

May  
2017

No. 27

# The Red Brick Bulletin

Feature: Hawai'i and Hokkaido Sister-State Affiliation  
JET Spotlight: Erin Fukushima



© State of Hawaii Department of Business and Economic Development and Tourism

## Hawai'i and Hokkaido Sister State Affiliation

It seems that opposites really do attract! On May 8th, 2017, Hokkaido Governor Harumi Takahashi and Hawai'i Governor David Ige signed a Declaration of Sister-State/Prefectural Affiliation between Hokkaido, a land of snow and ice, and Hawai'i, a land of eternal summer and sunshine. An unlikely pair, but these two regions actually share a lot in common. They have also been putting serious effort into coming closer together over the past years, culminating in this new and exciting sister relationship.

Hokkaido and Hawai'i both start with H, which clearly makes them soulmates. Coincidental spelling similarities aside, in reality these two regions are actually quite alike. They are both island states with gorgeous nature, have a high focus on tourism, and are home to rich indigenous cultures. The lush forests and gorgeous oceans of Hawai'i contrast sharply with the sprawling white snowy fields and the drift ice covered winter seas of

Hokkaido, but both are beautiful in their own way. Through this new sisterhood, region officials hope that the residents of both Hawai'i and Hokkaido will have a chance to experience a new kind of natural environment. I know that I for one would gladly hop on a plane in the middle of winter and take a trip to the land of surf and sunshine, and I imagine that a Hawaiian sick of the heat might also enjoy a visit to Hokkaido to play in the snow and drink hot mulled wine at the Sapporo Snow Festival.

Hawai'i has long been known as one of the world's top travel destinations, and just in 2016, Lonely Planet chose Hokkaido as the number one travel destination in Asia, naming it "Best in Asia." With more and more tourists visiting the prefecture each year, Hokkaido hopes to learn a lot from Hawai'i through this new relationship, making Hokkaido known not only in Asia, but around the world.

Both Hokkaido and Hawai'i are home to strong

communities of indigenous peoples, Ainu and Native Hawaiian respectively. In an ever-changing present, Hawai'i is working hard to preserve the Native Hawaiian culture and language. During her trip to Hawai'i for the signing ceremony, Governor Takahashi had the opportunity to visit Kula Kaiapuni O' Anuenue, a Hawaiian language immersion school where she visited lessons and spoke with the students. Perhaps in the future that knowledge could be helpful in the preservation of the Ainu language and culture in Hokkaido.

Benefiting from both the similarities and the differences, the sister-state relationship between Hawai'i and Hokkaido is sure to develop and strengthen over the years. I look forward to seeing how each region grows and learns from each other, and what kind of exchanges are accomplished. In the meantime, I think it's about time I took advantage of the direct flight from Sapporo to Hawai'i – the sunshine is calling my name!

ALOHA!

IRANKARAPTE!

Irankarapte, the traditional greeting in the Ainu language, means "let me softly touch your heart," and evokes the same feeling as the spirit of Aloha.

## A Glimpse of Paradise



Governors David Ige and Harumi Takahashi pose with the newly signed agreement.



© State of Hawaii Department of Business and Economic Development and Tourism

Governor Ige presents Governor Takahashi with a ukulele made from Hawaiian grown and prized koa wood.



At the Signing Ceremony Reception, there were performances of Ainu folk songs and traditional Ainu dance. .



Governor Takahashi visits Kula Kaiapuni O' Anuenue, a Hawaiian language immersion school.

# HOKKAIDO JET SPOTLIGHT

There are over 200 participants of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme who call Hokkaido home. We come from all over the world and we all have a very unique experience with the island. In each edition of the Red Brick Bulletin, I will introduce a current JET living in Hokkaido. Each has their own story to tell – let’s get to know them!



## What brought you to Hokkaido?

**A** I was finishing up my last year as an undergrad and I wasn’t 100% on board with the idea of slaving away for the next five years of my life as a grad student. So, I applied to the JET Programme on a whim thinking it would give me a good amount of time to reflect on what I really wanted to do.

## How has your experience been so far?

**A** I think I overestimated my ability to withstand cold climates. I’ve learned that snow looks really pretty and serene in pictures, but actually experiencing it on a day to day basis for six months straight is a whole different story. With that being said, working as an ALT in Hokkaido has been an unforgettable experience and although it hasn’t always been a bed of roses, I don’t regret coming here at all.

## This is a very difficult question, but what has been your most memorable moment in Hokkaido?

**A** That’s actually not a difficult question at all! My most memorable moment happened during a trip to Otaru last year. While walking down one of the streets, my friend noticed that the two Japanese men walking directly in front of us had ear pieces in and were dressed like body guards. The guards seemed to be busy in their own world, conversing with each other in Japanese. Peering a little further ahead we noticed that these two “body guards” were closely following two foreigners, a man and a woman.

We racked our brains (while tailing the foursome) to try to figure out who these “celebrities” were that required such protection. While chasing them, we were literally right behind the two guards but we assumed that as two small

girls, we didn’t pose much of a threat. As we continued down the street, my friend made an offhand comment that the guards looked pretty scrawny and we could definitely take them on. We jokingly made a bunch of condescending remarks about how the guards were probably extremely ineffective and wouldn’t be able to protect the two “celebrities” from any actual danger.

As we neared the end of the street, the foreign man turned around to the guards and asked them what they wanted to eat for lunch. One of the body guards responded in perfect English, “Oh it doesn’t matter”. My friend and I stared at each other in disbelief and quickly ducked into one of the nearby shops. We were extremely embarrassed realizing that the two guards probably understood every insult we made about them. It was a good reminder that you can never assume that someone doesn’t speak a certain language, no matter what they look like.

## What’s your favorite thing about your region?

**A** My favorite thing is my school experience, especially the teachers and staff! I feel that since we spend a large majority of our week at school, if being there is not pleasant, it would be very difficult to enjoy our time in Hokkaido regardless of how great everything else is.

Everyone is so warm, friendly, helpful and forgiving of the many mistakes I have made. I have met some extremely interesting, wonderful, and exceptional people at my school and I feel so lucky to have been placed in such an excellent institution. I really don’t want to work anywhere else!

## What are your thoughts on the new sister-state relationship between Hawai’i and Hokkaido?

**A** Hawai’i is a really special place and I think everyone should visit it at least once in their life. I know most people will say Hawai’i is great for its beaches, but as someone who does not really love the beach, I think Hawai’i is great for so many other things. From witnessing the ferocious destructive power of the Kilauea volcano on Hawai’i island, to feeling the sun rise on Mount Haleakala on Maui, to eating the best Asian fusion in the world at my favorite restaurant, Panya Bistro on Oahu, to enjoying the natural lush greenery on Kauai, each island within Hawai’i is unique and special in its own way and you really need to visit all of them!

Through this sister-state relationship I hope that the citizens of Hokkaido will go to Hawai’i for not only places like Waikiki and the Aualani Disney resort, but also to experience its awesome culture and rich history.

Erin Fukushima is a Sapporo City ALT from the island of Oahu in the state of Hawai’i. Her hobbies include playing the ukulele, going on YouTube journeys and eating tons of food!!! She is currently on her third year of JET and will be starting her fourth year in August.

All issues of The Red Brick Bulletin can be accessed at [http://pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/ss/tsk/akarenga\\_eng.htm](http://pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/ss/tsk/akarenga_eng.htm)

Published by the International Affairs Division, Department of Policy Planning and Coordination, Hokkaido Government (Edited by Emily Schuster)  
ADDRESS: N3W6 Chuo-ku, Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan 060-8688 PHONE: +81(0)11-231-4111 FAX: +81 (0)11-231-4303