we should try to open a bigger excavation with the help of the people of Mukawa Town and explore if there were more bones of this dinosaur. Yoshi asked for my assistance to make the case to the town to support a much bigger excavation. The town approved of the idea, and after the excavation and study, we named perhaps the most famous dinosaur from Japan, *Kamuysaurus japonicus*. And this dinosaur is very closely related to the most commonly found dinosaur in Alaska, *Edmontosaurus*, showing that the connection between Japan and Alaska extends back in geologic time some 70 million years ago.



This connection is also expressed in some of the rocks in Alaska where the strength of our cooperation has allowed us to discover additional evidence of the Japan-Alaska connection. In Denali National Park, for example, we have discovered unique dinosaur footprint associations that show how Asia and Alaska are related.



The rewards of our cooperation are many and promise to continue for many more years to come. Those rewards include, of course, dinosaurs and baseball. Because of our close work together with interested students, mostly from Hokkaido University, the rewards include developing additional close friendships with a new generation of Japanese students, some of whom have become established in the field now. These next generation scientists will continue the legacy of paleontology and mutual cooperation into the future.



### 3rd place: Sue Christiansen

A Heart Warming Experience in Japan

I'm Home

"Tadaima!" I announced as I opened the heavy carved double doors, and entered. "Okaeri" I heard from deep within the sanctuary of the house. Something welled up inside, I knew it meant welcome. Okasan had been waiting for my safe return.

For the first time, I had managed to find my way from Aoyama Gakuin School, to the Shibuya train station. I had identified the correct train. Got on it amidst the throng. I felt a little hand reach over and touch my yellow head, making me and all the squeezed in crowd around me smile. With vigilance, I searched each stop and finally recognized my station. I "gomen nasaied" my way out just in time for the train doors closing. There was the familiar vegetable vendor and the Buddhist temple. I weaved my way up the narrow streets along the tightly packed buildings, past the familiar Shinto shrine and the Sakura tree. This was my neighborhood. All the weeks of guiding, hand holding, looking at maps, being quizzed by my Japanese family....worked. I was home. I slipped off my shoes before stepping up onto the sweet smelling tatami floor.

It seemed the Igarashi family welcomed me in every way possible. Not only did they feed me, house me, take me to the most amazing places...every night after dinner they spent an hour teaching me Japanese and I taught them a little English. There was lots of laughter. The evenings would end with an Ofuro, a Japanese bath. Every tension or stress that could have possibly accumulated from being in a new culture, going to school, figuring out the language... was 'whooshed away' as I submerged into the deep wooden tub of hot soothing water.

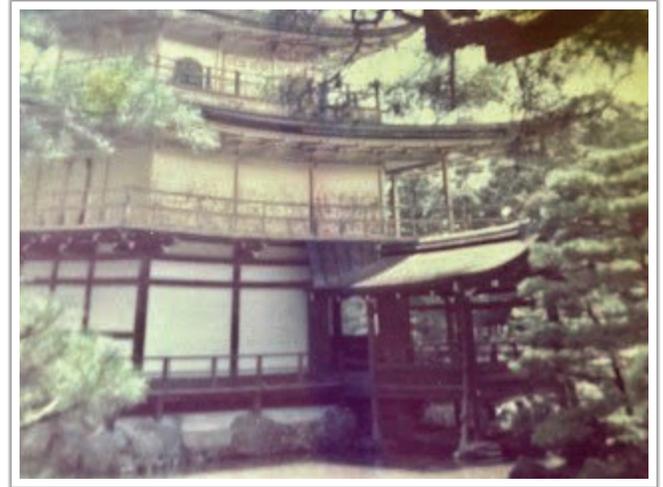
My Japanese Mama sent me off to school every day with a most exquisite work of art - my lunch. Sometimes, when I'd open the little lacquer bento box, the beauty would take my breath away. Such attention to detail and balance wrapped up with love and kindness in delicious silky smooth rolled omelets, or irresistible sweet salty chicken bites or my favorite... onegiri. Inside the scrumptious golf ball of rice, with a bit or dried seaweed decoration, was always a scrumptious surprise and sometimes a sweet sour plum.

I wore a uniform to Aoyoma Gaukin, and when called upon by my teacher, like every student in the class, I stood up respectfully and answered. My responses usually caused a bit of laughter and by the end of the school year, I was well known throughout. It started in chemistry. I was familiar with the periodic table of elements, common ions and compounds and my lab partner was very organized and detail oriented. We always followed protocol and safety rules, and took utmost care calculating the amount of compounds to mix but may not have always heated the solution to the proper temperature. Regardless, we seemed to empty out the school weekly as a result of our experiments. Even in Japan, most students appreciate getting out of the classroom, breathing the fresh air and having a break from tedious book requirements. It usually took a good 45 minutes to clear the room... and school of smoke :)

I sometimes found myself home alone after school, my sisters at piano or koto lessons, my Mother helping obaasan, my grandmother. We figured out just what I should say if the phone would ring.. "Mushi, mushi" (How one answers the phone in Japan.) "Gomen nasai". I'm sorry. "Wakarimasen". I don't understand. "Matta atodai." Until later. "Sayonara". Good - bye. For some reason when I was home alone the phone rang off the hook.



Family Camp



Aoyama Gauquin

My family was so good to me and I got to experience much of Japan in a very short time. We traveled and played in Kyoto and Kamakura, and on the North Island with my cousins. I climbed Mt Fuji. They taught me games and songs I teach to my own family now. They still bring tears of joy and laughter.

Never before or since have I seen, across the board, the pursuit of excellence. I know it sounds like a stereotype but I can honestly say I saw no mediocrity. My fellow students, sisters and cousins did not dabble at anything. They were amazing musicians, actors, mathematicians, athletes. They gave whatever it was they pursued, their all. A quality I hadn't seen in the United States. They also depended quite a bit on one another for decision making. Group consensus vital - what a gift they taught me. Still today in the States, independence and self sufficiency are so emphasized, treasured group consensus such a rarity.

My Japanese father had business in the United States and came to visit my family after my time abroad ended. It was wonderful for my Japanese father to meet my American family. When Fukushima happened, It took awhile, but I finally learned of the Igarashis. I got a letter letting me know my youngest sister had died. She was the sister who led me through the train stations, insisting on holding my hand whenever possible. She introduced me to anything she thought might remotely give me joy, flowers, birds, sunsets, comic books. It was a gift to know her. She spoke very little English but we never had trouble communicating with each other. Oyasuminasai little sister. May you sleep peacefully. I am so thankful for the opportunity to have lived in Japan with a family that welcomed me into their hearts and homes. I learned how much we are the same. Their grace and hospitality made me a better person. Domo arigato gozimashita.



The Igarahis

## “Youth Category” Winners

### 1st place: Makoto Kanamori

友達から広げる国際交流

金森 亮知

「君のお弁当に入っている、それ何?おいしそうだね。」小学生だった僕はそれを聞いて、びっくりした。クラスメイトには僕の弁当が「変なご飯」に見えるようで、これまではいつも、変わったものを見る目で見られていたからだ。僕の弁当は、毎日母が作ってくれる日本の弁当。日本の弁当はうまい。人の目を気にして、「アメリカ人っぽい弁当」を持っていくよりは、他人にどう思われようと日本の弁当を持っていきたい。だから人の目は気にしていなかった。だが、そんなある日、友達のエリオットにこう言われ、僕は戸惑いながら「フーリガン(アラスカで初夏にとれる魚)のフライだよ」と答えた。すると彼は、そのままの勢いによって、次々に質問を浴びせかけてきた。「その魚はどうやって料理したの?どこで釣れるの?」

その翌日から、エリオットはほぼ毎日、僕の食べているものについて質問してきた。これをきっかけに、巻きずしの作り方を教えてほしいと頼まれ、彼の家で一緒に巻きずしを作ったこともあった。その日、彼は事前に、自分で味噌汁の作り方を調べ、初めて自分で味噌汁を作り、僕を出迎えてくれた。一緒に作った寿司も、エリオットの作った味噌汁も、格別に美味しく、僕はアメリカ人の友達が日本の文化に興味を持ってくれたことに驚くとともに、なんともうれしい気持ちになった。僕とエリオットは親友になり、別の日は餃子を作ってみたり、学校では日本語を教えることもあった。

僕はこの出来事を通して、もっとアメリカの人に日本の文化のすばらしさを知ってもらいたいという気持ちを持つようになった。僕の両親は日本人だけれど、僕はアメリカで生まれ育ったので、半分は日本人で、半分はアメリカ人のような、ユニークな存在だと思う。両国の文化を知っているから、アメリカ人には日本の文化の良さを、日本人にはアメリカの文化の良さを伝えたい。

今、僕は高校で、友達に日本のアニメや漫画について教えたり、最近では放課後に週1回、日本語を教えたりもしている。彼は「日本のアニメや漫画の登場人物が言っていることが日本語でわかるようになったら、いつか日本に遊びに行きたい」と言っている。僕はそれを聞いてとてもうれしくなった。それからは、日本語を教える時に、日本の文化についても話すようにしている。彼がいつも興味津々なまなざしで聞いてくれるので、つい話すぎてしまうことがあるくらい。僕も日本のアニメや漫画が大好きなのだが、こんなふうにアメリカ人の友達と日本のアニメや漫画の話で語り合う日が来るとは思わなかった。

アメリカの人に、しいては他の国の人にも、日本の文化についてもっと知ってもらい、日本の素晴らしさをより知ってほしい——そんな思いが芽生えていたところ、昨年12月に「日-アラスカ姉妹都市 国際青年オンライン会議」が催され、僕は思い切って弁論者として参加を決めた。そこではアラスカと姉妹都市の北海道千歳市がズームでつながり、日米の姉妹都市交流を深めるためにできることについて話し合いがなされた。国際交流のために何ができるか、具体的なアイデアを出し合い、新しい意見を聞くことがとても楽しかった。

今の僕にできることは限られているかもしれないが、日本にアメリカの良さを伝え、アメリカに日本の良さを伝えることで、将来的にはアメリカと日本が今以上に深いかかわりを持ち、お互いがより分かり合える未来につながってほしい。人に文化を教えることは思うより難しい。教えてみると自分でも分からないことが多いからだ。僕はもっと双方の国の文化を勉強して、いつか国際交流の一助になれる日がくることを願う。

## 2nd place: Keigo Kanamori

戦争をなくす国際交流

金森 京幸

今、ウクライナとロシアが戦争をしています。ニュースを見ていたら、ぼくと同じ年くらいの男の子が出てきて、「早く戦争が終わってほしいよ。お父さんが戦争に行くかもしれない。」と言って泣いていました。ぼくはこれを見て、かわいそうだなと思いました。もしこの子がぼくだったら、ぼくだんが来るかもしれないから、こわくてねむれないと思います。ぼくは、ウクライナとロシアの戦争に反対です。どうやったら、国と国はなかよくなれるのでしょうか。

ぼくは、国と国をなかよくさせる方法を考えました。もっと他の国のことを知ることがいいと思います。例えばその国のおいしい食べ物を教えてあげるのもいいと思います。ぼくのお母さんは、ぼくがキングダガーデンのときに、教室に来て、クラスみんなに習字を教えていました。ぼくも学校で友達に日本語を教えています。日本語を教えてあげると、その友達は日本語でぼくにあいさつをしてくれたり、もっと日本のことを聞いてきます。「広島県に行ったことはある?」「着物を見たことがある?」「日本に行ったときは、どこに行ったの?」と、日本の話をいっぱいします。その時、ぼくはちょっとはずかしいけれど、みんなが日本のことを話してくれるのは、心がはずむ感じがします。

ほかの国のことをもっと知れば、その国と戦争しなくなると思います。いいところをたくさん知っている国と戦争したくないからです。ぼくは、戦争のない世界にしたいです。ぼくのお父さんとお母さんは日本人だけど、ぼくはアメリカで生まれたので、半分はアメリカ人です。アメリカと日本のいいところを教えあったり、ほかの国の人といっしょに遊ぶことは、ぼくのできる国際交流だと思います。

## 3rd Place: Kai Thomas

A Year to Remember



Early in the morning of October 9, 2021, my family (my brother, mom, and dad) and I moved from Anchorage to Haboro, a small town of about six thousand people on the northwest coast of Hokkaido, Japan. Before we could actually enter Japan, we had to be quarantined. Spending two weeks with your family in a small hotel room with mediocre food is something I don't want to relive! After enduring two weeks of just sitting in bed, we were finally allowed to fly to Hokkaido. Arriving at the Chitose airport felt like I was finally in Japan. This is where the journey begins.

I've been here for a few months now and have settled into 'regular' life. I'm attending a public school called Haboro Chuugaku, in the second grade. I have started to get adjusted to wearing a uniform, walking a mile to school, and trying as hard as I can to understand Japanese. School is very different here than in Anchorage. I feel that here in Japan students have more of a chance to connect with their teachers and peers because in junior school and high school, the students don't switch classrooms; instead, the teachers change classrooms. I think it makes a better environment for students to connect with their peers. But in America, I think students have more creative free time. First, with less homework and after school activities students have more time to do things they enjoy doing. Second, I think students in America have more freedom when it comes to projects at school like essays and presentations. Junior high school students in Japan are already choosing and deciding what they want to do for their career. In America, I think it's good that we get more time to choose, because I don't think I am going to want to do the same thing five years from now as I do right now.

Along with starting school, I have also picked up a few hobbies, both new and old. For instance, I now go to the community gym and have started learning the Japanese martial art of Kendo. It is so fun and a lot more technical than I would have thought. I am excited to keep learning and practicing and hope to continue when I get back to Anchorage. I have also started ski racing again, which has been fun! And it's a challenge trying to figure out what my coaches are saying. Skiing has been a very big part of my life in Anchorage, so it's great to be able to continue it here.

There are two very famous spots for skiing in Hokkaido that I continually hear about when I'm in Alaska: Niseko and Furano. I was lucky enough to visit both during my winter school break. It was so interesting to ski in a different place because, although it felt the same temperature-wise and snowed the same as it would on a regular winter night in Anchorage, the skiing was quite different. The snow is very light and fluffy here, whereas in Anchorage it is usually more wet and heavy. It was also surprising how much less supervision there was. In Alaska, it seems that wherever you go while skiing at a resort



people in Chitose were so appreciative of his kindness to them that when he left he was gifted an Ainu bead necklace with a seabird medallion known as a shitoki. After his passing it was willed to me and I cherish it to this day.

That my uncle built a close rapport with the Japanese people is not surprising. One of his primary responsibilities was serving as a liaison with the Japanese townspeople in Chitose. In his previous Alaska assignment he was a leader who came to be loved and respected by his men as well. John H. Grainger in his book "Alaska National Guard, 297th Infantry Battalion" writes about a 140 mile march "Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William Walther, Commanding Officer of the 297th Infantry, Battalion, from Fort Richardson to Mt. McKinley Park for testing of winter equipment" that was described as "unprecedented in number of men, time and distance covered under winter conditions." He added, referring to my uncle, that even though he was the Commander of the expedition he "worked the hardest and suffered the most. He traveled alone with his pack. Prior to the war he had been a mining engineer and foreman in a gold mine in Juneau."

Despite missing that first chance, just a few years later, through my church (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints) I had the opportunity to not only visit Japan, but to spend two years there.

In 1968 during my first months in Japan Crown Prince of Japan Akihito came to visit Kenroku-en Park in Kanazawa, Japan just a few blocks from where I was residing. Although we only briefly waved to each other it was a memorable experience. During my final months in Japan I had the opportunity to serve as a guide at Japan's Expo '70 at the church's pavilion there located next to the Japan Pavilion. (At the Expo the State of Alaska also had a pavilion that I spent some time visiting.) At Expo '70 the Crown Prince visited the pavilion where I served and even stayed beyond the scheduled time to have his questions answered.

After returning from my experience in Japan I had the opportunity to work one summer as a tour guide for Japanese visiting my home state of Alaska. Memorable among those I guided was a group headed by a recognized Japanese poet who asked me to accompany them to scenic locations where they would stop and compose their own poems. This was my first introduction to haiku which I came to appreciate was a poetic form that, at least for these poets, was inspired by the beauty of nature. On my most recent 2019 visit to Japan as a volunteer teacher for a college there (Mikuni International College in Yuzawa, Japan), I reciprocated the effort by composing a haiku of my own as an example for the Japanese students as I challenged them to attempt to write a haiku in English. Looking out at the Fall leaves, I penned:

Autumn leaves abound  
With a rainbow of colors  
Red, Orange, and Yellow

Earlier that year the now Emperor Akihito was televised visiting the Imperial Family's Shrine in Ise in preparation for his abdication. My wife and I had just returned from our own visit to Ise. Once again I saw him wave, this time to all of us in the Japanese television audience.

That token of greeting and friendship brought back not only the memory of his waving in person to those of us gathered five decades earlier in Kanazawa's Kenroku-en Park, but also of the Japanese citizens and school children who waved to us as we were welcomed as Alaskans visiting the City of Homer's Sister City in Teshio, Japan located just north of Anchorage's Sister City of Chitose in western Hokkaido.

I suspect there wasn't a dry eye among our assembled contingent of visiting Alaskans as we looked out from the bus windows to see the streets of Teshio lined with the children waving at us as they held small Japanese and United States flags.

That inaugural visit of ours in 1984 to Homer's newly designated Sister City of Teshio was followed by a delegation from Teshio who came to Alaska in a subsequent year. We were honored to chauffeur Teshio's Mayor from the airport to our home in Anchorage where we hosted a welcoming Bar-B-Q featuring Alaska Salmon for the delegation before they continued on to Homer.



The Ainu bead necklace with a seabird medallion known as a shitoki that I inherited from my uncle who had been given it by the Japanese citizens in Chitose in appreciation for his kindness when he headed the postwar occupation of Hokkaido (pictured to the left).



The Crown Prince Akihito waving his hand in friendship at Kenroku-en Park on his visit to Kanazawa (pictured to the right).



## “Circle of Friendship” Submissions

\*\*The Consular Office requested prominent figures in Alaska and Japan to create model works in order to promote submissions for this campaign. Together, these works are called the “Circle of Friendship” series.

### Mr. Zack Fields, Alaska State House District 20 Representative



2021 Japanese Sister City Essay Contest: Zack Fields

My wife and I had the privilege of visiting Japan for the first time during the winter of 2017, when we went skiing in Hokkaido. We flew into Chitose, Anchorage's sister city, and then traveled and skied both at resorts like Niseko and in the backcountry, such as on Mt. Yotei and the area around Kiroro. There are so many similarities and so many differences between Hokkaido and Alaska. Later that year, our first daughter Zara was born. Just before her second birthday, and shortly before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we traveled to Tokyo, Kyoto, and hiked part of the Kumano-Kodo trail on the Kii peninsula. Zara loved the Ueno zoo, temples, and Japanese food (her favorites were eating in at an izakaya or exploring the many course of dinner if we were eating in at the ryokan). It is humbling to walk through a city as ancient and beautiful as Kyoto, or walk along a path like the Kumano Kodo, and think about the age of your young daughter in contrast to the thousand-year old trails, temples, and what I think is the world's most advanced and awe-inspiring art. Our younger daughter Simone was born in the midst of the pandemic, and has hardly traveled, but I can't wait to go back to Japan with her and with Zara as soon as possible after they're vaccinated. I want them to learn as much, and be as inspired by Japan as I have been.

-Zack Fields, Alaska State House District 20 Representative

### Prof. Hiroko Harada, Director, the Montgomery Dickson Center for Japanese Language and Culture, University of Alaska Anchorage

Thank you, Manabe-sensei!  
Hiroko Harada (Anchorage, Alaska)

In September 2019, Anchorage and Chitose celebrated the 50th anniversary of their friendly relationship, and fifteen Anchorage delegates visited Chitose for the celebration. The two cities, separated by the Bering Sea, the Sea of Okhotsk, and the northern archipelago, have transcended language, customary, and cultural differences that far exceed the geographical distance and have formed a strong bond for half a century. Behind these incredible 50 years is the unceasing dedication of our seniors, who passionately kept the relationships.

**Manabe Sensei** Among them is one indispensable person who made significant contributions to this long-lasting friendship from the start. His name is Mr. Tatsuo Manabe ('Manabe sensei'), an honorary citizen of Anchorage. He was instrumental in the Anchorage-Chitose alliance formed in 1969. For nearly half a century, Manabe sensei dedicated his life to building the sister-cities friendly relationship.

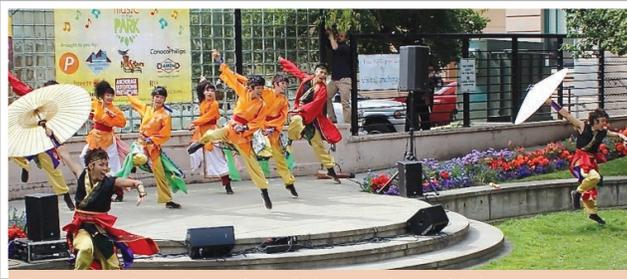
I met him for the first time in 2009 when the Chitose delegates came to Anchorage for the 40th anniversary. Since then, I have had the pleasure of visiting Chitose many times as a Sister Cities Commissioner. Manabe sensei, you were always there to welcome us at the airport with a big smile. I recall the time when I played the violin at a reception. After the performance, you reached out to me, saying, "It was beautiful. You made my day," and sobbed. We cried together. I felt our hearts become one, and I could feel how much you had been cherishing our sister-cities relationship. We promised to meet again in 2019 at the 50th anniversary. However, you were not there at the airport. Manabe sensei passed away in 2016. He was 100 years old.

Although he was not there, there was a moment when I felt the presence of Manabe sensei during the celebration. On the second day, we were surprised by an unexpected reunion of a former Chitose Little League baseball player and a former Anchorage youth baseball team coach. The two teams had friendly matches more than a quarter-century ago in Anchorage and Chitose. Who could have expected such a reunion? I could only think Mr. Manabe connected them from heaven.





Surprise reunion at the 50th in Chitose, September 2019



The Yosakoi Soran Team from Chitose Institute of Science and Technology at the 45th Anniversary in Anchorage, August 2014.



With Manabe sensei, at the Chitose airport, 2012.



Anchorage Sister Cities Commissioners with Representatives from the Chitose Ainu Association, in Anchorage, January 2020.

For the next 50 more years of close friendship, we have launched a new friendly relationship between Ainu and Alaska Natives. We also expanded our K-8 school exchanges to the high school level. Our sister cities exchanges are in full swing, thanks to you, Manabe sensei!

**Mr. Michihiro Konno, Japanese Dog Sledding Musher**

I'm from Ashibetsu City, Hokkaido. Hokkaido is similar to Alaska. Why was I interested in dog sledding? The beginning of my motivation to become a musher was when I saw a drama set in Furano, Hokkaido called "From the North Country(Kitano Kunikara)", and I thought that the log house that had appeared in it was cool, and I wanted to build it someday. I was a civil servant in Sapporo City. After working steadily, I finally purchased land in the suburbs of Sapporo City and built my long-awaited log house. I also had a dog that I had loved since I was a child.

In the 1980s, dog sprint racing became popular in Hokkaido. I was impressed when I saw the dog sledding race. You know a jockey, Mr. Yutaka Take, don't you? I felt that I could manipulate the dog and be in first place so like he could manipulate the horse.



When I was 28 years old, a dog sledding professional sold me puppies of dogs purchased from foreign countries, and I lived with them and trained them. I didn't have a teacher to teach dog sledding, so I read many dog sledding books. I started training dogs riding on my bicycle. The following year, I competed in a local sprint race.

In 1995, when I was 33 years old, I went to Alaska to see a race. That's when my mind was decided. I want to try dog sledding races in Alaska.

I participated and made my first appearance at the Open North American Championship (Sprint Race) at Fairbanks in 1997 and won the rookie of the year award in fifth place.

In 1998, I participated in the Open North American Championship known as the World's Four Biggest Dog Sledding Race (Sprint Race) and I was the first Asian to win. I have received recognition from the Alaska Legislature and granted permanent residence in the United States in 2000. I have been living in Alaska since then.



Around 2013, I remembered when I faced my friend's death, I felt that I would regret not doing the last challenge race on the verge of dying. One of my friends encouraged me and started looking for sponsors with cloud founding.



I participated to a qualifying race in 2017 so that I can race for the upcoming race. It costs money to sled a dog. Dog procurement, training, bait, home, long-distance races, airplanes, snowmobile rentals, equipment, etc. At that time, I borrowed \$50,000 from the bank with my only house in Willow as collateral. I wanted to try it even if my house was gone. That was the last way to get the expense.

I believe that muscles strengthen the mind, so strength muscles are essential every day. I like to be involved with people. It is such a great feeling to be united with my dogs and cut through the wind aiming the first place. It's the best feeling. Now, I am enjoying talking to customers who come to Alaska to see the Northern Lights in my cottage in Fairbanks, we talk about grandeur of Alaska and the theory of our lives feeling a cool air next to my skin. "Unless you give up, your dream will not end" is my belief.



### Mr. Forrest Dunbar, member of the Anchorage Assembly

Three times I have had the pleasure to visit Japan, and each one had a significant impact on my life.

In the first instance, when I was just 15 years old, I had the good fortune to live and study in the city of Hirakata-shi, Osaka-fu on a one year foreign exchange through the American Field Service. It was, without exaggeration, the most important year of my life up until that point. Coming from a small town in rural Alaska, it was hard to imagine a community so different from what I had known. But the students, the teachers, and my host family were incredibly welcoming. For a full school year I absorbed the language, the culture, the food, and the friendship. It transformed the way I saw the world; I learned a tremendous amount about Japan, of course, but I also learned how many people outside of the United States saw my nation and its place in the world. By the time I returned to Alaska, I had decided that I would be pursuing a career in International Relations and Diplomacy, a complete departure from what I had been intending up until that point.



Four years later I returned on a National Security Education Program Boren Scholarship to study for a year at Waseda University in Tokyo. Waseda offers a program taught in English, which I took advantage of to study primarily Economics and Foreign Policy (I must admit that I never became proficient enough in Japanese to take college-level courses taught in that language). By this time, I was majoring in International Service, with a focus on International Economic Policy, and was planning to enter the US Foreign Service. The Japanese college students I took classes with, trained in the Judo Club and socialized with were again a highlight of my time there. Smart, studious, fun, and engaging--what strikes me most about

those young people now, looking back, was how at home and comfortable they seemed navigating one of the largest, densest, most overwhelming cities in the world. Tokyo was, of course, wildly out of my price range, but all us poor exchange students scraped by, and I can say that there was seldom a dull moment, in class or wherever the Yamanote-sen could take us. We even left the loop on occasion.



Finally, in late 2019, just before COVID struck the world, a delegation from Anchorage's Sister Cities Commission visited Chitose-shi on Hokkaido and then Rikuzentakata, where a former University of Alaska Anchorage student named Monty Dickson lost his life, along with so many others, in the 2011 tsunami. This was my shortest stay in Japan, but still left me feeling transformed. Whereas before I had always been a student in Japan, now I was an adult, an elected official, and saw a new side of the country. In both cities, we visited with government officials, teachers, university professors, business owners, and more, and they could not have done a better job impressing on us the innovation, resilience, and frankly organizational prowess of the country and its people. Though I have long since abandoned my planned life in the Foreign Service for one in domestic public policy, that visit made me remember some of the thriving, engrossing world outside of our borders, as well as the willingness of Japanese people to embrace us and make us feel welcome. Also, once more, I have to mention the food-- I don't think we had a single meal during that trip that I didn't love. And that includes the couple of times I bought snacks at a "konbini;" it's probably a good thing I had so little money as a student, because as an adult I couldn't resist buying and consuming just about everything in those convenient stores I could get my hands on. Natsukashii!



So that's my Japanese story, or at least part of it. What I've left out is the Japanese people that I have met in the United States-- whether exchange students at my American college, visiting delegations to Anchorage, long-time permanent residents making a home here, or even tourists coming to see the beauty of Alaska. I cannot think of any interaction out of all those that has been negative, and I love hearing the Japanese language spoken or stories about what is happening back in Japan, a nation both modern and changing and also, in a comforting way, forever grounded in its history, in its culture, and recognizable to that 15-year-old version of me who first laid eyes on Hirakata-koukou, rode the Keihan-sen, and drank from the stream at Kyomizu-dera.

