

ESL Workshop and Symposium  
 Towada City, Japan  
 October 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> 2014

宝くじ助成金  
 カナダ青少年語学研修交流整備事業  
 国際交流を通じた相互語学・文化学習  
**「シンポジウム」**  
**「ワークショップ」開催**

**シンポジウム** (通訳付き) 2014年**10月5日**(日) 午後1時~4時  
 シンポジスト アルバータ州レスブリッジ市内大学等英語教師他

レスブリッジ姉妹都市協会会長 ハロルド・パレヴァセフ氏	レスブリッジ総合大学 ダイアン・ミナミデ氏	レスブリッジ短期大学 セビー・マスーディ氏	フレキシビリティラーニング・システムズ エルマ・ギント氏	日本語養成講座教師 根岸 健男氏

**ワークショップ** (通訳付き) 2014年**10月4日**(土) 午後1時~4時  
 「カナダ人3人の英語教師による英語のワークショップ」

ク	ラ	ス	「初級」「中級」「上級」別 中学生以上 各クラス15人 無料 9月20日(土)
対	象	者	
募	集	人	
参	加	費	
募	集	締	切
<b>※場所：両日とも十和田商工会館</b>			

On September 30, 2014 a three person delegation consisting of:

- Harold Pereverseff – President, Lethbridge Twinning Society (LTS)
- Dr. Sepideh Masoodi – Programs Coordinator - Lethbridge College (LC)
- Elma Guinto – Director – Flexibility Learning Systems (FLS)

Departed Lethbridge enroute to our sister city, Towada City, Japan. We would meet with Diane Minamide – Director for Towada City Relations, LTS, who had departed prior to September 30<sup>th</sup>.

\*Diane Minamide represented on behalf of the University of Lethbridge (UofL) and their ESL program and International Student Programs at the University of Lethbridge.

The primary purpose of the journey was to participate in a workshop and symposium regarding English as a Second Language (ESL) and the availability of such programs through the UofL, LC and FLS in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. The workshop and symposium had been organized by the Towada City Association for International Relations (T-AIR) and they had sponsored the Lethbridge delegation to participate.

The secondary purpose of the visit to engage in strengthening our sister city relations between Towada City and Lethbridge through the efforts of the Lethbridge Twinning Society (LTS) and T-AIR. LTS President Pereverseff had brought official messages from MP Jim Hillyer, as well as from MLA Greg Weadick and MLA Bridget Pastoor. These would be presented to the President of T-AIR and to the Mayor of Towada City at an appropriate time during the visit. (*These messages are appended to this report*)

Significant preparation for the symposium and workshop began well over a year prior. Dr. David Ibsen (an associate of LTS) visited Towada City in fall of 2013 and assisted in facilitating a “reunion” of Japanese and Canadian students who had participated in ESL and Japanese Second Language (JSL). Then, in May, 2014, Diane Minamide (Director for Towada City relations) visited Towada City and further discussion and planning for the symposium and workshop was undertaken.

On October 03, 2014 we were met by Mary Beth Takao who works for the Government of Alberta at the Alberta/Japan Office in Tokyo. Mary Beth joined us as we began the final leg of our journey to Towada City.

As a delegation, we arrived at the Shinkansen (bullet train) Shichinohe-Towada Station. We had a warm reception from T-AIR President, Mr. Shirayama, Mr. Arao and other members of T-AIR. After checking into our accommodations at the Towada City Hotel, we went to the Towada City, Chamber of Commerce Building, where the workshop and symposium was being held.

The venue was perfect, it allowed for each of the facilitators to set up their “class rooms” in separate areas and for LTS President Pereverseff to set up a reception/information station at the facility entrance.

The workshops held the following day went very well, Mary Beth became involved in visiting each of the classrooms and interacting with the facilitators and the students.

The Alberta/Japan office had provided some practical items to present to those in attendance and included a bilingual book (Japanese/English) regarding Alberta, some erasers, pencils and note books – very much appreciated and well received.

The participants “students” of the workshops were assessed prior as to their knowledge of English and were directed to the classroom that best suited their knowledge level and proficiency of English. This resulted in each of the students being designated as “beginner”, “intermediate” or “advanced”. The beginner students were assigned to Elma Guinto (FSL) class, the intermediate students were assigned to Dr. Sepideh Masoodi (LC) while the advanced students were assigned to Diane Minamide (U of L). There was a very good representation of participants, some very young and others were seniors. Each class was assigned a Japanese/English translator who were volunteers with T-AIR. This was very helpful. Immediately following the first session of class, the students changed classrooms and were provided the opportunity of experiencing ESL instruction at a different level – Elma instructed the students at the intermediate level – Sepideh the students at the advanced level – Diane the students at the beginner level. Each of the facilitators provided information on their respective ESL programs offered at their facilities. This information included verbal as well as written documentation that described their facility, the ESL courses offered, time frames, costs as well as admission direction. Each facilitator left contact information for each of the participants and for the T-AIR organizers of the workshop. A question and answer opportunity was extended to all of the participants. The workshops were a huge success as noted by feedback forms completed by the participants and from the impressions gleaned by the facilitators. T-AIR are conducting their own analysis and will be finalizing their report shortly.

The following day, a symposium was held at the reception hall of the Towada City, Chamber of Commerce Building. The symposium format was that each of the Lethbridge facilitators and LTS President Pereverseff were seated behind a table on a raised stage. Mr. Kuniwo Negishi a Japanese as a second language teacher, was as well, a member of the panel. The panel chair was Mr. Teiichi Arai. Mr. Arai introduced each of the panel members to the symposium participants. Each panel member was given the opportunity of presenting information on their respective facilities as well as promoting the ESL programs which they offer. LTS President Pereverseff presented information on the “sister city” relationship that the communities of Lethbridge and Towada City enjoy. (Speech is appended to this reporting) T-AIR had arranged for accredited translators to assist each of the panel members in their presentations. It is noteworthy to advise that Diane Minamide of the U of L and Dr. Sepideh Masoodi of LC had power point presentations to go along with their presentations. Diane Minamide delivered her presentation in Japanese and therefore did not require any translator.

The symposium participants consisted of the Mayor of the City of Towada City, Mr. Oyamada, several members of the Towada City, City Council, Regional and Prefecture representatives, Mary Beth Takao from the Alberta/Japan Office, teachers, community

leaders, former ESL students who had studied in Lethbridge as well as many perspective Lethbridge bound ESL students. Following the panel presentations, there was an opportunity for participants to pose questions during a question and answer period. Two former Lethbridge ESL students, Katsuhito Shimada and Toshishiko Kawashima had attended at the Lethbridge College in the spring of 2014. Both Katsuhito and Toshishiko displayed enthusiasm and passion for their Lethbridge ESL experiences as they presented speeches and also acted as respondents during the question and answer session. Risa Kumasaka, also a former Lethbridge, ESL student who attended at the Flexibility Learning System provided a speech and acted as a respondent during the question and answer session. The time was short and we were not able to address all of the questions. Mr. Arao dismissed the panel and a dinner reception was immediately enjoyed. Traditional Japanese foods were served as visiting and further discussions took place. The Japanese customary "business card" exchanges took place. Speeches from the Mayor of Towada City, Mr. Oyamada, the President of T-Air Mr. Shirayama and various other dignitaries were delivered. We were treated to entertainment as Risa (former ESL student who attended in at Flexibility Learning Systems in Lethbridge) performed some spectacular juggling. Makoto Sakurada (two time guest of the Lethbridge Twinning Society (2009 to Lethbridge and Southern Alberta & 2011 to the Province of Alberta) performed a brief musical concert. Gifts from the Lethbridge delegation were exchanged with members of T-AIR. The standard gifts were framed pictures of the Lethbridge CPR High Level Trestle Bridge. (Taken by Lethbridge photographer, Mike Byneshewsky). It was very encouraging to have had the opportunity of meeting with Risa, Toshihiko and Katshuhito, all of whom were former ESL students who studied in Lethbridge previously. There were parents and perspective students who came to speak with us and in fact two students committed to come to Lethbridge in 2015 for ESL studies!

The planning, organizing and conducting of the two day event by T-AIR and their collaborating organizations along with the City of Towada City resulted in an entirely successful two day ESL event.

The information delivered by the Lethbridge delegation is fully on record and T-AIR will be able to share the information with all those in Towada City and throughout Japan.

The following day, (October 6<sup>th</sup>) the Lethbridge delegation was invited to the Office of the Mayor of Towada City. T-AIR President, Mr. Shirayama along with other members of T-AIR accompanied. We were impressed with the reception that we were given, the meeting was informal as we enjoyed a cup of traditional Japanese tea while we chatted about our efforts as a twinning society and our experience at the ESL Workshop and Symposium. Elma Guinto, on behalf of the Lethbridge delegation presented Mayor Oyamada with one of the beautiful framed photographs of our Lethbridge CPR High Level Trestle Bridge. Harold Pereverseff presented the formal greetings from MP Jim Hillyer, MLA Greg Weadick and MLA Bridget Pastoor. Mayor Oyamada was most gracious to us, he presented each of the Lethbridge delegation members with beautiful tapestry that was hand made in a very traditional way using old kimonos for the fabric structure. The tapestry is indeed very beautiful and will be cherished gifts in our homes.

One of the Towada City Councillors spoke to us after our meeting with the Mayor and said that he had attended the ESL symposium and that after attending, he and his wife are considering having their daughter attend ESL studies in Lethbridge!

Immediately following the meeting with the Mayor, we were off to Hokkaido as Mr. Shirayama had arranged for an overnight visit to the famous city of Hakodate. Mrs. Yamada joined us as we travelled on a train. The train actually goes almost 300 meters under the ocean surface through a unique tunnel that is in fact the longest deepest tunnel of it's kind in the world. You are over 25 minutes under the ocean while you travel to Hokkaido from Honshu. There were many exciting sights that we experienced in Hokodate. This port city is said to have the world's fourth most beautiful night time views. Sea foods of all description were for sale in open air markets. Most prominent, squid. We had the opportunity of visiting a whale meat shop and even to taste samples. Mr. Shirayama had provided hotel accommodations for us at a very nice hotel situated in the downtown area. The following day, October 7<sup>th</sup> we said good bye to Diane who carried on to Sapporo and Elma and Sepideh who made their way back to Tokyo. Harold stayed with Mr. Shirayama and Mrs. Yamada and travelled back to Towada City on the train.

Harold was the house guest of the Yamada family. Back in Towada City, Harold had the opportunity of participating in several sister city related activities these included:

- 1- Being invited back to City Hall where he met with Mr. Kazuhito Watanabe. Mr. Watanabe works with the City of Towada, Legal and Financial departments. Several years ago, Mr. Watanabe worked for the Japanese consulate in Claire, New York with the JET Program. It was at that time that Harold met him through the Sister Cities International network and invited him to visit Lethbridge. Mr. Watanabe did visit Lethbridge and as such he has a good understanding of Lethbridge and our community.
- 2- Harold was invited to attend an official opening of the Towada City – Civic Centre Plaza. The ribbon cutting by Mayor Oyamada officially opened the facility which is a 1,846 square meter community center costing in excess of 900 Million Japanese Yen. The facility is designed as a plan by the City of Towada to activate the city center by introducing the “Plaza for Education” and “Plaza for Social Communication “. The Civic Centre Plaza will improve the public welfare and environment for lifelong learning by attracting the public of all ages through numerous social events to improve the social exchange within the community. This building is ultra modern and very impressive, it is accessible and user friendly. The site of the facility is strategic as it located immediately downtown and faces the shopping district. A city bus stops in front of the main entrance.

- 3- Mr. Shirayama invited Harold to a Community reception which, among other things recognized Mr. Shirayama as a civic leader in Towada City. The reception was attended by over 400 guests.
- 4- Harold was invited to enjoy a fall festival held at the Kita Sato University, Towada City Campus. The University is where Mr. Teiichi Arai is a professor. The University is a private University that consists of six schools: Allied Health Sciences (since 1962), Science (since 1962), Pharmacy (since 1964), Veterinary medicine (since 1966), Medicine (since 1970), Marine Biosciences (since 1972) and Nursing (since 1986). The Schools are distributed across four areas of Japan with the headquarters located in Shirokane, Tokyo. Various buildings are strategically situated on the large 380,000 square meter campus. Several of the buildings are new as having been reconstructed or completely rebuilt following earthquake devastations. It was amazing to see the huge number of bicycles on the campus that are the mode of transportation for students, faculty and administrative staff alike. Very few automobiles were on campus! Mr. Arai toured Harold though most of the campus introducing him to several of faculty members and a number of students. The university has international exchanges with Mahanakorn University in Bangkok, Thailand along with three United States universities. (Perdue University in Indiana; University of Georgia and the University of Tennessee).
- 5- Harold met with travel agency in Towada City to investigate tourist visits to Towada City and area. This was a worthwhile exchange and much information was gleaned that may be of great assistance in planning for future delegation visits to Towada City.
- 6- Harold met with members of "Suijin Taiko" who are "Sensei" (teachers) of the Director of the Lethbridge Japanese Taiko drumming group – "Hibikiya" and the Southern Alberta Taiko Society. It was encouraging to exchange information and "catch up" on relations that were established with Suinin Taiko over a decade ago when the Lethbridge Twinning Society sponsored two members of Suinin to come to Lethbridge to introduce the authentic Japanese Taiko in our community.
- 7- Mr. Teiichi Arai the T-AIR Director for Lethbridge relations along with his wife invited Harold to a traditional Japanese dinner that was at a traditional Japanese restaurant in downtown Towada City. The chef is a neighbor to Mr. Arai and as such the meal presentation and meal menu was made especially for us. Words cannot describe the ambiance of the restaurant, the taste of the cuisine, and the unforgettable experience that was much enjoyed.
- 8- Harold was presented a pair of "antique" Taiko Drum sticks from the Sakurada family in Towada City. These sticks are perhaps 100 years old! They were given to Harold to be specifically presented on behalf of Makoto Sakurada to Mr. Adam Mason of the University of Lethbridge, Global Drums. Mr. Mason has visited Towada City twice over the past few years and intends on another visit in the near future.

- 9- Harold had the opportunity of touring through the Hakkoda Mountains and taking a road trip to the far north eastern coast line of Honshu. The Sea of Japan coast is rugged and laden with fishing vessels of all description. Deep in the Hakkoda Mountains, an "Onsen" was enjoyed. This is a Japanese Hot Spring, very relaxing and very refreshing.
- 10-Finally, the interaction that Harold had with local residents in Towada City was very pleasant. One day there was a typhoon that bore down on Towada City, it was a very significant storm and it was interesting to see the community prepare to weather out the typhoon. Neighbors and businesses alike were assisting one another in preparation. After the storm, cleanup was fast, efficient and any damages were immediately repaired. The following day, you would have never thought a storm had attacked.
- 11-Mr. Shirayama is as well a farmer and has several rice paddies. One day, Harold was invited to his farm and was given command of a rice harvester. Harold actually harvested a rice field with a new combine, which was a very high tech piece of machinery. It was interesting that Harold not only ate rice while in Towada City, but he had the opportunity of seeing rice growing and in fact harvested rice!

Members of the Lethbridge delegation all arrived back home safely. This experience was certainly well worth our efforts. We trust that we have made the bridge of friendship between the community of Lethbridge and the community of Towada City even stronger than before.