

- Regional Leaders International Forum in Hokkaido -

30th Anniversary Commemoration of Friendship and Affiliation between Hokkaido and Alberta

The *Proclamation of Friendship and Affiliation* between Alberta and Hokkaido was originally signed in 1980, first in Edmonton (Alberta) and then in Sapporo (Hokkaido). Since then, both regions have continued to promote exchanges in a wide range of fields such as culture, sports, and industry. Delegations from both sides have also continuously reaffirmed their friendship and affiliation every five years by meeting in both regions, this year being the sixth time such delegation visits have taken place.

On November 11, foreign delegations from all over the world gathered for the *Regional Leaders International Forum in Hokkaido*, held in commemoration



Photo: Governor of Hokkaido, Harumi Takahashi, and Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations of Alberta, Iris Evans.

Following the presentations on efforts being made by each region to achieve sustainable development, a joint statement was signed by representatives of the five jurisdictions. The document states, “[...] climate change is one of the biggest public policy challenges of our time and a responsibility that must be considered in a global context. Recognizing that all global citizens have an important role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting the environment and adapting to the effects of climate change, the leaders reviewed recent international discussions on sustainable development. [Representatives] also agreed to continue to closely monitor developments and to



Photo Above: Deputy Chairperson of Sakhalin, Irena Trutneva.

Photo Below: Governor of Hokkaido, Harumi Takahashi



Photo Above: Director General of the Foreign Affairs Office of Heilongjiang, Erli Zhao.

Photo Below: Director of the International Trade Division of Gyeongsangnam-do, Dae-Ho Shin.



of the 30th anniversary of friendship and affiliation between Hokkaido and Alberta. Regions represented at the meeting hosted by Hokkaido included Alberta (Canada), Heilongjiang (China), Gyeongsangnam-do (South Korea), and Sakhalin (Russia). While Hokkaido is also twinned with Massachusetts (USA) and the cities of Seoul and Busan (South Korea), representatives from these regions were not able to attend. Nonetheless, the meeting provided an opportunity for the four represented regions, which share official affiliation with Hokkaido, to exchange opinions and develop new friendships while also strengthening existing ones.

The theme of the *Regional Leaders International Forum in Hokkaido* was sustainable development. Presentations made during the meeting focused on how the issue of environmental



protection was being addressed in each region. Hokkaido’s initiatives to make venues more environmentally friendly, learn from traditional practices of its indigenous Ainu people, and develop Environment Model Cities (EMCs) left a lasting impression on the audience.

work in their own jurisdictions to advance climate change initiatives.” Minister Evans, commented that, “[...] [she looks] forward to continued dialogue and moving forward on these important issues.”

Canada and other nations around the world take time every year on November 11 (*Remembrance Day*) to remember those who sacrificed their lives for the democratic freedoms enjoyed today. This year in Hokkaido, the past was also remembered – 30 years of achievements made possible through ongoing exchanges between Hokkaido and Alberta. Moreover, plans for sustainable development and creating a world in which future generations can thrive were also discussed. Through reflection of past challenges met and overcome, one can be optimistic about what the future holds for Hokkaido, Alberta, and the bond they share with one another as well as regions around the world.

A Town Close to Home – Shikaoi

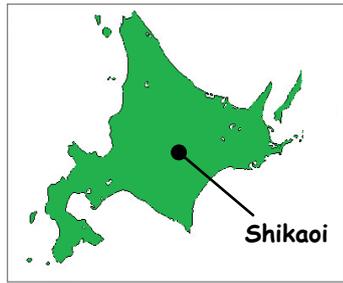
Shikaoi is located in the *Tokachi Subprefecture* at the doorstep of *Daisetsuzan National Park*. Like many Hokkaido municipalities, the name *Shikaoi* is derived from the language of the indigenous Ainu people: “shika” meaning deer and “oi” meaning “to chase” – *Shikaoi* meaning “to chase deer.” The name is believed to find its origin in the practice of chasing deer until catching them using nets strategically placed in ravines.

Not long after settlement began in 1902, a train station opened up in 1913. A wave of settlers arrived and several services and businesses were soon established. Today, the population numbers roughly 5600, while the economy is driven mainly by a Self-Defense Force Stationing Grounds, agriculture, and dairy.

Not only does the name of Shikaoi reflect Hokkaido’s long history before Japanese settlement, but mountains, lakes, and animals also tell stories of a time long ago. It is believed the *Nakiusagi (Pika)* came from Eurasia to inhabit the mountains of Shikaoi and central Hokkaido thousands of years ago during the last glacial age.



Map of Hokkaido



Shikaoi is also twinned with the Town of Stony Plain, Alberta, Canada. Active and ongoing exchange programs have facilitated a variety of home stays and delegation visits. In fact, 2010 marks the 25th anniversary of their dynamic sister-city relationship!

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Left: Canoeists paddle around *Lake Shikaribetsu*, a popular destination among outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Right: *Onsen* (bathing facilities near a hot spring) allow Shikaoi visitors to relax and rejuvenate following a day of wilderness adventures. Ever bathed outside in mid-winter courtesy a natural hot spring?



KANJI AND KOTOBA CORNER

Written Japanese is comprised of three scripts: *kanji* (Chinese characters), *hiragana*, and *katakana*. There are two thousand commonly used *kanji*, but commonly used *hiragana* and *katakana* each total only 46 (total 92). *Kanji* are complicated characters comprised of derivatives and often have several different pronunciations, whereas *hiragana* and *katakana* are simple and pronounced only one way (aside from exceptions). *Hokkaido* is written below using the three different scripts.

- kanji** → 北海道
- hiragana** → ほっかいどう
- katakana** → ホッカイドウ

Kanji, hiragana, and katakana are used simultaneously. Generally, *kanji* are most commonly used, *hiragana* are used for noting grammatical markers, and *katakana* for words borrowed from other languages. Can you recognize each of the scripts in the phrase below?

私はカナダ人です。(I am Canadian.)

Canadians

In

Hokkaido



Austin Corbett is a 24 year-old native of Calgary, Alberta. He has been living in Hokkaido for three years and four months at the time of interview. In August 2007, Corbett came to Hokkaido for the first time through

famous for its abundance of powder snow and long, cold winters. As an avid snowboarder, he has been able to bond outside of the classroom with students each year for about three months during ski lessons which are administered by schools across Hokkaido. Hokkaido is also where he carved ice blocks out of a lake in order to help construct an ice village. According to Corbett, his time in Hokkaido has also taught him much about how to make the most of what he is given. In fact, he has decided that he may very well live in Hokkaido.

and with “a thousand places like it” across Hokkaido, one can surely understand what makes Corbett want to live here. If it is not the breathtaking scenery, it may also be the cuisine. Corbett lists his favourites: venison and a Hokkaido-style lamb dish called *Ghengis Khan*; salmon, oyster, and scallops. Hokkaido is also where he discovered a fondness for spicy miso-flavoured ramen noodles!

“Thousands of gorgeous campsites make Hokkaido a paradise for campers.”

Aside from honing his snowboarding skills, Corbett has also taken up squash and judo. He traveled all over Hokkaido competing with a local squash team, and is now hoping to do the same with judo.

While nature and food are fantastic, it seems Corbett has a special affinity for Hokkaido especially due to the human relationships he has made while living here. Indeed, he readily claims Shikaoi’s people are as open-minded as the island is vast. Although planning to discontinue JET and leave Hokkaido next year in order to pursue further studies, Corbett seems intent on coming back.

His favourite destination in Hokkaido is Lake Kusharo. Located near Lake Akan, there is a gorgeous campsite and great *onsen* (bathing facilities near a hot spring). As a “big camper”

