

ALASKA - JAPAN

SISTER CITIES NEWSLETTER 2025

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An update on the various interactions between the sister cities of Alaska and Japan. Discover the recent milestones and ongoing collaborations highlighting the deep cultural connections that have transcended the Pacific divide.

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Anchorage Chitose



Celebrating 55 Years of Friendship

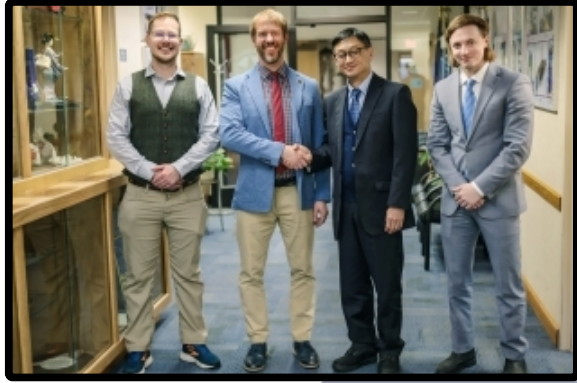
In 2024, Anchorage and Chitose celebrated their 55th Anniversary as sister cities, and 16 Chitose representatives, including Mayor Yokota, joined the celebration in Anchorage. Activity has continued: Alaska Native delegates met with Ainu representatives in Chitose (Nov. 2024), Chitose junior high students visited Anchorage (Jan. 2025), Mears Middle students visited Chitose (May 2025), an ongoing 10-month exchange between Chitose and Dimond High schools (DAICHI project) continued, and Miss Anchorage and a companion participated in Chitose's Sky Beer & Yosakoi Festival (July 2025). This October, Chitose's Ainu representatives will attend the AFN Convention in Anchorage, and another Anchorage delegation plans to visit Chitose.



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Chitose Primary SC Contact: Takao Kosaka - shuji.itori@city.chitose.lg.jp

Fairbanks NSB Mombetsu



Exploring Future Opportunities

Since linking in 1991, Fairbanks North Star Borough and Mombetsu have sustained a friendly dialogue.

While public exchanges have been less frequent in recent years, a research-based exchange occurred in February 2025 as Director Hajo Eicken of the University of Alaska Fairbanks' International Arctic Research Center visited Mombetsu city to participate in the 39th International Symposium on the Okhotsk Sea & Polar Oceans.

While there, he met with representatives from the Mombetsu City International Exchange Committee and delivered a letter from Fairbanks Mayor Grier Hopkins. There are plans in motion for further exchanges in 2026!

Fairbanks NSB Primary SC Contact:

Mombetsu Primary SC Contact: kokusai@city.mombetsu.lg.jp

Homer Teshio



Adventuring Happi Coats

This last year school year, Winter 2024-2025, 17 online exchange classes were held between the students of Teshio and Homer which led to five Homer student ambassadors, (ranging from 5th to 8th grade) 3 chaperones, and 2 other representatives, traveling to Japan for a multi-city visit that culminated in a four-night homestay in Teshio. The group, officially recognized by the City of Homer, presented gifts to Teshio's Mayor and participated in numerous school and local events with Teshio locals.

Teshio presented the Homer delegation with traditional happi coats bearing the town's crest, a symbol of friendship the delegation carried across Japan. Online exchanges are expected to again resume in the fall of 2025.

Homer Primary SC Contact: Megumi Beams - 2024alaskajapaneseclubhomer@gmail.com.

Teshio Primary SC Contact: Hideto Sugawara - ouentai@teshiotown.com

Kenai Akita



A Legacy

In August 2023, seven students from Kenai visited Akita City to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Kenai-Akita sister city relationship, and additionally honor Mrs. Lehtinen, who received the 2022 Foreign Minister's Commendation.

Later in May of 2024 another delegation from Kenai was able to visit 4 schools and meet with Akita city Mayor. During each trip the delegation of course had the opportunity to participate in Akita's rich culture, school activities and festivals.

Kenai Primary SC Contact: Yasuko Lehtinen - _ylehtinen@alaska.edu
Akita Primary SC Contact: City General - ro-plmn@city.akita.lg.jp

Ketchikan Gero Kanayama



Ketchikan Middle Schoolers in Gero



Ketchikan and Gero have a broad range of activities each year often involving dances, picnics, and regular exchanges! Just earlier in June of 2025, 12 middle school students accompanied by 4 chaperones visited Gero from Ketchikan. The group had the opportunity to enjoy visiting all six junior high schools in the larger Gero city area as well as an elementary school, and preschool. And they of course participated in numerous varied activities with the students there and at other locations in the city.



Ketchikan Primary SC Contact: Ashley Glenn - info@ketchikangerokanayama.org

Gero Kanayama Primary SC Contact: Tony Hatano Worrell - tony.in.kanayama@gmail.com

Palmer Saroma



45 Years of Cultivated Roots

The summer of 2025 marked a major milestone for the Palmer Saroma Sister City relationship, thus 23 adults in the Palmer Delegation traveled to Saroma in July 2025 to attend a formal anniversary ceremony. While staying with host families they visited schools, toured Saroma town hall, fished for karei in the Okhotsu sea, studied the famous scallop industry firsthand, rose for zazen in the mornings, and breathed the countryside's fresh air each day. They also were able to attend a special art class taught by Makoto Ambo himself. Everyone also learned that every meal in Saroma is a feast! The trip culminated with a two-day visit to Sapporo and Otaru with a tour of Es Con Stadium and the sacred Hokkaido Shrine. What started as a ham radio friendship in the late 1970's has grown into a sister city family tree that continues to cultivate new roots.

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Saroma Primary SC Contact: City - kikaku@town.saroma.hokkaido.jp

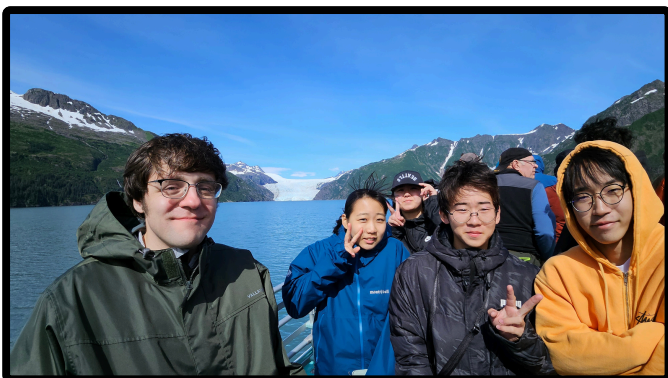


Seward Obihiro

A Re-Ignition of Exchange

In August 2023, a delegation was sent to each of the two cities to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the sister city relationship and to deepen friendships.

Since then, the relationship has been incredibly active! Just early in August 2025 locals from Obihiro returned home from a visit to Seward during which they met the mayor, went on boat tours, kayaked, hiked mountains, attended dog sledding tours, and of course played games in local community member homes. With growing interaction during these exchanges their cultural connections grow stronger year by year.



Seward Primary SC Contact: City Clerks - clerk@cityofseward.net

Obihiro Primary SC Contact: Chris Andrade - international@city.obihiro.lg.jp

Sitka Nemuro



50 Revolutions Round the Sun

This year, 2025, marks the 50th anniversary of the sister city relationship between Sitka and Nemuro. In 2023 Nemuro sent 5 students to Sitka, the first exchange the cities had seen in 7 years. The reopening of communication has now led to new opportunities as Sitka's mayor and two other delegates have made plans to travel to Nemuro in October of 2025 to commemorate the half century relationship between the two cities.

Sitka Primary SC Contact: Melissa Wileman - melissa.wileman@cityofsitka.org
Nemuro Primary SC Contact: Yuko Sato - ichiroku.takuma@city.nemuro.hokkaido.jp

