



Obihiro Pioneer

Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section Newsletter

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Hokkaido Town Name Origins 北海道市町村名の語源

Hokkaido is Japan's largest prefecture and contains the largest amount of cities, towns and villages of any prefecture in Japan. While towns in Honshu have longstanding Japanese historical influence, Hokkaido's towns most often derive from the language of the native Ainu people and the name that the Ainu had for those regions or local land forms, such as rivers and lakes. The Ainu language is very different from Japanese, resulting in some interesting town names that even Japanese people can't guess without knowing how to read it first! I'll introduce some modern town names in Tokachi/Hokkaido to give you an idea of their supposed origins.

Obihiro

The origin of this word is actually very complicated, confusing, and highly debated. The origin comes from the Ainu name for the Obihiro River which was [operperkep]. The consensus on the meaning is {river that is severely torn up at the river mouth}. In actuality, the area was called many similar names, including [oberiberip], [obiobirop], and [oberoberop]. Japanese people heard this and recorded it as Oberiberi or Oberobero. In 1871, the government added kanji to the Oberobero name and it became the current kanji for Obihiro (帯広). However, these kanji were read as [obirubirup] and [oberiberi]. When the *Banseisha*, the pioneers of Obihiro, first arrived in 1883, they called the area Oberiberi, but soon after, the normal reading for the kanji was used and the area was called Obihiro ever since!



Shimizu

You might think it derives from a person named Shimizu, however, it actually comes from the Ainu word [pekerpet], meaning {bright and clear river}. In 1899, Pekerebetsu Post Station was established in the town of Hitomai. Town eventually consolidated under the name Shimizu, which means {clear water} in Japanese.



Otofuke

The name comes from the Otofuke River in Ainu, called [otopke]. The meaning of this is {place where hair grows}. Some propose that the Otofuke River flows like hair. Others propose that the willow trees that grow from the riverbed of the river look like black hair, giving it its name.



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Ashoro

The town gets its name from the Ashoro River, which comes from the Ainu word [eshoro pet], which means {river that flows downward}. The current town of Ashoro was actually split in two between Nishi Ashoro in Tokachi and Ashoro in Kushiro areas. In 1948, Ashoro became part of Tokachi and in 1955, the two combined into one Ashoro.



Sapporo

The city name likely comes from the Ainu word [sat poro pet], or {big dry river}. This is because a long time ago, the Toyohira River dried up and had almost no water during the dry season. In the oldest records found, the area was written with the hiragana for *Satsuhoro* (さつほろ). It remained the most common reading throughout the years, but was sometimes transcribed as *Satsuporo* and *Shiyatsuhoro*. During the end of the Meiji period, it was given its current *kanji* (札幌) and pronounced as Sapporo ever since.



Tomakomai

The city name comes from the Ainu word [to makomay], which means {the Makomai River that flows from the swamp}. The river's name comes from the words [makoma nay], meaning {stream that flows from the deep part of the mountain}. You might be wondering why the Japanese character 牧 is read as *mai* in the city name (苫小牧) when it does not actually have that reading. It is theorized that during the Meiji period when Japan was deciding the kanji for city names, the person in charge of submitting the name planned on using the kanji 枚, which is pronounced *mai*. His name was Komaki (小牧), and since he was so used to writing his own name, he accidentally submitted his name's kanji, resulting in the wrong kanji but still pronounced Tomakomai!



Furano

Comes from the Ainu word [hura nu i], meaning {place that has a smell}. The Furano River, which flows from Mount Tokachi, contains large amounts of sulfur, so it gave off a sulfuric smell. In the past, Furano was a small town that covered a wide area. In 1956 and 1966, it combined with two towns called Higashiyama and Yamabe. Furano was split into four towns covering different parts of the Furano River. Now, we have Kamifurano, Nakafurano, Furano, and Minamifurano!



Wakkanai

The name comes from a river that flowed through the area called {yam wakka nay}, or {river with cold, beautiful water}. There was another river in the area that contained lots of salmon called {husko yam wakka nay}, and it became the name of the town, which later became the name of the area.



References: 1) Official town home page (Shimizu, Otofuke, Sapporo, Tomakomai, Wakkanai), Sota (2008) Tokachi Ainugo Chimei Techo, Honda (1999) Hokkaido Chimei Bunrui Jiten. Country Sign usage permission obtained.

Hand Games: Yubisuma

手遊び: 指スマ

Japanese children love to make any sort of decision easier with a simple game of rock-paper-scissors, or *jan ken pon!* However, aside from this hand game, there are other games that Japanese kids and even adults play to kill time or make decisions. One of these games is *yubisuma*. It is a game in which the goal is to guess the number of thumbs put up by everyone and be the first to get out of the game! Here are the basic rules.

1. Players make fists and put their hands forward.
2. The first player says *issēnōse*(いっせーのーせ) and a number of thumbs that they think will be standing up (zero, *ichi*, *ni*, *san*, *yon*, etc).
3. The exact moment that the player says the number, all players (including the speaker) put up as many thumbs as they want. It can be 0, 1 or 2 thumbs.
4. The players count the number of thumbs that are up. If the number of thumbs matches the number, then the person who said the number removes one of their hands from the game.
5. The next player goes and repeats the process. The first player to remove both hands from the game is the winner!

For a bit of trivia, do you know the idol group SMAP? The name of this game comes from one of their TV shows where the members often played this game with guests. *Yubisuma* is a combination of the word finger (*yubi*) and the first part of the pronunciation of SMAP in Japanese (*sumappu*)! Have fun playing!



Movies @ Cinema Taiyo, Obihiro

Not all movies are listed. Times and movies are subject to change. To confirm, call or check online at: www.taiyogroup.jp/movie/obihiro			
Title	Genre	Lang	Dates
Spider-Man: No Way Home <i>Supaidāman: Nō Wei Hōmu</i>	action/ adventure	EN/JP	Until 24 th
Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City <i>Baiohazādo: Werukamu Tu Rakūn Shiti</i>	horror/ action	JP	All month
Ghostbusters: Afterlife <i>Gōsutobasutāzu/Afutāraifu</i>	fantasy/ comedy	EN	From 4 th
The 355 355	action/ thriller	EN	From 4 th
West Side Story <i>Uesuto Saido Sutōrī</i>	musical/ romance	EN	From 11 th
Death on the Nile <i>Nairu Satsujin Jiken</i>	mystery/ crime	EN	From 25 th

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West Side Story

KEY: JP = Japanese voice EN = English voice with Japanese subtitles

Events in Tokachi

Please be aware that these and other events may be affected by COVID-19. To find out if these events are still running, please contact the respective organizers or check out their webpages online.

When	What	Where/Contact
2/11 (Fri) 10:00-15:00	International Festa in Tokachi 2022 国際フェスタinとかち2022 This year's Festa will take place in two locations! At the TIRC, you can experience an English lesson, a stamp rally, food from 4 countries, and a picture display. At the MEGA DON location, there will be a mini talk show, a cultural display by international students, and panels on fair trade and cultural clothing from around the world. Fee: Free of charge Notes: Please wear a mask to the event and practice social distancing.	Tokachi International Relations Center and Mega Don Qixote @ Obihiro 十勝インターナショナル協会 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp
2/13 (Sun) 10:00-15:00	Snow Art Village Nakasatsunai スノーアートヴィレッジなかさつない During this event, artists create art with their feet in a large snow field, which can be viewed from a hot air balloon or from the top of a tower. Additionally, you can experience the fun Nakasatsunai winter with dance events, snowmobile riding, and snow art experiences. Fee: Free of charge with some events costing money	Satsunaigawa Sogo Undo Park @ Nakasatsunai 中札内村観光協会 0155-68-3390 http://kankou-nakasatsunai.com
2/18 (Fri) 19:00-20:00	Winter Starry Sky Observation Meet 冬の星空観察会 Observe winter constellations and the starry sky with telescopes. Target: Students Max Visitors: First 20 children (guardians excluded) Fee: 500 yen / adult, 600 yen / elementary school student and guardian Registration: 2/7 deadline by phone, fax or website	Makubetsu Centennial Hall @ Makubetsu 幕別町百年記念ホール 0155-56-8600
2/20 (Sun) 10:00-12:00	39th Churui Nauman All Hokkaido Sled Race 第39回忠類ナウマン全道そり大会 Come enjoy a sled race of unique sleds made from cardboard. The sleds compete for both speed and design with big prizes for the winners.	Hakugindai Ski Area @ Makubetsu 幕別町地域振興課 0155-88-2111
2/27 (Sun) 14:00-16:30	14th Multicultural Festival 第14回国際文化祭 Enjoy performances by international residents, a traditional clothing fashion show, foreign country introductions, and a world craft display! Max Visitors: First 70 people only Fee: Free of charge Registration: 2/2 (Wed) to 2/19 (Sat) using the QR code	Tokachi International Relations Center @ Obihiro 外国人留学生まちづくりを考える会 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp



Obihiro Pioneer can be found at the following locations: Obihiro City Hall, Tokachi International Relations Center, Obihiro University International Center, Obihiro Tourism and Convention Center inside the Obihiro JR Station, Obihiro Public Library, Tokachi Plaza, Cinema Taiyo, Joy English Academy and online at www.city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp (search for "Obihiro Pioneer").

Obihiro Pioneer is a newsletter published monthly by the Obihiro City Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section for residents of the Tokachi District and related parties. The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the official views or opinions of the Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section or the City of Obihiro. Questions? Contact the Editing Team at:
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