



Our Study and Activities about the Ainu

Knowledge of the Ainu

History The Ainu people are said to have lived in the Northern island of Japan and Sakhalin since the Jomon period. Genetically, they are said to be almost the same as the Japanese people in Honshu and the Ryukyu (ethnicity in Okinawa Prefecture).

The Ainu captured salmon mainly and used them for trade. Since trade with foreign countries was popular at that time in the Ezo land. The Ainu traded for items of value with foreign countries and many Ainu obtained this trade with trade.



Between the Japanese and the Ainu people of that time until the Meiji Restoration battles were repaired over control of the Ezo land and trade rights with other countries. After that, until modern times, there was political control from the Japanese and they spent a difficult era in receiving ethnic discrimination. And moreover, the Ainu people have persisted assertively in society, aiming at improving their social status and establishing pride as a nation.



Faith & Ceremony Essentially, Ainu lived in Hokkaido and the Northern territories and they hunted wildlife animals in order to this day. They believe that gods or their incarnations are found in every phenomenon and object, including natural phenomena and they honor them. All gods are called "Kamuy". The Ainu believe in so many gods of Kamuy, and they live there believing that they're kept alive by these gods, in addition to their beliefs.



The Ainu have an important ceremony. It's called "Iomante", which means to see off bear spirits. When they get a baby bear, they think it is honorable thing that "Kamuy" (gods) entrusts them to raise the baby bear. Then they raise the bear for 1 or 2 years. After that they pray for the second coming of bear and food stability to see off Kamuy's spirit (bear's spirit). This is Iomante. It's the most important ceremony for the Ainu.

Culture The Ainu traditional pattern is basically made by combining 3 patterns. It is said that this pattern has been brought out from the river whirlpool and ice, drift ice, wind and breeze. It is a basic pattern widely used in textile products and modern products, which is most familiar to Ainu people. Long ago, a little girl designed this curve pattern as a part of play.

However we do not know the roots of the Ainu patterns. These Ainu pattern is always embroidered in the fine clothes of Ainu people. In addition to such clothes, Ainu's costumes have casual wear made from animal skins and plant fiber.



Quoted from the Ainu Museum home page

Law In 1899, a "law to protect aborigine in Hokkaido" was published. This encouraged agriculture, saved minorities and built schools in places where located close to Ainu residence. However, the land that was given based on the law had limited when the deal was made. Moreover, the schools, which were built under the new law were made only for Ainu. From this fact, the law was criticized by some citizens and the Ainu because it promoted discrimination.

After that an "Act on the Promotion of Ainu Culture, and Dissemination and Enlightenment of Knowledge about Ainu Tradition" is made to create a society which respects the Ainu by promoting the Ainu culture. The target of the law is only Ainu culture, so it did not protect the Ainu rights. It just approved them.

Our Activities

The Aim of 2017 is making projects which have the possibility of becoming reality. The purpose of this project is making "Ainu Kakkoi (Ainu is cool)" more popular. We are now researching and making details to show some people who helps our study in January. We introduce two of these projects as examples.

Making New Uniform of CONSADOLE Sapporo

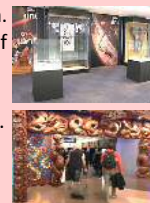
Our group think a uniform of soccer teams is one of major way to collaborate with Ainu Art. Because in New Zealand, All Blacks, which is the national team of Rugby, has some uniforms collaborating with Maori Art (see the picture). It is very cool and helps to recognize the presence of Maori nationally and globally.



And moreover, there are other effects. 1st is establishing Ainu Art's status as a brand. 2nd is integrating Ainu into Hokkaido / Hokkaido into Ainu.

Renovation of the Ainu Cultural Exhibition in the New Chitose Airport

In the New Chitose Airport, there is the Ainu Cultural Exhibition. It is located at 2nd floor (International Flight Building) and works of Ainu culture are on display at this place to introduce Ainu culture to foreign tourist. However, it's always very quiet. We think this space is not enough to introduce Ainu culture and recognize Ainu. So, we are making renovation plan. For better renovation, we refer to international airports in Vancouver (Canada), Auckland (New Zealand) and Incheon (Korea).



Guest Speakers

- * Mr. Hiroaki Hashimoto (Sales Section in Marui Imai)
- * Mr. Koji Yuki (A representative director of Ainu Art Project)
- * Mr. Kenji Sekine (A specialist in Nibudani Ainu Culture Museum)
- * Mr. Nagayasu Sato (A Cabinet Counselor in Cabinet Secretariat)



Cooperative and Supportive Organization

- * Ureshipa Club in Sapporo University
- * Ainu Art Project
- * The Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture

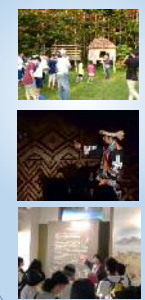


Domestic and overseas training

In Hokkaido there are many "kotan" which means a village of Ainu. We have visited three kotans in 3 years and had opportunities to talk with Ainu people and join the cultural programs.

Poroto-kotan at Shiraoi-cho

- Ainu Museum
- The Night Event of Poroto-kotan



Akan Lake Ainu-kotan at Akan-cho

- (the biggest kotan in Hokkaido)
- The stage of Ainu Tradition dance
- Lecture by Mr. Hideo Akibe
- The field work in Akan National Park



Nibudani at Biratori-cho

- Nibudani Ainu Culture Museum
- Lecture by Mr. Koichi Kaizawa
- Interview with Mr. Toru Kaizawa
- The Ainu Event "Chipusanke" (getting boats on the river)



In order to deepen our understanding of many cultures and multiculturalism, we underwent a training program in Vancouver, Canada.

- the Museum of Anthropology in UBC
- St. George's High School
- Interviews in UBC and Vancouver city



We had a study tour in Whakatane and Auckland, New Zealand to deepen our understanding of the preservation of Maori's culture and the present situation of coexistence (Maori and others).

- Auckland University of Technology (Maori Cultural program)
- Whakatane Intermediate School
- Kiwi Sanctuary
- Interviews in city mall

