Interview with a Palmer High School Student



Born in Japan, **William Cannon** spent the first years of his life there before his family moved away in 2011. Although he has always felt a strong connection to Japan, he never imagined he would have the opportunity to return one day. Reflecting on his visit to Saroma, Hokkaido, he described the experience as "surreal and very magical."

The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage recently had the opportunity to speak with William via an online interview about his experience and the memories he made during his visit to Saroma as part of the **2025 Palmer-Saroma Delegation**.

Q. What was your first impression of Saroma?

A. Being in Saroma felt surreal, **almost as if my dream had finally come true**. My host family welcomed me with open arms and made me feel like part of their family. They were incredibly kind and always made plenty of delicious food for me.

When it was time to leave, my host mother gave me a postcard saying that I would always have a home in Saroma and that I would always be part of their family. I was deeply moved by her words. The experience left a lasting impression on me, just as I hope I did on them.





Q. What was your favorite part of trip?

A. My favorite part was simply **enjoying the little things with my host family**. The delegation's schedule was quite busy, with visits to the mayor, local schools, and other community members. So it was nice to unwind and spend time together after a full day of activities.

We went ziplining, tried lots of delicious food (especially crepes!), and even had okonomiyaki parties at their friends' homes. Those everyday moments and new experiences became some of my favorite memories of the trip.





Q. What were some of the differeces between Japan and the U.S. that surprised you?

A. One thing that stood out to me was **how clean Japan was** compared to the U.S. I also felt that Japan was generally safer and had a more positive atmosphere. Everything seemed lively, bright, and colorful, and there were so many new things for me to experience.

At the same time, **I noticed that Palmer and Saroma actually have a lot in common**. Both are small agricultural communities where people know each other well. It was interesting to discover both the differences and similarities between the two countries.





Q. Were there any moments when you were glad you had learned Japanese?

A. Absolutely! I was especially glad I had learned Japanese when we had the opportunity to **introduce ourselves to the mayor of Saroma**. The occasion was important, as it was recorded and covered by the local newspaper and shared with other communities in the area.

Learning Japanese, even just a little, was important not only for communicating with people but also for representing the City of Palmer and **strengthening the connection between Palmer and Saroma**. It made me realize how valuable language learning is in building relationships between communities.