

The Red Brick Bulletin Q & A

What is it?

The Red Brick Bulletin is a monthly newsletter written by a Canadian working as a Coordinator of International Relations in the International Affairs Division of the Hokkaido Government.

What is it about?

The Red Brick Bulletin aims to introduce or re-acquaint Hokkaido with its readers covering topics such as history, sports, festivals, tourist attractions, cuisine, etc. It also hopes to inform its readers about on-going exchange activities between Hokkaido and regions around the world with which affiliation



has been established, while continuing to strengthen these meaningful relationships.

What are regular columns?

The Red Brick Bulletin will feature three regular columns: *Kanji and Kotoba Corner* – a mini Japanese lesson on selected Chinese characters and the Japanese language; *A City Close to Home* – a column featuring one of Hokkaido's cities twinned with a city in a region affiliated with Hokkaido; and *Canadians in Hokkaido* – a column featuring an interview with a Canadian currently living in Hokkaido.

What about this issue?

As the first issue of the Red Brick Bulletin, the *A City Close to Home* column will be replaced by a special *A Prefecture Close to Home* column, featuring the Prefecture of Hokkaido.

Why the 'Red Brick' Bulletin?

The Red Brick Bulletin is named after the 100 year-old former Hokkaido Prefectural Government Office Building which was constructed using red bricks. As all brick buildings were and still are rare in Japan, the building came to be called *Aka (Red) renga (Brick)*. A famous monument of rare architecture located beside the present Hokkaido Prefectural Government Buildings in the city of Sapporo, Akarenga is a popular attraction among visitors to Hokkaido.

The Red Brick Bulletin Factoid:

There are three versions of The Red Brick Bulletin: Chinese, Korean, and English. The content of each version is original but all share the same purpose with their respective readers. While the Chinese and Korean versions have been published since October 2009, this is the first version of the English publication.

KANJI AND KOTOBA CORNER

This month, two kanji will be introduced to explain the name of this column. 'Kanji' are Chinese characters which were introduced into and adopted by Japanese in the 4th century. 'Kan' means 'Chinese' and 'ji' means 'letter/character.'

'kan'

'ji'

漢 字

'Kotoba' means 'word' and/or 'language' (similar to the way English interchanges between the use of 'word' and 'language'). 'Koto' means 'say,' 'tell,' 'speak,' etc. while 'ba' actually means 'leaf' (use here possibly derived from Chinese phraseology).

'koto'

'ba'

言 葉

A Prefecture Close to Home

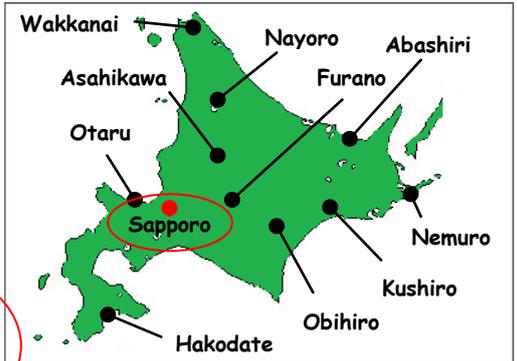
Hokkaido's unique characteristics compared to other prefectures make it a charming destination adored by visitors from both inside and outside of Japan. Its peoples' generosity, kindness, and love for good food and the great outdoors are sure to leave visitors enchanted.

Hokkaido Prefecture is the northernmost island of the Japanese archipelago. Fittingly, the Chinese characters for Hokkaido, 北海道, are literally translated as 'northern sea way.' Due to its location, Hokkaido's four seasons are more



similar to those of Canada than of most of Japan's relatively southern prefectures. Fall colours recently lit up the mountainous countryside for all to enjoy one last time before winter arrives!

Hokkaido is also the largest of Japan's 47 prefectures accounting for 22% of the country's total land area. Meanwhile, Hokkaido's approximately 5.6 million inhabitants make up only 4.4% of Japan's total population. The economic center and capital city is Sapporo which has a population of about 1.9 million people.



Hokkaido also occupies one-quarter of Japan's total arable land and is the nation's leading producer of beef and various crops, while being famous for high-quality dairy products. The fishery and forestry industries are also thriving and have become pillars of sustainable development plans. In addition, public and private collaboration has continued to further develop expanding biotech, IT, and tourism industries.



A Brief History of Hokkaido

Hokkaido as it is known today has a very short history. However, long before being founded in 1886 and gaining status equal to other prefectures in 1947, the region had undergone extensive transformations. Hokkaido's land and its inhabitants have had a long and fascinating history.

Although Japan's earliest records of present-day Hokkaido go back as far as 658, it is believed that Asian migrants arrived much earlier. In fact, records suggest that the island has been inhabited for roughly 20 thousand years. Indigenous culture had developed its own language, cosmology and lifestyle, while being able to survive harsh climates without modern amenities.



The most well-known indigenous peoples are the Ainu people (above photo) who have managed to avoid being completely assimilated. They have maintained traditional Ainu customs and have gained considerable attention in recent years as interest in indigenous peoples has heightened worldwide.

Before the island was called *Hokkaido*, Japanese people called the island *Ezo* or *Ezoichi*. During

the Tokugawa Period from 1600-1868, the Ainu people became increasingly involved with Japanese traders, and in 1855, *Ezo* was annexed by the Tokugawa Shogunate.

In 1869, the Meiji Government assembled a development commission which recommended sweeping reforms to be implemented across the region and *Ezo* was renamed *Hokkaido*. The Development Commission's policies are considered to be the foundation upon which present-day Hokkaido was built.



**1980-2010
Hokkaido Celebrates 30 Years
of Friendship and Affiliation with
Alberta, Canada**

**Sister-City Relationships with the
Province of Alberta, Canada**

- Kamikawa / Rocky Mountain House (1984)
- Shikaoi / Stony Plain August (1985)
- Kamifurano / Camrose (1985)
- Rikubetsu / Lacombe (1986)
- Higashikawa / Canmore (1989)
- Okoppe / Stettler (1990)
- Ashoro / Wetaskiwin (1990)
- Tokoro / Barrhead (Kitami; 1991)
- Yuibetsu / Whitecourt (1998)

Similar to the rest of Japan, many major developments of the past 140 years have been heavily influenced by foreign countries. However, the presence of the Ainu people and settlement of Hokkaido by Japanese emigrants have shaped Hokkaido's history in distinct ways.

In fact, the names of many of Hokkaido's municipalities are derived from the Ainu people's language. For example, Hokkaido's capital city, Sapporo, was derived from the name of the Ainu village 'Satsuporo.'

Under government auspices, soldier-farmers called 'tondenhei' were sent to clear Hokkaido land and deter Russian invasion. There were also prisoners sent to be used for labour, and voluntary Japanese emigrants looking to start afresh.

Perhaps the greatest foreign influence came from American Professor William Clark. He helped establish Sapporo Agricultural College in 1876 in order to ensure settlers would be able to establish an effective agricultural system. The discovery of coal resources also advanced development while the small Sapporo Agricultural College went onto become Hokkaido University. Incidentally, Emeritus Professor of Hokkaido University Akira Suzuki was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry this past October.

Hokkaido has also hosted a variety of international events ranging from the 1972 Winter Olympics to the 2008 G8 Summit. The direction of Hokkaido's future may depend largely on a vibrant history which is surely more investigation.

Canadians	In	Hokkaido
------------------	-----------	-----------------



Hello! My name is John Shigeo McNie. I am from Hamilton, Ontario and have lived in Hokkaido for 2 years and 3 months at the time of writing. Through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET)

abounded with kind people and breathtaking nature, making it a lot like home! Although this makes Hokkaido a very comfortable place to live, interaction and challenges are what make living abroad in Hokkaido interesting and exciting.

“The exchange of ideas is an invaluable exercise which I am proud to be a part of!”

I came to Hokkaido a little over two years ago and was stationed in a small, northern rural town called Shimokawa. The warm welcome and beautiful scenery which greeted me upon my arrival and everyday thereafter until I was seen off to Sapporo are some of my finest memories. However, sporting a red loincloth in the name of the local festival, interacting with children in school clubs and during events, and learning and performing with the local taiko drum group are also

some of my most precious memories.

Very few obstacles have been had, but I did face challenges when attempting to introduce the custom of hair growing/shaving and fundraising for cancer patients and research. Fortunately, my proposal was accepted and two years later, my hair was long enough to be donated while almost all of Shimokawa had become familiar with the custom. Not only was my proposal accepted, but about 800 dollars was raised and Shimokawa's high school student council has made plans to continue fundraising in years to come!

The exchange of ideas is an invaluable exercise which I am proud to be a part of and one which I hope this newsletter encourages. It is my absolute pleasure to have the privilege of bringing you The Red Brick Bulletin each month. Please enjoy and I hope to see you in Hokkaido soon!