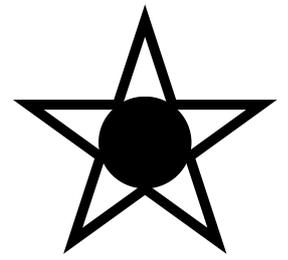


ASAHIKAWA INFO



March 2024, Volume 328

Hokkaido News Top 5

February 2024, compiled by the AIC

Snowpack Sensor Tests Continues Steadily (2/1)

To minimize the burden of snow clearing, Asahikawa City has turned towards using advanced sensor technology in order to monitor snow accumulations. The city is currently working together with two IT companies, Rack and All Works, in order to test and demonstrate snow sensor technology. The sensors are meant to shoot out beams to detect accumulated snow, which will send a notification to connected devices such as a computer or a smartphone when the snow accumulates to a certain threshold. As testing the sensor continues and more cumulative data increases, the city is learning the limitations and potential that this technology can offer.

Asahikawa Winter Festival Brings Tourists From All Over (2/11)

From February 7th to February 12th, the city of Asahikawa hosted its 65th Winter Festival; attracting both locals and tourists from all over. This year's festival theme, collaborating with the game company Square Enix, is from the world-renowned RPG, Dragon Quest. Under the theme, the main snow stage sculpted by Japan's Self-Defense Force was designed with Dragon Quest characters featuring Asappi. At the festival, attendees not only enjoyed the Dragon Quest merchandise, but also various snow sculptures, a winter food market, and several thrilling snow rides.

Celebrating "Tet", Vietnamese Lunar New Year, in Asahikawa (2/12)

On February 11th, the Vietnamese Youth Student Association of Hokkaido hosted the city's first "Tet", Vietnamese Lunar New Year at the Asahikawa Community Support Center (CoCoDe). This event was open to the public and many attendees were able to enjoy a variety of cultural experiences such as Vietnamese traditional food and a lion dance. Over 100 Asahikawa residents participated in the event where they were able to learn about Vietnamese culture and meet the foreigners and international students residing in Asahikawa and its neighboring communities.

With Rising Temperatures Means More Falling Snow (2/21)

The recent warm temperatures in the Asahikawa area have caused much of the snow on roofs to melt and fall to the ground which has resulted in several locals in the area getting injured. The sudden rise in temperatures has also resulted in an increased risk of avalanche and river flooding. Many local associations are requesting the public to exercise caution and watch out for falling snow and icicles.

Kamikawa Subprefecture Estimates A Drop of 150,000 Residents by 2050 (2/23)

The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research recently released their findings on Japan's regional population estimate last year in December and have found that the Kamikawa Subprefecture in Hokkaido will see a significant decline in the next 20-30 years. For instance, in 2020 there were 329,306 residents residing in Asahikawa, but there are projections that it will go down to 236,115 residents by 2050. Besides Asahikawa, local entities in the subprefecture are expected to experience up to a 50% decline in residents. The continuous population decline is said to be a potential threat in sustaining local governing entities in the near future.

Inside this issue...

01	Hokkaido News Top 5
02	Upcoming Events
04	Guide to Libraries
06	A Baby Boomer Learns English
10	Dear Asahikawa
12	Bulletin Board

**For more information,
please scan the QR code to
access our website**



For further information or to register for events, contact:

Asahikawa International Committee (AIC) (SUGANO Ayumi or
MABILANGAN John)

Location:

International/City Affairs Division, Tourism, Sports and
International/City Affairs Dept.

Address:

Asahikawa International Center Feeeal
Asahikawa 7F, 1-jo-dori 8-chome,

Asahikawa 070-0031

Tel: (0166) 25-7491

Fax: (0166) 23-4924

Email: cir_kokusai@city.asahikawa.lg.jp



Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities in Asahikawa and around Hokkaido



Sapporo Symphony in Takasu

札幌交響楽団：鷹栖公演

An orchestra full of charm; fitting for the grand Hokkaido Region

Event Details

Date: 3/6 (Wednesday)

Time: Venue opens at 17:30, Performance begins at 18:30

Location: Takasu Melody Hall
(Minami 2 jo 4 chome, Takasu)

Admission: ¥3500 (General Admission),
¥1000 (for those 25 and under)

44th Vasaloppet Japan

第44回 バーサーロペット・ジャパン

Watch the renown cross-country ski race in Asahikawa!

Event Details

Date: 3/9 (Saturday)~3/10(Sunday)

Location: Kitasaito Designated Ski Site & Riverside Course

For Details : <https://vasaloppet.jp/index.html>



International Exchange Salon

国際交流茶ロン

Cultural exchange for foreigners and residents of Asahikawa City. This will be an opportunity to connect with the community both in English and Japanese!

Date: 3/16 (Saturday)

Time: 13:30~15:30

Location: Asahikawa International Center
(1 jodori 8 chome FEEEL 7F, Asahikawa)

Registration Deadline: 3/13 (Wednesday) by 17:15

Admission: ¥200

For Registration and Queries: 25-7491 (Phone Number)
cir.kokusai@city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp (Email)

Asahikawa Civic Wind Orchestra 20th Annual Concert

第20回旭川シビックウィンドオーケストラ定期演奏会

Listen to the sounds of the Alvamar Overture, idols, and many more performances.

Date: 3/16 (Saturday)

Time: 14:00 (Performance begins)

Location: Taisetsu Crystal Hall
(Kagura 3 Jo 7 chome 1-45, Asahikawa)

Admission: ¥1,000

For Queries: 01658-6-50-11



Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities in Asahikawa and around Hokkaido



Ice Fall Festival

氷瀑まつり

Experience the unique beauty of icicles near Souunkyo Onsen. In addition to the beautiful icicles, there will be local Taiko performances, Kamikawa Ainu performance, and fireworks!

Date: 1/27(Saturday)~3/17 (Sunday)

Time: 17:00~21:30

Location: Souunkyo Onsen, Kamikawa-cho, Kamikawa-gun

Admission: ¥500

Hello Kids : An English Event for Kids

ハローキッズ: こども英語イベント

Experience English through games and activities with your local Coordinator for International Relations!

Date: 3/24 (Sunday)

Time: 10:00~11:00

Location: Kagura Community Hall
(Kagura 3 jo 6 chome 1-12, Asahikawa)

Capacity: 20 participants

Fee: ¥100

For Registration or Queries: 25-7491



I Love Cats Art Gallery

猫大好き展

Love cats? Check out this unique art gallery full of cat art brought to you by 8 cat-loving artist!

Date: 1/29(Monday)~3/24 (Sunday)

Time: 11:00-17:00

Location: Suehiro 5 jo 1 chome 2-17, Asahikawa

For Queries: 0166-54-0404

Museum College

ミュージアムカレッジ

Learn about the Asahikawa from 20,000 years ago. Look through ancient artifacts and learn about the peoples who used them.

Date: 3/24 (Sunday)

Time: 14:00-16:00

Location: Asahikawa City Museum Country Samurai Room
(Kagura 3 jo 7 chome, Asahikawa)

Registration: Begins on 3/5 (Tuesday)

For Queries: 0166-69-2004



Guide to Asahikawa Libraries

Sourced from the Asahikawa City Library
by John Mabilangan



Intro

For foreigners living in Japan, just like language, literacy is a key asset for survival. This article of Seikatsu 101 will discuss how to access the library and its abundant resources of books, CDs, DVDs, and more!

Obtaining A Library Card

The libraries in Asahikawa require a library card to be used in all of its branches. To acquire a library card, you must register with your local library.

Registration Requirements:

- Must be a resident, commuter, or a student of Asahikawa. Residents of Asahikawa's neighboring cities or the Kamikawa Subprefecture are also eligible.
- For high school students and older: A valid Proof of Address (driver's license, residence card, student identification card, etc.)
- For middle school students and below: Proof of Address is unnecessary.



! Please ensure to promptly notify the library of any changes to your address or in the event that your library card is misplaced.



Loaning From The Library

- When loaning from the library, be sure to bring the books you are loaning along with your library card to the counter.
- Loan Limit: 10 books max, 3 items (books, CDs, cassette tapes, video tapes, etc.) max.
- Loan Duration: 2 weeks (items must be return within this time).

Searching for Your Book at The Library

When searching for your book at the library, please seek out a library staff. Since not all staff can provide support in English, please be sure to do any of the following:

- Learn the title or the author name of your desired book
- Bring a someone who can help you communicate in Japanese,
- Or prepare to use a translation device in advance.

Reserving Your Book

Books and other items can be reserved via the library counter, phone call, or online at the library website.



Listening or Watching Video and Audio Materials in The Library

- Laser disks, DVDs, and Video Tapes can be viewed at the following branches: Chuo, Kagura (excluding laser disks), Suehiro, Toko, and Nagayama.
- CD Listening Corner is only available at Chuo Library.
- The listening booth can only be used once per day.

Making Copies

Copies can be made at the following Asahikawa library branches: Chuo Library (1st and 2nd floor), Suehiro, Nagayama, Toko, and Kagura.

Costs: Black & white : ¥10 per sheet

Colored: ¥100 per sheet (exclusively at Central Library)



! Copying the following is prohibited

- Non-library materials (books and documents not from the library).
- Duplication of materials that would violate copyright.

For more information regarding Asahikawa's libraries, please scan the QR Code. (Japanese)



A Baby Boomer Learns English

Episode 1: Nostalgic Asahikawa and Unforgettable People (1967-1969)

Written submission by Noriaki Gentsu



Clockwise from top left: Ken's greeting card to my family; Ken with my family and relatives; Cafe Chiruru; promotion for the Wakadanuki Club; Lyrics sheet used at the Song Hour; Ken and me in his room

Introduction

Collecting and sorting out scattered memories of life as a student in Asahikawa, I sometimes look back to 1967-1969. In those brief 2 years, I remember vividly the English learning communities and the cafes where we hung out, among all other memories back then. Without them all, I could not have set out for the long and cross-cultural journey I will be telling here.



Ken Reed in Asahikawa (1969)

Knowing People

Ken was an English teacher from the States for a class he held at the Mennonite Church in Asahimachi, Asahikawa. When I joined it, it was a small one held weekly or bi-weekly; I cannot recall. The class was free and focused on

spoken English which suited me well. There were a few students from Hokkaido University of Education, who later invited me to a summer camp hosted by their university's English-Speaking Society (ESS club).

The trip lasted for about a week and took us around eastern Hokkaido via train and bus where I quickly met 20 or more English-loving people. As we enjoyed cooking, strolling along the lakeside beach, and singing Joan Baez's folksongs, such as "We Shall Overcome", life felt simple. I later joined them for two more English training camps at Yukomambetsu, a hot spring resort area that is a one-hour bus ride from the city. Eventually, two of the ESS club members would join a new English club Ken and I would set up the following year.

Koinonia Center

During autumn Sunday evenings, Ken would take me to the Koinonia Center

which was originally a religious community center, but open to the public. Mr. Kuyten, an American born in the Netherlands was the pastor running the community. He would lecture us from time to time about friendship and our society.

There we met people, enjoyed speaking in English and singing songs during their Song Hour. Kiyoko-san, a then-English teacher in the city, taught us how to sing "White Christmas" and "Edelweiss", which have been my favorites to date.

Since then, singing in English has become one of my English training methods. I would memorize and sing the beautiful lyrics of a song with as correct pronunciations as possible so that my brain can perceive and feel their true meanings entirely.



A songbook used at Koinonia Center (1968)

A Winter's Tale

On an early winter's day, I was at a ramen shop with Ken. He told me that Simon & Garfunkel, an American folk-rock duo from the 1960s, were getting popular back in the US, but I did not pay much attention to it then. While The Beatles' titles, especially "Yesterday" at that time, had occupied the hit chart, Simon & Garfunkel's "The Sound of Silence" gradually climbed up. Both songs have fascinated me in my entire life.

As winter deepened into the New Year holidays, Ken stayed for six nights at my



Ken with my family and relatives (1968)

childhood home in Biei, where I still live today in a newly built house. In an upstairs room, he would type a report to Mennonite Church in the US which sent him to Japan. He was teaching in Japan on religious grounds instead of serving in the army amid the raging war in Vietnam.

According to the greeting card he sent to my grandfather, he liked three things during his stay:

First, he enjoyed our Goemon-buro, a traditional Japanese bath that resembles a large iron kettle and is heated directly from beneath. It stood inside a shed standing beside our home, which I believe was enough for him to feel the freezing weather.

Then, he was impressed by our big banquet with Genghis Khan, a popular Hokkaido dish that consists of grilled mutton or lamb on a metal skillet and with the meat marinated in a house-made sauce. It lasted for half a day with about 20 members from my family and relatives, and about 10 additionally invited villagers from my father's community. The villagers and my father asked Ken and tried to find out any common points in life in Japan and America. I helped Ken partly with interpreting some of the villagers' dialects. A surprise came when we found that Ken's father had worked for McCulloch, an American manufacturer that made tools such as the McCulloch

chainsaw that my father used for his winter job as a tree cutter. At that moment, it felt like two generations from two countries, once divided in a war, got quite close to each other.

Lastly, he mentioned my grandmother. She sang old nursery songs for him as she spun wool yarn from the sheep wool taken from the sheep we ate for our banquet.

One night at my home, as we chatted about various topics until late at night, I asked him, "What should I do to improve my English?" He said thoughtfully, "Your English is already OK", adding politely, "It feels like it's flat, I mean, monotonous." This is one of the most influential tips I have ever had in my life of English learning. I have applied this point when talking with global business partners, and eventually learned that human relations matter in business as well as logical approaches.

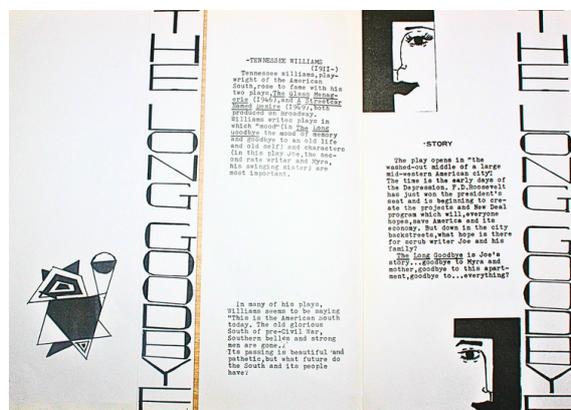
The Wakadanuki Club

In early spring that year, Ken and I hung out more often: we were going to cafes, discussing various topics, and watching movies at the cinema like Tolstoy's "War and Peace". One day, he proposed a new name for his class, the Wakadanuki Club, or "Young Badgers Club" in English. It added new members from various backgrounds and employed simplified debate sessions. It was not a simple English class anymore, but a new club. Ken wrote invitation postcards for the next meeting with a stencil duplicator, a then-standard printer using waxed paper and dedicated ink. Recently I happened to find one of them addressed to me in a messy box, which strongly prompted me to engage in this essay.

We would meet on Saturdays at a new venue, Cafe Chiroru (3-jo 8-chome) in a spacious guest room upstairs, sitting around a large table where the sunlight penetrated through the opaque window glass and into my eyes. When we go there, I would order a coffee set with Mont Blanc cake which is my favorite to this day.

The Long Goodbye

Before summer, we agreed the club would perform an English drama in public. We chose "The Long Goodbye", a one-act play written by Tennessee Williams. Ken edited the original texts into simple English, which I typed on waxed paper to print with. Ken was our acting coach while I shared miscellaneous tasks such as collecting ads, securing an assembly hall in the Toyo-oka district, negotiating a tax exemption with the relevant office, and others. We sold about 100 tickets.



The program for the play "The Long Goodbye" (1968)

At the final step of the project, Ken brought a young lady talented at art, who would manage stage props and decoration. That person would become my wife, Rumiko. She had a personal English lesson from Ken with the goal of studying in the US and being qualified as a dental hygienist.

When the day of the performance came that autumn, it was compelling. The main characters were Joe and Myra, played by Yoshimi Kagawa and Kumiko Uyama, respectively. Strangely enough, we had no photos from that day, or more precisely put, nobody cared about it aside from performing.

Time went by and Ken left for Tokyo early next year. And a few months later I left for Osaka to work for a company. As I recall those last days in Asahikawa, I could hear Mary Hopkins sing sentimentally, “Those were the days, my friend, we thought they’d never end, we’d sing and dance forever and a day...”

Back then it felt like the end of our time, but it was only the beginning of the many stories to unfold.



To Be Continued

Letters to Asahikawa

Falling for Winter

Written Submission & Photos by Jovana Maksimovic



Left: A view of Chicago. Top right: Asahikawa Winter Festival zoom-in. Bottom right: A wild fox in the snow.

Dear Asahikawa,

I have something to tell you that I never thought I would say in my life. I love winter.

I grew up in Chicago, a very flat city whose weather can be eccentric and unpredictable. When it rains, streets and houses get flooded. When it gets windy, large branches damage cars and roofs. When it snows, it becomes a blizzard that can cut power lines.

In the 24 years that I lived in Chicago, I never liked winter. Chicago is along the frigid cold Lake Michigan, where the city gets most of its wind. In January, the temperature can be as low as (20.7°F/-6.3°C), but with the wind chill, it can quickly drop to (10°F/-12°C). The snow is much different, too. Because the snow melts as it falls from the clouds, it's often wet, sticky snow that is heavy to shovel and worse if it builds up on your roof. Driving on it once frozen is a nightmare. In fact, the city uses a generous amount of salt in their road clearing procedures to keep the roads safe. Businesses and residents are required to keep their pavements clean, too.

However, if you can bear the freezing winds that chill your bones, frostbitten toes and wet gloves, you can enjoy what this slushy, mushy snow has to offer: snowball fights, snowmen, snow forts, and hot chocolate at the annual Christkindle Market. (Or hot spiced wine if you wanted to forget where you lived, like me). I swore to myself that I would move to a place where there would be no winter. At the least, no snow.

And I did. I lived through seven snowless winters. Surprisingly, I didn't enjoy it.

Then, last August, I arrived in Hokkaido. Everyone left and right was advising me on how to survive a winter in Asahikawa. I was very, very puzzled. It couldn't be worse than Chicago. Nothing could be worse than Chicago, except maybe cities in Russia.

Colleague: Dress in layers.

Me: Of course.

ALT: Get rubber cleats so you can walk on the icy roads!

Me: Do you not know how to walk on ice?

Neighbour: Heat only the room that you use the most. Kerosene is expensive, you know!

Me: Kerosene heating? Isn't that a fire hazard?

Friend: If you get a kotatsu table, you'll never leave your apartment.

Me: It's a shame I'm not a housecat. I could sleep under that.

And yet, despite other people's advice and worries, I find that winter in Asahikawa is delightful!

There is (usually) no wind to fight against as I walk. Fresh layers of dry, fluffy snow cover everything like a warm blanket. On my weekly train rides to Furano, I'm always surprised to see the snow dotted with animal tracks. From time to time, a fox runs around, too. I even tried cross-country skiing for the first time, and it was fun to fall in the snow. The best thing about winter here? All of the festivals. I keep finding places to go during a season when I would rather stay indoors under my kotatsu.

Previously, in January, I had the chance to visit Jozankei. Wisps of steam rose from the river that passed through the quiet, snow-covered onsen town, giving it an air of mystery. The bright red suspended bridge had a strong presence above the warm waters and crisp white surroundings. Later in the evening, a local shrine removed the barriers around hundreds of ice lanterns and access to an illuminated forest. Along the edges of the paths, shrine staff members were digging out new ice lanterns to replace ones that melted.

A group of friends and I went to help build a snow sculpture for the Asahikawa Winter Festival. Watching the professionals saw, chisel and sand away at the sculptures was fascinating. I only wished we could have seen the process from start to finish. The following weekend, we all went to enjoy the festival and try some new food. I was a big fan of the Gyūtan skewers.

My personal favourite was the small Ice Festival in Higashikawa. An ice lantern-lit path led the way to the main event area, where various sculptures were on display: simple round embedded disks of ice designed by young children, snow sculptures made by locals, and snowmen put together by volunteers and students of the Japanese Language School. The wood-burning fire outside made the event feel very cosy despite the drop in temperature that day.

Winter is still far from over, and I hope to see a few more festivals before everything melts. In the meantime, I will be shopping around for sunglasses to shield my eyes from the burning glare of the snow.

Until next time,
Jovana

AIC BULLETIN BOARD



Need Assistance?

If you ever find yourself in need of assistance, know that the Hokkaido Foreign Resident Support Center is there for you! They are able to provide you with consultation services in various languages (Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Russian, Indonesian, Thai, Nepalese, Burmese) on residence procedures, employment, medical care, welfare, childbirth, childcare, education, and more for FREE! Call them at **011-200-9595** or go to: www.hiecc.or.jp/soudan



Interesting activities such as quizzes, discussions, songs, games, handicrafts and much more, all in English! Come meet new people, relax and relate on Fun Fridays!

Dates: March 8th & 22nd

Times: 13:00pm-14:00pm ~Afternoon~ 2nd and 4th Friday of the month
18:30-20:30pm ~Night~ 2nd Friday of the month

Location: Asahikawa International Center, Common Meeting Room (1)
(Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome)

Charge: ¥1,500 for 3 months (Free for volunteer leaders)

The AIC offers many services to make your life in Asahikawa more enjoyable. Here are just a few:

Volunteer Guide: Volunteers are registered to help translate and interpret.

Event Volunteer: The AIC plans many exciting events throughout the year, such as Friendship Parties.

Homestay: Families are registered to welcome you into their homes for an overnight stay or just an afternoon visit.

Why not become a volunteer and help plan these events?



The Asahikawa International Center (Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome) has free Wi-Fi available for public use. If you reside in Asahikawa, registration for a user card is required. Please feel free to come by anytime, as well as check out some of the other services and activities available at the Asahikawa International Center!

Spread the Word!

Contribute to the AIC newsletter and share any interesting information you may have with other readers. You may write on any topic including: items to buy/shell, offers for culture/language exchange, or write an essay about your life in Asahikawa or your hometown. The article should not be profit-related! Please send your submissions to us at the AIC.



Asahikawa International Committee

Asahikawa International Center Feeeal Asahikawa 7F, 1-jo-dori 8-chome, Asahikawa 070-0031

TEL: (0166)25-7491 FAX: (0166)23-4924

E-mail: cir_kokusai@city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp

****The opinions expressed in the essays are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AIC or the City of Asahikawa.****