

NIA LETTER

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On the Cover

International Understanding Presentation Contest (Top Left), Yasashii Nihongo Workshop (Top Right), Supporting Foreign Residents in a Disaster Workshop (Bottom Left), Discover the World from Asia! (Bottom Right)

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Feature

Efforts for Multicultural Coexistence – Conveying feelings with “Yasashii Nihongo”

On July 17(Sat.), 2021, the Niigata International Association (NIA) and Kamo City's International Association jointly hosted a workshop for Yasashii Nihongo. "Yasashii" has two meanings in Japanese: it can mean simple and easy, and also kind or friendly. "Yasashii Nihongo" is Japanese that is simple, easy to understand, and also kind. They invited Katsura Kaishi, a rakugo (Japanese storytelling) performer, for the "Let's Try Yasashii Nihongo!" workshop. While following infection prevention measures, around 60 local residents and exchange students were able to participate in the event.

Kaishi's rakugo stories were easy to understand, and so funny! The hall was filled with laughter, and it was a good opportunity to learn about Yasashii Nihongo in a relaxed atmosphere.



Kaishi's "Yasashii Nihongo" rakugo performance. He explained rakugo's history and storytelling tools, and told some short stories in Japanese that were easy for anyone to understand.



By changing his voice, he could perform multiple roles by himself.



Giving Yasashii Nihongo rakugo a try. The students sat on the stage and performed using stories from Kaishi.



A Yasashii Nihongo skit. In pairs of Japanese and foreign residents, they performed skits about everyday life, such as helping someone who is lost.

Participant's Opinions

We received these impressions from questionnaires and from responses from reports by the Exchange Student Representatives!

I learned that it's easier for foreign residents to understand Yasashii Nihongo.

I hope that COVID-19 goes away soon so that Japanese and foreign people can enjoy having conversations again.

As a foreigner, it was my first time watching rakugo, but Katsura Kaishi made it easy for anyone to understand. Although it is my 3rd year in Japan, I haven't been able to participate in nearly any Japanese cultural events. I first heard about rakugo when I was in Tokyo, but I wasn't brave enough to participate. I felt that the event would be difficult for foreign people like myself to understand, so I gave up. I think overcoming cultural hurdles is difficult for anyone. But, thanks to Katsura Kaishi, I could learn more about Japanese culture, and we could have an event where even foreigners could understand Japanese culture. I'm truly happy.

If people use simpler words, it's much easier for us exchange students to understand. Learning keigo (honorific Japanese) is an important skill for us to acquire, but keigo and other complicated Japanese terms are very difficult for us foreigners to learn, and there are times when we don't perfectly understand. If you use Yasashii Nihongo, it makes communication easy for everyone.

The rakugo performance was slow and easy to understand, with explanations too, and content that was fun to listen to. I thought about how important it is to communicate at work and with other people, and to speak slowly, making sure that they understand what I am saying.



Conveying feeling with a point:

Tomodachi Card



NIA has finished making a Tomodachi Card. This is a type of communication card you use by pointing.

The Tomodachi Card was made in collaboration between Shibata City Hall, Shibata City's Joint Local Government Association, and NIA's Exchange Student Members.

There are 5 languages on the card: English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Yasashii Nihongo.

It can be used as a tool for communication to connect Japanese nationals and foreign residents in regional areas. If you find speaking another language difficult, or you aren't used to speaking in Japanese, why don't you try talking to lots of people using the Tomodachi Card?

The exchange students who provided translations

What's on the Tomodachi Card?

- ◇ Greetings / Self-introductions
- ◇ Questions
- ◇ Food · Free Time · Work
- ◇ Neighborhood Associations/
Taking out Trash/Consultations



Thant Sin
(English)



He Yaoqiang
(Chinese)



Ha Phuong
Nam
(Vietnamese)



Regina Ancilla
Natasaya
(Indonesian)



Tomodachi Cards are available at the Niigata International Plaza and the Foreign Resident Consultation Center of Niigata!

Check out our website for more details:



Did you know? The Number of Foreign Residents in Niigata



Number of Foreign Residents living in Niigata 17,571 (0.8% of total population of Niigata)		Resident Status of Foreign Residents	
		#1 Permanent Residents	5,174
		#2 Technical Intern Trainees	2,837
		#3 Students	1,796
		Nationalities of Foreign Residents	
		#1 China	4,406
		#2 Vietnam	3,820
		#3 The Philippines	2,675
Niigata City	5,496		
Nagaoka City	2,316		
Joetsu City	1,786		
Minamiuonuma City	974		
Kashiwazaki City	930		

(Ministry of Justice, Statistics on Foreign Residents, June 2021)

As of June 2021, there were 17,571 foreign persons living in Niigata Prefecture. When we look at the data for each area, even though Niigata City, Nagaoka, and Joetsu have the greatest number of foreign residents, all 30 towns and cities in the prefecture have foreign residents. By resident statuses, although it seems that technical intern trainees are trending upward, permanent residents are actually the biggest group. Chinese, Vietnamese and Filipino residents make up the largest portion of foreign residents, and the number of Vietnamese residents is increasing.

2021 Fiscal Year Exchange Student Representatives' Activity Report

Foreign exchange students who have a desire to join international exchange activities can sign up as an "Exchange Student Representative" with the Niigata International Association. In the 2021 fiscal year, we had 32 members registered as exchange student representatives, and they participated in various exchange projects throughout the prefecture. Let's take a look at part of what our Exchange Student Representatives have done over this past year.

2021 Fiscal Year Exchange Student Members' Accomplishments (May 2021 ~ January 2022)

Number of activities/events... 39

Number of people dispatched... 179 in total

Main dispatch locations... elementary, junior high and high schools, local governments, international associations, etc.

■ Sado Online Exchange Session

September 11 (Sat.), 2021, online (ZOOM)

"DSI Volunteer Interpreters of Sado," a private organization which provides support to foreign residents living on Sado Island, held an online exchange session with the Exchange Student Representatives, where they talked about the experiences they want to have on Sado Island when the COVID-19 pandemic is over.



■ Let's Learn About Countries of the World

October 13 (Weds.), 2021 at Yahiko Elementary School

The Exchange Student Members introduced the culture, language and traditional clothing of their home countries to 6th graders at Yahiko Elementary School. The students enjoyed learning about foreign cultures through games prepared by the Exchange Student Members and had time to ask questions.



■ Shibata City International Understanding Lecture - What is Myanmar Like?

November 14 (Sun.), 2021, at Ikunes Shibata

* The Exchange Student Representative presented from online

At this International Understanding lecture for citizens of Shibata City, an exchange student from Myanmar explained about the ethnicities, religions, traditional clothing, and social situation in their home country. After the lecture, there was a choir performance by people from Myanmar that are working in Niigata Prefecture.



■ Sports Exchange with Foreign Residents

November 28 (Sun.), 2021, at Kashiwazaki Sports House

At a sports exchange organized by the Kashiwazaki Sports Promotion Committee, Exchange Student Representatives deepened their connections with Japanese and foreign resident participants through playing "boccia," an official Paralympic sport.



From the Foreign Resident Consultation Center: Connecting Niigata

~ Improving the skills of our counselors and interpreters ~

Foreign Resident Consultation Center of Niigata (FRCN)

Monday - Friday 10:00 ~ 17:00
Niigata-shi, Chuo-ku, Bandaijima 5-1, Bandaijima Bldg. (Toki Messe) 2F
☎ 025 - 241 - 1881 ✉ nia10@niigata-ia.or.jp
💻 Online Consultations (reserve on our website)

For details:
(our website)



Here at the FRCN, our Lifestyle Counselors (hereafter: counselors) and Consultation Interpreters (hereafter: interpreters) work as a team in order to efficiently respond to consultations.

By building a connection network of relevant agencies and experts, our counselors make the most of their wealth of resources in order to offer the best advice possible. Our interpreters not only act as a bridge between languages, but they also provide comfort to our counselees by carefully listening and talking in their mother tongue, and can help to organize the problems faced by the consultee by thinking about how to deal with them together with the counselor.

Through deeply understanding our roles as counselors and interpreters, and based on the FRCN manual, we aim to carefully and thoughtfully respond to any consultation, no matter how small they may seem.

We are also building up our staff's credentials by having regular meetings and workshops at the FRCN.

(1) Meetings

At the end of every workday, we have a full-staff reflection meeting. We discuss what consultations we had that day, what we can do next to resolve it, as well as share the decisions we struggled with, and how we can improve next time. By talking through all of the doubts and psychological burden placed on the counselors through their work, no one has to bear any problems alone.

(2) Case Conferences

Once a month, all our staff members have a meeting. We take a look at difficult consultations and cases that have not yet been closed over the last month, and discuss how to deal with them. In addition, we discuss how we can improve overall as a Consultation Center.

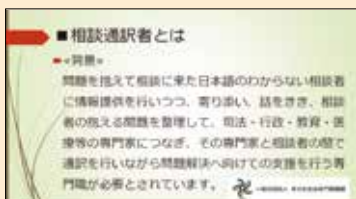
(3) Workshops

The FRCN implements workshops and training sessions to improve consultation support and interpretation skills. In 2021, workshops for counselors were held by various organizations in the prefecture in order to improve methods for supporting foreign residents and to build a cooperative system. An online training session specifically for consultation interpreters was also conducted.

In addition to this, we actively participate in workshops and study sessions hosted by outside organizations for administrative scriveners, lawyers, and immigration officers.

【Internal workshop for interpreters(online)】

On Tuesday, November 2nd, we invited Yamaura Ikuko, an instructor at The Institute for Multicultural Society Professionals (TaSSK), to conduct our workshop for our FRCN Interpreters. We covered the duties and ethical codes of consultation interpreting, learned some tips, and had a case discussion of actual situations and how to respond appropriately.



【Practical Workshop for Counselors on Supporting Foreign Residents】

On Sunday, November 14th, we had the pleasure of having Kado Miyuki at our workshop on the theme of hands-on Multicultural Social Workers at the Niigata Union Plaza. The event was attended by 27 participants from International Associations and Social Welfare Associations from within the prefecture, as well as administration and foreign resident support group employees. We had lectures about social work and exchanged opinions.



Introducing a New Coordinator for International Relations!

Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) are hired by local governments through the JET Programme to assist with local international exchange activities. Our CIRs can usually be found in the International Affairs Division of the Niigata Prefectural Government, providing advice and assistance the planning and implementation of international exchange projects, translation of publications, interpretation for events, and other activities.



Katelyn DePalmer

◇ Where are you from?

That is a difficult question! I was born in the USA in Virginia, but I moved a lot as a child, so Niigata is the 17th place I've lived. Currently, my parents live in Colorado, so I guess you could say that I am "from Colorado" now.

◇ Tell us about your hobbies and any special skills you have.

My hobbies are playing tennis and embroidery. I also love cooking. I want to learn more about Niigata's local dishes, so please teach me your favorite recipes!

◇ What made you interested in Japan?

When I was 16, I was able to stay in Fujiyoshida City for 1 month through a sister-city exchange. My host family really took care of me and taught me all kinds of things about Japanese culture and history, which made me want to learn more about Japan.

◇ How is life in Niigata?

It's colder than I expected it to be! But Niigata City is a comfortable place to live. I especially like taking walks around Furumachi and Bandai City. Niigata has some incredible food, and the people are kind too. Although I'm not a fan of snow, I'm excited to try some snow sports!

◇ If you have a message for our readers, let us know !

Living in a foreign country can be really hard, but there are so many good things about it, too. It's a wonderful chance for locals and foreign residents to learn about each other's cultures. If you are ever invited to something, you should go for it! You never know what other great opportunities it could open up for you.



Hoshino Kyoko

- She was born in Tsubame City, Niigata, in 1992
- After graduating college, she worked for a pharmaceutical company for 4.5 years
- She left this job in order to join the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, but after completing her training, her dispatch was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- While waiting, she worked for an NPO which aims to narrow the education disparity gap
- She was dispatched to Uganda in September 2021

As a member of JICA's Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer group, I am working to combat infectious diseases and AIDS in Uganda. I came to Uganda because I wanted to work on public health issues in developing countries and support HIV-positive people, making use of my experience working for a pharmaceutical company and a non-profit organization in Japan.

[Life in Uganda]

Uganda is a country rich in nature, and it never gets too hot or too cold throughout the year, so it has a very comfortable climate. Over half of the population is under the age of 18, so it is a really energetic country full of children and young people.

I was assigned to the Mpigi district, which is located around 1.5 hours away from the capital city of Kampala by car. This area has problems with power and water outages, but neighbors will share food and water amongst each other, and will help with laundry and cleaning, so you can live feeling the kindness of Ugandan people here.

When I came to Uganda, I was surprised by the vitality of the children here. Schools in Uganda have been closed for around 2 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and children as young as 10 years old are helping their parents by doing household chores such as washing dishes and laundry, selling things by the road, and taking care of livestock. Even though there are no sports grounds or parks like there are in Japan, you can see children playing soccer with balls made from fruit shells, or making model cars from tree branches. I really feel the strength and spiritual richness it takes to live in such harsh conditions. However, as schools have been closed for such a long time, teenage pregnancies have been increasing and

that there are a fixed-number of children who will not be able to return their education even after the schools reopen. I want to learn a lot from the people around me and continue to think about what I can do.

[Current Conditions]

I was assigned to an NGO that supports children in vulnerable situations, HIV orphans, and HIV positive people in Mpigi. We make home visits to interview people about their lives and health conditions, and think of ways to support the issues that we find.

We recently held an informative event on hand washing with local elementary schools. Hand washing awareness is low among Ugandan children, and there aren't enough places for handwashing in the neighborhood schools. When the schools closed, we were worried about the spread of COVID-19, so we informed students and their guardians how to properly use soap and wash their hands, and installed simple handwashing stations in the schools. Furthermore, there are reports that the number of HIV-positive cases are increasing due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Mpigi. Going forward, we would like to collaborate with health centers and government administrations to conduct field surveys, promote testing, and support the continuation of treatment.



An event to promote hand-washing.
We visited schools to teach students and their guardians proper hand-washing methods.



The local marketplace



A typical meal. Matoke (a type of banana) and small fish.

Republic of Uganda

Population : 44,270,000

Capital: Kampala

Land area : 241,000 km²

(About the size of Honshu in Japan)

National language : English, Swahili, Luganda

« Data from »

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/uganda/index.html>



NIA Activity Report Recent Seminars and Workshops

Seminar on International Understanding: Discover the World from Asia!

A series of seminars for international understanding on world history and culture with the theme of "Discover the World from Asia!" was held at 4 locations across the 3 cities of Niigata, Tainai and Kashiwazaki. 156 people participated in the seminar, including from online, as part of the seminar was streamed.

- **October 9 (Sat.)** Korea's pop culture gaining world popularity (the Korean Wave) ~ In the middle of Asia's pop culture trends ~
- **October 23 (Sat.)** Vietnam's Women's Day: Are Vietnamese women strong and tough?
- **November 3 (Weds., national holiday)** Food is the God of the People! Food and Agriculture in China
- **November 21 (Sun.)** Sustainable Regional Development from Global and Asian Perspectives



October 23rd,
Niigata City



November 3rd, Tainai
City

Job Hunting Seminars for Exchange Students

The "Job Hunting Seminar for Exchange Students" was held at the Toki Messe on November 10 (Weds.), 2021. Seminars included information about job hunting in Japan and the paperwork necessary for changing one's status of residence in order to look for work. 18 exchange students and 12 members of private companies or school-related persons attended.

- **Seminar ①** "Let's learn about job hunting in Japan"
The Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia Cai Shengxi
- **Video Message** Niigata University of Management Graduate Le Thi Bich Ngoc
- **Seminar ②** "Let's learn about visas for job hunting"
Tokyo Regional Immigration Services Bureau Yasumoto Daisuke
- **Seminar ③** "Let's hear about Niigata companies"
Presentations from companies within Niigata



Supporting Foreign Residents in a Disaster Workshop 2021 in Joetsu

When a major disaster occurs, it is difficult to get important information to foreign residents who do not understand Japanese, and puts those who do not have knowledge or experience with disasters in a very hard situation. In order to solve this problem and adequately support foreign residents in a disaster, a workshop with essential information and tips was held at the Joetsu Kyoiku Plaza on December 5 (Sun.). The director of the Institute for Multicultural Society Professionals (TaSSK), Kikuchi Akiyoshi, led the event titled "Let's think together! Regional disaster prevention in an age of multicultural coexistence," which included quizzes and discussions of experiences with the Great East Japan Earthquake, and practice exercises with Simple Japanese.

42 people participated, with government employees, social welfare council members, international exchange association members, disaster prevention experts, Japanese language volunteers and exchange students at the workshop. We heard comments such as: "It was an eye-opening experience to see not only how we can help foreigners, but also help each other. It made me realize the importance of communication" and "It was a great opportunity to directly hear the opinions of foreign nationals that participated."



International Understanding Presentation Contest

The "International Understanding Presentation Contest 2021" was held at the Tokki Messe International Conference Center's Marin Hall on December 18 (Sat.). The 5 junior-high and 10 high-school division teams presented the results of their daily studies and activities.

7 Exchange Student Representatives volunteered and helped the event run smoothly.

[Junior High School Division]

- First Place
• Go! Ecotto (Arakawa Junior High School)
- Award for Excellence
• Demeter
(Niigata Meikun Junior High School)
- Glocal Group (Tsubame Secondary School)



JHS Division First Place
- Go! Ecotto

[High School Division]

- First Place
• Cacao (Kokusai Joho High School)
- Award for Excellence
• Chocomin-to
(Kashiwazaki- Shoyo Secondary School)
- Anpan Girls (Niigata Commercial High School)
- Encouragement Prize
• Meguro-Shoji Sanjo Branch
(Sanjo Commercial High School)



HS Division First Place
- Cacao

Notices from NIA

On September 22 (Weds.), 2021, the Niigata International Association had a presentation ceremony for the Korean ethnic clothing and traditionally designed panel that were graciously donated by the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Niigata.

Right: Lee Su-jeong, Deputy Consul General of the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Niigata Left: Sakai Takenori, Executive Director of the Niigata International Association



Korean ethnic
clothing



The Exchange Student
Member volunteers who
helped out at the event!

Borrow national flags and ethnic clothing!

We lend flags and ethnic clothing to our supporting members, exchange institutions, and public organizations. You can use them for international exchange events or school studies. For more information, check our website.

〈Examples of uses〉

- International Exchange Organization:
Foreign culture presentations,
children's events,
exchange student meetings, local
festivals, etc.
- Schools, universities:
Club presentations, cultural
understanding seminars
- Prefectural or Municipal uses:
Consular or ambassadorial visits,
signing ceremonies



Become a supporting member!

Help support our international cooperation and exchange activities by becoming a supporting member, either as an organization or an individual. We accept new members year-round, and we're currently recruiting for April 1 to March 31 of next year. The fee to join is 10,000 JPY for an organization or 3,000 JPY for an individual.

To see all the benefits included with becoming a supporting member, check our website.



Website

NIA Foreign Language Tidbits: ~ Korea Edition ~



To all readers of the NIA Letter, hello!

I'm Yoo Minhyoung. Thanks to you all, I have been a Coordinator for International Affairs for 1 year now at the International Affairs Division of Niigata Prefecture. Although I came to Niigata a year ago, I'm still not used to Niigata's winters. While praying for this cold winter to end and for spring to come, let me tell you about how we spend springtime in Korea.

When we think of spring weather in Korea, one word absolutely comes to mind. We have the Korean word "got-sem-chu-ui" (꽃샘추위), which means "the winter envies the flowers." The Japanese equivalent word "hanabie". This word is used when the weather is beginning to slowly warm up at the beginning of spring, and then suddenly it becomes cold again. In preparation for the sudden chilly weather, people bring a thick cardigan or jacket when they go out.

Also, Korean schools are different from Japanese ones, in that our school entrance ceremonies and our school year begins on March 2nd. It's still cold then, so when you look at school entrance ceremony pictures, many students are wearing warm jackets.

In Japan, there is a strong image that "spring = cherry blossoms," but in Korea, we think of cute pink "Jindalrae" (Korean azaleas) and yellow "gaenari" (Korean goldenbell) flowers. According to the old calendars, March 3rd was traditionally a good day for going out and seeing flowers. People would eat and have a picnic with "hwajeon" (화전), a Korean chijimi pancake with bloomed azaleas, while enjoying "hwajeon nori" (화전놀이). This is the Korean version of "hanami," or "flower viewing" in English. If you have the chance to go to Korea, definitely try "hwajeon nori"!



Korean Azaleas and Goldenbells



Korean Azaleas

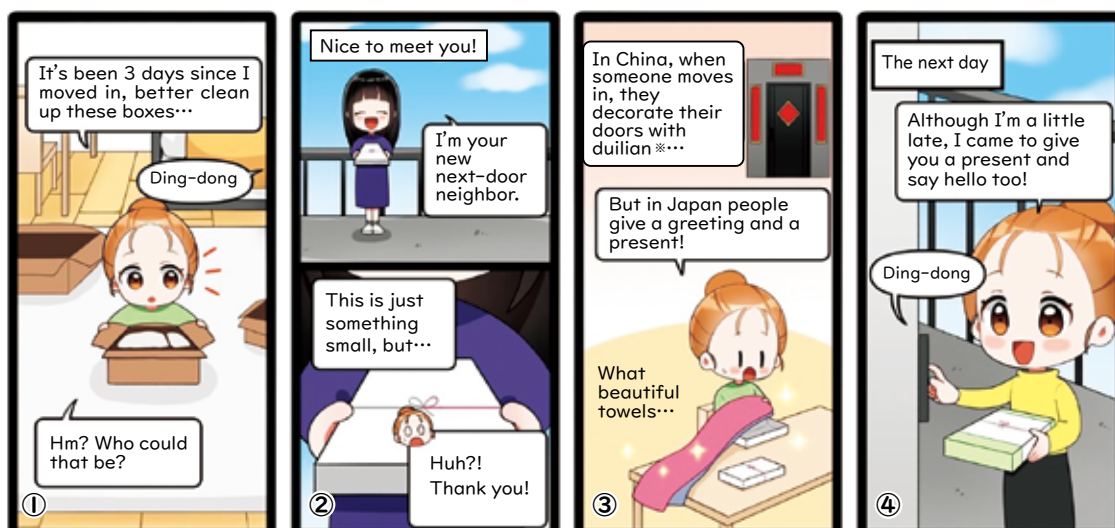
Comic

Episodes about life in Japan as an exchange student, in comic form!

#8

"Moving-in greetings"

Pen name:
Nekotaro



~ Message from the artist ~



Hello, I'm Nekotaro. I'm from Niigata, and I love cats. I usually draw illustrations and comics with deformed characters and young boys and girls. Nice to meet you.

◇ Nekotaro ◇ Japan Animation and Manga College - Manga and Illustration, 2nd year

※ Duilian...A couplet in Chinese poetry, but also refers to traditional Chinese decorations of hanging scrolls.

