



Upcoming Events

| Event Name | Event Summary | Event Details |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Asahikawa Summer Festival | Let the summer festival sweep you off your feet! Check out Asahikawa's Summer Festival! From fireworks and food stalls to performances and parades! Experience Japanese culture with the city! | Date: 7/31 (Thur) - 8/2 (Sat) Time: Time Varies Location: Location varies. See website for details:  |
| Youth English Lounge | Join us for AIC's very first Youth English Lounge—an English exchange event for middle schoolers, high schoolers, and native English speakers! | Date: 8/4 (Mon) Time: 14:00-16:00 Location: Asahikawa International Center Feeeal 7F (1-jo-dori 8-chome) |
| Nihongo Lounge | Studying Japanese? Join us for a fun and interactive language exchange with native Japanese volunteers from Asahikawa! This is a great chance to practice your Japanese in real conversations while building connections with the local community. | Date: 8/7 (Thur) Time: 10:30~12:00 Location: Asahikawa International Center Feeeal 7F (1-jo-dori 8-chome) |
| Hello Kids! | Come hang out with us in English! This event is open to preschool kids and younger. We'll play games, sing songs, and have fun while learning English together! FEE* 100 yen per child | Date: 8/19 (Tues) Time: 10:30-11:30 Location: Asahikawa International Center Feeeal 7F (1-jo-dori 8-chome) Requirements: Preschool |
| Let's Talk in Japanese | Practice your Japanese language skills with Japanese teachers! Polish your conversation skills, deepen your understanding of Japanese grammar, and connect with the international community through Japanese! | Date: 8/17 (Sun), 8/24 (Sun), 8/31 (Sun) Time: 15:00-16:00 Location: Asahikawa International Center Feeeal 7F (1-jo-dori 8-chome) |



Inside this issue...

- 01..... Upcoming Events
- 02..... Reconnecting Roots
- 03..... When the School Day Ends Later

Check out our website and social media for information regarding the events above.

For further information or to register for events, contact:

Asahikawa International Committee (AIC), (NAGATA), (MIYAUCHI) or Coordinator for International Relations (CIR), (JOHN)

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

Tel: (0166) 25-7491 **Fax:** (0166) 23-4924

Email: asahikawainternationalcenter@gmail.com

Website: <https://asahikawaic.jp/en/>

Follow us on social media for latest updates and upcoming events!

X (formerly twitter)



Facebook



Instagram



****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.****

Reconnecting Roots

By John Mabilangan



Clockwise from left to right, my childhood home, a view of Mt Makiling and coconut trees, Halo Halo (Filipino Ice Dessert), fresh mango

My name is John, and I am the Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) here in Asahikawa City. Although I represent the United States as a CIR, my roots are actually tied to the Philippines. I was born in the Philippines and immigrated to the United States at the age of 8, where I lived for 19 years before moving to Japan.

Growing up in the U.S., I considered myself more American than Filipino, with my education and cultural background being closely connected to the States. However, on June 30th, I made the bold decision to visit my childhood home in order to meet my parents.

My childhood home is located two hours away from Manila, in the province of Batangas. Though the region is known for its beaches, my home is situated in the countryside, surrounded by trees, wild animals, and farmland.

The house was exactly as we had left it—hot, without a shower or proper bathroom, no fridge, and full of bugs. Coming from the U.S. and living in Japan, returning there felt like a mini camping trip. Visiting Batangas rekindled my childhood memories: playing hide-and-seek in the forest, climbing trees, playing by the river, hunting spiders and bugs, and enjoying all the typical countryside pastimes.

Aside from the bug bites and the chickens crowing at 3 a.m., being back reminded me of the simplicity of life there. Though there weren't many material things for entertainment, and many of the basic necessities found in developed countries were lacking, it was more than enough for my younger self.

There were many surprising things during my trip. One pleasant surprise was the abundance of fruit in the countryside. I discovered that my childhood home had seven banana trees, three mango trees, two coconut trees, and several pineapple shrubs. Beyond the overwhelming amount of fruit, it was fascinating to see how many people were working to develop the village. Almost everyone had smartphones and Wi-Fi access, and I saw construction of buildings and houses everywhere. Although the village was changing, the memories I had there remained the same.



When the School Day Ends Later

By Arthur Taylor



Dover Bay Secondary School in Nanaimo, British Columbia

While visiting Asahikawa the past few months, I have been struck by the differences between the lives of schoolchildren here and those in my home school district in Canada. While walking along Ushubetsugawa at night, you can see many pupils cycling home at 7:00 or even 8:00 pm – long past the time when most students in my Vancouver Island high school would have left. Generally, extracurricular clubs in my city’s public schools do not attract as much participation; even then, many only meet during lunchtime instead of after school to let students return home by 4:00.

Moreover, after-hours cram schools are much less ubiquitous in Canada. While I have in fact worked part-time at a Kumon centre while in high school, it was more for a small number of pupils being homeschooled or trying to skip a grade rather than those following the normal school curriculum. The relative rarity of *juku* in Canada is likely due to the lack of entrance exams for either universities or even the entire public school system (at least in British Columbia), meaning that students do not have to study as much to get into their desired schools.



Canadian high school parking lot

Many of the differences between the two school systems can be attributed to the organization of the surrounding community. In much of Canada, cities are big and sprawled out, and the only practical way of getting around is by car – as the vast majority of students do. While walking past nearby middle schools in Asahikawa, I was intrigued to see large numbers of students' bicycles parked outside. I tend to think that the denser nature of the city makes this way of travelling more popular.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit a school festival at Higashikōkō and was impressed by the level of organization and detail involved. While I have seen Canadian high schools put on Open House events, these are focused on giving parents and future pupils tours of the school. By contrast, the Asahikawa school festival I attended included student-designed games, musical performances, and chemical experiments. The amount of responsibility given to the students during the two-day festival was rather striking compared to the smaller-scale, teacher-driven events I was used to (eg. 15 minute ceremony for Remembrance Day).



Above: Higashikōkō school festival performances and sculptures

All in all, the lack of important exams or big events in my western Canadian school district probably impose less pressure or structure on student life than its Japanese counterparts. On the other hand, the Canadian structure means there is a more stressful transition from high school to university, where many unprepared students in difficult science programs end up dropping out.