

Obihiro Pioneer

Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section Newsletter

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Good Luck, Gavin!

マネリさんさようなら

This month, Obihiro City says goodbye to Gavin Munelly, one of the CIRs in Obihiro. Gavin has been working at the Tokachi Internaitoal Relations Center (TIRC) for over 2 years and is going back home to his country of Ireland. We sat down with Gavin to ask about his experiences working and living in Tokachi and about his plans for the future.



OP: Hello Gavin! Thank you for joining us for an interview during this busy time. How do you feel about returning home after two years?

Gavin: Hello! Thanks for having me. It's certainly a bittersweet feeling. On the one hand, I'm excited to go home and see all my friends and family again, but on the other hand I have to leave a lot of friends behind. Not to

mention that there's still so many things I never got around to doing while I was here.

It has been a rather strange 2 years here looking back on it. I had only just arrived and really gotten settled in before COVID-19 hit and the whole world turned upside down, but compared to back home, living here in Tokachi has been relatively stress free. There have been no big lockdowns and the number of COVID patients has been quite small compared to back home. Having said that, I'm still really hoping to come back in a few years and do all the things I didn't get to do and go to all the places I didn't get to go this time.

OP: It has been a very strange few years hasn't it. How was your time working at the TIRC? What were some of the challenges you faced?

Gavin: Working in the TIRC was a really unique and interesting opportunity. Coming to Japan, I wasn't sure what to expect from my job because CIR jobs vary quite a bit. I was expecting something like translating jobs or interpreting jobs and to be working in city hall! Things didn't turn out anything like what I expected, but I think that's for the best.

Instead I got a ton of experience in organizing things like events and meeting people I would have never met if I didn't work at the TIRC, like all the exchange students in Chikudai. I really loved being out near Obihiro no Mori as well. I grew up in the countryside and I don't do too well in cities where I can't find any greenery.

As for challenges in the job, working on events is always challenging because you can

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have a very tight schedule, particularly when you need to find someone as a guest, but it's too early for anyone to say if there have time to do it! Sometimes there were a lot of crossed fingers and hoping for the best. I also found interpreting to be pretty difficult, but I guess that's a matter of practice.

If I had to pick one thing that was the biggest challenge for me personally, I would have to say working on the weekend. Having a day off, a day of work and then another day off can be hard. Also since TIRC is closed on Mondays, one of my days off would also be a Monday when all my friends are working! Making plans with people was a challenge for sure.



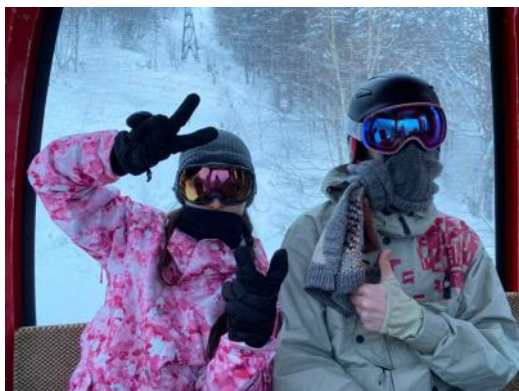
Gavin on the frozen throne

OP: What are your lasting impression of Obihiro? Give us the good and the bad!

Gavin: In Japan I've only really had experience living in Tokyo, and compared to that it's so much easier to live here. The rent is cheaper, the apartments are bigger, food shopping is MUCH cheaper, there are lots of parks and places to go when you've had your fill of city for a while...the list goes on. Plus there's snow. I know a lot of people aren't fond of snow, but I absolutely love it. I'm going to be sad about going back to Ireland where there's no snow. There are some downsides though. A lot of people in Obihiro really like drinking, but I'm not too fond of it so I found it hard to make friends sometimes when every invite was to go drinking somewhere.

OP: When you first came, you mentioned you were really excited about snowboarding in Hokkaido. Did you get your fill of the Hokkaido slopes?

Gavin: I could never get my fill of the Hokkaido slopes, the only things stopping me from being on them all the time are time and money! I did manage to get out there quite a bit though, and it was a lot of fun. I even managed to find a



Riding the ski lift for some snowboarding

board in a second hand shop bargain bin for 3000 yen! I affectionately called it "Trashboard". Saying goodbye to Trashboard was a pretty sad occasion for me, but I'm not going to have much chance to ride it through the fields of Ireland. When I arrived I was also pretty excited about hitting the roads of Hokkaido on a motorcycle, but unfortunately that didn't work out. As it turns out you need something to prove you were in the country where you got your license for an unbroken 3 month period before you can exchange your license for it in Japan! I wasn't aware of that and unfortunately had nothing acceptable to prove it. A lesson for anyone out there thinking of changing their international license for a Japanese one!

OP: What will you be doing once you head back home?

Gavin: I actually already have a job lined up! I came to Japan on the JET Programme and in Ireland every year the Japanese embassy hires a returning JET participant to act as JET Programme Coordinator for the coming year. So back in June I applied on the off chance that I might be chosen and it was successful! So I guess I'll be in charge of ferrying the next lot of Irish JET participants to Japan in 2022.

OP: Do you have any advice for your successor?

Gavin: Sure! Working in the TIRC might be overwhelming at first but you'll get used to working there over time. Might take a few months but you'll get a feel for how much preparation time an event needs, where everything is, etc. Also, your work hours might make it difficult to meet up with people or participate in social events but try to make as many friends and go to as many events as you can—it will help a lot both for work (someone coming to an event you're in charge of is a big confidence boost!) and out of work. Best of luck working in the TIRC!

Gavin has been a staff member of Obihiro Pioneer for 2 years. We were very proud to feature his in-depth articles about life in Hokkaido and Japanese culture.

We wish Gavin luck in his future endeavors and are hopeful to welcome him with open arms when he can return to Obihiro as a visitor in the future.



Gavin at a pre-COVID party

TIRC's YouTube Channel 森の交流館・十勝のYouTubeチャンネル



Did you know that the TIRC has a YouTube channel? Featuring interviews and cooking classes by various international residents of Obihiro, there's a whole host of content available with even more yet to come! Gavin's goodbye interview is planned to be uploaded to the channel this month. Check it out by scanning the QR code.

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
F9 <i>Wairudo Supīdo Jetto Bureiku</i>	action	EN or JP	Until 23 rd
Old <i>Orudo</i>	horror	EN	All month
Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings <i>Boku no Hīrō Akademia Wārudo Hīrōzu Misshon</i>	action	N/A	From 3 rd
The Deer King <i>Shika no Ō: Yuna to Yakusoku no Tabi</i>	anime	JP	From 10 th
The Reason I Jump <i>The Reason I Jump</i>	docu- mentary	JP	From 17 th
HOKUSAI <i>HOKUSAI</i>	drama	JP	From 24 th


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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
9/11 9/25 (Sat) 16:00-17:30	Japanese Conversation and Learning Table 森の日本語レッスン Improve your Japanese language skills in a friendly environment. Fee: Free of Charge	Tokachi International Relations Center 森の交流館・十勝 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp
9/16-9/21 9/23-9/28 10:00-19:00	Fujimaru—Japan Product Exhibition 第75回全国うまいもの大会【第1・2弾】 Try out food from various locations around the country! Notes: Store hours can be confirmed on Fujimaru's website. On the last days (9/21 and 9/28), the exhibition closes at 4 p.m.	Fujimaru Obihiro, 7F 藤丸百貨店 0155-24-2101 www.fujimaru.co.jp
9/18 (Sat) 18:30 ※Planned release date	International Talk (Irish CIR Farewell Talk) インターナショナル・トーク(マネリ国際交流員のフェアウェル・トーク) Learn more about the countries of the world. This time International Talk will be held online in video format. This month our guest is Gavin from Ireland, Obihiro City's CIR. He will introduce his country and share his experience living in Obihiro, as well as the cultural differences he felt living here.	TIRC YouTube Channel 
9/25 (Sat) 10:30-12:00	Kids Playground (Halloween) キッズ・プレイグラウンド(ハロウィーン) Come with your children to learn and play while meeting local families. This month's theme is "Halloween". This time our guest, Chris from America, will interact with the children through song, dance and arts and craft. Fee: Free of charge Participants: Children 0-6 years old and their parents/guardians. Limited to 40 participants (decided by raffle) Notes: Register by contacting TIRC. The registration period is 8/27 (Fri) to 9/10 (Fri)	Tokachi International Relations Center 森の交流館・十勝 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp
Until 9/26 (Sun) 9:30-17:00	Obihiro Art Museum 30th Anniversary—Cassandre Poster Exhibit 開館30周年記念 カッサンドル・ポスター展 The art museum is celebrating its 30th anniversary with a display of posters by Cassandre (1901-1968), a French graphic designer renowned for popularizing the art deco style and having a massive influence on 20th century art. Come enjoy his famous works utilizing a dynamic and geometric art style. Fee: 800 yen/adult, free entry for middle school students and below	Obihiro Art Museum—Main Showroom 北海道立帯広美術館 0155-22-6963 www.artmuseum.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/obj/

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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