



*One of the iconic symbols of this season is  
"Koinobori" (carp-shaped streamers)  
fluttering in a gentle breeze throughout Japan.*

*Looking up at these beautiful koinobori  
almost swimming in the blue sky,  
You may realize that spring will soon turn into early summer.*

*It also reminds you of parents' wishes for  
their children's growth and happiness.*

# Japan Now: May 2024

*Japan Now* is the email newsletter of the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage

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## Table of Contents

- Children's Day
- A report on the Bridge Festival

- A report on JAPAN Fes
  - MEXT Scholarships
- 

## Children's Day

In Japan, May 5th is Children's Day, and is also the day for a traditional Japanese festival for boys called "Tango no Sekku".

**Tango no Sekku**, originally from China, was introduced to Japan in the Nara era (710-794 ad) as an important day to celebrate a boy's healthy growth. Families with boys traditionally display samurai helmets and figurines of warriors or heroes inside the house. They also fly huge carp-shaped streamers outside of the house as symbols of strength and success; because in a certain Chinese legend, a carp swam upstream to become a dragon.



In 1948, **Children's day** was designated as a national holiday to celebrate the healthy growth and happiness of children. Since then, Children's Day and Tango no Sekku have been celebrated together. Now, May 5th is a celebration day for not only boys but also girls, and in fact, it is also a day to give thanks to mothers under the Public Holiday Law.



The best holidays often come with their own seasonal food, as well!

**Kashiwa Mochi** is a traditional rice cake filled with sweet red bean filling wrapped in Kashiwa leaf (Oak leaf). The oak leaf is not meant to be eaten but believed to bring good fortune and protect children from evil spirits.

**Katsuo** (Bonito) is also eaten since the Japanese name for bonito is associated with the word "victorious man (勝男 katsu-otoko)". Rice balls with bonito flakes are simple to cook if you want to celebrate this day with your family!

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## Bridge Festival

On Saturday, April 6, our office attended the 1st annual Bridge Festival, a cultural exchange festival held at Chugiak High School. There were many people from various countries in attendance, and some of them wore their country's traditional clothing!

Our booth showcased a few aspects of Japanese culture, such as Kendama, Origami,

Sanshin(an Okinawan banjo), and calligraphy using Gansai (traditional Japanese watercolor).

We'd like to thank everyone who visited our booth! The event wasn't long, but we had a steady stream of visitors, especially for Gansai and Kendama.

The Sanshin performances a member of our office did were also well received.

He was able to play some requests from guests between the event's stage performances.

We hope this was a good chance for everyone to get more interested in Japanese culture and language!



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## JAPAN Fes

Last Saturday, April 27th, Head Consul Hamada gave the opening remarks at JAPAN FES. Thank you to the hundreds who came out to experience such a wonderful evening celebrating Japanese culture!

The event began with an impassioned performance from local taiko drum troupe Tomodachi Daiko, followed by national award winning Shamisen artists KIKI. KIKI's act was part performance, part comedy, and part a historical lesson on the Shamisen; and although it was likely the first time many in the audience had heard the Tsugaru Shamisen in person, their act was met with universal appraisal, laughter, and appreciation.



Once the music subsided, California-based BURAI entertained the crowd with a short play featuring samurai and ninja. Crowd participation was a large part of their action-comedy show, and Burai had the audience shouting, laughing, and cheering the whole way through.



Finally, the show ended with a Kimono fashion show. Local volunteers walked on stage dressed in both traditional and contemporary Japanese kimono fashion by some of the industry's finest, including kimono/costume designer Sueko Oshimoto (most recently of FX's show Shogun fame) and photographer and Kimono stylist Kentaro Terauchi to name a few.

The fashion show ended with KIKI and BURAI returning to the stage to join the kimono models for the finale followed by a meet and greet with the performers. The event was a huge success not only thanks to the warm public reception, but thanks to the performers, volunteers, and last but not least the organizers at JAA, the Anchorage School District World Languages and Immersion Program, and the UAA Montgomery Dickson Center for Japanese Language & Culture for putting the event together as well. The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage is always eager to see Japanese culture, education, and entertainment brought to Alaska.



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## MEXT Scholarships

Did you know that there are scholarships available for you to study abroad at a Japanese university? Since 1954, the Japanese government has been offering scholarships to foreign nationals from countries around the world to study in Japan.

The Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle receives applications from Alaska state residents.

If interested, please see this link for application deadlines and application documents.

[https://www.seattle.us.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_en/scholarship.html](https://www.seattle.us.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/scholarship.html)



**STUDY in JAPAN**

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# Niponica

Niponica is a magazine that introduces modern Japanese culture, entertainment, technology, and art. Previously, it was titled “Nipponia” and was first published in 2001. Today, the name has been changed to “Niponica” and is distributed all over the world by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



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