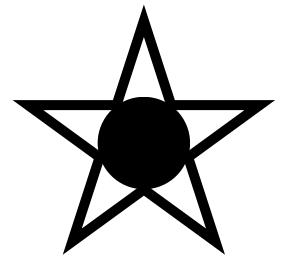


# ASAHIKAWA INFO



April 2024, Volume 329

## Hokkaido News Top 5

February & March 2024, compiled by the AIC

### Successful Japanese Speech Contest by Foreign Students (2/28)

114 foreign students from the Higashikawa Japanese Language School, participated in a Japanese language speech contest in front of an audience of 140 people at the Centpure town exchange complex. For the speech contest, the students conducted speeches on themes such as “international student life” and “life,” where they shared their thoughts and personal experiences.

### Vasaloppett Under A Refreshing Blue Sky (3/11)

The 44th Annual Vasaloppet Japan took place on March 9th and 10th. More than 1,200 participants from all over came to Asahikawa for cross-country skiing. The event began with a cross-country ski race on the 9th, concluding with a more relaxed family-friendly course on the 10th. Everyone, even toddlers, was able to ski across the track with their chaperones under good weather while enjoying the local scenery.

### Kitaca (Hokkaido Public Transport Card) Expands Utility to Asahikawa (3/14)

On March 16, JR Hokkaido will expand the usage of Kitaca (Hokkaido Public Transport Card) from Hakodate to Asahikawa. This card, which enabled riders in Sapporo to ride trains through contactless electronic fairs is being amended to improve its convenience and access. Although the usage range for this card has increased, discounts for the Asahikawa-Sapporo and other discounts will not apply.

### Brown Bear Exterminations Have Reached Record Numbers for 2023 (3/21)

In the last 10 years, Hokkaido has experienced an increase in brown bear sightings near human settlements resulting in a heightened risk of bear encounters, attacks, and potential threats to livestock and agriculture. The growth in brown bear populations led to a record number of brown bear exterminations for 2023.

### Dohoku Buses Accepting Tap-Payment Transactions (3/22)

As of March 29, Dohoku buses have rolled out their credit card payment ports to expand payment options to credit cards. To tie tourism to the bus routes and inter-city travel, Dohoku has opted to install payment ports to accommodate both visiting tourists from abroad as well as for residents dependent on the bus. In doing so, the company hopes to make it more convenient for its many riders throughout Kamikawa.

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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

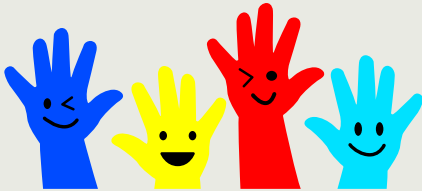
Fax: (0166) 23-4924

Email: cir\_kokusai@city.asahikawa.lg.jp



# Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities in Asahikawa and around Hokkaido



## Autism Awareness Lecture

世界自閉症啓発デー記念講演会

*For Autism Awareness, there will be a lecture in city hall to learn about the people who are part of the autism spectrum*

**Date:** 4/6( Saturday)

**Time:** 13:30~15:30

**Location:** Asahikawa Disabled Welfare Center Opitta  
(Miyamae 1 jo 3 chome 3-7)

**For Queries:** 35-2780

## Clean Walk

クリーンウォーク

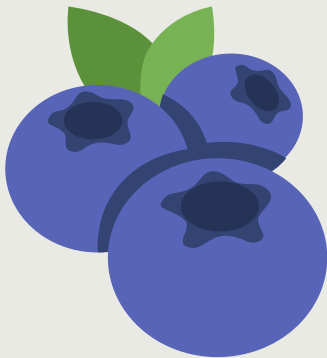
*Walk 5km around the Chuubetsu River bank while picking up trash with the community !*

**Date:** 4/7 (Sunday)

**Time:** 09:00~12:00

**Location:** Meet at Asahikawa Station Southern Exit

**For Queries:** 090-3428-5051 (Mr. Goto)



## Cooking with Blue Berries

ブルーベリーに魅せられて (おいしいブルーベリーの作り方を教えます)

*Learn about different delicious dishes you can make with blueberries*

**Date:** 4/7 (Sunday)

**Time:** 13:30~15:30

**Location:** Midori Center (Kaguraoka Park)

**Capacity:** 20 participants

**Registration:** Begins on 3/20 (Wednesday)

**Contact/Registration:** 0166-65-5553

Dogtooth Violet Bloom at Otokoyama Nature Park

カタクリの原生花園が楽しめる男山自然公園

*Come experience a sea of purple flowers!.*

**Date:** Mid~Late April

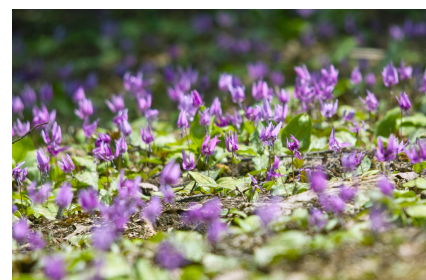
**Time:** 9:00~16:30

**Location:** Otokoyama Nature Park  
(Higashiyama 1431 , Asahikawa)

**Access:** Free Parking (200 spaces)

**Admission:** FREE

**For Queries:** 0166-57-2131



# Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities in Asahikawa and around Hokkaido



## Swing Messengers Orchestra

スイング・メッセンジャーズ・オーケストラ

*Experience a thrilling Jazz performance right at CoCoDe!*

### Event Details

**Date:** 4/13 (Saturday)

**Time:** 15:30 (Entry), 16:00 (Performance begins)

**Location:** Community Support Center CoCoDe ( Miyamae 1 jo 3 chome 3 ban 30 go, Asahikawa)

**Admission:** ¥1,200 (Reserved General Admission), ¥1,500 (Day-Of General Admission), ¥800 (Middle & High School), FREE (Elementary and below)

## Tatsumi Yuuto Troupe Special Stage

辰巳ゆうと一座 特別公演

*Enjoy an outstanding comedy and enka performance by rising star Tatsumi Yuuto and other performers!*

**Date:** 4/13 (Saturday)

**Time:** 15:00

**Location:** Asahikawa Civic Culture Hall (Large)  
(7 jodori 9 chome, Asahikawa)

**Admission:** ¥ 6,000 (General Admission)

**Ticketing Booth:** Asahikawa 7/11 Ticket Kiosk,  
Gyokoudo Aeon Mall (Asahikawa Station)



## Succulent Festival

多肉祭

*Checkout succulent and garden vendors offering a diverse array of plants. In addition to plants, there are many other shops offering handmade crafts and food!*

### Event Details

**Date:** 4/21(Sunday)

**Time:** 10:30

**Location:** Community Support Center CoCoDe  
(Miyamae 1 jo 3 chome 3 ban 30 go, Asahikawa)

Peak Sakura Bloom at Mihonrin (Forest of Foreign Tree Species)

【桜・見ごろ】見本林

*The cherry blossoms will bloom around late April to early May.*

**Date:** 4/25 (Thursday)~5/8(Wednesday)

**Time:** 09:00~17:00

**Location:** Mihonrin (Kagura 7 jo 8 chome 2-15, Asahikawa)

**Access:** Free Parking (30 spaced 3/13 (Wednesday) by 17:15

**Admission:** FREE

**For Registration and Queries:** 0166-69-2626

(Phone Number Miura Ayako Memorial Museum)



# Is Japan a Being-Kind-Over-Being-Right Country?

Written by Yasutomo Kuwana

I wish Japan, my home country, prioritized being kind over being right. Unfortunately, it does not.

The other day, I came across an article about something that happened at a junior high school regarding a high school entrance exam in Fukuoka Prefecture, Kyushu. In Japan, by the way, the academic year ends in March. So, February is a busy time as students, teachers, and families prepare for the new academic year beginning in April.

Here is the story. A junior high school failed to submit three student application forms for high school exam registration. The junior high school teachers in charge had thought the deadline was February 20. However, it turned out to be noon on February 16. The applications arrived at the high school at two p.m. on the 16th. Due to the two-hour delay, the applications were rejected, which meant three unfortunate students could not take the entrance exam. They were forced to give up the chance to attend their first-choice high school.

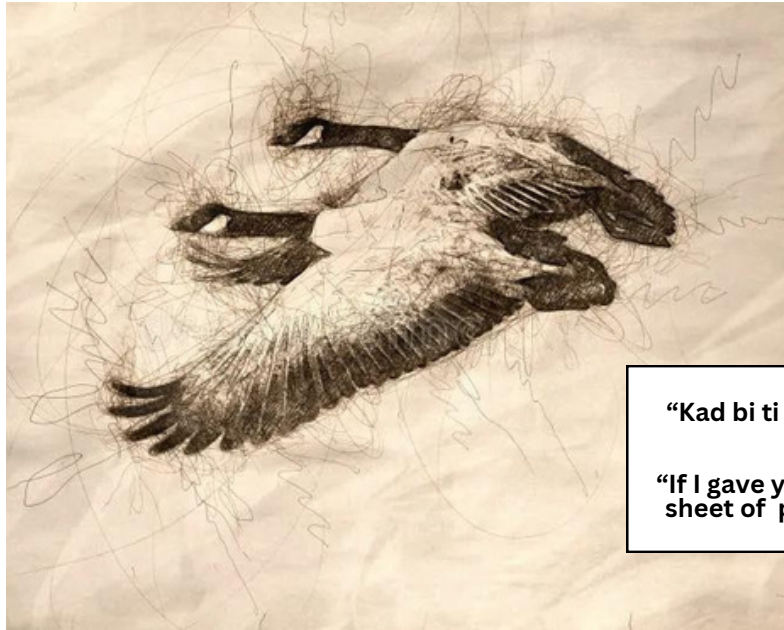
Why must junior high school teachers, not students themselves, submit the applications? Why did the junior high school misunderstand the deadline? These questions aside, I wonder whether the high school was fair in refusing the late application forms. Of course, no one can deny the importance of punctuality - Japanese people usually show up five minutes earlier than the appointed time - but was the delay in Fukuoka such a serious offence? Taking an entrance exam is a potentially life-changing event. The high school could have been more flexible about the matter and just accepted the documents. The three students did nothing wrong but were given the “punishment” for being late anyway.

Regrettably, what happened in Fukuoka is just one example of a phenomenon we encounter from time to time in Japan: people strictly adhering to manuals. If you are not Japanese, you may be surprised to witness the commitment to rules. I am a 46-year-old Japanese man who has been living in Asahikawa for more than ten years, and I am still surprised by situations where some people adhere almost blindly to the rules in order to be right.

The supermarket I often go shopping at opens at 9:00 in the morning, and it does so without being one second early or late, even if there is a long line of customers on a heavy snow day. No one would blame you (or everyone would admire you) if you were more relaxed, flexible, and kind rather than determined to be right. Why not let the almost-frozen customers enter the supermarket a few minutes before opening? The high school in Fukuoka could have accepted the applications and warned the junior high school about being late in the future. Until March 18, there has not been any follow-up news.

# Letters to Asahikawa

Written by Jovana Maksimovic



“Kad bi ti dala dve guske nacrtane na papiru, jednu bi izgubila.”

“If I gave you two geese drawn on one sheet of paper, you would lose one.”

## Lost in Translation

Dear Asahikawa,

Learning a language in high school, university, or with a language partner is one thing. Mastering expressions and how to tell jokes in a foreign language is another. You can perfect all the conjugations, case endings, gendered nouns, and other grammar points a language may have. But, if you don't feel at ease with its expressions or how to use them, your language level will always be less than near-native. It isn't a critique but pure fact and a Herculean amount of hard work.

Humour is very cultural, so an expression in English may not translate well in Japanese. Serbian jokes make no sense in French. And French sarcasm is lost to most, except some Belgians and Brits. Each language has its unique sense of humour, and apprehending it is a journey that every language learner has to undergo on their own. I will share some expressions that baffled me over my mere 30-some years of life. Fair warning, your heads are about to spin.

Sidenote: The English and French languages use the Latin script, also called the Roman script. The Serbian language uses the Latin and Cyrillic scripts, with Cyrillic predominantly used in official communication. For the sake of this article and for the ease of reading Serbian expressions, I will use the Latin script only. Here's why:

Cyrillic: тешко је читати, зар не ?

Latin: Teško je čitati, zar ne ?

Translation: It's difficult to read, isn't it?

**On a very rainy day:**

English: *"It's raining cats and dogs."*

French: *"Il pleut comme vache qui pisse."*  
It's raining like a pissing cow.

Serbian: *"Čak i Bog plače."*  
Even God is crying.

Japanese: 土砂降りだ。  
It's raining earth and sand.

**When someone really annoys you:**

English: *"You're getting on my nerves."*

French: *"J'ai pété un câble."*  
My cable burst.

Serbian: *"Ideš mi na živce."*  
You're going on my nerves.

Japanese: むかつく。  
It's making my chest hurt and I feel like throwing up

**When your house is a mess:**

English: *"It looks like a tornado passed through here."*

French: *"C'est une bordel."*  
It's a pleasure house.

Serbian: *"Imam od Popa uši."*  
I have everything, even the Pastor's ears.

Japanese: ぐちゃぐちゃ。  
Chaotic/ cluttered.

**When someone is clumsy:**

English: *"She's got two left feet."*

French: *"Elle a deux main gauche."*  
She's got two left hands.

Serbian: *"Smotana je kao saila."*  
She's as clumsy as a spring.

Japanese: 不器用だ。  
She's unskilled/incompetent.

**When you're about to say something stupid but shouldn't:**

English: *"Think before you speak."*

French: *"Il veut mieux se taire et passer pour un idiot plutôt que de parler et de ne laisser aucun doute sur le sujet."*  
It's better to stay silent and pretend to be an idiot than to speak and have it be true.

Serbian: *"Drži jezik u ladovini."*  
Hold your tongue in the shade.

Japanese: 空気を読みなさい。  
Please, read the air.

**When someone is crazy, literally or very close to it:**

English: *"He's lost his marbles!"*

French: *"Il a perdu ses pédals."*  
He lost his pedals.

Serbian: *"Lud je kao struja!"*  
He's crazy like electricity!  
(In the sense that electricity and a crazy person are both unpredictable.)

Japanese: 頭がおかしくなる。  
His head is becoming weird.

**When someone is trying to join a conversation that isn't their business:**

English: *"Keep your nose out of it."*

French: *"Ce ne sont pas tes oignons."*  
They're not your onions.

Serbian: *"Nemoj biti mirođija u svakoj supi."*  
Don't be the dill in every soup.

Japanese: 首に突っ込まないで。  
Don't thrust your neck in it.

**When someone is trying to compare two unrelated things:**

English: *"You can't compare apples to oranges."*

French: *"Il ne faut pas mélanger les torchons et les serviettes."*  
One shouldn't mix tea towels and towels.

This expression dates back to the 17th century when high society and low society were not supposed to mix. In a household, those who were in the upper class were allowed to use 'towels', while everyone else was only allowed to use 'tea towels'.

Serbian: *"Koliko su dve babe i dve žabe?"*

What do you get when you add two old ladies and two frogs?

As a child, this expression frustrated me beyond all others. For years, I had thought it was an arithmetic problem when it had nothing to do with maths. Funny enough, even native speakers get perplexed and need time to understand the humour behind a common expression.

Japanese: 月とすっぽん。  
Comparing the moon to a turtle.

The examples above are only a fraction of what exists out there, and these are the translatable ones! Countless others are unique only to the one language and have no equivalents. Yet, with practice and proper timing, you too, will crack jokes with native speakers. The key is to keep using them, however strange they may seem.

Or perhaps you may be thinking the same thing Serbians would when they receive something they have no use for: "E, baš mi je to trebalo! Kao rupa u glavi!"  
I really needed that! Like a hole in my head!

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](http://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](mailto: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.\*\***