

# STRENGTHENING OUR TIES



THE MAINE DELEGATION  
VISIT TO AOMORI

NOVEMBER 2005

# The Maine Delegation and Governor Mimura In the Governor's Conference Room

November 8, 2005

Aomori City, Aomori Prefecture, Japan



(FR, l to r) Lisa Adams, Hilda Nicoll, Don Nicoll, Maine First Lady Karen Baldacci,  
Governor Mimura Shingo, Lynn Thompson, Margaret Kelley  
(BR, l to r) Robert Plummer, Sue Plummer, Nancy Gibson-Nash, Scott Nash,  
David Kolb, Anne Niemiec, Sally Baughman

(Ms. Baldacci is holding a Japanese *noren* [entry curtain] with a Nebuta print,  
a gift from Governor Mimura; Governor Mimura is holding a carved loon,  
a gift from Ms. Baldacci on behalf of the State of Maine)



## I. INTRODUCTION

March 31, 2006

Aomori is the northernmost prefecture on Japan's main island of Honshu. Maine and Aomori established a Sister-State relationship on May 25, 1994, but the ties between the two maritime states date from October 30, 1889, when villagers in Shariki, on the northwest coast of Aomori rescued crew from the Bath square rigger Cheseborough, wrecked in a fierce storm on that coast. The devotion of the people of Shariki to the memory of that rescue and the ideal of international friendship led ultimately to the Bath-Shariki Sister-City relationship and the Maine-Aomori connection.



In the eleventh year of the Maine-Aomori Sister-State relationship, a thirteen member official delegation led by Maine First Lady Karen Baldacci visited Aomori as part of the pattern of alternate year exchanges between the two states. The November 6-12, 2005, visit focused on education and cultural exchanges, with the centerpiece exploration of a proposed Maine-Aomori illustrated children's book.

Members of the Maine delegation, in addition to Ms. Baldacci, included: Lisa Adams, a member of the Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council, representing the Maine Humanities Council; Sally Baughman, Director of Human Resources, Acadia Hospital, and President-elect of the Bangor Rotary Club; Margaret Kelley, Chair of the Maine State Museum Commission and a member of the Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council; David Kolb, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Religion, Bates College; Scott Nash, Assistant Professor of Illustration, Maine College of Art; Nancy Gibson Nash, free-lance illustrator; Don Nicoll, Chair, Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council, representing Japan-America Society of Maine; Hilda Nicoll, member of the Japan-America Society of Maine board of directors; Anne Niemiec, Executive Director, Lewiston Education Fund and former President, Japan-America Society of Maine; Robert Plummer, retired teacher and former international aid program volunteer; Sue Plummer, assistant to Ms. Baldacci; and Lynn Thompson, Executive Director, Watershed Ceramics Center, and member of the Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council, representing the Maine Arts Commission. Lisa Adams served as general organizer of the trip and liaison with the Aomori host team.

As can be seen in the pages of this report, the members of the delegation felt the visit was very successful in strengthening ties between the two states, particularly in education and cultural exchanges and in the personal connections between people in Maine and in Aomori. They had remarkably varied experiences in seeing the beauties of Aomori and in exploring the culture of the area – from architecture to art, to education, to food, to government, to music, to religion, to social interactions. Every day in many different ways they encountered generosity and warmth in the hospitality that surrounded them. And, in ways that have very positive implications for the future of the sister-state program, delegation members found communications between them and their colleagues in Aomori continuing to become more frank and relaxed, opening new levels of understanding. Members of the delegation hope more Mainers will take the opportunity to travel to Aomori as members of different kinds of official and unofficial delegations and as individuals. They also hope more Maine citizens will participate in welcoming visitors from Aomori to Maine, offering the same quality of generous hospitality this delegation enjoyed in Aomori.

The visit to Aomori could not have been as successful as it was without the substantial contributions a number of individuals made in Aomori and in Maine.

We thank first Governor and First Lady Mimura, whose leadership and warmth of welcome set the tone for the entire visit. Director General Kagaya Hisaki<sup>1</sup> of the Department of Tourism and Director Fujibayashi Miyagi of the International Affairs Division and their staffs outdid themselves in arranging our visit, responding cheerfully to our many requests, and making possible the kinds of exchanges that resulted in such productive policy and program discussions. We valued the continued contributions International Affairs Division Deputy Counselor Hatai Susumu made to our working sessions. Representatives of other departments added significantly to the ideas and understanding that came out of informal and formal conversations. The report mentions a number of individuals in the public and private sector that gave added dimensions to our time in Aomori. We are particularly grateful to Sato Tokuko – Sato-sensei – for the generosity she and her husband, Dr. Sato Jinya demonstrated in opening their home and in giving us an afternoon and evening of artistic and gustatory delights.

We shall always remember the warmth and care with which the late Mayor Narita's family welcomed us into their home in Shariki, giving us the opportunity to convey our appreciation for his many contributions to the Maine-Aomori relationship and to join with them in grieving over his death.

In thinking about our Aomori hosts, we have special thanks for Tonosaki Akira, Senior Chief in the International Affairs Division, and Ellen Tilton, the Division's

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: In this report Japanese names are given in the standard Japanese order – family name first. Following the initial mention of an individual's name, the Japanese honorific *san* is used. It is the equivalent of Mr., Ms. or Mrs.

Coordinator for International Relations and Prefectural Advisor. Tonosaki-san and Ms. Tilton were assigned to take care of us, to see that we got to our appointments on time, to help us gain as much as possible from our encounters and to be sure we were comfortable and enjoying our time in Aomori. Shepherding the thirteen independent-minded Mainers was, as we said to Tonosaki-san, like herding cats. He and Ms. Tilton did it very well indeed.

Finally, we want to express our appreciation to Sawada Toshiki and his daughter Aiko, who came to Aomori to test the waters and explore the possibilities of the Maine-Aomori children's book project. Scott and Nancy Nash's description of their time with Sawada-san and Aiko-san will give you a sense of how important their presence was to the success of the visit as well as the future of the book project.

We reflect on the visit, the wonder of the welcome we received and the high standards of hospitality our Aomori friends demonstrated and have only one concern: how can we reciprocate in ways that will do honor to their care for us? We intend to work as hard as we can to measure up and we invite others to join us.

At home in Maine, individuals and organizations have contributed already, making certain aspects of the trip and the initial work on the book project possible. This report would not be complete without grateful acknowledgement of the contributions from:

Maine Arts Commission  
Maine College of Art  
Yaeko Collier  
Cory Crocker  
Maine Community Foundation  
Maine Humanities Council  
National SemiConductor  
Marvin Sadik  
Natsu Sato  
Unity Foundation  
Gail Van Wart Blueberry Farm  
Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

The members of the delegation hope you will enjoy the report as well as find it instructive. If you have questions or suggestions, please write to Lisa Adams, 65 Center Street, Yarmouth, Maine 04096, or [eadams1@gwi.net](mailto:eadams1@gwi.net).

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A thirteen member Maine delegation, led by Maine First lady Karen Baldacci, visited Aomori Prefecture, Japan, November 6-12, 2005, continuing the alternate year pattern of the sister-state exchange program. The group focused primarily on education and cultural exchanges, with the centerpiece the exploration of an illustrated Maine-Aomori children's book.

In Aomori members of the delegation, in larger and smaller groups and, occasionally, as individuals, engaged in formal and informal discussions, met with senior officials and private citizens, visited schools, museums, historic sites, monuments, shrines, gardens, cities and villages, ocean shores, lakes and mountains, quiet back streets and busy markets. They enjoyed the hospitality of their hosts, the varied tastes of Japanese cuisine and the experience of Japanese baths.

From their experiences and encounters members of the delegation concluded that the Maine-Aomori Sister-State relationship is healthy. It has entered a new stage, in which communication between the two states is, thanks to work over previous years, more open and direct. There are more perceived opportunities for exchanges, and there is more mutual interest in a variety of exchanges, particularly in education and cultural pursuits. The obstacles remain: distance, language, patterns of decision-making on public policy, and limited funds. Both states face substantial economic and public finance challenges. Sustaining and expanding the relationship will require ingenuity and prudent risk-taking, but there are, in the delegation's view, substantial advantages to both states in a program that fosters a mix of education, cultural, public policy and business exchanges.

The delegation's report offers fourteen priority recommendations for action in support of closer ties with Aomori and, near the end of this report under the heading "Exchange Activity Recommendations," nineteen additional suggestions for initiatives others to undertake.

### III. THE DELEGATION VISIT – INTERACTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

The Maine delegation's visit to Aomori was a combination of interactions with leaders, civil servants, community volunteers, artists, artisans, teachers, farmers, shopkeepers, managers, scientists, health care professionals, workers, adult citizens and children, and experiences with the culture and environment of Aomori. One cannot understand the interactions and their implications for the future of the Maine-Aomori relationship without sensing the experiences of the delegation. In the following narrative we have tried to give the reader an appreciation of our encounters with the life and spirit of Aomori and the meaning of those encounters.

#### Sunday, November 6

**Arrival.** Most of the delegation arrived in Aomori City Sunday evening, November 6, where they were greeted by Fujibayashi Miyaji, Director of the Aomori International Affairs Division, Tonosaki Akira, Senior Chief of the Division, and Ellen Tilton, Coordinator for International Relations in the Division. Tonosaki-san would serve as coordinator of the visit, assisted by Ms. Tilton. The group stayed at the Hotel Aomori while in Aomori City.

#### Monday, November 7

**ASPAM Building and Introductory Film.** On Monday morning, following a briefing by Tonosaki-san, the delegation went to ASPAM, the Aomori Prefectural Tourist Center, a modern building located at the edge of the harbor. The first floor is filled with craft and food stalls. On the second floor we visited a *sumo* museum. A great number of famous *sumo* wrestlers come from Aomori. In a large 360-degree theater we watched the Aomori introductory movie in surround-pictures and sound. We were immersed in dramatic images of Aomori and its people in all seasons, including the Nebuta and Neputa festivals, which are truly amazing in their size and ferocious beauty.

**Lunch with First Lady Mimura.** At lunch the delegation split into two groups, one with Ms. Baldacci going to lunch with Aomori First Lady Mimura Michiyo, the other an informal gathering. The two first ladies were to meet, visit, discuss the proposed Maine-Aomori children's book and talk with the two author-illustrators, Sawada Toshiki and Scott Nash. Sawada-san came to the luncheon with his daughter, Aiko, who would serve as interpreter for Sawada-san and Mr. and Ms. Nash during their joint visit in Aomori. The luncheon was relaxed and productive, moving the book project forward. The two first ladies agreed to sign the introduction to the book.



**Working Meeting with Aomori Officials.** Following lunch, Ms. Adams, Ms. Kelley, Ms. Thompson and Mr. Nicoll participated in a working session with Aomori prefectural officials moderated by Hatai Susumu, Deputy Counselor of the International Affairs Division. Fujibayashi-san, Director of the Division, delivered welcoming remarks.



Exchanging opening remarks at the working session.

Mikami Satoshi, Teacher Consultant, Prefectural School Education Division, presented the education report. He said 20 Aomori high school students had spent ten days in Maine and had an unforgettable experience. Seventeen Maine high school students came to Aomori and spent ten days in Misawa. The connection in school exchanges is stronger. Next year the prefecture wants to take 20 students to Maine for various experiences. The prefecture has suggested October 5-12, 2006, as the dates for the visit. Money is a problem, but the school division wants to take 20 students. They admire the students in Maine. Their Japanese has improved over two years ago. There is a strong interest in the need to exchange to understand cultural differences, to gain knowledge of volunteer work, to gain a cultural sense they cannot experience in Japan. Mikami-san noted the Maine delegation's interest in early childhood education, saying there was a long-term plan for early childhood education in Aomori. In the conversation that followed, Mikami-san responded with interest to: the possibility of lengthening the time the exchange students spend in the sister-state; expanding exchanges by use of email and teleconferencing; developing a joint Maine-Aomori curriculum on cultural patterns and values, etc.; and developing a scholarship program for the exchanges.

Yamauchi Satoshi, Chief Researcher of Arts and Sciences, Cultural Museum of Aomori, presented the museum report. He noted the existence of the exchange program between the state museums since 1996, including the 2004 photo exhibit. He said the Aomori museum hopes to continue the exchange of information through printed materials. He said there is an international corner at the Aomori Museum that includes books from Maine. Margaret Kelley said the Maine Museum appreciates the financial constraints on the Aomori Museum and recommended continuation of exhibits like the photo exhibit. She told the group she had a set of reproductions of the photo exhibit for them to view. Yamauchi-san did not indicate a reaction to a separate suggestion that the two museums seek television station programs about the exhibits and research

areas at the two museums for broadcast in the sister states. Ms. Kelley talked with Museum officials later in the visit about specific exchange proposals. The results of that conversation are contained in the supplemental report on her visit.

Oguma Masaomi, Director of the Aomori Industrial Research Center, referred to a 1997 agreement with the Maine Technology Center, a 1998 trip to Maine, and exchanges with the University of Southern Maine Dean of Applied Sciences. He also noted a 2002 presentation in Aomori on the industries of Maine and a 2003 discussion of a large number of issues of common interest. Unfortunately, he said, they have not been able to come up with a joint program. Finances have been the big barriers. He expressed interest in pursuing potential joint projects and overcoming the financial difficulties. Dr. Oguma distributed a paper on Freehand Wood Blocks that had been developed with IRC support, which he noted was consistent with JETRO's "Universal Craft Japan" campaign and thought exemplified the kind of "creative economy" venture the two states might pursue.

IAD Director Fujibayashi then turned to the three topics Mr. Nicoll had raised in a memorandum prior to the delegation visit:

The first item, which was of major concern to the Aomori delegation, was the suggestion that we pursue other means of communication and interchange than travel between the two states. The International Affairs Division staff had understood that to mean Maine did not think the biennial delegation visits could continue. In the discussion that followed, members of the Maine delegation explained that Maine did not want to end the biennial visits, and regarded them as extremely useful, but wanted to explore other ways of increasing communications, including email and teleconferencing. Those other means were regarded as additions to the biennial visits and other trips that could be financed and arranged. There appeared to be mutual understanding of the suggestion, but the Aomori prefectural representatives indicated that the prefectural government does not have teleconferencing equipment and they did not see a way for government officials to use private, corporate facilities. There was agreement to pursue the idea of supplemental means of communication, coupled with agreement on the importance of face-to-face contacts through visits and other exchanges.

The second item was the suggestion that direct contacts between government agencies be broadened to reduce burdens on the International Affairs Division, thus increasing the flow of communications. The IAD staff seemed receptive to the proposition, but stressed the limitations placed on them by the lack of translation services outside the division. There was agreement to pursue the possibilities of expanding the availability of translation services in Maine and Aomori.

The third item was expanding economic relationship possibilities. Fujibayashi-san referred to the Fujikura Company request for a meeting, which was to take place Thursday. There appeared to be an interest in joint marketing studies by business faculty in the two states. There was agreement to pursue that and other business-related topics.

Lynn Thompson expressed the Council's interest in making links with arts organizations in Aomori and developing an inventory of organizations in both states that could assist in expanding visual and performing artist exchanges. The International Affairs Division had no immediate information or suggestions to answer her request at the meeting, but Yamauchi-san provided a brochure from the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) about the recently launched "Universal Craft Japan" program. Ms. Thompson also emphasized Maine's interest in artist exchanges, noting the tax issues related to compensation of visiting artists and suggesting joint efforts to resolve problems affecting compensation and expense reimbursement. The Maine delegation agreed to provide a memorandum on the issues and possible solutions.

**Welcoming Reception.** Monday evening the Aomori prefectural government hosted a reception for the delegation at the hotel. The room was set up with a long buffet of beautiful and delicious food including sashimi, sushi, noodles, scallops, and apple soup, an Aomori specialty. Following welcoming remarks by Kagaya Hisaki, Director General of the Aomori Department of Culture and Tourism, a response from Ms. Baldacci and remarks by Fukunaga Kenji, President of the Aomori Foundation for a Bright Future, local guests and visitors from Maine mingled, ate and chatted. Mr. Nicoll was asked to make closing remarks for the occasion. Later Kagaya-san obtained a copy of the recipe for apple soup that Mrs. Baldacci had requested.



A toast to friendship

### **Tuesday, November 8**

Early in the morning several energetic members of the delegation explored the central area of the city and observed the fish market operation,

#### **Meeting with Governor Mimura.**

We met with Governor Mimura in his large conference room Tuesday morning. Governor Mimura was gracious and warm in his welcome to the Maine delegation. After the formal greetings and response by the Governor and Mrs. Baldacci, there was informal discussion, during which the Governor expressed the intent to visit Maine, if he is re-elected, and endorsed first ladies' joint children's book project. Relaxed conversations continued during the round of picture taking at the end of the reception.



Ms. Baldacci and Governor Mimura

**Education Meetings.** From the Governor's reception we proceeded to a meeting with the Education Superintendent Hanada Takatori, Vice Superintendent Yoshida Takao and School Department Executive Vice Superintendent Tamura Mitsuharu. The principal topic of conversation was the student exchange program.

Our final meeting before leaving Aomori City for the Tsugaru region was with the staff of the Compulsory Education Division staff. There a school principal made a presentation and responded to questions. Members of the delegation were intrigued by his response to a question about what stories are used to teach children moral lessons. He reported that the children tell stories each day in the morning and the afternoon. The stories that are most important are the children's stories. The listening children chime in, offering advice or sympathy as appropriate. It is the most child-centered activity imaginable. We also learned that, as principal, he teaches classes when a teacher is absent. By his expression it was clear he loves this.

**North and West to Tsugaru Region.** Our itinerary over the next days took us north and west to the Tsugaru region, then south to the vicinity of Hirosaki City, then east into the mountains and north to Aomori City. Thanks to our guides Tonosaki-san and Ms. Tilton and our skilful driver, we had a comfortable and comprehensive view of much of the varied terrain of Aomori Prefecture. We were also treated to delicious meals, inviting accommodations and a series of heart-warming encounters with Aomori people of all ages.



**Tsugaru City Meeting.** The first official stop on the tour was Tsugaru City, a newly established regional municipality, created by the prefecture and incorporating five villages including Shariki, Bath's sister city. In the city hall we met with several senior officials from city departments and Chris Hainge, the international relations coordinator. In the mayor's absence Akitaya Yozo, Special Councilor and colleague of the late Mayor Narita, was the spokesperson for the city. He talked about how surprised he had been when he visited Maine at the way the Maine legislature works – noisy, disruptive. Mr. Nicoll laughed and commented how much he admired our Aomori friends' willingness to deal with us! Akitaya-san replied that he was able to see that the more organized quieter Aomori system and the noisy boisterous Maine system both were good. Ms. Adams said that was exactly the kind of open-minded attitude we hope our exchanging children will gain from their visits to Maine and Aomori. We are different, but both good! In the course of the meeting we asked several questions about the regionalization decision, local reactions and the effects of the consolidation. We did not get any direct answers.



**Bath-Shariki Sister City Association.** After the session with city officials we crossed the street to meet with the Bath-Shariki Sister-City Association that supports the sister-city student exchange. Many of them had hosted Maine children and a



number of them had visited Maine. We were greeted with "Hello" and "Welcome" and had a comfortable exchange. We talked about the experience of the exchange visits and a little about volunteerism. The group was looking forward eagerly to the next Bath trip in March 2006.

Ms. Baldacci and members of the Bath-Shariki (Tsugaru City) Sister City Association



**Visit with Late Mayor Narita's Family.** We came to Tsugaru City in large part to pay tribute to Shariki Mayor Narita, who had died just before our trip to Aomori. We had intended to visit his grave, but that afternoon a line storm moved across the area and buffeted the countryside with heavy winds and rain. Concerned about the storm, the Narita family asked us to come to their home rather than going to the cemetery. Mayor Narita's widow, their son Hiroshi and family, and Mayor Narita's cousin greeted us, after which each of us lit a stick of incense at the family altar in honor of Mayor Narita, following the traditional ritual: bow, kneel, bow, light the incense stick and plant it in the ash filled container, strike a gong 2 times, bow and stand. The altar had a large picture of the mayor, many offerings of food and sake. Mrs. Baldacci presented the bouquet of flowers that had been intended for the mayor's grave and it was placed at the altar. We were served coffee and refreshments and talked with members of the family of Mayor Narita's many contributions to the relationship between Maine and Aomori and the importance of the continuing ties between Bath and Tsugaru City. We learned that Mayor Narita's granddaughter Haruna planned to go to Bath as part of the March 2006 exchange. Narita-san said goodbye to us kneeling in the entryway of her home, as she had done when she greeted our arrival,



Remembering Mayor Narita

**Takayama Inari Shrine.** Our bus driver navigated the dark country roads through the wild night, taking us to the Takayama Inari Shrine, where we were to stay in the *ryokan* (inn) maintained by the shrine. We imagined the fierce storm was much like the gale that had wrecked the Cheseborough, leading to the Shariki rescue and, ultimately, to the Bath-Shariki link we were commemorating. We were welcomed to the warmly lit inn and shown our traditional *tatami* (straw mat) rooms and changed to *yukata* (cotton kimono) and *hanten* (jacket). Each room is simple, with a cozy gas heater, a small low table with a round box filled with tea supplies and snacks, and a *zabuton* cushion. It is the epitome of a simple lovely Japanese room. Spare, but with everything

one needs. A small indoor veranda with a chair overlooks the entrance to the shrine, where one can see the enormous red *torii* (gate) at the entrance to the driveway. The howling wind rattled the room *shoji* screens. Some members of the group tried the traditional Japanese *ofuro* (bath) before going to dinner.

Our hosts at the shrine had set up a long table in an enormous *tatami* room. An enormous meal had been prepared for us. Joined by Sawada-san and his daughter and led by Tonosaki-san and Ms. Tilton, we relished our food, lively conversation and a songfest, vowing to make an improved version of the latter a regular part of future gatherings with our Aomori friends.

### Wednesday November 9

**Cheseborough Memorial.** The next morning some members of the delegation visited the 150-year-old shrine. After breakfast, as we were preparing to visit the Cheseborough monument, we were greeted by Narita Hiroshi, who brought each of us gifts of socks from his mother. She feared we would be cold in the changing weather. They are a continuing reminder of the warmth of our welcome in Shariki.



The Nashes and the Sawadas left the group to continue their exploration of Aomori and the children's book project as the rest of the group took the bus the short distance to the Chesebrough monument. The rain had ended and the shredded clouds were clearing, but it was ferociously windy, with waves crashing on the shore and trees bent to the wind, the monument surrounded by hills, forest and the sea. Tonosaki-san read and Ms. Tilton translated the inscription on the memorial. It is beautiful, honoring the souls of the men who perished and reminding us that although all those who witnessed or participated in the event are now gone, that we are reminded of them by the sound of the waves and the gulls: a lovely poetic tribute.

**Kuzukawa Elementary-Middle School, Hiraka Town.** We took a long bus ride south, passing partially erected snow fences in the north, rice fields, villages, towns, small cities, industrial plants, shopping centers, apple orchards and woods on our way to Hiraka town in the hills near Hirosaki. We were to visit the Kuzukawa Elementary-Middle School, which has an on-going exchange program with the Camden-Rockport Middle School. When we arrived at the school, a large, new masonry building, the principal and vice principal and an assistant administrator were all there to greet us. We hopped off the bus, went upstairs to the meeting room and arranged ourselves around a large table. The light and airy atmosphere and the cleanliness of the building impressed us. After a brief greeting we divide into two groups and went to the classrooms for brief visits. We were struck by the small number of children (22 in the entire elementary and middle school), the quality and quantity of education equipment and the small teacher-student ratio. There are, for example, two children in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade combined.

While in the cafeteria we saw the truck pull in with the lunch cart loaded with food and dishes. We saw a poster of photos of all the children's teeth from every month and a poster on how to wash hands properly. Our impressions were extremely positive. The children seem happy, the facility and equipment is excellent.

At the conclusion of our tours we returned to the meeting room for discussion time. The experience was so different than we expected, we hardly knew how to begin with questions. We observed that many of us who are parents wish we could send our children here. This was true and a warmly received compliment. We learned that the children and the teachers clean the amazingly clean school –really sparkling --. The principal said with embarrassment that because the enrollment is low they are not able to clean every room every day! The children were happy and relaxed and did not seem in the least daunted by the visitors. We learned that they spend 2 hours a week on music. As we left, the teachers and administrators on the front steps waved us off. Overall, we decided the school is very impressive, warm and sweet. We were awed by the money spent on equipment in this little school – grand piano, enormous xylophones, laboratory equipment, gorgeous blond wood chairs in the cafeteria with cushioned seats. It represents a terrific investment in and respect for the children.

Our bus route from Hiraka town included a stop for another delicious lunch and a drive through Hirosaki city and the narrow streets of a village on the way to Zuirakuen, which includes a 250 year old home and a beautiful Japanese garden, both formal and wild. We viewed the fall foliage and explored the varied aspects of the garden while it snowed. The garden boasts beautiful stone lanterns, sculpted trees, and small white house with round and rectangular windows with bamboo grids. We also had a quick tea and tour inside the house. Then we were off to a very different setting that links modern Japan to the past: Sato-sensei's home and studio.



**Sato-sensei.** Sato-sensei (teacher) is a kite-maker, dancer, musician and tea master. She has been a frequent visitor to Maine as part of the former AFFAIR (Aomori Foundation for the Advancement of International Relations) volunteer artist program. Her home and studio are behind her husband's dental offices. His pink and blue uniformed dental hygienists greeted us and served refreshments, us. Sato-sensei, dressed in a brilliant kimono, met us as we gathered in her living room and dining room. We were served cold drinks and yogurt with fruit. We looked around the room at the many objects on display, focusing at last on a full samurai suit of armor, a huge *makie* lacquer box with cherry blossoms and a wonderful old *tansu* chest, all in a large glass case in the wall. We learned that Dr. Sato descends from a samurai family and the treasures of his heritage are everywhere



Sato-sensei then invited us to walk along an interior small stone pathway next to her living room to her *tatami* tea ceremony room. It was too small for all of us, so a few participated in the tea ceremony, which Sato-sensei narrated with much discussion of the heart and soul of the ceremony. Ms. Tilton translated in hushed tones. Following that long ceremony we were taken upstairs to yet another room where Sato-sensei performed a less elaborate tea ceremony.



We concluded our visit to the Sato home in Sato-sensei's kite studio. It was a riot of color and kinetic images, with huge kites everywhere. This is where she teaches kite making and produces her own creations. By the time we concluded our visit we were ready for a quick nap as we rode on our bus to a dinner sponsored by Sato-sensei.

**Dinner at a *Minka*.** We drove back into Hirosaki and stopped right at the point where we almost saw the castle as we whizzed through the city earlier in the day. We were welcomed into a *minka*, an old home/sake warehouse, owned by the city of Hirosaki as an historic site. The front is a sake shop, but behind that is an enormous storeroom with earthen floors. Stepping up to the right we entered two large *tatami* rooms with *shoji* screens to enclose them. The *irori* (charcoal pits) in both rooms were burning. Skewers were thrust into the ash, small fish on their ends leaning in toward the embers to grill. The 250-year-old structure is enormous, with huge beams wrapped in rope darkened by years of smoke. In one room the *irori* was surrounded by lacquer trays arranged in a square with the hearth in the center. Soon we were eating an amazing feast of *toro shashimi*, *sushi*, the grilled fish, pickled fish, the tenderest of beef, and a huge snail like creature a horny shell "*sasae*". It was a very special *gochiso* (feast) among the many extraordinary meals we enjoyed during our visit.

After dinner, the caretaker of this spectacular building slid back the *shoji* on the far side of the room to reveal the living quarters. Inside were incredible treasures, the family shrine, the house gods, the six-paneled hand painted screen designed to cover the shrine. We were amazed at the screen paintings and took picture after picture of them. They are museum quality, the colors so true despite their age. There was also a wonderful black and white Chinese style two-panel screen by an ancestor of Munakata Shiko, we were told. There were amazing examples of Tsugaru lacquer – a table, a beautiful round box. These exquisite pieces of art that were being picked up and moved around to show us. We did not want to leave, but we had no choice if we were to get some sleep before the next day's program.

We took Sato-sensei home, where she gave us each another *meibutsu* (souvenir gift) -- a *tsugaru* kite-style pencil holder.

We ended our day with a short bus trip to the village of Kuroishi in the hills beyond Hirosaki. There we stayed overnight in a modern *onsen* (hot spring) hotel. Our fellow guests in the baths, the dining areas and the shops were, for the most part, retirees.

### Thursday, November 10



**Towadako/Oirase Gorge.** After breakfast in the large *onsen* dining room we started our journey through the Hakkoda Mountains to Aomori City. The twisting mountain roads were familiar territory for Tonosaki-san, who has camped in the area, and our bus driver, who grew up in the mountains. In the village it was a bright, crisp fall morning. As we climbed we encountered more and more snow. It was in the snowy mountains we caught our first glimpse of Towadako, Aomori's second largest lake. We viewed the lake in its massive double caldera from an observation tower on a ridge. We took a little time for tossing snowballs, and our artist Scott Nash made a little snow animal to entertain us and other visitors.



We stopped for lunch at Hakkoda Hotel, an enormous lodge made from massive logs that were imported from Oregon and Canada! The dining room is monumental, with 40-foot high ceilings and half the size of a soccer field. We enjoyed lovely French cuisine with a Japanese touch.

The journey from the mountain heights to the coastal area of Aomori City was through the Oirase Gorge, following mountain streams and viewing a series of poetically named waterfalls, some broad curtains of water, some tumbling cataracts and some wisps or threads of white against green moss and black rocks.

Our bus driver knew every turn of the road and every waterfall by name.

Back in the city we went directly to the Aomori Prefectural Museum for an educational tour guided by a series of young museum employees. Ms. Kelley had met with museum officials in advance of the group's visit. They had discussed continuation



of the cooperative program launched several years ago by the Aomori Prefectural Museum and the Maine State Museum. Her account of the program plan is contained in the “Supplemental Reports” section.

**Fujikura Meeting.** At the end of the afternoon Ms. Baldacci and three other members of the delegation met with representatives of the Fujikura F-Cable Group of the corporation, which manufactures special, self-regulating heating cable in an Aomori factory. The company has a sales program for its product in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and Canada and wishes to begin marketing in the northeastern region of the United States and Canada by establishing a base in Maine. Their representatives were seeking help in identifying potential agents in Maine. We obtained information and background materials from the company that we brought back to the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Maine International Trade Center for follow-up.

**Evening Dinner.** Thursday night was a “free night” for members of the delegation. Don and Hilda Nicoll, Lisa Adams and Lynn Thompson had dinner with Goto Reiko, formerly a senior staff member of AFFAIR and coordinator of several Aomori volunteer artist visits to Maine, now a staff member at the Aomori Prefectural Art Museum, which is scheduled to open in July 2006. The conversation with Goto-san stimulated a number of ideas for cooperative activities in the arts.

### **Friday, November 11, 2005**

**Sannai Maruyama.** Friday morning was devoted to a tour of the Sannai Maruyama archaeological site, museum and education center, where we were guided by Sachiko Niimi, a volunteer with the AFFAIR exchange groups and a former ESL (English as a Second Language) student at the University of Southern Maine. The Sannai Maruyama site was discovered in 1994 when the prefecture began work on a new baseball stadium and uncovered the archeological remains. Since that time it has been dedicated as a national historical site and a truly impressive facility constructed. We were able to view the pottery mounds, enter a small pit dwelling as well as a large communal structure. We also saw the enormous pit holes that led to the reconstruction of an enormous and beautiful standing pillar structure. We also toured a very fine exhibit of pottery remains that featured explanations designed specifically for children, featuring a very cute Jomon-style cartoon figure. We were impressed with the child-friendly nature of the exhibits. After the tour several of us saw the educational facility where children come everyday for all kinds of hands on experiences such as making the Jomon figures out of clay or the



pottery, using rope to imprint designs. (Portland native Edward Sylvester Morse, who founded scientific archaeology in Japan, gave the Jomon people their name, “Jomon,” based on the rope patterns they impressed on much of their pottery.) The expenditure to create this truly remarkable museum must have been enormous. The facility is open every day of the year and there is no entrance fee

After lunch in the ASPAM building the group divided, with some going to the Suginoko Yochien school and some going to the Museum of Modern Aomori Literature.

**Suginoko Yochien.** At the school the group was greeted at the door by the principal and several others. The *Yochien* is a private school, an architectural wonder, colorful, open, bright, sparkling and very clean. The children were bubbling over, cute and happy in their yellow smocks, pig tails and big smiles. “HERRO!” they crowed at



us. “HOW ARE YOU?” We visited several classrooms. In one the children were singing and playing castanets and harmonium. Scott Nash started the book reading for the five year old students by drawing them a dinosaur and teaching them a “dinosaur stomp.” Then Mrs. Baldacci and he read alternating pages out loud. The children responded with enthusiasm and ebullient chattering. The principal and teachers next showed the group the children’s tea room -- a beautifully *tatami* room with *tokonoma* (an alcove for flower and

artistic scroll display) -- where they begin to learn the tea ceremony twice a month. The visit concluded with a lively exchange with teachers and principal in a very large bright meeting room. The conversation covered questions from about the curriculum, the structure of the day and so on. The group felt these were some of the happiest school children they had ever seen and that, as they told their hosts, we have much to learn from them.

**Museum of Modern Aomori Literature.** Curator Kushibiki Youichi of the Museum of Modern Aomori Literature guided the group through the exhibits. Thirteen Aomori writers are represented in the museum’s collections, including Dazai Osamu, Fukushima Koujiro, Ichizaka Youjiro, Kasai Zenzou, Kitabatake Yao, Kitamura Komatsu, Kon Kan’ichi, Miura Tetsuo, Osabe Hideo, Satou Kouriuku, Takagi Kyouzou, Terayama Shuui and Ujaku Akita. The group saw exhibits about the writers and their work and, for some of the writers, original manuscripts. It was a special opportunity to gain a sense of the importance of Aomori’s importance to Japanese literature.

**Munakata Shiko Museum.** The final cultural visit of the day was the museum dedicated to the exhibition of famed Japanese wood block artist Munakata Shiko's work in the setting of a Japanese garden with a wisteria arbor. There are two rooms with about forty works displayed. There is also an exhibit of photos of the artist. Included in the exhibit of Munakata's work are a twenty foot long scroll, two folding screens with blond and white wood block buddhas and bodhisattvas, a long panel of wood block plus color applied from the back of the paper, which apparently was Munakata's trademark. He also applied color to the front. Members of the delegation expressed interest to the museum curator in facilitating a Munakata exhibit in Maine.

**Keikokan Museum.** Following the Munakata Museum visit, three members of the delegation went to the Aomori City Historical Folklore Museum "Keikokan" and were delighted and very impressed by the exhibits of traditional cultural artifacts.

**Farewell Reception.** After a brief time for shopping in the late afternoon the members of the delegation walked from the hotel to a small restaurant, which had been transformed for our farewell party. Like the opening reception it had a buffet to one side with a number of tables set up with drinks to stand around. The Suginoko Principal, Sato-sensei, Hatai-san, Fujibayashi-san and Kagaya-san are all there along with our two intrepid guides, Tonosaki-san and Ms. Tilton. We talked about our visit, what we had learned, and expressed our deep appreciation for all that our hosts had done to make our time in Aomori so pleasant, exciting and memorable. At the end of the reception Fujibayashi-san and Lisa Adams gave the closing toasts.

### Saturday November 12

**Departure.** There was an early departure for the airport, where Fujibayashi-san, Tonosaki-san and Ms. Tilton saw the group off. There were thanks all around again, a souvenir collection of 13 toy cats for Tonosaki-san to commemorate his "herding" tasks, and not a few moist eyes. The official visit was over. Planning for the next encounters was about to begin.

## IV. SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTS

As noted in the foregoing narrative, our hosts, in response to our delegation's request, facilitated separate, small group meetings from time to time, in order to expand our interactions and to allow more in-depth discussions in several areas of education and cultural interest. There were, in addition, supplemental visits and meetings that are important to the overall Maine-Aomori relationship. We have included summary reports from those encounters. We plan to publish more complete versions of the reports that provide a rich evocation of the individual experiences.

### 1. November 7-9, the Nash-Sawada Visit and Tour

A major purpose of the Aomori trip was to launch a collaborative effort by Scott Nash and Sawada Toshiki to write and illustrate a children's book about Maine and Aomori. Arrangements were made for Scott and Nancy Nash and Sawada-san and his daughter Aiko to spend four days together, sometimes with the Maine delegation and sometimes on their own. The Sawadas came from their home in Tokyo to meet the Maine group in time for the two artists to join first ladies Baldacci and Mimura for lunch.

Following lunch on Monday the four set out on their adventures in the Tsugaru region. Sawada-san would be the chauffeur, driving his parents' car, and guide the exploration of his native state. Aiko-san, who had studied in Great Britain, would be the interpreter. Their first stop was the Nebuta Festival Museum, outside Aomori City, where they viewed in the great darkened wooden building the artists and their rice paper and wire creations, what over the next months would become massive, rotating, vibrantly colored



Japanese warriors, sea creatures, dragons and animals, floats in the 2006 Nebuta Festival. With help from Sawada-san and Aiko-san, Scott got a chance to play a great Nebuta drum. The sound of the drum filled the hall and their bodies. Scott and Nancy ushered in their new relationship with Japan, Aomori, Sawada-san and Aiko-san with a very big bang!

They rounded out their day with a brief drive in the hills outside Aomori, the official welcoming reception back at the hotel, and an evening of conversation at a club run by an old friend of Sawada-san's, the "Body," a bar filled with Sawada-san's artwork! His whimsical paintings, sculptures and mosaics of dancing animals, drumming creatures and flying birds covered the walls. Scott and Nancy enjoyed learning more about Sawada-san and Aiko-san's lives in Tokyo, Sawada-san's youth in Aomori and his



career as a graphic designer and illustrator. He has worked collaboratively with authors in Africa, Cuba and Portugal. His work is varied and eclectic as could be seen from the pieces at the bar...paintings, mosaics, logos, CD covers, signs and murals. There were even whimsical fire hydrants he painted on commission for the city of Aomori!

On Tuesday, after Governor Mimura's reception meeting, the Sawada-Nash team drove to meet Sawada-san's parents in the seaside village outside Aomori where they live. Then they were off on the journey to Shariki in Tsugaru City. The drive gave them a chance to learn more about each other. Scott and Sawada-san compared notes about books, music and movies, chatting about Shinto and other Japanese traditions. Aiko-san answered Nancy's questions about her family. Sawada-san, like Scott, is usually very busy, works late at night and like Scott, had books that were due as they spoke! Sawada-san is the youngest of four boys - Scott is the oldest of four boys. Aiko-san is a twin, and Nancy has a twin brother. Sawada-san and his wife have been married almost as long as Scott and Nancy. Sawada-san's wife is a graphic designer and Nancy is an illustrator. Aiko-san and her sister both want to be illustrators and/or graphic designers. They marveled at all the similarities in their lives. The feeling continued... this is a good match! As if to agree, the sky offered up a rainbow! They all cheered.

In Tsugaru City the travelers met their guides for introductions to significant local sites commemorating the wreck of the Cheseborough. They were taken to the Takayama Inari Shrine, the Cheseborough Monument and Shrine and the beach area. They were shown the original document from the Japanese government commending the people of Shariki for their rescue of the survivors of the Cheseborough. They examined relics from the ship and received pears from a 100-year old tree grown from the seeds of pears cast ashore from the Cheseborough. And they talked with Okabe Chizuko, a teacher in the elementary school, author of Love across the Seas, the story of the Cheseborough. All of those encounters were experienced in the midst of the fierce storm that reminded all of the events of October 1889.



That evening the four artists rejoined the delegation for dinner, singing and overnight in the Takayama Inari Shrine inn.





Sawada-san and Aiko-san at the orchard

The next day, Wednesday, began with a return to the Shrine, a walk on the shore and exploration of the collection of shrines to foxes in the vicinity of the main shrine. The delegation headed south for Hirosaki and the group of four drove to the Iwaki Mountain area northwest of Hirosaki, where they would visit with an artist friend of Sawada-san, Suzuki Syuuji, enjoying a picnic in his apple orchard and discussing the artist's work. Some of his traditional wood cuts and ink paintings are on the wall in his barn. He and his wife make costumes and participate in the traditional dancing at the festival dedicated to the worship of Mount Iwaki. The visitors saw the grasses that Suzuki-san had harvested and dyed to make the hair on the masks that are used in the dances. His days were very busy with the festival work and his apple harvest, so the visitors left to rejoin the delegation at Sato-sensei's home.

On the road again, Scott and Sawada-san, with help from Aiko-san, discussed illustration styles, practical questions about the publication of a book, ideas for the subject-matter, and ideas for other ways of teaching children about different cultures. At Hirosaki the new friends parted, as Sawada-san and Aiko-san had to return to Tokyo, and Scott and Nancy continued with the delegation.

At the end of the delegation visit in Aomori the Nashes traveled to Tokyo, where they were able to spend more time with the Sawadas, getting to know the rest of the family and continuing the book project discussions in more depth. They agreed they would meet next in Maine. The project had been launched with energy, imagination and good fellowship.

## **2. November 7-10, Margaret Kelley Visits and Meetings with Prefectural Museum Representatives**

The Maine State Museum and the Aomori Prefectural Museum have had a relationship since 1997. It was in 1997 the Prefectural Museum presented an exhibit on Maine followed by an Aomori exhibit at the Maine State Museum in 2000. Since 2000, there have been a few small exchanges between the two museums. The most recent exhibit with our sister institution was the *Apple and Pine Tassel* photographic exhibit in 2004 celebrating the tenth anniversary of the sister-state relationship with Aomori.

In the prefectural government of Aomori, governmental positions shift every year or two and continuity with any institution or department becomes difficult to maintain. Museum Director and various staff positions had changed several times over the years, including the loss of English speaking staff. As part of the Maine Delegation to Aomori, Ms. Kelley was afforded an opportunity to rekindle the Maine State Museum's relationship with the Aomori Prefectural Museum.

During the week Ms. Kelley was able to visit with friends who were former staff members at the Prefectural Museum. Near the end of the week, she met with Narita Hideo, current Director of the Aomori Prefectural Museum. The conversation dealt with a traveling exhibit. The concept, on which they agreed, was to create an exhibit that would move from school to school - it would be portable, hopefully no bigger than a medium sized box. The box from Aomori would contain photos of Aomori daily life (agriculture, hobbies), a Jomon (reproduction) pot and shards, plus twine with which to make clay impressions. In return, we would send similar materials from Maine - including clay Native American pots or baskets.

### **3. November 10, Lynn Thompson Exploration of Potential Ceramic Arts Exchanges**

Lynn Thompson left the delegation in Kuroishi to spend the day in Hirosaki, rejoining the group in Aomori City at the end of the day. She had three objectives: 1. research the source of the characteristic Tsugaru pottery style and visit the pottery sites; 2. locate the ceramic artist Yoshimura Toshimi; and 3. find the work, names, and locations of as many contemporary ceramic artists who live in Aomori as possible.

Before she began her artist search, she visited the famous Hirosaki Castle, 17th century home to generations of the Tsugaru Clan, which gave its name to the region and to its crafts. From there, she went to the Sightseeing Information Center where English-speaking guides were able to direct her to specific areas of the city and where a gift shop of local products carried the work of several Aomori potters.

She was able to find samples of the two most characteristic Tsugaru ceramic forms: the gray, white, and blue "cherry blossom" pots and the colorfully painted Shimokawa earthenware "dolls". She found that while the Shimokawa "dolls" (most typical of which is the pigeon whistle) are produced throughout Aomori as a tourist industry, the Tsugaru "cherry blossom" pot is made by the Hayakawa Sadayuki pottery, which is located in the Shimizu area of Hirosaki-shi. She was able to visit this pottery, which uses a blend of Aomori clays, including a cream slip on gray clay, to create Kakiotoshi (the "cherry blossom" pieces). These are generally molded tea and sake oriented wares, although some are wheel-thrown. The bisqued pieces are covered in a heavy layer of white slip, which is then carved through to reveal the gray clay body, and the center of each blossom drawn this way is then dabbed with a blue slip and the

whole is overcoated with transparent glaze and fired in a gas kiln. This pottery was established at the end of WWII, though the characteristic style of the Kakiotoshi in this area goes back to the days of the Tsugaru lords.

Two other characteristic Tsugaru Pottery styles for which Ms. Thompson found samples were “osawa-yaki” and “akudo-yaki”. These are uniquely colored glazed pieces such as “black heaven eye” and “snow on mountain” or “earth ash glaze” wood-fired pots. She located one pottery (that of Rikei Imai), which specializes in the wood-fired wares: Ujoyaki Misuji kobo, 27 – 109, Aza – Oinomori, Oaza – Toyooka, Kuroishi, where the delegation had spent the previous night.

Ms. Thompson also visited the Tanaka gallery where she found the work of a ceramic artist she had been researching for several months – Yoshimura Toshimi. Yoshimura-san, who was not born in Aomori, but currently lives and works there, is important because he is a contemporary vessel-maker/sculptor who uses the variously natural colored native Aomori clays, something that Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts potters do with native Maine clay.

Ms. Thompson found another contact, which she anticipates will producing good artist exchange possibilities. Matsumiya Ryoji, President of the Goshogawara Artist In Residence Program at the Kanayama Ceramic Training Center, which hosts a wood-firing festival each July in Aomori for artists from around the world.

Finally, she read in a 2004 issue of *The Mingei*, a journal of folk craft, an essay about The Mingei Summer School, an annual summer craft school in three prefectures each year, rotating throughout Japan. Tonosaki-san is helping Ms. Thompson contact the Mingei Summer School executive director for more information.

#### **4. November 4-6, Hilda and Don Nicoll Visit and Events in Hachinohe**

Hilda and Don Nicoll visited in Hachinohe, traditional capitol of the eastern Nanbu region of Aomori and northern terminus of the Shinkansen, bullet train system, on their way to Aomori City. Takahashi Yutaka, General Manager of the Hachinohe Grand Hotel (owned by his family) was their general guide. Takahashi-san was a member of the Hachinohe JC study delegation that came to Portland in 1996 and 1997. They were also met on arrival by Kwaragi Katsutoshi, a Hachinohe high school teacher who has organized two trips to Maine, some of his associates, and leaders from the Hachinohe Enburi dance group, which has also visited and performed in Maine.

Saturday afternoon Takahashi-san took the Nicolls to the Korekawa Archaeological Museum where they talked with Kobayashi Kazuhiko, director of the city-owned Jomon archaeological research center and museum. Saturday evening they went to the Enburi Dance group’s “clubhouse” for a party and performance, staged for their benefit. Takahashi-san and Yokomachi Toshiaki, president of Yokomachi Store, a supermarket chain, and also a member of the JC study group that came to Portland in

1996 and 1997, also attended at the invitation of the hosts. Sunday morning Takahashi-san took the Nicolls to the Hachinohe municipal museum and to lunch. Kwararagi-san and a member of his 2005 Maine visit group saw the visitors off at the train.

The time in Hachinohe reinforced the view that there is a potential for expanded exchanges with the Hachinohe area and that Maine's interchanges with Aomori should build on the links we have throughout the prefecture.

### **5 November 11, Sally Baughman Visit to the Hachinohe East Rotary Club.**

On the last full day of the delegation visit, Sally Baughman, who is President-elect of the Bangor Rotary Club, went to Hachinohe City on the east coast of Aomori Prefecture to attend a meeting of the Hachinohe East Rotary Club. She traveled by train, viewing the countryside and the sea from different angles and observing the farmland with a variety of crops in smaller plots than in Maine, homes with stacks of pottery and gardens, and workers burning stacks of compost. In the railroad car she watched an elderly farmwoman, who got on the train at a rural station, as she carefully prepared a flower arrangement from red leaves, black twigs, green and silvery moss.

In Hachinohe Ms. Baughman explored downtown and shops, then joined the members of the Hachinohe East Rotary Club at the Hachinohe Grand Hotel. A club member, who is a pharmacist, acted as her interpreter, helping her follow the discussion of finance, fundraising, volunteer efforts and membership. It was in many ways like a meeting of an American Rotary Club. Club membership, on the other hand, is very different. There are no women members in the Hachinohe East club. Ms. Baughman was asked to speak to the group about the Bangor Rotary Club, herself and her work. They were impressed by the number of members (125) in the Bangor Club and gasped when she told them that thirty of the members are women. They laughed when she told them that she was not the tallest woman in her club. She learned she was the second international visitor to the club, the other having been a man from South Korea. At the close of the western style lunch (the club alternates Japanese and western lunches at its weekly meetings) and the program Ms. Baughman and the president of the Hachinohe club exchanged club flags.

Following the Rotary Club meeting Takahashi Yutaka, general manager of the hotel and host of several Maine visits to Hachinohe, acted as guide, taking Ms. Baughman to the city's new cultural museum, a tour of the city and the train station. As they talked in a coffee shop at the station she had more opportunities to observe the different people in the shop: teenage "punk" boys and girls with lots of dark eye makeup, middle aged dressed-up women having an afternoon on the town, farm workmen in boots and baggy blue pants, and businessmen talking quietly on cell phones that had small plastic key chains hanging from them. Mr. Takahashi escorted her to her train and saw that she was comfortably settled, waving goodbye as her train left the station.

On the return train ride to Aomori City, Ms. Baughman talked with a monk in red and gold robes, who was fluent in English. They discussed volunteer efforts and the difficulties Japanese young people have in volunteering directly out of college for such programs as the Peace Corps. He said that when someone skips going directly into a job it is tough getting accepted in the office world. This has caused a lack of interest in volunteer service, while groups like Rotary are attempting a cultural shift by promoting volunteer efforts.

## V. EXCHANGE ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the course of the visit in Aomori and in subsequent discussions, members of the delegation have identified a number of areas where expanded or additional exchanges could build on the existing Sister-State relationship to the mutual advantage of the people of Maine and Aomori. Some of the suggestions came from our friends in Aomori. Some came from members of the delegation. Some came from others in Maine with an interest in the program.

Members of the delegation recognize that there are many more exciting opportunities for joint ventures than there are resources to implement them. Therefore, they have selected fourteen activities that are high priority and have one or more delegation member volunteers willing to work on their development. The delegation has also compiled a list of nineteen other potential areas of activity that they commend to others for consideration, exploration and, we hope, action.

### *Priority Proposals*

#### *We recommend >*



#### **Children's Book Project**

**>> Provide continued, focused support for the Maine-Aomori children's book,** initiated by Ms. Baldacci and being developed by co-authors and illustrators Scott Nash and Sawada Toshiki. We also recommend the development of outreach and education programs derived from the book in a variety of media and venues. We encourage translation and U.S. publication of one or more of Sawada-san's books as a part of a broadened introduction of Aomori culture to young people in Maine and other parts of the United States.





## Education

A.>> **Encourage** Maine and Aomori departments of education and individual schools to use electronic communications systems to implement **direct exchanges between students and teachers** in the two states, using the internet and teleconferencing, thus broadening and deepening the ties between young people in both states.

B.>> Work with elementary and secondary schoolteachers and post-secondary faculty to **develop a joint curriculum in comparative studies of traditions and values in our two cultures** for use in elementary and secondary schools.

C.>> **Develop an early childhood education teacher exchange program** focused on different perspectives on early childhood education. We have much to learn from each other on the different approaches to early childhood education.

D.>> **Develop a teacher exchange program that addresses over time different teaching and learning issues of mutual concern.** Present exchanges offer little time for teachers to exchange views and experiences with different approaches to teaching and learning.



## Cultural Exchanges

A.>> **Encourage public and private agencies and institutions to make a Maine contribution** to the new Aomori Prefectural Art Museum in connection with its July 2006 opening.

B.>> **Develop more low-cost exchange programs by the Maine State Museum and the Aomori Prefectural Museum**, building on the experience of the 1997 *Maine: Its Nature and Culture* exhibit at the Aomori Prefectural Museum, the 2000 *Aomori and Maine: Bridges Through Time* exhibit at the Maine State Museum, and the 2004 *Apple and Pine Tassel* photographic exhibit at the Maine State House.

C.>> **Encourage** Maine museums and galleries undertake arrangements for the **exhibition of the works of Aomori artists in Maine and seek exhibitions of Maine artists in Aomori.**

D.>> **Explore ways of engaging corporations, service clubs and other organizations** in logistical and financial support of several education and cultural exchange programs.



## Public Policy and Government Exchanges

**A.>> Expand ongoing communications between Maine and Aomori governments through the use of the Internet and teleconferencing and by the use of additional interpretive services for the translation of documents and written**

**communications.** Those modes of communication should supplement existing visits by individuals and delegations in both states.

**B.>> Develop joint research and scholarly interchanges on public policy questions of mutual interest,** including such topics as regionalization of government services in the two states.

**C.>> Seek active public and private support for the Aomori prefectural government trainee** scheduled to be in Maine from June 2006 to March 2007.



## Economic Development

**>> Develop coordinated eco-tourism projects for both states.**



## General International and Intercultural Exchange

**>> Expand Maine's public and private sector cultural exchange programs** with sister states and sister cities, building on the work of the Maine Aomori Sister State Advisory Council and the experience of this delegation and that of other delegations to other countries.

## **VI. ADDITIONAL AREAS OF INTEREST AND PROMISE**

A number of the following areas, grouped by program focus, are of substantial interest to the members of the delegation, but are beyond the capacity of our group to pursue. Nevertheless, we believe they should be kept on a list of potential activities and projects. We suggest a number of organizations, institutions and agencies should be encouraged to explore their possible contributions to the sister-state relationship and the social, cultural and economic health of the two communities.

### **I. EDUCATION**

A. Explore ways and means of increasing the length of elementary and secondary school student exchange visits in Maine and Aomori. Current exchanges are limited to a week or less, which restricts the opportunities for learning about the other community and its culture.

B. Seek funding for scholarships for exchange students in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. The cost of exchanges places serious burdens on families and small school organizations in trying to insure broad participation, regardless of individual student family economic resources.

C. Study the Hiraka School and its impact on rural children and their aspirations and development. The Hiraka School is very small, but offers a rich and supportive program for its elementary and intermediate school students.

### **II. ARTS AND CULTURE**

A. Develop scholarly exchanges and public education efforts in both states related to archaeology and anthropology. Aomori is a rich site of Jomon settlements and has a number of scholars interested in the earlier cultures of the region. Maine native Edward Sylvester Morse, who introduced scientific archaeology to Japan, named the Jomon culture.

B. Expand museum interchanges beyond the two state museums. There are several art and scientific museums in Aomori Prefecture with fine collections and programs of potential interest in Maine. Maine has its own impressive museums of potential interest in Aomori.

C. Encourage the production and exchange of television programs featuring the research and exhibitions of Maine and Aomori museums.

D. Develop a database on visual and performing arts organizations in the two states that could form the basis for a more vigorous series of exchange programs. Early efforts to identify potential exchange artists have been difficult because of scattered sources of information.

E. Explore ways and means to reduce economic, travel and tax policy obstacles to visual and performing artist exchanges. The cost of travel between Maine and Aomori and the problems created by tax policies affecting visiting performers, coupled with the security-driven visa restrictions now in force, make artist exchanges very difficult.

F. Explore the possibility of ceramics exchange exhibits and ceramic artist exchanges.

### **III. PUBLIC POLICY AND GOVERNMENT**

A. Explore the possibility of joint ventures with the Aomori Foundation for the Creation of a Bright Future, which has announced its intention to focus on international relationships.

B. Explore the possibility of having a Maine civil servant go to Aomori as a nine-month intern, comparable to the internship Aomori supports for an Aomori civil servant in Maine.

### **IV. NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND 'PEOPLE TO PEOPLE'**

A. Increase opportunities for continuing such cultural exchanges as the Hachinohe Enburi Dancers and volunteer artists like Sato-sensei, developing counterpart efforts in Maine.

B. Explore ways and means of encouraging exchange visits by occupational counterparts.

C. Explore the possibility of getting episodes of MPBN's "Home: the Story of Maine," "Made in Maine" and "Quest" captioned (or voice over) in Japanese for broadcast in Aomori.

D. Explore the possibility of having locally produced television programs about Aomori captioned (or voice over) in English for broadcast in Maine.

E. Develop as joint projects the publication of two (low cost, simple) books: (1) a Main-Aomori cookbook, featuring comparable, local ingredients and the different approaches to their preparation; and (2) a Maine-Aomori group songbook.

### **V. ECONOMIC RELATIONS**

A. Explore ways and means of increasing the implementation of potential joint projects by the Aomori Industrial Research Center and counterpart organizations in Maine.

B. Explore development of joint "creative economy" projects in the two states.

C. Explore the possibility of joint market studies by business faculty in Maine and Aomori.



## THE MAINE DELEGATION AND THEIR GUIDES

November 7, 2005

Hotel Aomori, Aomori City, Aomori Prefecture, Japan



(l to r) Sally Baughman, Karen Baldacci, Tonosaki Akira, Ellen Tilton, David Kolb, Hilda Nicoll, Lynn Thompson, Margaret Kelley, Scott Nash, Nancy Gibson-Nash, Anne Niemiec, Sue Plummer, Don Nicoll, Lisa Adams, Robert Plummer

Published by



**Braeside Press**

Portland, Maine

March 31, 2006

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