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The Red Brick Bulletin

Feature: Sapporo Citizens' Disaster Prevention Center

JET Spotlight: Keli Wang (Shiranuka Town ALT)



www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp

The Red Brick Bulletin (English edition) is written by Armi Henriksson, a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) at the International Affairs Division of the Hokkaido Government.

Sapporo Citizens' Disaster Prevention Center

On September 13th of the current year, I joined my two CIR colleagues and two Japanese supervisors on a field trip to Sapporo Citizens' Disaster Prevention Center.

As the name suggests, it is a facility where citizens can learn about disaster prevention. Although there is often not much we can do to keep these disasters from happening, there is a lot we can do to prepare for them.



▲ The Center's mascot, Boosa-chan



▲ My Korean colleague hugging a fire truck

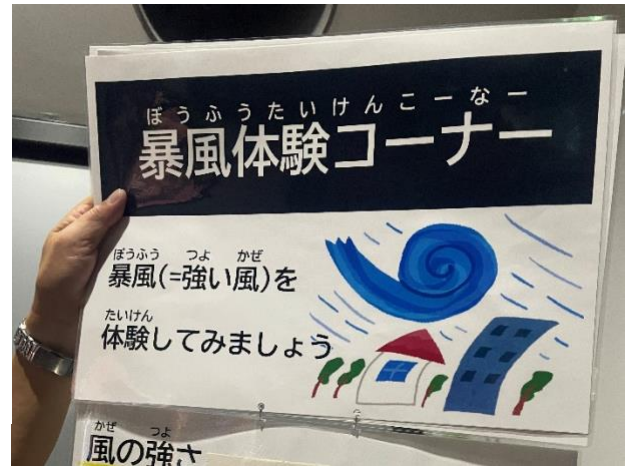
Seeing a massive fire truck on display in the main hall as soon as we entered the building, we were immediately inspired to learn. The Center features many simulations for different types of disasters, and we naturally asked to see everything they had on offer.

The tour started out with 3D videos that explained the mechanics of landslides and tsunami, culminating in chilling computer animations that demonstrated getting directly hit by the unstoppable masses.

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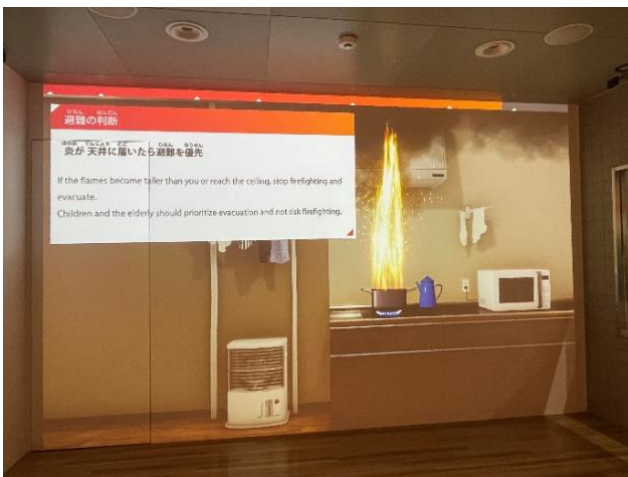
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Following the cinematic experience, it was time for some more hands-on learning. My personal favorite was the storm simulation room: huge fans would blow air at us, gradually raising the wind speed up to 30 m/s. (I somewhat regretted not tying my hair beforehand.)



▲ Storm simulation materials

Our team also practiced how to behave in case of a fire: how to move through a room filled with smoke (stay as close to the floor as you can, and make sure the last person closes the door!), and how to use a powder extinguisher (although both the “fire” and “powder” were replaced with light in our simulation).



▲ Fire extinguishing simulation

The final simulation was of one of the most common, yet grave hazards in Japan: earthquakes. I have experienced multiple small earthquakes in Hokkaido, but they have always felt like gentle swaying, akin to being on a boat – the simulation room gave us a taste of the violent shaking that a bigger quake would cause.



▲ How earthquakes and tsunamis are born

Our tour of the Disaster Prevention Center was a good reminder of the many natural hazards whose threat is ever looming over Hokkaido. It made me think of how well I would be prepared should any of them happen near me. Do I have a go-bag I could easily take with me in an emergency? Do I know where to evacuate? Do I even know which of these hazards are likely to hit the area where I live? The Center provides a lot of information on how to prepare for disasters, but that is only the beginning: we individuals still need to do our part.



▲ Display of various protective gear



▲ Some of the many resources available

Sapporo Citizens' Disaster Prevention Center

Address: Nangoudoori 6-choume Kita 2-1, Shiroishi-ku, Sapporo
(3 min. walk from Nangou 7-choume subway station exit no. 1)

Open: 09:30 – 16:30 daily

Closed: 1st and 3rd Monday of each month, Dec 29 – Jan 3

Entrance: Free of charge

Website: <https://www.119.or.jp/sapporo-preventioncenter/>

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HOKKAIDO JET SPOTLIGHT



There are over 300 participants of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme who call Hokkaido home. They come from all over the world and they all have a very unique experience with the island. In this issue, we introduce a JET participant working as an ALT (Assistant Language Teacher) in Shiranuka, a town in Kushiro Subprefecture.



MEET KELI WANG



Tell us a bit about yourself.

Hello, I am Keli Wang from Henan Province, located in the middle of China. During my free time, I love to explore different languages, indulge in reading, travel to new places, and embrace novel experiences. When studying Japanese, I prefer watching reality TV shows or dramas. As a social and outdoorsy person, I enjoy spending time with friends. Living in Hokkaido, each season brings a unique festival that can only be experienced in Japan. I relish every moment of my life here.

What brought you to the JET Programme?

One of my companions introduced me to this program. My major in college was Japanese, and before coming to Japan, I taught Japanese in high school. However, I have never had the opportunity to live or study in Japan, and I am eager to expand my language skills and experience Japan through my own life.

What kind of work are you doing as a JET participant?

As a Mandarin teacher in Shiranuka, Hokkaido, I teach students about both language and Chinese culture in different schools each day.

What in your experience are some of the differences between Japan and where you're from?

The thing I miss most about China is authentic Chinese cuisine like spicy hot pot dishes, which are hard to be found in here. On the other side, since moving to Japan, I've enjoyed many nature-filled adventures like camping and hiking with friends in Hokkaido. It brings me so much joy to explore the beautiful landscapes Japan has to offer.

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Tell us of a memorable moment you've had in Hokkaido!

In July, the annual Shiranuka Itsukushima Shrine festival took place. During this grand celebration, a beautifully adorned mikoshi was carried through the town to offer prayers for a bountiful harvest and safe travels at sea. The lively Soran Bushi performance added to the festive atmosphere, and the sight of the underwater mikoshi submerging with muffled chants was truly touching. This summer tradition is a true gem of Japan's rich cultural heritage.



What are your favorite things about Shiranuka or the surrounding region?

My go-to spot in Shiranuka is Hamanasu restaurant. This place offers a diverse range of cuisine, utilizing local ingredients in their Japanese, Western, Chinese, and Italian dishes. It's the perfect spot for a fun dinner with friends. Highly recommend checking it out!

