

Obihiro Pioneer

Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section Newsletter

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Festivals in Tokachi #2

Pioneers, this week we bring back our section on festivals in Tokachi with some more information on local events throughout the year! Last time we introduced Shikaoi's Hakujaime Festival and Otofuke's Sairinka. This month we bring you some more Tokachi festivals!

Heigen Festival—Obihiro

Time: August 14 and 15

Long ago lived Mokuren, a disciple steadfast in his devotion to the great Buddha. His faith was firm as stone, yet the fate of his departed mother gnawed at his heart. Though many moons had passed since she left the world, he had a feeling that her spirit had not yet found peace. Mokuren had the supernatural gift to gaze into realms unseen. Unable to bear his unease, he turned his sight to the afterlife. What he beheld saddened him.



There, bound in the realm of suffering, was his mother. Her punishment was a hunger that could never be satisfied. Each morsel of food he offered her turned to flames the moment it touched her lips. Mokuren's heart was broken. He sought the counsel of the Buddha, who said to him: "Good alms reverberate across the worlds. On the fifteenth day, when the monks re-

十勝の代表的な祭り #2

turn from their pilgrimage, prepare for them a great offering. Feed them well, and this act of compassion will ease your mother's hunger."

On that day, he set forth a feast for every monk who came, offering all he could with open hands and a faithful heart. And so it was, the power of his offerings and devotion lifted his mother from her suffering. Her spirit was freed, and at last she moved onward into peace. Overcome with joy, Mokuren leapt and danced, his body becoming the song of his happy heart. Thus was born the dance of remembrance and gratitude; the dance we know today as the Bon dance.



This is one of the origin stories for the Japanese holiday Obon, which is the focal point of Obihiro's famous Heigen Festival. Heigen means "plain", referencing the Tokachi Plain. This two day festival takes place typically after the spectacular Kachimai Fireworks Show, coinciding with Obon on August 15th. It mixes aspects of summer festivals, the fall harvest, honoring ancestors, and fun! The streets are packed with food vendors and games. There are scheduled performances by singers, taiko drum groups, comedians, and much more.

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On the 14th is the harvest-inspired tradition 夢降夜 (Yumefuruya, “night of falling dreams”). There are two giant parade floats called mikoshi with the word 五穀豊穡 (gokoku hōjō, “abundant grain harvest”) written on them. The floats are carried back and forth across the street, one by men and one by women, as onlookers make a wish and throw stalks of wheat onto a giant basket on the mikoshi. By doing so, their wish is granted and the harvest will be plentiful. After, the mikoshi carriers throw bread called yume pan yaki into the crowd!



On the 15th is the famous Bon dance, an Obon tradition that honors the spirits of the ancestors. Groups of participants such as the fire department, cosplayers, etc. dance down the street as the bon dance song is sung in the middle of downtown. It's an exciting and cultural must-see tradition!



Rekifune River Seiryu Festival—Taiki

Time: Early August

This one-day festival first began when the Rekifune River, which both starts and ends within Taiki, was recognized as the cleanest river in Japan in 1989. The festival takes place along the river with all sorts of events during the day, such as a bottle rock-

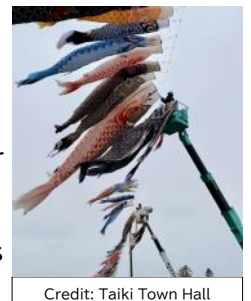
et contest (Taiki is known for its space port), live music, and games.

The real show starts at night. This river festival is actually known for FIRE! There is a longstanding tradition called the Perupune Fire Festival, in which fire from Taiki Shrine is brought to the event ground on a small portable shrine called a hōtō and that fire is used to light small torches used to light an enormous 20 meter torch. It lights up the night sky with fire and eventually falls down. It is said that if it falls towards the mountainside it signifies a good harvest, if it falls towards the ocean it signifies a good catch of fish. After the spectacle, there is a taiko performance and fireworks.



Credit: Taiki Town Hall

Also, at the same location on Children's Day, a koi nobori (carp-shaped kites) with over 250 carps is set up and there are activities for children and adults that take place. Even if you don't have children, it's quite a sight to see so I suggest going to see the koi nobori display, which is on display for about 3-4 weeks before Children's Day.



Credit: Taiki Town Hall

*We hope you enjoyed these festival spotlights.
More to come in the future!*

Rakugo Stories #1: Jugemu

Rakugo, the Japanese performing art of comedic storytelling, has some well known stories, many of which are unknown to Western audiences and/or untranslated. In this and future issues, I will share these stories to hopefully give you a laugh!

落語演目 #1: 寿限無

Pa and Ma had a baby boy. They didn't really know what to name him, so Pa went to the local temple to ask the monk to give him a good name. “How about the name 寿限無 (Jugemu)? It means “longevity” and “no limits”, quite an auspicious name!” “Hmm, that's

Rakugo Stories #1: Jugemu

落語演目 #1: 寿限無

pretty nice,” said Pa, “but do you have any other suggestions? The monk responded, “How about these?:”

- 五劫の擦り切れ (Gokō no Surikire, “time it takes 5 rocks to disappear from brushing, aka eternal”)
- 海砂利水魚 (Kaijari Suigyo, “the number of pebbles and fish in the sea, aka infinite”)
- 水行末雲来松風来松 (Suigyōmatsu Unraimatsu Fūraimatsu, “the final destination of water, the clouds, and wind, aka unending”)
- 食う寝る所に住む所 (Kū Neru Tokoro ni Sumu Tokoro, “a place to eat, sleep and live, aka good life”)
- やぶらこうじのぶらこうじ (Yaburakōji no Burakōji, “marlberry bush x2, aka good fortune”)
- パイポ・パイポ・パイポ・のシューリングン、シューリングンのグーリンダイ、グーリンダイのポンポコピーのポンポコナー (Paipo Paipo Paipo no Shūringan, Shūringan no Gūringandai, Gūringandai no Ponpokopī no Ponpokonā, “story of imaginary country called Paipo where King Shūringan and Queen Gūringandai and their daugh-

ters Ponpokopī and Ponpokonā lived long lives”)

- 長久命の長助 (Chōkyūmei no Chōsuke, “long life, long-lasting help, aka living long)

Pa couldn’t decide which to go with, so he...strung them together. He went home to his wife. “Did the monk give you a good name for our little bundle of sunshine (and crying and poop)?” “He sure did,” said Pa. “What is it?” asked Ma. “We’ll call him Jugemu Jugemu Gokō no Surikire Kaijari Suigyo no Suigyōmatsu Unraimatsu Fūraimatsu Kū Neru Tokoro ni Sumu Tokoro Yaburakōji no Burakōji Paipo Paipo Paipo no Shūringan, Shūringan no Gūringandai, Gūringandai no Ponpokopī no Ponpokonā no Chōkyūmei no Chōsuke!” And thus Jugemu lived an exciting life where everyone had to use his name... except he drowned one day because the person calling the lifeguard took too long to say his name...



Movies @ Cinema Taiyo Obihiro

Nishi 3 Minami 11, Obihiro Tel: (0155) 20-1525



Not all movies listed. Times and movies are subject to change.
To confirm, call or check online at: www.taiyogroup.jp/movie/

Title	Lang	Dates
Lilo and Stitch <i>Riro ando Sutitchi</i>	JP	Until 7/27
I Am Kirishima <i>Kirishima Desu</i>	JP	From 7/4
Hellboy: The Crooked Man <i>Herubōi: Za Kurukiddo Man</i>	EN, JP	From 7/4
Superman <i>Sūpāman</i>	EN, JP	From 7/11
Fantastic 4: First Steps <i>Fantasutikku Fō: Fāsuto Suteppu</i>	EN, JP	From 7/25

EN = English dub with Japanese subtitles JP = Japanese dub with no subtitles



Tokachi Trivia

Did you know?

Tokachi boasts one of Japan’s highest food self-sufficiency rates at a whopping 1300%. The 4 main crops are **wheat, potatoes, sugar beets, and beans**. Of course, all sorts of dairy, meat, veggies, fruits, grains, and more are grown here!



Events in Tokachi

Please be aware that these and other events are subject to changes. To find out the latest information about these events, please contact the respective organizers or check out their webpages online.

When	What	Where/Contact
7/5 (Sat) 17:30-21:15	51st Hakujahime Festival 第51回白蛇姫まつり A festival based on the Ainu legend called the “Tale of the White Snake Princess”. You can see a dance involving 13 meter and 8 meter-long snake decorations performed on a lit up stage. You can also see an traditional Ainu dances, an Ainu mukkur instrument performance, and much more. Fee: Free (activities may require payment)	Shikaribetsu Lakeside @ Shikaoi 鹿追町観光協会 0156-66-4034
7/12 (Sat) 10:00-15:00	Friends of the World 2025 世界のともだち2025 Come enjoy one of Obihiro’s biggest cultural events of the year with Friends of the World 2024! You can take part in activities such as taking photographs in traditional clothing from around the world, eat food from food stalls from many countries, listen to English stories, make crafts from around the world, and much more! Fee: Free Max Visitors: No limit, however parking is limited.	Tokachi International Relations Center @ Obihiro 帯広市観光交流課 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihoro. hokkaido.jp
7/19 (Sat) 15:00-16:30	International Talk: Cuba インターナショナル・トーク:キューバ International Talk is an event where guest speakers give talks about their home countries. This time, Lesly from Cuba will give a talk about Cuba’s history, culture, food, and much more. Fee: Free	
7/20 (Sun) 13:00-21:00	Makubetsu Natsu Festa 2025 まくべつ夏フェスタ2024 This summer festival in Makubetsu will have dance and taiko performances and attractions for kids. There will be a firetruck where children can experience using a water hose. At 20:00, a fireworks display including about 3,000 fireworks will begin! Fee: Free (activities may require payment)	Makubetsu Undo Park @ Makubetsu 幕別町観光物産協会 0155-54-6606

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 City of Obihiro.

Obihiro Pioneer can be found at the following locations: Obihiro City Hall, Tokachi International Relations Center, JICA Obihiro International Center, and Cinema Taiyo Obihiro. The digital version can be found on Obihiro City’s homepage at www.city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp (search for “Obihiro Pioneer”) or by scanning the QR code on the right.

Questions? Contact the Editing Team at:

Tel: (0155) 65-4133

Email: international@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp

