

Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council

**2007 Delegation to Aomori, Japan
October 31 to November 5, 2007**

Arts, Culture, Education and Travel: Avenues of Connection



Standing from left: Hank Schmelzer, Pat Parker, Amber Degn, Max Calderwood, Margaret Lawrence, Dan O'Leary, Natsu Sato, Tom Denenberg, Rosemary Underdahl, Ann Swardlick, Cynthia Livingston.
Seated from left: Debra Andrews, Kathy Bouchard, Lisa Adams, Vice Governor Takeshi Ebina, Scott Peterman, Hans Underdahl

Acknowledgements

To our 2007 delegates. An extraordinary group of intelligent, curious, energetic and kind individuals with varied backgrounds and distinguished levels of expertise joined the 2007 Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council (MASSAC) delegation. In addition to all we learned together from our experiences in this culturally rich corner of the world, we learned a great deal from one another. MASSAC greatly appreciates the energy, enthusiasm and knowledge each of you brought to the delegation.

To our friends in Aomori. The hard work and good will of our friends in Aomori made this 2007 visit most memorable and productive. The planning required to coordinate the combined visits by MASSAC and Governor Baldacci is hard to imagine. Our Aomori colleagues responded flexibly and readily to our many requests and their thoughtful consideration resulted in a number of new and promising connections. We thank our friends in the International Affairs Division and those outside the government, all of whom gave so generously of their time in support of the Maine-Aomori relationship.

To our colleagues at the Maine International Trade Center (MITC). Our MITC colleagues cooperated in arranging the simultaneous visit to Aomori by MASSAC and the Governor's group. On the Maine side also, the joint trip was an organizational feat and we appreciate their willing assistance.

To First Lady Karen Baldacci. Mrs. Baldacci is a dedicated supporter of the Maine-Aomori relationship and has stepped forward time and time again to assist MASSAC. We greatly appreciate the generous gift of her time and energy.

To our willing editors. Don Nicoll and Zachary Bass provided able fact-checking and editing assistance in the production of this report. Their help is much appreciated. Any remaining errors are the responsibility of MASSAC.

Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council
Lisa Adams, Chair

Note: Japanese names are written in the Western fashion — first name, followed by family name.

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MASSAC 2007 Delegation to Aomori October 31 – November 5, 2007

Introduction

Sixteen MASSAC delegates, representing a broad range of Maine artistic, cultural and educational organizations, participated in the 2007 delegation to Aomori Prefecture, Japan. They shared the hope of furthering the Maine-Aomori relationship and promoting projects related to their various fields of interest. The heart of the delegation's work occurred in Aomori, between a sightseeing stop in Tokyo and a three day visit to Kyoto.

In preparation for the working meetings in Aomori the delegates formed committees in advance of the trip.¹ The groups met separately to prepare for the working meetings in Aomori and the entire delegation met several times to discuss the broad goals of the trip, to participate in cultural training and to build relationships among the delegates.

While in Aomori, the MASSAC delegation was joined by Maine's Governor John Baldacci and members of his trade mission to Korea and Japan.² At the conclusion of the official visit to Aomori, the MASSAC delegation, the First Lady Karen Baldacci and several member of the Governor's mission enjoyed a two day tour of rural Aomori, including visits to several important cultural destinations, an overnight at a local hot spring, and an unforgettable evening of traditional dance and music in Hachinohe.

This report is the record of the trip, the meetings and events that occurred in Aomori, the conclusions delegation members reached and proposed next steps. An Executive Summary is followed by the full report of each of the official meetings and many of the additional activities of the delegates.

¹ **Art and Cultural Exchange Committee:** Amber Degn (Chair), Dan O'Leary, Kathy Bouchard, Cynthia Livingston, Ann Swardlick, Donna McNeil, Tom Denenberg, Margaret Lawrence. **Museums Committee:** Dan O'Leary (Chair), Kathy Bouchard, Donna McNeil, Tom Denenberg, Amber Degn, Hans Underdahl. **Cultural Travel Committee:** Cynthia Livingston (Chair), Max Calderwood, Ann Swardlick, Hank Schmelzer, Lisa Adams, Tom Denenberg, Amber Degn, Rosemary Underdahl. **Education Committee:** Pat Parker (Chair), Max Calderwood, Debra Andrews, Margaret Lawrence, Lisa Adams, Natsu Sato

² **The Governor's Delegation to Aomori:** Governor John Baldacci, First Lady Karen Baldacci, John Richardson of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, Dr. Stephanie Grohs-Richardson, Carolann Ouellette of the Maine Office of Tourism, Dr. Richard Borgman of the University of Maine Business School, Rhyan Romaine of York County Community College, Janine Bisailon-Cary of the Maine International Trade Center, Anne Nanovic of the Maine International Trade Center, Sally Baughman of the Friends of the Blaine House, Margaret Kelley of MASSAC and the Maine State Museum Commission, Sue Plummer, Executive Assistant to Mrs. Baldacci, and Robert Plummer.

Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council 2007 Delegates

Lisa Adams, Chair, Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council
Debra Andrews, Director, Center for Global Opportunities, Southern Maine Community College
Kathy Bouchard, Administrative Assistant, Portland Museum of Art
Max C. Calderwood, Library Assistant II, University of Southern Maine
Amber Degn, Director of Foundation and Corporate Support, Portland Museum of Art
Thomas Denenberg, Ph.D., Chief Curator, Portland Museum of Art
Margaret Lawrence, Artist and Trustee, Maine College of Art
Cynthia Livingston, Partner, Cambio International
Daniel O'Leary, Director, Portland Museum of Art
Patricia Parker, Ph.D., Emerita Professor, Salem State College, Japan America Society of Maine
Scott Peterman, Artist
Natsu Sato, Japanese Language Coordinator / Lecturer in Japanese, Bowdoin College;
Council Member, Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council
Henry L. P. Schmelzer, President, Maine Community Foundation
Ann Swardlick, Co-owner, Swardlick Marketing Group
Hans Underdahl, President, Board of Trustees, Portland Museum of Art
Rosemary Underdahl, Volunteer, Portland Museum of Art

Joining the MASSAC Delegates in Aomori

Karen Baldacci, First Lady of the State of Maine
Sally Baughman, Friends of the Blaine House, Acadia Hospital Corporation
Margaret Kelley, Director, Maine State Museum Commission
Sue Plummer, Executive Assistant to Mrs. Baldacci
Robert Plummer, Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School

Our Aomori Hosts

Shingo Mimura, Governor of Aomori Prefecture
Takeshi Ebina, Vice-governor of Aomori Prefecture
Makoto Kosaka, Director General, Department of Environment and Public Affairs
Koken Imai, Director, International Affairs Division
Susumu Hatai, Deputy Counselor, International Affairs Division
Keiko Hatayama, Administrative Staff, International Affairs Division
Hisayuki Nara, Senior Staff, International Affairs Division
Hitomi Tenma, Senior Staff, International Affairs Division
Zachary Bass, Coordinator of International Relations, International Affairs Division

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Executive Summary

The MASSAC delegates explored ways to help the Maine-Aomori relationship strengthen and grow. The following are brief summaries of a number of the topics on which the delegates worked while in Aomori.

The Maine-Aomori Book Project. “*Hello From the Other Side of the World*”, is an illustrated children’s book currently being completed by Maine’s Scott Nash and Aomori native son Toshiki Sawada and to be published in both Japanese and English. The book is intended to introduce the children of Aomori and Maine to one another’s cultures. The Maine-Aomori book project was initiated by First Lady Karen Baldacci. In partnership with First Lady of Aomori Michiyo Mimura, Mrs. Baldacci and MASSAC members were able to promote the project while in Japan. Hopes are high for a successful outcome. The next step is securing a publishing agreement. Our thoughts are turning also to the best methods of distributing the book in Maine. (See pp. 6, 12, 25)

Exchange Project with Woodwork Artist Oyu Hirovuki. Three MASSAC delegates met woodwork artist Hiroyuki Oyu in his Hirosaki workshop. They found his work to be extraordinary in its execution and exquisite in its design. In conversations that evening and since an exchange project has begun to take shape. Ioneta Gallery of Wiscasset, Maine has expressed interest in importing Oyu’s work for sale. The Maine College of Art would like to explore the possibility of bringing Oyu to Maine to conduct a workshop. MASSAC will facilitate these relationships and explore the potential for others. (See p. 9)

Cultural Tourism. The Cultural Tourism group explored the potential for “cultural travel” whereby Maine and Aomori people would visit each other’s state through affinity-based trips such as: eco-tourism, gardens and landscapes, outdoor adventure, visual arts, etc. The Committee concluded that Maine should (1) establish a Maine-Aomori website to publicize its sister-state relationship with Aomori, including linking from other sites, (2) identify potential marketing opportunities for the sister-state relationship, (3) develop a network of volunteer guides to help support Japanese/Aomori travelers, (4) explore a relationship with the Aomori International Exchange Association, (5) further identify proposals for affinity-based travel, and (6) build upon existing relationships in Aomori. (See p. 13)

Relationship with Aomori Contemporary Art Centre. Director, Hamada Goji, gave the delegates an overview of the history and philosophy of the ACAC, its artist in residency program, educational outreach and various workshops offered throughout the year. He then guided us through the Centre, which was designed by world renowned Japanese architect Tadao Ando. The delegates were struck by the physical beauty of the place and the extraordinary facilities for the creation of art. Knowing that the first-rate facilities would be of interest to a number of Maine institutions, we will provide information about ACAC to MECA and the Maine Arts Commission. We have also begun discussions with ACAC about bringing a group of Maine print artists to ACAC for a workshop in the summer of 2009. (See p. 20)

Secondary School Exchanges. Our foremost topic of discussion was the renewal of the Aomori and Hall-Dale High school exchange program. Upon our return, Governor Baldacci

wrote a letter to Governor Mimura expressing his admiration for the Aomori/Hall-Dale exchange program. Happily, as of the time of publishing this report, the Aomori government has renewed the Hall-Dale/Aomori exchange program. The group also discussed ways to explore more deeply the topic of what motivates students to volunteer and agreed to consider undertaking a joint research project on this subject. The parties agreed to explore the REX Program in which an Aomori teacher would spend 2 years in Maine teaching Japanese. The group also discussed establishing a program for a group of Aomori teachers to stay in Maine for several weeks in the summer in order to experience the culture and improve their English skills. (See p. 16)

Tsugaru Shamisen. On several occasions the delegates were treated to performances of the highly distinctive Tsugaru Shamisen music. MASSAC will consider partnering with a performing arts group in Maine to bring Tsugaru Shamisen to Maine. (See p. 23, 33, 34, 38)

Museum Exchanges. In recognition of the significant occasion of the construction of the Aomori Museum of Art (AMO), the State of Maine gave to Aomori this year two Scott Peterman photographs for the Museum. In addition, a group of delegates from the Portland Museum of Art (PMA) and the Maine College of Art explored the background of AOMA, audience trends and funding, AOMA exhibitions and the potential for exhibition exchanges. In addition the Museum committee will explore the possibility of museum-themed travel to Aomori. The entire MASSAC delegation also visited the Munakata Shiko Memorial Museum. Munakata's prints have been the subject of exhibitions at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This is a very fine small museum with a potential for relationships with Maine museums. In addition, the Maine State Museum has an ongoing exchange relationship with the Aomori Prefectural Museum. (See p. 8, 28, 30)

Goshogawara Kanayama Pottery. This year's delegation built upon the earlier efforts of the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts to build a relationship with the Goshogawara Kanayama pottery. The delegates were able to visit the pottery and view first hand the processing of the clay, the creation of the pottery and the firing of the kilns. Master Potter Ryoji Matsumiya agreed to welcome two Maine potters to his annual International Firing Festival. MASSAC will work with the Watershed, the Maine College of Art and the Maine Arts Commission to make Maine artists aware of this opportunity. There also exists the possibility of bringing a group of MECA students to a Goshogawara workshop. Maine continues to hope to entice Mr. Matsumiya to travel to Maine to share his expertise with Maine potters. (See p. 35)

Hachinohe's Cultural Bounty . Through the extraordinary efforts of our contacts in Hachinohe, the delegates enjoyed several events in the city of Hachinohe. First the group was provided a tour of the Momokawa sake brewery where they were greeted by its president Kyota Murai. Next the group was warmly greeted by our host Yutaka Takahashi, general Manager of the Aomori Grand Hotel. The group enjoyed a fine dinner at the hotel. Finally, the group was taken to the headquarters of the Daily Tohoku newspaper where an unforgettable evening of dance and music organized by Katsutoshi Kawaragi awaited. Over 100 performers from tiny children to grown men and women donned native costume and performed the traditional folk dance and music for the delegation. It was an extraordinary evening. MASSAC looks forward to further cultural exchanges with this city. (See p. 42)

REPORTS OF THE DELEGATION'S OFFICIAL MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Tuesday October 30, 2007 (Tokyo)

Book Project Meeting

- Mark City Plaza, Tokyo
- Toshiki Sawada, Aiko Sawada, Natsu Sato, Lisa Adams
- Reported by Lisa Adams and Natsu Sato

Background

The Book Project was initiated by First Lady Karen Baldacci. With the support of MASSAC and many others, “*Hello From the Other Side of the World*” has taken shape as an illustrated children’s book written and illustrated by Scott Nash and Toshiki Sawada to be published in both Japanese and English and intended to introduce the children of Aomori and Maine to one another’s cultures.



They became fast
friends even though
they were half a world
apart.

They wished they could
meet, if only in their
dreams.

Aiko's life seemed very
different from Isabella's
life yet, in some ways
very much the same.
Isabella wrote a letter
to Aiko with her
favorite pen. She put it
in an envelope.
She addressed it,
Stamped it, and gave it
to the mailman.



Meeting

The group met at a tea shop in the Mark City Plaza. It was lovely to see Sawada and his daughter Aiko again. We exchanged news and all expressed disappointment that Scott Nash, Sawada's Maine artistic counterpart, was unable to be with the delegation this year.

Sawada then showed us the two drawings he had prepared. These drawings are rich and delicate and serve as an excellent contrast to Scott's masterful ink drawings. He will deliver them to First Lady Karen Baldacci on Friday.

Sawada described some of the challenges of working on the book project, the most significant being that of distance. Any collaborative work requires a great deal of intense communications. The combination of the physical distance and the language barrier make the collaboration process difficult. Another challenging factor is the difference between the two different publishing practices. His work schedule is managed by his editor, and it is very hard to allocate adequate time for the work that is not on the editor's list. He reiterated his desire to come back to Maine to work in a concentrated fashion with Scott to complete the book.

We also discussed Scott's strong desire to preserve the Japanese language publishing rights in negotiating the American book contract. Sawada seemed to be pleased. All in all, it was an excellent meeting with a strong positive outcome.

Sawada and Aiko joined us for an okonomiyaki (a savory Japanese-style pancake) dinner with a number of the other delegates, which was convivial. Among the topics discussed was the hope that Aiko might study in the US. It would be wonderful to find a way to bring her to Maine for a year. Her work can be seen at www.cafe-cura.com – be sure to browse through the menu to see her many delightful drawings.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Report back to the book project committee.
2. Confirm with Scott the appropriate next steps for seeking a publisher. What more does he need in order to approach publishers and how can we support that effort.
3. Determine the appropriate time to bring Sawada to the US and begin making arrangements. (Margaret Lawrence, MECA trustee, has offered to look into a MECA-owned retreat setting for the artists.)
4. Frame the next steps along with an appropriate and agreed upon time line in writing.

Wednesday October 31, 2007

Visit to Munakata Shiko Memorial Museum of Art

- Aomori City
- All delegates
- Reported by Tom Denenberg



Entrance to the Munakata Shiko Memorial Museum

The MASSC delegation began our exploration of the Aomori's cultural life with an in-depth tour of the Munakata Shiko Memorial Museum. Opened in 1975, the Munakata Museum is dedicated to the artistic legacy of Aomori's premier printmaker, Shiko Munakata (1903-1975). A woodblock print artist and native son of Aomori, Munakata was deeply moved and inspired by a reproduction of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* as a child. His early work in oil closely followed popular French styles and techniques, but he found his voice when he shifted to traditional Japanese woodblock printing in the late 1920s. In this way Munakata participated and led the national return to printmaking as an outgrowth of the Mingei Movement (equivalent to our Arts and Crafts Movement). Munakata garnered international awards and accolades in the course of his long and productive life and the museum was fittingly dedicated in the year of his death. The Museum is a wonderful survey of the artist's career and ably plumbs the role of traditional printmaking in modern Japanese culture.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Remain in communication with director Jiro Ono
2. Provide information about the Munakata Museum to other museums in Maine for consideration of a possible future exchange, exhibition.
<http://www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/2002/55.html>
<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-112131316.html>
3. Consider the museum a "must see" stop for future delegations.

Contact information

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Munakata Shiko Memorial Museum of Art
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Telephone 017-777-4567

Visit to Hiroyuki Oyu's Woodwork Studio

- Hirosaki city, Aomori-ken
- Hans Underdahl, Margaret Lawrence, Lisa Adams, Hiroyuki Oyu, Kentarou Oyu
- Reported by Margaret Lawrence and Lisa Adams



Hiroyuki Oyu, Kentarou Oyu, Hans Underdahl



Hiroyuki Oyu's bench and tray



**Lisa Adams, Margaret Lawrence, Hiroyuki Oyu
And Hans Underdahl in Oyu's display room**



Delicate spoon sets on oval tray

Background

While in Tokyo, Lisa Adams visited the Ginza Bricks Gallery run by Keiko Takeuchi to see the exhibit of her longtime friend, Rie Kashiwagi. After admiring Rie's work, she was invited to sit down for tea. She sat on a stunning stool, at a lovely long and low table, drinking tea stirred with a spoon of amazingly delicate proportions. When she asked about the spoons, she learned that they along with the stools and table had all been made by Aomori craftsman Hiroyuki Oyu, who is represented by and has his own exhibits at Ginza Bricks Gallery. Wishing for an artist's eye to evaluate the work, Lisa returned to the Gallery the next day with Margaret Lawrence who was also very taken with the simplicity and beauty of the work. Ms. Takeuchi kindly made a call to Oyu who willingly agreed for us to meet him in Hirosaki on the evening of our arrival. Margaret and Lisa asked Hans Underdahl, a woodworker with a sensitive eye for both style and quality, to join them on their adventure.

Meeting

Margaret, Hans and Lisa rode the train from Aomori to Hirosaki where Oyu waited at the turnstile. After greetings, he showed them to his van and drove through the winding back streets of this castle town to his home and its adjacent workshop. Immediately, Hans was interested in the large stockpile of native Aomori wood.

We were shown up steep stairs to his workshop where the conversation began. Lisa's usually serviceable Japanese was useless as the conversation turned to woodworking techniques and tools. But a minor miracle occurred. Hans, in English (with no understanding of Japanese), and Oyu in Japanese (with limited understanding of English) began a long and intricate conversation. Handling Oyu's mostly hand-made tools and learning the very un-American ways of shaping the wood the two men conversed easily with each other as only two woodworkers could. Kentarou, Oyu's son, helped the process along. We were able to see some of the delicate spoons that Oyu was working on and understood his approach of following the shape of the slender branches as the means of carving incredibly delicate yet strong utensils.

We then visited his showroom with many beautiful tables, trays, stools, benches and chairs. Expecting similar comments about the one armed chairs and the philosophy and practice of following the contours of the wood, Oyu delighted us instead with an impromptu demonstration of how important it is that a chair have the proper place for a beer and a small plate of snacks while resting back to read a book! As if on cue, a dozen cold Asahi beers appeared along with delicious home-made rice balls, tiny sausages, and deep fried crispy dumplings. We also met Kentarou's lovely wife and his baby daughter as well as Oyu's wife.

Having been given the "high sign" by woodworker Hans that Oyu's work was of a very high standard, we were able to reply when Oyu asked exactly why we had come to visit him: that we would love to find a way to share his work and his talents in Maine. He resisted at first any thought that he might "teach" his work. A teacher is highly revered in Japanese society and Oyu apparently did not feel adequate to the title. We talked instead about workshops, and leading a workshop of Maine wood craftsmen. This idea seemed to sit more lightly on his shoulders. We agreed to explore the idea more upon our return to the US.

Oyu allowed us to visit his back room of experiments and some seconds. We each bought a tray and some spoons and he gave us small spoons as well. They will always be treasures.

Worrying that we would miss the last train to Aomori City, Oyu called us a taxi to take us to the train station. The family gathered to say farewell and send us off with bows as the taxi pulled away.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. We have made contact with Lisa Tichy, the owner of the IONETA Gallery in Wiscasset, which carries contemporary and antique Japanese wares. Margaret and Lisa visited her with their samples of Oyu's work. She is interested in carrying his work for sale and helping to coordinate a visit by him, including a show in her gallery

of his furniture. Lisa and Margaret are trying to facilitate Lisa Tichy placing an order with Oyu's work to sell at the IONETA gallery.

2. Lisa, Margaret and Hans will continue to pursue a possible workshop by Oyu offered through MECA and possibly in collaboration with the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Rockport.
3. Discuss with PMA the possibility of a future exhibition featuring Japanese furniture, perhaps along the lines of Ned Cooke's "Inspired by China" exhibit at the Peabody Essex. See:
<http://www.taunton.com/finewoodworking/ProjectsAndDesign/ProjectsAndDesignArticle.aspx?id=28009>)
4. Arrange a meeting of all interested parties to discuss the best way to pursue these goals through an interrelationship between the various potential Maine partners.

Contacts

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Takeuchi Keiko, Owner
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Thursday November 1, 2007

Book Project Meeting (in Tokyo)

- ANA Hotel, Tokyo
- First Lady Karen Baldacci, Sally Baughman, and Toshiki Sawada
- Reported by First Lady Karen Baldacci



Sally Baughman, Toshiki Sawada, Karen Baldacci

Background

The Book Project was initiated by First Lady Karen Baldacci. With the support of MASSAC and numerous others “Hello From the Other Side of the World” has taken shape as an illustrated children’s book written and illustrated by Scott Nash and Toshiki Sawada to be published in both Japanese and English and intended to introduce the children of Aomori and Maine to one another’s cultures.

Meeting:

Toshiki apologized for being very busy with his work. He did say he felt re-energized about the joint book project and felt the project could be completed. He expressed an interest in meeting with Scott Nash to complete the work. Sawada was concerned that the book be available in Japanese for the Aomori children.

Please see photos of the artists’ progress on the book at page 6.

Please see Next Steps for book project on page 7.

Cultural Tourism Meeting

- Aomori Prefecture Office North
- Hitomi Tenma (International Affairs Division); Alexander Gordon (CIR, Aomori City); Hironobu Mikami (International Tourism & Conventions Group, Shikansen Related); Yamada Shigeru (Aomori Tourism and Convention Association); Koitsu Takase (Japan Tourism Bureau), Max Calderwood, Ann Swardlick, Rosemary Underdahl, Hank Schmelzer, Cynthia Livingston
- Reported by Cynthia Livingston



MASSAC Delegates Meet with Aomori Tourism Representatives

Background

From the Maine members' point of view, the meeting goal was to explore the potential for "cultural travel" which would allow Maine and Aomori people to visit each other's state through affinity-based trips themed to particular arts and cultural experiences but would also include a general focus on Maine and Aomori's living culture. Thus visitors would experience some of the underpinnings of the visited culture – why particular activities are significant and what they mean or represent to our respective states and citizens. Examples of affinity-based trips could be related to: eco-tourism, Maine cuisine, gardens and landscapes, outdoor adventure, visual arts, and many more.

The Aomori members did not state a goal for the meeting in advance but did ask for specific questions from us so that they could prepare responses. Our advance questions included: what kinds of travel programs would attract people from Aomori to Maine and vice versa? What are travel preferences and habits? What organizations are the best contacts for group travel questions? What kinds of artists and performing groups would be interested in cultural exchange and vice versa?

Meeting

With their introductions each of the Aomori representatives described their organization's role in tourism for the region and also gave their perspectives on tourism in Aomori and potential for Aomori tourists to travel to Maine. Tourists currently coming to Aomori are primarily from Taiwan, Korea and China. They don't have many tourists from Europe and the US but

would like to encourage more. They now have many pamphlets, marketing materials and websites in English. The local people do have contact with Americans stationed at the US Misawa airforce base in eastern Aomori.

Other discussion items related to Maine travelers coming to Aomori were:

- The best initial contact for travel groups coming to Aomori is the Japan Travel Bureau (JTB) – Tohoku Branch. They can answer questions about cultural events as well as travel arrangements.
- Similar to Maine, Aomori feels its strongest tourism attractions are its beautiful scenery, nature, and unique culture. This would include events such as the Nebuta festival annually in August.
- Their greatest concern for English speakers is the language barrier. Now more road signs are in English as are materials as mentioned earlier. Also English speaking translators are available on a volunteer basis through the Aomori International Exchange Association.
- Knowing that many Americans like Japanese food, they asked if we thought having recipes in English would be a good idea. Although we said yes, Ann Swardlick asked if they had or would consider offering cooking experiences with a local chef for tourists. They replied it could be possible but would require translators.
- When asked, they also said that “homestays” could also be possible and the contact again would be the Aomori International Exchange Association.
- It sounded like the Maine/Aomori sister-state relationship is being promoted quite well in Aomori. They noted that a description of the relationship is included on the Aomori official website in both Japanese and English and it is also on some other prefecture websites. They also mentioned that the education exchanges that have taken place have received good publicity in the local papers.
- Max Calderwood asked about a ship in the Aomori harbor and noted that it added quite a bit of intrigue. Max commented that other than in Wiscasset, Maine doesn’t visually showcase ships for tourists, a missed opportunity to highlight the significance of Maine’s seafaring heritage.



Autumn at Choshi Falls in Oirase Gorge, Aomori



Bug Light, South Portland, Maine

We had less discussion about the opportunities for citizens from Aomori traveling to Maine:

- The three members agreed that most citizens from Aomori did not travel internationally. However for those who might come to Maine, they would likely be interested in the natural beauty and food. They thought perhaps a trip to Maine could include Boston and other parts of New England.

- The following notes were not part of the committee discussion but were excerpted from the *2007 JTB Report -- All about Japanese Overseas Travelers*:
 - Aomori Prefecture has one of the lowest percentages of overseas travelers.
 - Middle aged men were attracted to China and Southeast Asia; middle aged women to resorts.
 - Male students preferred Southeast Asia; female students Europe.
 - Related to preferred activities:
 - Over 80% of housewives chose shopping;
 - Middle aged men and women chose natural and scenic attractions, historical and cultural attractions;
 - Elderly women spend the most on traveling.
 - Preferred non-Asian destinations: Hawaii was #1; Australia #2; France #3; Italy #4; the west coast of the US dropped from #10 to 11
 - In general the motivation for new travelers to travel overseas is in decline. The greatest factors are safety/security which is a primary concern to 40% of those surveyed and also language differences.
 - However packaged tours have risen 51%.
 - Trips for repeat international travelers has also increased.
 - Pamphlets and travel books are the most influential in terms of travel choices -- nearly three times greater than information from the web. From her own experience, Pat Parker confirmed that Japanese tend to follow recommendations from travel books.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next steps

1. Maine should further publicize its sister-state relationship with Aomori (and potentially other international relationships). An immediate goal is the creation of a Maine-Aomori website. Besides the value of the information, it would demonstrate a sincere invitation to travelers, and promote Maine's offerings as an international destination. As does Aomori, the relationship could then be promoted/linked on official websites such as the state's International Trade and Tourism website as well as in bi-lingual brochures and other tourism marketing materials. Another specific opportunity is to publicize the relationship at a kiosk in the Portland airport as well as other well traveled locations.
2. This committee and others will identify potential marketing opportunities for the sister-state relationship -- This committee will also identify other potential marketing/publicity opportunities for the sister-state relationship, such as in travel books for Japanese, but also with an eye to informing and attracting Maine's citizens.
3. Develop a network of volunteer guides to help support Japanese/Aomori travelers. We were all impressed by the experience we had with volunteer guides in Japan -- how well-informed they were, their facility in English, as well as their kindness and patience. Possible sources for volunteer guides within Maine could be: The Japan America Society of Maine, the Osher lifelong Learning Institute and students from the various colleges and universities.

4. Follow up with the Aomori International Exchange Association (MASSAC made brief contact during the 2005 visit with Kenji Fukunaga of the Aomori Foundation for the Creation of a Bright Future, AIEA's predecessor organization, to discuss cultural tourism.) <http://www.kokusai-koryu.jp/english/>.
5. For Maine to Aomori travel -- Further identify proposals for affinity-based groups under the umbrella of MASSAC to travel and experience "cultural tourism and arts exchange" between Maine and Aomori. A good example is to help support the efforts of Lisa Adams and Margaret Lawrence to develop a trip around woodblock printmaking aimed at artists and perhaps other interested participants. Amber Degn suggested that another possible affinity-group could be the docents from Portland Museum of Art.
6. For Aomori to Maine travel -- For MASSAC the most immediate opportunities for encouraging affinity-based groups to experience "cultural tourism and art exchange" seem to be by building upon existing relationships such as the Aomori delegation coming in 2008, artist groups, and families of children who have been involved in educational exchanges.

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Secondary School Exchange Meeting

- Aomori Prefectural Office Building
- Satoshi Mikami, Hisayuki Nara, Pat Parker, Lisa Adams, Debra Andrews, Natsu Sato
- Reported by Lisa Adams and Natsu Sato

Background

Maine and Aomori's longstanding school exchanges are a vital core of the relationship between the peoples of the two states. At least seven school districts in Maine currently participate in exchange programs with Aomori schools. We would like to strengthen those programs and encourage participation by other schools.

Meeting

In our meeting, we focused on the renewal of the Aomori and Hall-Dale High school exchange program, a joint volunteerism research project, and teacher exchanges.

The renewal of the Aomori and Hall-Dale High School exchange program. The four year commitment to the Aomori/Hall-Dale High School exchange program has expired. Mr. Mikami expressed great interest in renewing the program, but explained the significant challenges he faces in obtaining the necessary funding. Throughout the month of November he will have numerous meetings at various levels in an attempt to refund the program's budget. He needs help from Maine in demonstrating the strong desire on both sides to continue the program. In particular, Mr. Mikami requested that we provide a letter from Governor Baldacci to Governor Mimura in support of the exchanges. This would be a very significant piece of evidence of Maine's support for the program. [Upon our return from the trip, Governor Baldacci wrote a letter to Governor Mimura expressing his admiration for the Aomori/Hall-Dale exchange program and his hopes that it would be continued. Happily, as of the time of publishing this report, the Aomori government has renewed the Hall-Dale/Aomori exchange program for another four years.]

In addition, Mr. Mikami explained that the Japanese Ministry of Education is interested in including volunteerism in the national school curriculum and has already done so in Tokyo but not yet in Aomori. There is a good opportunity to learn from Hall-Dale about including volunteerism in the life of the school. In particular, why are the students so willing when not required? (Mr. Mikami showed us a photo of the Maine students engaging with nursing home residents in Aomori and their eagerness to interact compared with what he expressed to be the greater hesitance on the part of the Japanese students.)

Mr. Mikami also noted the ongoing nature of the exchange student relationships: 5 Aomori students returned to Maine to visit host families; 2 Maine students applied to JET program.



Aomori Students volunteering with Maine elderly



Hall-Dale students participate in Nebuta Festival

Joint Volunteerism Research Project. Mr. Mikami indicated an interest in exploring more deeply the topic of why students volunteer, what motivates them to do so. In the course of discussion, the idea arose of undertaking a research project using communication technology to explore with students in Maine and Aomori why they volunteer/are interested in volunteer

work. Although Maine appears to lead in this area, we discussed the benefits to Maine of such a project as well as it could help us understand how to increase student volunteerism in Maine

Teacher Exchanges. Mr. Mikami expressed a long-term interest in the REX Program in which a Japanese (Aomori) teacher would spend 2 years in Maine teaching Japanese while improving English skills and developing an international outlook through the overseas teaching and living experience. http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/rex/english/001.htm

There was considerable concern on the Aomori side about the cost of this program to the Maine school hosting an Aomori teacher. Although shared 50/50 by the two sides, it includes housing, tuition, living expenses, etc and is a considerable commitment, although we did not learn the amount in our meeting. The initial reaction from the Maine side was that the investment would likely be well worth the benefit.

In the near future, there is interest in a several week program for a group of Aomori teachers in which they would stay in Maine for several weeks in order to improve their English skills and have a short term international experience. We discussed creating such a program at SMCC.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Work with Governor's Office on a letter in support of the Hall-Dale/Aomori school exchange (completed)
2. Discuss within MASSAC Delegation Education Committee the feasibility of an SMCC-Aomori short term teacher program
3. Discuss with Hall-Dale feasibility of a volunteerism research project
4. Discuss with Debra in greater detail the idea of a visiting teacher program at SMCC. (Possible components: 2 week summer institute with Language Training and Immersion; Service Learning; Technology; Curriculum Development. Possible partnership with Maine Community Development)
5. Learn more about the REX program and the costs and commitments involved
6. Put out a call to Maine Schools to locate schools in Maine with an interest in the REX program
7. Consider possibilities of a partnership with Maine's NGO "KIDS Consortium (a service learning initiative that's been engaged with Maine schools for 10 years or so).

Contact Information

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Hirosaki University Meeting

- Hirosaki University
- Shuichi Kuramata, Hannah Joy Sawada, Victor Carpenter, Kaori Saito, Hisayuki Nara, Natsu Sato, Max Calderwood, Debra Andrews, Pat Parker
- Reported by Pat Parker

Background

The ultimate goal of this group is to promote lifelong learning, with a particular emphasis on increasing the connections and inter-cultural knowledge between Maine and Aomori at the post-secondary levels.

Meeting

The committee had posed a number of questions about higher education in Japan. The following is a summary of the answers provided by our Aomori colleagues.

- Most Japanese students who study abroad go during the second semester of their school year, October to February.
- Regarding the higher education institutions in Aomori prefecture, Hirosaki University is a national university. Others post-secondary schools in Aomori Ken include Hirosaki Gakuin (private), Tohoku Gakuin (private), and Aomori City University (run by Aomori city).
- Few Japanese students have interest in overseas internships because they receive their credits from the university and can't spare time away from their four years there. Also language problems would be great. In Japan, internships during college years are a contribution by the company and are of 1-2 weeks' duration.
- Hirosaki University has no continuing education programs comparable to what is found in the US. They do have a special entrance exam for non-18-year-olds. They also have a satellite education system and an "on-air university." But their part-time students are always non-degree students. They do have continuing education courses for graduates in the field of education. They also have an open lecture series, open to the public. But in Japan, age is very significant and most programs are age restricted.

Regarding library procedures:

- Ms. Saito, the librarian, expressed interest in coming to Maine to study American academic library procedures but felt cost was prohibitive. We suggested a 2-3 week trip rather than a whole semester.
- There does exist a country-wide library organization in Japan which sends about two librarians a year abroad.

Regarding the international exchanges of Hirosaki University specifically, the meeting revealed the following:

- To suit a Western calendar, most exchange students come to Japan from October to the end of July.
- Hirosaki University's only complaint with the current exchange with University of Maine is that the latter charges Japanese students for extra ESL classes which results in extra expense for the Japanese students.
- The Maine delegates were very impressed by Hirosaki University's strong support of their visiting students. Their Handbook for International Students is worth emulating.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Keep in touch with our new contacts at Hirosaki University.
2. Inquire at University of Maine regarding extra ESL fee.
3. Pursue possible ways to have a librarian from Hirosaki visit Maine colleges for 2 weeks to study academic library procedures.
4. Explore exchange between SMCC and Hirosaki University and Aomori City University.

Contact Information

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Aomori Contemporary Art Centre Meeting

- Aomori Contemporary Art Centre, Hirosaki
- Hamada Goji, director of ACAC; Yuji Tanaka, Chief Administrative Staff; Hinuma Teiko, curator ACAC; Ram Katzir, artist in residence ACAC; Margaret Lawrence, Amber Degn, Tom Denenberg, Dan O'Leary, Kathy Bouchard, Hans Underdahl,, Rosemary Underdahl, Lisa Adams, Ann Swardlick, Scott Peterman, Hank Schmelzer, Cynthia Livingston
- Reported by Margaret Lawrence



Looking towards exhibition space and amphitheater



Entryway to ACAC

Background

Knowing of MASSAC's desire to further cultural and artistic exchange, International Affairs Division member Keiko Hatayama suggested a visit to the Aomori Contemporary Art Centre. It was a highlight of the trip for many delegates and resulted in the potential for one or more Maine-Aomori exchange projects.



Ram Katzir's Exhibit



ACAC's Press

Meeting

Director Hamada Goji gave us an overview of the history and philosophy of the ACAC, its artist residency program, educational outreach and various workshops offered throughout the year. The Centre was designed by world renowned Japanese architect Tadao Ando and built in 2001. Set in the woods Ando's objective was to create a place where people could connect with the mystical. The director said, he does not think of himself as a director, rather "I like to think of myself as a gardener in the woods." Reflecting the philosophy of the Centre, there is no permanent collection of art here; rather, it is a place for the creation of art. After discussions in the cafe he led us on a tour of the facilities. For an excellent overview of ACAC see <http://www.acac-aomori.jp/en/index.html>

Ram Katzir, from Israel, discussed his experience as an artist in residence and gave us a tour and talk of his work. He was inspired to do very different work from what he anticipated because of the influence of the architecture and connection with nature and stated it was liberating to work there. He also said he appreciated the connection to the local people through the workshops as well as the volunteers who help the artists.

Curator Hinuma Teiko led us on a tour of the facility's exhibition space and an exhibit of the four artists who were just finishing up their 3 month residencies. In addition to Ram Katzir,

one of the Japanese artists was available to discuss her work in the large semicircular exhibition space.

In addition, we learned the following from our meetings:

Regarding the Artist in Residency Program

- 3 month stay offered Spring and Fall.
- Spring session selection is by consultation with professionals; the autumn session is an open competition.
- The autumn session is intended for two Japanese artists and two international artists.
- Application information is available on ACAC website (see contact info below).
- In the fall of 2007 there were 110 applications for 2 places.
- The artist in residence receives airfare, studio, living quarters, production. He or she is expected to conduct workshops with local school age children. Volunteers from local area assist artist during their stay with transportation, finding needed materials, etc.

Regarding the ACAC public workshops:

- The workshops are held throughout the year.
- They are designed for children and adults.
- All media are offered and departure from traditional art is encouraged.

Regarding use of the facilities:

- The facilities are available to public for personal work as well as for workshops.
- There is space and equipment for all media including the largest printing press in Japan (and perhaps the world).

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Provide information regarding Artist Residency to Maine Arts Commission and Maine College of Art (MECA)
2. Discuss possibility of exchange of art/collaboration with Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) at MECA. The director seemed receptive to this idea.
3. Explore possibility of Printmaking Workshop at ACAC, namely bringing a group of artists from Maine to Japan for Tokyo Print Show then traveling to Aomori for printmaking workshop at ACAC (preliminary discussion with MECA continuing studies office has taken place) Note that: a) rooms are available at ACAC, b) it may be possible to include include Aomori artists in workshop, and c) the ideal would be to locate an Aomori printmaker to conduct workshop. The director said he would welcome discussion of this project.

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Lacquerware Facility and Yamauta Live House Shamisen Pub

- Hirosaki City
- Delegation plus Akira Tonosaki, Policy Regulation Division, and Zachary Bass, CIR
- Reported by Hank Schmelzer

After our first full day of meetings in Aomori, we enjoyed an evening arranged for us by Akira Tonosaki, formerly of the International Affairs Division and the principle contact for the 2005 Maine Delegation to Aomori. First the group visited a lacquerware facility where the delegates learned of the very many steps involved in the creation of the various Tsugaru lacquerware and had the chance to purchase a beautiful memento of the region. We then went for dinner to the Yamauta Live House, a “Shamisen Club” in the city of Hirosaki, an hour by train from Aomori. The Shamisen is a traditional 3- stringed Japanese instrument that looks a little like a banjo and is used to play traditional Japanese folk music. A recent touring review of the Club described the music as “a sort of Japanese bluegrass, fairly indescribable, a sort of Oriental plunkety sound, accompanied by wailing, but a lot of fun”. This is an apt description; one might add the adjectives “thumpy” and “loud”. The food was varied and scrumptious, the atmosphere friendly, and the beer good and abundant. It was a great team-building event to wrap up our first full day of the mission.



Live House Yamauta Shamisen Pub

At a later stop at the Shamisen Museum in Tsugaru, a number of delegates purchased the shamisen music of Ryoichiro Yoshida and Kenichi Yoshida which we very much enjoyed playing on the sound system on our bus tour through the Tsugaru and Shimokita peninsulas.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Consider collaborating with a performing arts group to bring Tsugaru Shamisen performers to Maine.

Contact Information:

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Yamauta Live House, 036-8004 Hirosaki City, Omachi 1 chome 2-4, Tel: 0172-36-1835

Friday, November 2, 2007

Meeting with Vice Governor Takeshi Ebina

- Conference Room, Prefectural Office Building
- Vice-Governor Ebina, All MASSAC delegates, Aomori Officials
- Reported by Lisa Adams

Vice Governor Takeshi Ebina warmly greeted the group, shaking hands and exchanging business cards with each delegate. He then asked each person to offer a reflection on the visit. In addition to praising the relations between Aomori and Maine, he reflected on the unfortunate circumstances of the U.S. not signing the Kyoto Protocol and the country's disproportionate consumption of energy. His remarks were made politely and honestly. Perhaps the anticipation of the G8 energy ministers' conference in Aomori (chosen perhaps due to their renowned nuclear recycling and wind power) next June has sharpened the focus on this issue. MASSAC Chair, Lisa Adams, spoke of the many educational and cultural exchanges between Maine and Aomori and expressed hope for the continuation of those and other projects, mentioning in particular the First Ladies' book project. She also sympathized with the Vice Governor's frustration with the U.S.'s attitudes towards global warming and energy consumption. The delegation gave a Scott Peterman's book of photographs to Governor Ebina who gave to each delegate a beautiful reproduction Jomon vessel.



Vice Governor Ebina addresses the Maine Delegation

Governors' Meeting

- Office of Governor Mimura
- Governor John Baldacci, Governor Shingo Mimura, First Lady Karen Baldacci
- Reported by First Lady Karen Baldacci



The Governors' Meeting at Governor Mimura's Office

Background

In the 13 years of the formal Maine-Aomori relationship, this is the second visit by a Maine Governor to the Prefecture of Aomori, the first by Governor Angus King in 1995. The warm welcome given to Maine's First Lady in 2005 and the strength of the many Maine-Aomori programs, including the First Ladies' joint book project, encouraged Governor Baldacci to extend his Trade Mission to Seoul and Tokyo to include a diplomatic visit to Aomori. A number of members of the Trade Mission joined Governor Baldacci, including representatives from the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, York County Community College, Friends of the Blaine House, the Maine State Museum Commission, the Maine Office of Tourism and the University of Maine Business School.

Meeting

The two Governors exchanged gifts and good wishes. Governor Mimura had just seen the John Irving movie "Cider House Rules," located in Maine. He shared the two states common attributes. Governor Mimura also mentioned the joint children's book project and that he was looking forward to its completion. The Governor of Maine thanked Governor Mimura for his hospitality. The First lady encouraged Governor Mimura to visit Maine.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Continue to support and encourage the relations between our two excellent states to our mutual cultural, educational, and economic benefit. We have much to offer and learn from one another.

First Ladies' Book Project Meeting

- Aomori Grand Hotel
- First Lady Karen Baldacci, First Lady Michiyo Mimura, Sue Plummer, Sally Baughman, Keiko Hatayama
- Report by First Lady Karen Baldacci



First Lady Karen Baldacci and First Lady Michiyo Mimura



The First Ladies converse about their joint book project

Background

The Book Project is the joint project of First Lady Karen Baldacci and First Lady Michiyo Mimura. With the support of MASSAC and many others³, “Hello From the Other Side of the World” has taken shape as an illustrated children’s book written and illustrated by Scott Nash and Toshiki Sawada to be published in both Japanese and English and intended to introduce the children of Aomori and Maine to one another’s cultures.

Meeting

General greetings were exchanged. We discussed the Children’s Book and the importance of the project and reviewed the work to date from both artists. Emphasis was made to ensure the introduction was jointly written and that the book would be available to both Maine and Aomori children. It was explained to Mrs. Mimura that the two characters were named for Toshiki Sawada’s daughter Aiko and Scott Nash’s niece Isabella.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Continue to support the efforts of the artists to see this rewarding project to conclusion.
2. Consider the best way to distribute the book to the children of Maine and Aomori.

³ Our great appreciation is extended to project donors: Unity Foundation, Mr. Marvin Sadik, The Maine Community Foundation, the Maine Arts Commission, National Semiconductor, the Maine Humanities Council, the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine and the Japan America Society of Maine.

Sannai-Maruyama Archaeological Site Visit

- Sannai-Maruyama
- Governor's Delegation and MASSAC delegation
- Report by Rosemary Underdahl



Long House at Sannai-Maruyama

The Sannai-Maruyama archaeological site, one of Japan's largest, is the remains of one of the largest communities in the Jomon Period. Continuous occupation took place here and thrived for approximately 1,500 years (about 5,500 – 4,000 years ago). In 1992, when the Aomori Government began surveying the site for a baseball stadium, workers found countless relics 4,000 to 5,500 years old just a few meters below the surface. Jomon relics, which filled over 40,000 cardboard boxes, included lacquer ware, jade pendent heads, pot shards, and stone masks. More than 700 remains of dwellings and human graves were also found.

Governor and Mrs. Baldacci had a previously scheduled commitment; however the Governor's group joined us for our visit to the Sannai Maruyama Ruins. We were met and warmly welcomed at the entrance of the Museum by two volunteer guides. Our guide was an archeologist, spoke English very well, and successfully sparked our interest in the Jomon culture. We followed, on foot, as she explained that the excavations showed the land was systematically divided into areas for dwellings, storage, burial and dumps. We entered the remains of pit dwellings, long houses, graves for adults and children, mounds of debris, storage pits, and clay mining pits. Only 20 percent of the site has been uncovered so far, and so excavation will continue to uncover more of this rich and still-mysterious life of the Jomon Period. The site was designated a Special National Historical Site in November 2000 and more than 1 million people have visited since it opened to the public in August 1994.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. This is a fascinating must-see for visitors to Aomori.

Contact Information

Sannai-Maruyama
Aomori- City, Oaza Sannai-Maruyama
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Aomori Prefectural Museum Meeting

- Aomori Prefectural Museum Offices
- Margaret Kelley; Lisa Adams; Takaaki Shiratori, Director; Tomoyuki Fukuda, Vice Director; Satoshi Yamauchi, Curator; Hitomi Tenma, IAD; Lyudmila Meteleva, CIR
- Reported by Margaret Kelley

Background

In 1997 an exhibit about Maine coordinated by the Maine State Museum opened at the Aomori Prefectural Museum. In March of 2000, Governor King opened an exhibit about our sister-state at the Maine State Museum. The exhibit told the story of the wreck of the “Chesebrough” off the east coast of Aomori Prefecture in 1889 and displayed artifacts from ancient Japan and modern Aomori as well as a tea house where a student from Aomori Prefecture performed the tea ceremony for visitors and students. A beautiful catalog was sent to all school libraries. Since that time, the two institutions have exchanged books about each of our states. Maine’s collection is on a shelf in the Maine State Library and Aomori’s are in a corner of the Prefectural Museum designated for sister-state memorabilia. In 2004, ceremonies were held in both Aomori and Maine to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the sister-state relationship and a comparative cultural photographic exhibit “The Apple Tree and the Pine Tassel” was displayed simultaneously in Maine and Aomori.

Meeting

In our meeting this year, warm greetings and sincere appreciation for the sustained friendship between the two museum institutions were exchanged. The Maine State Museum gave to the Aomori museum reproduction native Maine artifacts, including basket making materials and related books for use in a traveling educational box for use by school children in both states. This gift was a reciprocal gift for a similar contribution to Maine in 2006 of educational materials demonstrating Aomori’s ancient pottery traditions.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Several trips between representatives of both institutions over the years have created friendships that have made the relationship between the Maine State Museum and the Aomori Prefectural Museum strong. Reduced funding has limited the complexity of the exchanges in which our two institutions can participate at this particular time. Our hope is for further exchange opportunities in the future.

Contact Information

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The Welcome Reception

- Aomori Grand Hotel, Momoyama Ballroom
- All members of the Governor's Delegation, all members of the MASSAC Delegation, our Aomori Hosts and additional guests
- Reported by Lisa Adam

Our Aomori hosts treated the combined gubernatorial and MASSAC delegations to a delightful reception at the Aomori Grand Hotel. All of Aomori's delicacies were lavishly presented on a long buffet table: sweet Aomori scallops, Aomori apple soup, the finest sushi and sashimi, and in our honor a lobster standing upright and dressed as a chef! The Governor and Mrs. Mimura joined the festive occasion and warm remarks were exchanged by the Governors. Vice Governor Ebina sang "Yasaburo-bushi", a folk song of the Tsugaru area. It was beautifully performed and evocative of the rich musical tradition of the region. We also enjoyed a wonderful shamisen performance. The Maine visitors so enjoyed themselves and lingered so long that our hosts, in the end, gave us a Japanese indication that the evening was concluded by clapping in unison until the last Mainer had left the ballroom. The group so appreciated the opportunity to visit with our Aomori friends in a relaxed fashion in such an enjoyable setting. We extend our very great thanks to our Aomori friends for a wonderful evening.



The combined Maine delegations enjoy the Welcome Reception with their hosts

Saturday November 3, 2007

Museum Meeting and State Gift-Giving Ceremony

- Aomori Museum of Art
- Miyoshi Toru, Chief Curator; Junichi Ida CFO/Budgeting; Honda Nobuo, Vice Director, Dan O’Leary, Tom Denenberg, Hans Underdahl, Margaret Lawrence, Amber Degn, Kathy Bouchard
- Report by Dan O’Leary and Amber Degn



Entrance to Aomori Museum of Art



Margaret Lawrence, Scott Peterman, Hans Underdahl
Dan O’Leary, Amber Degn, Kathy Bouchard, Tom Denenberg

Background

The Museum Committee and Scott Peterman had previously toured the AMOA with a curator on November 1, including their workshop and studio areas. During the November 3 visit, three principal activities took place. First Governor Baldacci presented the Maine State Gift, two photographs by Scott Peterman, to the Prefecture of Aomori for its new Aomori Museum of Art. Secondly, the Governor and the First Lady, the Governor’s touring group and the MASSAC delegates were treated to a tour of the Museum. Finally, the Museum Committee engaged in working meetings with Museum staff.

The State Gift

Scott Peterman travels the world to photograph cities, yet continues to find inspiration at home in Maine. His photographs have become internationally recognized through exhibitions in New York, Boston, Atlanta, the Tate Modern Museum in London and the 10th Annual Architecture Exhibit at the Venice Biennale. *Camels Pasture II 2004* and *Squaw Island 2005* were selected from among the works of over 50 artists as a gift to the Prefecture of Aomori for the Aomori Museum of Art. A jury of Maine-Aomori Sister State Council members, a professional museum curator, a member of Maine’s Arts Commission, and our First Lady Karen Baldacci chose these photographs to express our friendship with Aomori. Governor and Mrs. John Baldacci, the Maine-Aomori Sister State Advisory Council and the people of Maine thank the following individuals and institutions for their funding of the gift of the Scott Peterman photographs: Bowdoin College, Japan America Society of Maine, Maine Arts Commission, Maine Community Foundation, Donald E. & Hilda F. Nicoll, Dan O’Leary, Mr. & Mrs. Hans Underdahl, University of Maine.



Squaw Island 2005



Camels Pasture II 2004



Governor Baldacci and artist Scott Peterman prepare to give the Maine State Gift to the Aomori Museum of Art

Meeting

Regarding the background of the Aomori Museum of Art, audience trends and funding, the Museum Committee learned the following:

- The AOMA opened in the summer of 2006 and was the result of more than 10 years of planning by the Prefecture. The AMOA was designed between 1999 and 2002 by architect Jun Aoki, and under construction between 2002 and 2006. The logo, identity graphics, and wayfinding system were designed by Atsuki Kikuchi. The facility includes permanent and temporary exhibition galleries, a community gallery, 220-seat theater, shop, and café. AMOA is located near the Sannai Maruyama archeological site, and the building's concept was inspired by the ancient Jomon era (BC10,000-BC400). Total cost to build AMOA was approximately \$260M.
- The collection of approximately 3,000 objects focuses on art and artists related to the Aomori prefecture and includes works by Shiko Munakata, Jun-ichiro Sekino, Yoshishige Saito, Tadahiro Ono, Uichi Takayama, Kojin Kudo, Tetsumi Kudo, Shuji Terayama, Tohl Narita, and Yoshitomo Nara. National artists in the collection include Shusaku Arakawa and Toshimitsu Imai, and international artists include Kandinsky, Klee, Matisse, Rembrandt, Odilon Redon, and Picasso. One of the most impressive exhibitions is the permanent installation of three Chagall backdrops from the Aleko ballet. The fourth backdrop is at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The AMOA designed the four-story exhibition gallery around these works, and paid \$10M for the three backdrops ten years before building the art museum.
- The AMOA commissioned two works by Yoshitomo Nara – the large Aomori-ken dog sculpture and the Hakkakudo (Octagonal Chamber).
- A major goal of the AMOA is to increase access to the arts for the people of Aomori prefecture so they do not have to travel long distances. The AMOA also stresses the importance of including both visual and performing arts (music, dance, theater, etc.) in their programming.
- Visitor stats: in the first nine months they were open (January 2006 – March 2007), 465,000 visitors came to AMOA. 55% were from Aomori. Between October 2006 and January 2007, 45% of their visitors were in their 20s, 28% in their 30s and 40s, and 27% over 50.
- Annually they bring in about \$1M in income; 60% from admissions and 40% from event rentals.
- They have 19 professional staff members, and 5 professional part time people.
- Philanthropy as we know it in the US does not exist in Japan, as donations to nonprofits are taxed, effectively discouraging giving. The AMOA is a prefectural museum, and their budget is a government budget. However, the AMOA can approach corporate sponsors through an advisory committee of media and government officials because this committee is not a government entity.
- AMOA does have a membership program. Membership is 3,000 yen/year and provides free admission to AMOA, discounted admission to traveling exhibitions, and a 5% discount in the shop and café. They have 150 memberships.

Regarding Exhibitions at AOMA and the potential for exhibition exchanges:

- AOMA produces three temporary exhibitions annually: one organized in house, and the other two traveling from other institutions.
- They expressed interest in exchanges, such as exhibition exchanges.

- Miyoshi Toru said they would be very interested in a Hudson River School exhibition, and when Dan O’Leary suggested a Wyeth show, Miyoshi Toru agreed that Wyeth is very popular in Japan.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Discuss within Museum Committee the feasibility of a PMA-AMOA exhibition exchange.
2. Consider a trip with PMA docents or donors to Aomori, and gauge interest in the PMA and arts community.

Contact Information

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Additional Touring Visits

- Combined Gubernatorial and MASSAC Delegates
- Aomori Museum of Art, Hirosaki Park, Neputa Village
- Reported by Lisa Adams



Hirosaki Castle Remains



The Joint Delegations at Hirosaki Park

In addition to the official meetings in Aomori, the combined Gubernatorial and MASSAC delegations were treated to a wonderful array of cultural and culinary delights and good fellowship. In the morning, the group attended the gift-giving ceremony at the Aomori Museum of Art and enjoyed a tour of the spectacular new museum. Highlights included the innovative and beautiful architecture of the museum, the enormous 9 m x 15 m Chagall paintings once used as backdrops for the ballet “Aleko” and the museum’s Yoshimoto Nara collection. After the museum tour the group was treated to a delicious lunch and taken to visit Hirosaki Park. The Chrysanthemum Festival was in full bloom, adding to the great charm and beauty of the park. Several of the group stayed on in Hirosaki to enjoy the Neputa Village and a Tsugaru shamisen performance.

Farewell Dinner

- Aomori Washington Hotel
- All MASSAC delegates, Governor's delegates, Aomori Hosts
- Reported by Lisa Adams

The joint Maine delegations hosted a farewell dinner for our generous Aomori hosts. The groups intermingled at two long tables and enjoyed course upon course of outstanding excellent Japanese cuisine and relaxed conversation. Renowned kite maker Tokuko Sato-sensei, distributed gifts and explained the art of kite flying. The Governor and other University of Maine alumni/ae regaled the group with the school's song. Governor Baldacci, Janine Bisailon-Cary and Lisa Adams each thanked our Aomori hosts. After farewells, the group retired for the evening in preparation for their morning departure.



A delicious farewell dinner



Maggie Kelley with Mr. Ogasawara and Mr. Ota



Sato-Sensei instructs the group on the art of kite flying

Sunday November 4, 2007

Goshogawara Kanayama Pottery

- Goshogawara City, Aomori-ken
- Attended by delegates participating in Tsugaru/Shimokita Tour
- Reported by Lisa Adams, Margaret Lawrence



A 45 minute bus trip from Aomori City took us to the Goshogawara Kanayama Pottery located just outside of Goshogawara City. Our visit there was facilitated by the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts former Executive Director Lynn Thompson and current program director Tyler Gulden. They have been engaged in ongoing discussions since the 2005 MASSAC delegation to Aomori. We were pleased to bring with us a letter of greeting from the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts as well as two beautiful tiles as gifts. Lee Middleman, the American contact for the Goshogawara was most helpful in assisting us in making arrangements for us to tour the facility and meet the master potter, Ryoji Matsumiya. Ryoji is a delightful man with strong English skills and a great passion for his work. Lee Middleman has visited and worked at Goshogawara many times and serves as Ryoji's principal US contact and personal friend.

We learned from Ryoji that he had chosen the site for the pottery because of the availability of the clay. Clay production is part of the process there and they use approximately 50% of their own clay. We were able to see the clay making machinery, much of which he had improvised himself.

There are eight woodfiring kilns at Kanayama. Depending on size and design they are fired for 3 to 8 days. The some kilns are fired as often as twice a month, others less. During the International Firing Festival, four kilns are fired (Noborigama, Hai Kaburi kiln, Olsen cross-fire kiln, and a single chamber kiln). A firing requires the 24 hour feeding of the kiln.

The pottery sells its wares through galleries throughout Japan, many of them in Tokyo. It is a tough business. Over 75% of potteries have gone bankrupt in Japan in the past decade. It is a real struggle to keep going. The Goshogawara Pottery is an interesting mix of art and

business. Ryoji believes strongly in passing the pottery art on to future generations and expends the business's income on the programs with that aim. There is a very extensive on site gallery, part of which is dedicated to students' work.

Since 2002, the Tsugaru Kanayama Pottery has sponsored an Artist-in-Residence program during the month of July. Twelve ceramic artists and potters from around the world are selected to participate. The program is focused on the exchange of techniques and ideas about ceramic art and wood fire. The hope is that working together and freely sharing information will contribute to mutual understanding and cooperation among potters throughout the world. The planned number of foreign participants is 12 (with no more than two from any country). The application is available on line at <http://www.makigama.org/en/-application.html>.

We spoke at some length with Ryoji about how best to facilitate a relationship between Maine and Goshogawara. Between his comments and Lee's feedback, it seems apparent that bringing Ryoji to Maine is a challenge due to his extensive commitments in Aomori. However, Ryoji was quite willing to entertain saving a slot or two for the artists in residence program for Maine ceramic artists. We also talked about bringing a group of potters, perhaps a mix of professionals and students to Goshogawara for a workshop, possibly combining the ceramic work with some traveling and cultural experiences in the Aomori region. Ryoji seemed quite interested in the possibility of our helping to bring the prefectural government's attention to the pottery.

Next Steps

1. Upon our return we attempted to locate two Maine potters to participate in the International Firing Festival in July 2008. Unfortunately, only students applied for the Festival and we realized through communications with Lee Middleman, that it had not been Ryoji's intention to involve such young artists. In the past, all the participants have been older potters with years of experience. This misunderstanding was cleared up amicably, though it we felt bad for the students who applied.
2. We will continue to try to locate Maine potters, hopefully including a MECA professor, to participate in 2009. Looking forward it is possible that we might be able to take a group of students at some time other than the woodfiring festival.

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Lee Middleman
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Shayokan

- Kanagi Town, Aomori Ken
- Attended by delegates participating in Tsugaru/Shimokita Tour
- Reported by Pat Parker



Shayokan



Shayokan Garden

Shayokan is the family home of the writer Osamu Dazai. Dazai was born in the house and the room in which he spent much of his childhood is on the first floor. Built by his father, a rich landowner, the house is a striking combination of Japanese and Western style architecture, all of which reflects the family wealth. For example, the kitchen is a traditional style open hearth, but with polished wood instead of the usual dirt floor. The staircase to the second floor is a wide, elaborately carved Victorian style stairway, reflecting the late Meiji interest in Western architecture. The 15+ room house became an inn after the family sold it in 1949 but since 1996 has been a museum.

We were fortunate to have an English-speaking tour guide through the house. For readers of Dazai, the house explains some of Dazai's embarrassment over his family money and his sense of alienation from the common townspeople.

Conclusions, Recommendations, Next Steps

1. This is a recommended stop for those interested in the life of Osamu Dazai or in a very fascinating combination of Western and Japanese architecture. We ate at an excellent restaurant to the left of Shayokan, as you face the entrance.

Contact Information

Telephone: 0173-53-2020

www.goshogawara.net.pref.aomori.jp/16_kanko/dazai/syayoukan.html

(Japanese)

Tsugaru Shamisen Museum

- Kanagi Town, Aomori-ken
- Attended by delegates participating in Tsugaru Tour
- Reported by Max Calderwood



The Tsugaru Shamisen Museum which opened in April 2000 is a marvelous small museum that is extremely well planned and laid out. Displays guide the visitor through the history and origins of this traditional Japanese stringed instrument. Some wonderful examples of original instruments are on display as well as precursor instruments from other cultures. A careful examination is given to the unique construction and parts of the Shamisen. Audiovisual displays give the visitor an introduction to the sounds of various instrument types as well as styles of music. But the real treat is the live performance hall where one can hear master musicians playing traditional tunes. The performance hall is usually packed with enthusiasts. The performers are impressive, I wish I could have stayed longer. This little museum is doing a great job of preserving and presenting a classic Japanese art form.

There is also much to see within close walking distance of the museum. There is a tiny Shinto Temple directly behind the museum that is dedicated to world peace. The Osamu Dazai homestead is on the next block and right up from this is a Nichiren Buddhist temple with a fascinating cemetery. Across the street from Tsugaru is Un Shō Jī Buddhist Temple (Osamu Dazai's family temple) with a unique bell tower and a beautifully sculpted modern statue of Kannon. Restaurants and shops are also conveniently nearby.

Next Steps

1. This is a recommended stop for shamisen enthusiasts or those interested in learning about shamisen.

Contact Information

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Telephone: 0173-54-1616

<http://www.kanagi-gc.net/syamisen.html>

The New Yagen Onsen (Hotspring)

- Yagen Valley
- Attended by delegates participating in the Tsugaru/Shimokita Tour, Zachary Bass and Keiko Hatayama
- Reported by Lisa Adams



**Ferry to Shimokita departing from Kanita Town
(birthplace of Daisuke Matsuzaka)**



New Yagen Hotel outdoor bath



The gentlemen in yukata, traditional onsen dress

After an hour long ferry ride and a scenic bus trip, the delegates arrived at a hot spring resort in the beautiful Yagen Valley where they spent the night. The group enjoyed outdoor hot spring baths under starlit skies. After experiencing this quintessential Japanese form of relaxing, the group enjoyed the height of Shimokita tuna season, and feasted on buttery tuna sushi and sashimi.

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. This traditional hot spring hotel was clean and very well priced, including dinner, and able to accommodate our large group, more than making up for the lack of historic atmosphere to be found in some other areas.
2. The principal regret of the group was inadequate time to explore the regions several famous open-air baths that are within walking distance, including a foot bath for the more modest visitor. An additional night here would have been welcomed.

3. Next time visit Mount Osore, a most sacred mountain which closes Oct. 31.

Contact Information:

New Yagen Hotel, 6-1 Aza Yagen, Ohata- machi, Shimokita-039-4401gun, Aomori-ken tel (81)0175-34-3311

Monday November 5, 2007

Hotokegaura Cliffs Photography Expedition

- On the western coast of Shimokita Peninsula between Fuku-ura and Ushitaki
- Scott Peterman, Dan O’Leary, Kathy Bouchard, Zack Bass, Lisa Adams, Sally Baughman
- Report by Lisa Adams



Scott photographing at Hotokegaura



Scott Peterman

Through the generosity of Dan O’Leary, a small van was hired to take Scott Peterman and a few accompanying early birds to the Hotokegaura Cliffs (two hours away) on the western

shore of the Shimokita Peninsula. Scott prefers the atmosphere of the just pre-dawn and we hoped to beat the 6:11 AM sunrise. Despite a timely departure, the light began to spread in the final minutes of our drive as we approached the cliffs. Scott bolted from the van, slung his bags over his shoulder and took off running down a slippery, steep and leaf covered path. By the time the rest of us had more gingerly made our way down, Scott was bounding over rocks looking for his preferred vantage point. He quickly set up and disappeared under the hood of his camera. The rest of us enjoyed the glories of the cliffs on a peaceful early morning and shot our own photos. Thank you again to Dan for making the trip possible.

Recommendations/Next Steps

1. Next time, in the warmer months, a boat ride along the coast to view these and other cliffs from the water would be magnificent.
2. Sunset from the shore would be lovely as the cliffs are west facing.
3. It is a very windy road to the cliffs, probably not easily navigable by a large bus.

Momokawa Brewing Company

- Outskirts of Hachinohe
- All delegates
- Reported by Lisa Adams

Yutaka Takahashi, General Manager of the Aomori Grand Hotel, graciously suggested and arranged a visit to the brewing facility of world-renowned Momokawa sake. After a tour of the immaculate facilities we were greeted by the president and CEO Kyota Murai who spends his time both in Aomori and in Oregon at the the American Sake'One brewing facility. We were able to taste the different sakes and enjoyed a chance to chat informally with Mr. Murai who gave the delegates each a bottle of sake and a lovely square lacquer sake cup.



Momokawa sake in the making



Sake tasting with Kyota Murai (right)

Contact Information

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Hachinohe: Dance and Music Performance and Overnight

- Daily Tohoku 6th floor auditorium
- Attended by all delegates participating in the Tsugaru/Shimokita Tour
- Reported by Lisa Adams



Delegation members at the dais



The generations performing together



Good Luck God Ebisu fishing for the great red sea bream



Pat Parker, Maggie Kelley, Margaret Lawrence, Sally Baughman, with a young friend

Through immeasurable good will and extraordinary organizational skills, Katsutoshi Kawaragi of the U.S.N. international cultural exchange association, with the help of Yutaka Takahashi of the Hachinohe Grand Hotel, arranged an evening of traditional Aomori music and dance for our group. The enburi dance, a featured performance of the evening, had its origins in the early Kamakura period, 800 years ago and has been passed down through the generations. Enburi is designated as a Valuable National Folk Culture Activity. Over 100 performers, over half of them children, dressed in their native costume and performed for the delegation. First Lady Karen Baldacci was most warmly welcomed and met again several young ladies she had previously entertained at the Blaine House. The delegates, seated on a dais and treated to local delicacies including the famous Aomori apple juice and smoked

octopus, were in awe as wave upon wave of talented young Hachinohe children and their elders together recreated the traditional dance and music of their region which had originated to pray for a good harvest. The following is the report of the evening published in the Daily Tohoku Newspaper and translated (roughly) by Lisa Adams.

Daily Tohoku

November 8, 2007

“Enburi is great!”

The First Lady of Maine and a twenty-two person delegation enjoy a local performance at the headquarters of the Daily Tohoku.

On November 5, at the 6th floor auditorium of the Daily Tohoku headquarters, the Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council, in connection with the visit of Mrs. John Baldacci, First Lady of Maine, and twenty-two delegates engaged in a memorable cultural exchange and enjoyed the local Hachinohe enburi and other performances.

The cultural exchange on this occasion was sponsored by a private Hachinohe organization: U.S.N., the International Cultural Exchange Association, chaired by Kawaragi Katsutoshi.. This same association has made fourteen visits to the United States and has supported the local performance of traditional Japanese entertainment, thereby furthering ongoing cultural exchange. The group has visited the state of Maine three times.

On this day, the five performances included the Nanbu Horse Dancing (Takadate Komaodori), the Shinto “shinshi” Lion Dance (Houryou Kagura) and the Everyday Enburi (Hibakari Enburi). [The performance also included the drumming performance of the Shinkumi Sansha Festival Music and a lovely vocal performance by Miss Tomomi Matsuhashi, a senior student at St. Ursula High School who had visited Maine in 2005.]

The visiting delegation was able to view the performers in close proximity and appreciated well the dramatic force of the performance. At the end they expressed their great enjoyment, praising the performers with a standing ovation.

“Enburi is great! These little children are dancing enburi with all their might. I was really touched by seeing them,” said photographer Scott Peterman with a smile.

The delegation returned to the Hachinohe Grand Hotel for the evening where they had earlier enjoyed a warm welcome from Yutaka Takahashi, General Manager of the hotel who had been most helpful in making all arrangements related to our Hachinohe visit, including a stop at the Momokawa Brewery, a delicious Chinese dinner at the hotel and communications with Mr. Kawaragi relating to the dance performance. Our charming Hachinohe hosts met us at the train station at the crack of dawn the following day to give us a traditional farewell.



An early morning farewell to the First Lady
and her traveling companions

Recommendations, Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Consider what kind of similar entertainment we might provide to our Aomori friends and dignitaries when they visit Maine
2. Consider, for the sake of Maine children, ways in which to engage them in the kinds of multi-generational traditions such as these children are clearly enjoying and benefiting from.
3. Consider what opportunities exist for exchanges with the Hachinohe area in the performing arts arena. Both Mr. Takahashi and Mr. Kwaragi are wonderful contacts for Maine. Mr. Takahashi's English is excellent.

Contact information

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