



JLGC NEWS LETTER

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Comments from CLAIR's Fellowship Exchange Program Participants

CLAIR's Fellowship Exchange Program 2011 was held from October 23 to November 1 in Tokyo and Miyagi. Miyagi was damaged by a horrible earthquake and tsunami disaster on March 11th, 2011. Participants inspected and discussed the earthquake disaster reconstruction in Miyagi, and also experienced a seminar to learn about Japan's system of local governments and traditional Japanese culture. They thoroughly learned and enjoyed "Japan". Here is what they had to say:



At Matsushima, famous tourist site in Miyagi Prefecture

For more information about CLAIR's Fellowship Exchange Program 2011, Please visit our JLGC website :

[www.jlgc.org/TopicList.aspx?
topicCategoryID=2&topicID=14&languageTypeID=1&controlType=Display](http://www.jlgc.org/TopicList.aspx?topicCategoryID=2&topicID=14&languageTypeID=1&controlType=Display)

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Comments from CLAIR's Fellowship Exchange Program 2011 Participants



The Delegation Leader of CLAIR's Fellowship Program 2011

Mr. Daniel Gatien

President

The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO)

Last June, AMCTO was fortunate to receive an invitation to participate in a local government exchange and cooperation seminar from the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations. On October 22 last, I began a journey that comes once in a life time.

The trip was long and tiring approximately 14 hours in the air and there was a time adjustment to deal with (13 hours) but was well worth it. We did not know what to expect when we started our journey but we soon found out how informative and passionate the presenters were in each of the sessions we attended. On our first day, several presentations on the political structure in Japan and later in the day, we were exposed to the disaster of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. These sessions were very moving but it did not fully prepare us for when we actually visited some of the disaster sites.

First site visited was the municipality of Minami Sanriku-cho of approximately 18,000 people. The disaster coordinator Mr.Sato was our guide of the site and you can feel his pain for his residents who are recovering from the disaster. One of the comments that stood out during his presentation was that "the surviving residents are asking themselves why did I survive and not my neighbor". In Ishinomaki City, our study group was very impressed by the temporary housing for the disaster victims and how coordinated and quickly it was constructed. There was a section of 11,000 units we visited with an average of 400 square feet per unit for a family. These units are of a row housing type and are expected to be in place for a period of two years; however, the officials we met believe that the temporary housing will be in place for five years. The major obstacle for the type of housing will be the upcoming winter which the units are not properly insulated.



Explanation by Minami-Sanriku town staff

The disaster in Sendai City airport and port were unbelievable and the recovery plan is in full action. Sendai City has a population of 1 million and its local economy is strongly dependent on being able to move merchandise to and from their port and airport. Both the airport and port were completely submerged by the tsunami and the shore of the port dropped by .6 meter. We saw where ship containers were tossed like twigs and even a tanker ship still grounded on the main land a thousand feet away from the port.

Comments from CLAIR's Fellowship Exchange Program 2011 Participants



Explanation by the Sendai Port staff

Also, we were introduced to the beauty of Japan and its wonderful cultural sites. Miyagi prefecture is a beautiful part of the country with its breathtaking landscape and hidden treasures such as Matsushima Bay along the shores of the Pacific Ocean, the Zuiganji temple and I cannot forget Iwanumaya, where I experienced a traditional Japanese style Inn and hot spring bath "Onsen". Matsushima Bay is a small city which was spared by the tsunami because of the thousand of small islands that are in the large bay that absorbed the force of the tsunami. The ultimate experience was Tokyo with its 13 million residents and interesting sectors such as Asakusa which we saw the Kaminarimon gate, the famous Nakamise Street with all their vendors, and Sensoji temple, Shibuya, the rodeo drive of

Tokyo, the national government legislature called the DIET and many more sites.

3.11 stands for the Great East Japan Earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0., seismic intensity of 7 and a Tsunami of 8.8 meters high, flooding 327 square kilometers, 72,970 residences destroyed and 78,674 heavily damaged 13 billion dollars of damage costs to public infrastructure and 15,000-16000 deaths. In my visit, I saw the disaster relief in motion and there are still lots of work to do. However, it is the people that I will remember with their stories, their commitment to surpass this tragedy and to help each other.

I learned a few Japanese words during my visit but the one word that stuck with me and I will never forget was shared by the disaster relief workers;

"KIZUNA" which translates to **"Bond of People"**

In the next few months, I will post on our AMCTO web page a more detailed account of my trip along with additional information on local government in Japan, their disaster relief actions and my experiences during my trip. **Let's not forget the victims of this disaster.**

You can also read Mr. Gatien's report on our JLGC website :

www.jlgc.org/files/Fellowship2011/Fellowship2011-101%20.pdf

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Comments from CLAIR's Fellowship Exchange Program 2011 Participants



Ms. Beverly Bell
The Deputy Delegation
Leader
Senior Policy Analyst
The National Emergency
Management Association

My participation in the CLAIR seminar was an incredible experience, especially given my work with the National Emergency Management Association and disaster management in the U.S. Since my focus is at the state level, the activities at the Miyagi prefecture were of particular interest. Thanks so much



Ms. Susan Parnas
Frederick
Federal Affairs Counsel
National Conference of State
Legislatures

I learned so much about the culture and resilience of the Japanese people in the wake of a natural disaster of epic proportions. I was impressed by the efficiency of local government to quickly assess and respond to the concerns of their citizens and hope that the information I was able to share about disaster response and emergency preparedness in the United States will be helpful to the official I met in Miyagi Prefecture.



Ms. Nikki Guilford
Director
Office of Management Con-
sulting and Training
National Governors Associa-
tion

The stories and images of the March 11, 2011, Great East Japan Earthquake will remain with me always. As a former public servant with the state of Ohio, I was most impressed and moved by the compassion, commitment and strength of Japan's public servants.



Ms. Beverly Schlotterbeck
Executive Editor, County
News, NACo web site
Public Affairs Department
National Association of Coun-
ties (NACo)

The trip was incredibly well organized and provided exceptional views into Japan's culture, heritage and most importantly, its struggles to recover and rebuild from the 3/11/11 earthquake and tsunami. I met generous, hard-working, talented local officials, just like the kind I know in county governments in the States. It was an honor to have participated.

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Comments from CLAIR's Fellowship Exchange Program 2011 Participants



Ms. Caryl Arundel
Vice Chair, Board of Directors
& Chair of Governance Com-
mittee
Canadian Urban Institute

It was an eerie feeling to see the devastation of the earthquake and tsunami and to hear about the experiences of our hosts in Tokyo, Sendai, Minami-sanriku and Ishinomaki to both respond to the disaster and to plan for recovery. The study tour was an inspiring learning opportunity about resilience and the importance of local government. Thank you for the opportunity.

To see Ms. Arundel's report "CLAIR Fellowship Program 2011-My Impressions", please visit our JLGC website:

[www.jlgc.org/files/Fellowship2011/
Fellowship2011-11.pdf](http://www.jlgc.org/files/Fellowship2011/Fellowship2011-11.pdf)



Mr. Daniel Perron
Fire Chief and Emergency
Preparedness Coordinator
City of Sainte-Julie, Quebec



Ms. Dana Rohrbough
Deputy Principal Assistant,
Office of the Secretary of
State
State of Delaware

I am grateful for having the opportunity to travel to Miyagi, Japan for the CLAIR Fellowship Program and have learned a tremendous amount from the trip. I have an appreciation for the amount of challenges that face Japan after such a large disaster, and have a deep respect for those who are managing the recovery in the wake of such a significant disaster.

To me, the highlight was Ishinomaki and Minami-sanriku. Many times within my short stay, I was left speechless and my North American way of understanding things became rapidly meaningless in front of such a demonstration of destruction, but also by the will and the strength of the people we met.

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JETAA International Meeting and Rikuzentakata Volunteer Trip

On October 21-22, 16 delegates from 10 countries of JET Alumni Association International (JETAAi) gathered in Tokyo for the 2011 JETAAi International Meeting. As this is the 25th anniversary of the JET program, JETAAi wanted to have the meeting in Tokyo, where all of our JET adventures began.

For many of us, this was the first trip back to Japan since we had been JETs, but for all of us, it was the first trip back since the Earthquake. Landing at Narita, you would never know that it was eight short months ago that the tragedy struck.

Summary of International Meeting

The agenda and objectives of the meeting covered a variety of items ranging from improvements to the JET program to fundraising efforts for the tsunami area.

The meeting was sponsored by the Center for Global Partnership, a part of the Japan Foundation and CLAIR. Representatives from these organizations, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and AJET (Association of current JETs) attended. The meeting was also covered by NHK News and televised in Japan. Some of the delegates also had the opportunity to meet with government representatives in the three ministries that support and administer the JET Program: Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). We also had an opportunity to meet with a member of MEXT, who also requested JETAAi suggestions on how to improve the English Proficiency of the Japanese people.

Following the two-day meeting, we traveled to the Tohoku region to volunteer in the ongoing cleanup efforts in Rikuzentakata, where the late Montgomery (Monty) Dickson was stationed as a JET until he was tragically swept away with thousands of others in the March 11, 2011 tsunami that devastated the region. We were joined by fifteen current JET Program participants, led by Paul Yoo of Volunteer Akita, including one of Monty's childhood friends, Steven Wilson. Several delegates used this opportunity to show some of the efforts from their home countries. Nicky Furniss, our delegate from South Africa brought pictures of supporting and encouraging messages drawn by children that had been badly burnt. As these children are familiar with pain and loss they wanted to give their best thoughts to the people of Tohoku. Delegates from JETAA USA used this opportunity to present a donation from the JETAA USA Fund to the Rikuzentakata Board of Education. The proceeds will aid several efforts, including a project that provides study rooms for students and another aimed at hiring a second JET to

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JETAA International Meeting and Rikuzentakata Volunteer Trip



After arriving and checking in an inspiringly crowded volunteer center, we were sent to a plot of land near the coast that was formally a rice field and someone's family home. The next three hours were spent excavating and separating the debris from large area of sludge. Working alongside each other and a smattering of Japanese volunteers, everyone was humbled by the sheer amount of work that still needs to be done, but happy that we could do a little part of healing this area.

Following our physical volunteering, we were invited to a meeting with the Mayor of Rikuzentakata, Futoshi Toba, in the temporary building that serves a current city hall. Though it is a temporary structure, many of the walls were covered with an outpouring of support from around the world and the general demeanor was one of hope and optimism.

During the meeting, Mayor Toba described to us the current condition of Rikuzentakata including the many trials and tribulations that they are still enduring. "Since the grocery store opened, people have started to come out into the community again," Mayor Toba explained. Until that point, people had mostly been eating convenient store food and bento boxes trucked in from other regions, and staying close to home. Having somewhere to shop and meet with fellow community members has helped to establish a small bit of normalcy in lives that were turned upside down.

Mayor Toba also expressed his desire to put effort into the English education of next generation, whose task it will be to build a new Rikuzentakata City, and asked for support from JETAAi in this regard. The vice-superintendent of the schools also spoke to us at the meeting, giving JETAAi a list of requests, both general and specific. Mostly, his concern was to bring more cultural exchange to the students, especially the orphans. He also requested money for new instruments and general supplies.

In moving display of shared loss, JET participant, Steven Wilson offered a bouquet of flowers to Mayor Toba, to express his sympathy over the mayor's loss of his wife and fellow community members, including Monty.

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JETAA International Meeting and Rikuzentakata Volunteer Trip

Future Activities

Going forward, the JETAAi representatives plan to continue to fund-raise and support the Tohoku region during the rebuilding. They are joined by many others with ties to the area, including the family of Taylor Anderson, another JET that was lost in tsunami. The Andersons created the Taylor Anderson Memorial fund and are involved in several projects in Ishinomaki where Taylor was a JET. Back in our home countries we hope to help both monetarily and spiritually. In addition to fundraising, we will be pursuing various initiatives that will further cross-cultural exchange to the students in the affected area. One way would be to create short skype videos of individual's reading a children's book in English that we can send to current JETs to give out to their school. We are also hoping to work with schools in Australia and New Zealand to have live skype calls between classrooms in those countries and Tohoku.

Current JETs are also doing their part by volunteering regularly in the area and undertaking creative initiatives to support the remaining residents. It is a strong testament to the grass-roots loyalty to Japan that is created via the JET Program.

JETAA International Website :

www.jetalumni.org

JETAA International

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/
JETAAInternational](http://www.facebook.com/JETAAInternational)

JETAA International Twitter:

[http://twitter.com/#!/
JETAAUSA/jetaa-
international](http://twitter.com/#!/JETAAUSA/jetaa-international)



Shree Kurlekar

Chair

JETAA International (JETAAi)

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The New York Times Travel Show features Japan's Tohoku Region (March 2-4 at the Javits Center)

*For more information about the New York Times Travel Show, please visit the website:
www.nytravelshow.com*

The Jacob Javits Convention Center will be the venue for this year's New York Times Travel Show on March 2-4, 2012. One of the features showcased will be Japan's resurgence after the devastating earthquake and tsunami that inflicted terrible damage in the Tohoku region. The Japan Local Government Center in New York will feature an exhibition booth designed to promote Tohoku regions successful revival effort. The Tohoku Region, in northeastern Japan encompasses six prefectures; Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures were impacted severely by the March 11, 2011 disaster.



Cherry Blossom and Shiroishi Castle, in Miyagi



Tanabata Summer Festival in Sendai, Miyagi

The Tohoku Region is famous for its bucolic landscapes that subtly change with the seasons. Blooming in late April, you can enjoy the breathtaking beauty, serenity and fragrance of a wide assortment of cherry blossom trees. Also of interest are the regions Tanabata Festivals, a traditional Japanese summer festival held in August. Six prefectures in the Tohoku region hold these festivals such as the Rokkon Sai – or the six soul's annual festival that was started last year to cheer up the region.

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The New York Times Travel Show features Japan's Tohoku Region

The exhibitors booth will feature tourism information about the region, highlighting favorite and historic designations; including Hiraizumi, a recently designated UNESCO World Heritage Site – (June 2011), and fortunately spared from the horrific consequences brought by the earthquake and tsunami.



Chusonji Temple at Hiraizumi World Heritage Site in Iwate prefecture



JLGC staff demonstrated Japanese Calligraphy at Travel Show

In addition, members of the Japan Local Government Center will provide instruction on Japanese culture, including calligraphy (in Japanese “Shodo”) and test visitors on their knowledge of Japan.

Please come and join us at the Javits Convention Center !

For more information about Tohoku region's tourism, please visit these websites:

Tohoku Tourism Promotion Organization: www.tohokukanko.jp/english

Tourism Tohoku Portal Site for Post-Quake Rehabilitation: www.tohokukanko-fukkou.jp/en

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