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# JLGC NEWSLETTER

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*JAPAN DAY 2015 IN NY*

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## 1. Introduction of New JLGC Staff

**Namiko Mukumoto, Assistant Director, Representative of Matsue City**

Hello, my name is Namiko Mukumoto. I'm from Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture. Today, I'd like to introduce my hometown.

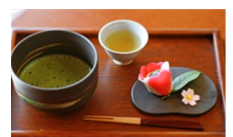


*Matsue castle in spring*

Matsue City is the capital of Shimane Prefecture, a rural area in Southwest Japan. The center of the city is an old castle town. Matsue Castle is about 400 years old. It's one

of the oldest castles in Japan and was designated as a national treasure this year.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a Lord of Matsue Castle deeply loved the tea ceremony. Under his influence, many Japanese confectionery craftsmen made delicious and beautiful sweets that are enjoyed during the tea ceremony. The tradition has been passed down to posterity. You can see many Japanese tea stores and Japanese confectionery stores in the town. Why don't you enjoy the tea ceremony?



*The tea ceremony*

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If you are interested in samurai, The Matsue Samurai Parade (*Matsue Musha-gyoretsu*) is worthwhile to see. It's held in April every year. More than one hundred people who wear old Japanese soldier costumes walk around the center of town. (You can also **BE** a samurai by taking part in this event!)



*Matsue Samurai Parade*

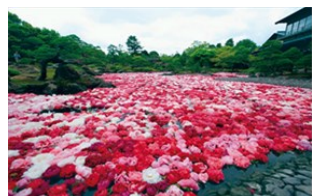
At the same time, the Izumo region, which includes Matsue City and its surroundings is the place where old Japanese mythical stories took place. It is said that the gods all over Japan gathered in Izumo once a year to decide who will marry whom. There are many shrines, traditions and festivals in this area. Recently, many more people (especially young women who want to get married) visit this area.



*Sada Shin Noh –a ritual dance designated as an intangible UNESCO world heritage.*



*Yaegaki Shrine is said to be the place where the first wedding ceremony in Japan was held.*



*Peony flower river in Daikonsima Island. You can see beautiful flowers are in full bloom around the island at the beginning of May.*



*Shoji (paper sliding door) made from Washi. Washi (Japanese traditional paper) is one of Matsue's specialties.*

In addition, there are so many beautiful places, delicious and fresh foods, and fine traditional crafts to be experienced in Matsue. You can also enjoy sightseeing near Matsue City. For example, the Izumo Taisha shrine is one of the biggest and most famous shrines in Japan. If you are interested in Japanese gardens, the Adachi Museum of Art has a beautiful garden that was granted the highest rank of three stars in the Michelin Green Guide Japan. I'm looking forward to your visit!

For more information about Matsue City, please check the following official sites:

<http://www.visit-matsue.com/index.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/visitmatsue>

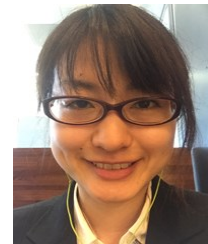


### Fumiko Tatemichi, Assistant Director, Representative of Hiroshima City

Hello, my name is Fumiko Tatemichi from Hiroshima City, Japan.

I just came to New York to work at Japan Local Government Center (JLGC) this April. This is my first time to live in the US and I am really excited to meet many people and discover a lot of exciting new things in New York.

Hiroshima is located in the western part of Japan and was featured in the Lonely Planet's *Cities Book* as one of the 200 most attractive cities in the world. "Hiroshima" is a well-known city because there are two world heritage sites- the Atomic Bomb Dome and Miyajima Itsukushima Shrine. Of course these are very famous, but there are other places I recommend you to visit in Hiroshima.



*Itsukushima Shrine in Miyajima*



*Atomic Bomb Dome along the river*

Miyajima Itsukushima Shrine, with its celestial grandeur and 1400 years of history, is one of the beauties of Japan. The shrine was registered as a World Heritage Site in 1996. It is only about 50 minutes from Peace Memorial Park by street-car or 55 minutes via World Heritage Sea Route, which connects Peace Memorial Park and Miyajima Island via cruise boat.

Hiroshima is a very beautiful city surrounded by the calm ocean (the Seto Inland Sea) and the mountains (the Chugoku Mountains). The Seto Inland Sea offers a great cruise experience, with the ever-changing scenery of a sea dotted with islands of various sizes. Also, riverside open-air cafes welcome both busy tourists and local people to take a nice break.

Surrounded by beautiful nature we offer a variety of delicious foods such as oysters, lemons and Hiroshima-style Okonomiyaki. Okonomiyaki has a tasty sauce on top and there is a special way to cook it. It looks like a pancake but includes lots of vegetables and sea food, so it is much healthier. When you are in Hiroshima, you just have to try it.



*Momiji Manjyu*  
(sweet red bean paste)



In the fall, you can see beautiful red maple leaves around the mountain areas. We offer traditional sweets called “Momiji Manjyu”, cakes baked in the shape of maple leaves with a filling of sweet red bean paste. You can choose flavors from many kinds of ingredients such as green tea, cheese and other seasonal flavors. You can go sightseeing while eating it, which is the local Hiroshima style.

Hiroshima has a professional baseball team, called the “Carp”. The new stadium was just built 5 years ago and is unique. There are many kinds of seats in the stadium, such as reclining sofas and tatami seats. You can enjoy a BBQ while watching the game. Since everybody in Hiroshima loves the “Carp” you can see them watching the game while singing and dancing!



*Slyly (Carp)*

See you in Hiroshima!

There are many wonderful places to see and enjoy in Hiroshima. We have lots of tourists from all over the world but I would like them to try not only sightseeing but also the local Hiroshima style!



*Hiroshima-Style Okonomiyaki*





## Yasunori Inoda, Assistant Director, Representative of Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department

Hello, I'm Cpt. Inoda from the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department (TMPD). I've been working for Japan Local Government Center since this April, seconded here by the TMPD. Today, I'd like to introduce some of our staff members who are real "softies" working in an organization known for its firmness.

What image do you have of the police or police officers? I think quite a few people in Japan still have an image of the police as a group of very serious people. In order to let people feel closer to the TMPD, one staff member of the TMPD has been working hard every day. That's our mascot character, "Peopo-kun (Peopo Boy)". Peopo comes from "People" and "Police".

Since his birth in 1987, Peopo Boy has played an active part in various police events, such as traffic safety campaigns every spring and fall and crime prevention activities held at elementary schools or nursing homes.

Peopo Boy is not alone. He has his family. The photo was taken when all his family members showed up at a police event. In the photo, from left to right, there are his grandfather, grandmother, father, himself, mother, younger sister and brother.



*Peopo Boy and his family*

In addition to Peopo Boy, some police stations in Tokyo have their unique mascot characters. The Minami Osawa Police Station, which was established in 2009 as the 102<sup>nd</sup> police station of the TMPD, has "Yuzu-ro (Yuzu Boy)". His name comes from both the "yuzu" fruits grown commonly in the station's area and "Yuzuriai", a spirit of give-and-take for traffic safety. Also, the Tamagawa Police Station, which is keeping the peace in the south-west tip of Tokyo, has its own mascot characters named "Tamao-kun (Tamao Boy)" and "Tamako-chan (Tamako Girl)". The original ideas of Tamao Boy and Tamako Girl were given by a bank clerk working in the area.

If you have a chance to meet Peopo Boy or other police mascots in Tokyo, please call to them in a friendly manner. As members of the TMPD, they will keep on warmly watching over both residents and tourists in Tokyo to keep everybody safe.



*Yuzu Boy*



*Tamao Boy & Tamako Girl*

## 2. Our Visit to the City of Novi, Michigan

*Shindo Hayase, Representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications  
Arisa Maruno, Representative of Wakayama Prefecture*

The City of Novi is located in southeastern Michigan. Its population in 2013 was around 60,000, and 2,600 of these were Japanese. There are also many Japanese companies there, along with the biggest Japanese community in Michigan.

The City of Novi and JLGC have a close relationship with each other, so Novi kindly hosted a visit by our Executive Director, Mr. Tatsuta, and five new assistant directors this year.

We met with a hearty welcome, especially from the Mayor of Novi, Mr. Bob Gatt. He went to Japan last year to take part in our “CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program”, which for over 20 years has been affording senior state and local government officials an opportunity to experience Japanese government administration firsthand.

During our four-day stay, we had a chance to visit the City Council, Novi High School, the general hospital, the welfare facility, and some administrative offices. All



*Novi Public Library*

the facilities we visited were wonderful, but what attracted our attention the most was the Novi Public Library. It provides many resources, according to each user's needs, and its services are offered to people of various generations. It plays a role as not only a library but also a facility for bringing people together. We could find familiar Japanese picture books which we had read when we were children, because many Japanese families live in Novi. It was a great place and there was more than we could see in such a short time.

Some of our JLGC members said that they would like to live near this library, if possible.

We deeply appreciate all the people who welcomed and took care of us during our stay. It was a valuable experience for us to learn a lot from the people who work there. We'll never forget this trip, and we strongly believe this friendship between the City of Novi and JLGC will last for many years to come.



*Thank you so much!*



### 3. Japan Day 2015 In Central Park

Arisa Maruno  
Representative of Wakayama Prefecture



On May 10<sup>th</sup>, the event known as “Japan Day” was held in Central Park in New York City.

Japan Day is an opportunity to people in New York exchange between Japan and year it has been held, and people come to this event were 19 booths (besides the cluding 8 booths of Japanese ous Japanese arts performed on the main stage. Five staff members from JLGC, including me, participated in this event as volunteers.



to introduce Japanese cul- and promote cultural ex- the U.S. This was the ninth more than fifty thousand every year. This year, there headquarters booth), in- food, and 12 groups of vari-

The event started with a four mile marathon called the “Japan Run” at 8:00 AM. After Ambassador Takahashi made some encouraging remarks, 5,580 people (3,000 men and 2,580 women) ran around Central Park. “Japan Run” was planned and conducted by New York Road Runners (NYRR). NYRR is a nonprofit organization that aims for the improvement of the public’s health and plans marathon races and training programs around NY. Japanese foods like *Okonomiyaki* and *Onigiri* were offered to people who finished the run.



*Yo-Yo Fishing*

As if to prove how well-known and popular Japanese foods are in New York, there was a long line at booths where they served things such as *Yakisoba*, *Okonomiyaki*, *Gyoza* and *Onigiri* for free from early in the morning. The booths where they offered chances to experience Japanese culture, such as trying on *Yukata*, *Kabuki* face painting, *Origami* and calligraphy, were also very crowded.

Meanwhile, what attracted my attention was the booth where JR (Japan Railways) Group introduced the stamp rally. The stamp rally is a popular activity in Japan. Recently, JR East conducted a stamp rally for Ultraman, which is a famous series about a group of superheroes, on Japanese TV. That stamp rally was held at stations around the *Yamanote* line. People collect stamps of characters at each station and get prizes, and so on. We can enjoy not only getting original goods but also collecting the stamps themselves! I hope that people in New York fall for its charm as I do. On the other hand, on the stage, people were entertained with both traditional Japanese culture, such as Japanese taiko drumming, Japanese sword fighting and karate, and Japanese modern culture such as dance performances, live painting, and a performance by the famous idol group AKB48. I was so surprised by AKB48's ability to attract people and highly excited about the band's performances. They played famous Japanese video game music. Almost all the people in my generation there must have been attracted to their playing like I was.



I could see a remarkably long line among the booths that I mentioned. It was the YO-YO fishing booth that Japan Society and The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program Alumni Association of New York (JETAANY) ran cooperatively. Japan Society is a leading U.S. organization committed to deepening mutual understanding between the U.S. and Japan in a global context. JETAANY is a public, nonprofit membership organization of JET alumni in the New York metropolitan area. YO-YO fishing is an indispensable activity at the summer festivals in Japan. People try to catch a "yo-yo" balloon from a small pool before their hooks, on paper lines, tear off. Every year many people show their interest in it and form a long line. Volunteers from JETAANY tried not to let people waiting in line get bored, so they stood near the line and told people how to do it and how much fun it is. I was moved by them, as if they embodied the Japanese idea of '*Omotenashi*'. Furthermore, the sight of both children and adults laughing with each other and looking into the pool filled with colorful balloons made me feel a warmth of space peculiar to Japanese culture. I hope that as many people as possible could feel that sentiment.



In conclusion, through this opportunity to serve as a volunteer at the event, I realize again the importance of grass-roots activities in order to spread knowledge of Japan and Japanese culture, and I can't help feeling gratitude to the JETAA members who help with activities such as these on a regular basis.



## 4. JET AA Canada Conference 2015 in Ottawa



*Keisuke Matsuura*

*Representative of Miyagi Prefecture*

The JETAA Canada Conference 2015 was held at the Embassy of Japan in Ottawa from June 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>. Not only delegations from all Canada chapters but also 2 country representatives from the US attended this conference and introduced their JETAA activities in 2014 to each other. They decided to make a membership database and discussed ideas for celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the JET Program in North America in 2016. It was a great opportunity for them to talk about some ideas regarding JETAA activities beyond their countries' borders and for helping think about future events.

JLGC announced recent developments concerning the JET Program, such as the Japanese central government decision to increase the number of participants from 4,400 currently to over 6,400 by 2020, when the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held. Also, JLGC explained the "Homecoming Program", which is to have 11 alumni from all over the world, including 3 alumni from North America, visit their former communities in Japan and promote the relationship between JET alumni and local governments in Japan. These attendees will have an informal international meeting in Tokyo to discuss ways to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in countries around the world. This program will be held in the fall of 2015 and I hope many alumni will have a wonderful experience again in Japan.

These issues will be discussed in more detail in the near future. JLGC will watch the alumni discussions closely and would like to support their activities.



*A discussion at the conference*



*Chapter delegation's presentation*

## 5. Tohoku: Moving mountains. Facing questions.

*Matthew Gillam*

### The Rebuilding

Compared to two or three years ago, the overall sense upon visiting Tohoku recently is that the future is finally beginning to take shape, even if the past still defines the landscape.

The record-shattering nature of the March 11, 2011, disasters – earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear reactor meltdowns – both in terms of their scale and compounded effects, produced quite disparate situations depending on the location. The coastal areas of Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima Prefectures were hardest hit, although the effects of the disasters were felt further up and down the coast, while most inland areas now show little if any obvious signs of damage.



*Part of Rikuzentakata's conveyor belt system for moving earth from a neighboring mountain*

For those communities devastated by the tsunami, much attention has been given to complaints that the rebuilding effort is going too slowly, and this is understandable when the pace of new permanent housing constructed is compared with that of previous disasters such as the Hanshin Awaji Earthquake that devastated the City of Kobe in 1995.

However, much of the reason for this is the decision to undertake the unprecedented civil engineering feat of leveling mountains and raising the land under the affected communities before moving to rebuild them on higher ground, whereas in earlier disasters it was basically possible to simply clear away the rubble and get to work. Each community being rebuilt along the coast is undergoing a somewhat different combination of having mountaintops levelled, lowlands raised, breakwaters, levees, and buffer zones created along their coasts, and evacuation areas provided.

In Rikuzentakata City they are shaving a neighboring mountain down from roughly 120 meters in height to 40 and using a massive conveyor belt system, three kilometers in total length, to move the approximately 6.4 million cubic meters of fill necessary to raise parts of the former downtown nine meters in areas closer to the ocean and eleven meters further inland, to be used for business & industrial development and housing, respectively. The entire project is expected to take at least another four years to complete.



A similar terracing (*kasaage*) process, using dump trucks rather than conveyors, is going on in most communities along the coast, although not quite on the same scale. Altogether, some estimates place the total amount of fill needed for various planned terracing and levee projects in the three hardest hit prefectures to be roughly 40 million cubic meters. This is enough to fill the 55,000 seat Tokyo Dome 32 times.



*"Kasaage" terracing operations in Rikuzentakata City, Iwate Prefecture*

The Town of Onagawa, in Miyagi Prefecture, is probably the community furthest along in its terracing and rebuilding effort. They just opened their new train station on March 21<sup>st</sup> and have made substantial progress in laying out the civic plaza that will run from the station down to the port, where a new marine products processing plant has already been built and opened.

Admittedly, Onagawa has benefitted from advantages not always enjoyed by other communities, including dynamic political leadership, strong community involvement, and money from the nuclear power plant located within the town's jurisdiction. They also benefit from being a smaller, more cohesive community, unlike larger, recently amalgamated cities such as Ishinomaki, next door.

Ishinomaki only recently settled on a plan for rebuilding, and is taking a somewhat different approach. They will build levees, topped by four-lane roadways, to help protect the city from future tsunami, which will at least buy time in a worst case scenario for residents to evacuate to high ground or specially-built towers. Coastal areas of the city were destroyed when the tsunami drove through them and large areas behind these were inundated to the depth of two to three meters, leaving behind extensive damage. However, with relatively more buildings and infrastructure having survived, it apparently makes more sense to adopt less-invasive measures than to demolish what's left and raise the city, as is being done elsewhere.

### The Challenges

The reality underlying the recovery effort is that the challenges facing the region prior to 3.11, foremost of which were limited opportunities for young people and an elderly and declining population, have only been exacerbated by the disasters, and the effort to recover from the destruction wrought on the coast is ultimately inseparable from the need to somehow address these longstanding issues.

Is it worth investing so much in terracing and rebuilding communities that were dying to begin with, where many people have already made the decision to move away and start anew elsewhere? Will these still be viable places for the elderly to live if all residential development is placed on high ground away from shopping and services, conveniently accessible only to those who can drive? Is there any way to make the region more attractive to young people?

As with all rural areas of Japan, Tohoku was losing population even before 3.11 owing to a combination of a declining birthrate, outmigration of working-age people to urban areas, and mortality among the aging population left behind. Statistics show Iwate losing roughly 55,000 people between 2005 and 2010, Miyagi roughly 22,000, and Fukushima roughly 62,000.

Cities in these prefectures, on the other hand, show more disparate trends, with Rikuzentakata and Kesennuma trending steadily downward from the 1950s until 2010, and Ishinomaki's population growing until the 1980s and then leveling off before gradually declining from the early 1990s. Fukushima City showed slight growth until 2011, then a small drop-off. On the other hand, Morioka City, in Iwate, showed strong growth from the 1920s into the 1990s, and while it has leveled off, it is holding steady. Sendai had steady growth from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the pace has actually increased since 3.11, probably due to people relocating there from the coast and people responding to the disaster basing themselves there.

While it is clear that substantial physical rebuilding will begin along the coast in the next year or so, it is less clear to what extent communities will be able to reconstruct themselves. It is likely that, as with developments so far, there will be a wide variety of outcomes, including newly revitalized, if perhaps somewhat smaller, communities, places that manage to build back to some degree and hold on for a while, and ones that fail to achieve enough critical mass to survive.

For more information about Tohoku, please check the following official site:

<http://www.jlgc.org/TopicList.aspx?topicCategoryID=6&topicID=445&languageTypeID=1&controlType=Display>

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