

Good-bye Mrs. Nakanishi (さよなら、中西さん)

It is March, and in Japan that means it is time for changes. This month we say good bye to long time Chinese Coordinator for International Relations, Mrs. Chan Nakanishi. We asked her a few questions about her time here at Obihiro City and about her future plans.

What did you like most during your job as a Coordinator for International Relations?

During my time here as a Coordinator for International Relations I had a number of jobs including school visits to promote international understanding, translating and interpreting, and helping Chinese residents, and I think all of these fit well with my personality. The one job however that leaves the biggest impression with me would have to be the JICA Grassroots (Kusa no Ne) Technical Coordination Project. During the close to 10 years that I helped work on this as an interpreter together with specialists, I was able to feel just how strong the people in the rural areas of Chaoyang City are as they lived their lives in a very harsh environment.

What will you be doing once you are done with your job as Coordinator for International Relations?

I have lived in Obihiro for 29 years. I will be staying in Obihiro and working at a new job. I look forward to my days off to continue to appreciate the wonder of Tokachi and enjoy all the great food and beautiful sites.

Any closing words for our readers?

I think that Tokachi-Obihiro is a very easy place to live in. The water and air here is clean, and the kind people here make it a great place to be. I hope you enjoy living here as much as I do.

Mrs. Nakanishi has been a Coordinator for International Relations for 11 years, and she will be missed at the International and Domestic Relations Section. Last year she obtained Japanese Citizenship. We wish her luck in her new adventure in Obihiro. If you see her please be sure to say hello.



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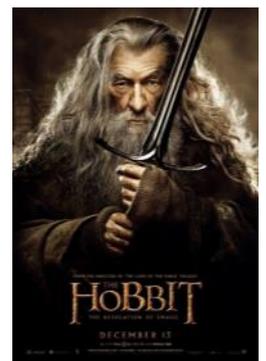
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Chef Hector
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Events at TIRC and in Tokachi and Obihiro

When	What	Where/Contact
 <p>3/5, 3/19 (Wed) 19:00-20:00</p>	<p>Traditional Japanese Dance Class (外国人向け日本舞踊体験会): Experience the traditional art of Japanese dance. Participation is free. Kimonos and other materials will be provided. For international residents only. Sign-up required.</p>	<p>森の交流館・十勝 Tokachi International Relations Center 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp</p>
 <p>3/9 (Sun) 9:00-12:00</p>	<p>Cross-Country Ski Lesson (在住外国人向けクロスカントリースキー講習会): Learn the basics of cross-country skiing. Participation is free. Skis and poles will be provided. Please come in ski wear or winter sports clothes.</p>	<p>Obihiro no Mori Cross-Country Ski Course 帯広の森クロスカントリースキーコース For registrations, contact: Tokachi International Relations Center TEL 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp</p>
 <p>3/12 (Wed) 19:00-21:00</p>	<p>International Mini-Volley Night (国際ミニバレーナイト): Meet friends from all over the world while enjoying a fun and easy sport!</p>	<p>森の交流館・十勝 Tokachi International Relations Center 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp</p>
<p>3/15 (Sat) 14:00-15:30</p>	<p>Kids Playground (キッズ・プレイグラウンド): Come with your children to learn and play while meeting local families. This month, you can have fun learning English with the preschool Learn-a-Lot.</p>	<p>森の交流館・十勝 Tokachi International Relations Center 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp</p>
 <p>3/29 (Sat) 19:00-21:00</p>	<p>42nd International Talk (第42回国際シヨナル・トーク): Learn more about the world and exchange ideas with other participants. This month's talk will be about Ethiopia.</p>	<p>森の交流館・十勝 Tokachi International Relations Center 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp</p>
 <p>3/2-3/16 10:00-18:00</p>	<p>Contemporary Art in Obihiro 2014 (おびひろ現代アート2014): See the works of contemporary artists in Hokkaido. There will also be a gallery talk, performance, and workshop.</p>	<p>Obihiro Citizens Gallery 帯広市民ギャラリー 0155-25-7250</p>
 <p>3/7 (Fri)</p>	<p>"Silver Spoon" Movie Release (映画「銀の匙 Silver Spoon」公開): Watch the live action movie based on the popular anime that is set in Obihiro.</p>	<p>Cinema Taiyou Obihiro and other theaters nationwide シネマ太陽帯広等 www.ginsaji-movie.com/index.html</p>
<p>11/1-3/31</p>	<p>Winter Fest in Ecopark (ウインタフェスinエコパ): Enjoy snowshoe walking, snow raft tours, a foot spa, and other fun winter activities.</p>	<p>Tokachi Ecology Park 十勝エコロジーパーク 0155-32-6780 www.tokachi-ecopark.jp</p>

Chef Hector's Cuisine Corner (ヘクター調理人の料理コーナー)

March is a time of natural and social transition in Japan. As the spring season comes around, so do the flowers, with the symbolic sakura starting to bloom towards the end of the month (though in Obihiro, you'll probably have to wait until May). People also go through significant changes, with many students graduating and leaving school. For international students, this usually means leaving Japan altogether as they go back to their home countries. Workers also clean their desks as they prepare for new jobs or new positions.

There are several cultural events of note occurring in March, starting with the Hinamatsuri on March 3rd, also known as the Doll Festival or Girls Day. From mid-February up to this day, families with daughters display a set of ornamental dolls in their homes, as a wish of happiness and good fortune for their girls. Traditional foods during Hinamatsuri include chirashi-zushi (sushi rice with egg strips and other colorful ingredients), hina-arare (colorful rice crackers), hishi-mochi (diamond-shaped rice cakes), and clam soup.



Then there's White Day on March 14th, a fairly recent tradition celebrated in East Asia. On this day, guys give gifts to girls as "payback" for the gifts they received during Valentine's Day. Similar to Valentine's Day, every cake shop and confectionery in the country have White Day specials on sale. Incidentally, March 14th is also Pi Day, which commemorates the mathematical constant π . As you might have guessed, people usually celebrate this day by eating pie.



Another famous March celebration is Saint Patrick's Day, observed in many countries on March 17th. Though its origins are obviously religious in nature, recent traditions include holding street parades, wearing green, eating Irish food, and drinking green beer. As a popular saying goes, "On St. Patrick's Day, everyone is Irish", so if you're feeling Irish on this day, joining the crowds at the local Irish pub might be a fun way to celebrate.



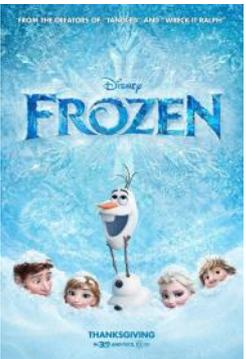
On March 21st comes the Vernal Equinox, when the length of the day and the night becomes equal. It marks the beginning of spring in the northern hemisphere, and is a national holiday in Japan (known as Shunbun no Hi). It is also celebrated as the New Year's Festival or Nowruz in Iran, Afghanistan, and other neighboring countries.

As a final note, we'd like to remind you that March is the last month before the consumption tax increases from 5% to 8% on April 1st, so if you're planning on making big purchases, better make them soon.

Movies At Cinema Taiyo, in Obihiro

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

Times and movies are subject to change! (for space reasons not all movies are listed)
To confirm, call or check online at: http://www.taiyogroup.jp/cinema/theater/_obihiro/movie.shtml



Title	Language	Dates
Thor: The Dark World	3D Japanese / 2D English	Ends 7th
Rush	English	Ends 7th
Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit	English	Ends 14th
Escape Plan	English	Ends 7th
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug	Undecided	All Month
Robocop	Undecided	Starts 14th
Saving Mr. Banks	Undecided	Starts 21st
Trick the Movie: Last Stage	Japanese	Ends 7th
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2	2D Japanese	Ends 7th
Kiki's Delivery Service	Japanese	All Month
Silver Spoon	Japanese	Starts 7th
Doraemon: New Nobita's Great Demon ~Peko and the Exploration Party of Five~	Japanese	Starts 8th
Frozen	Japanese	Starts 14th

Events (Continued)



When	What	Where/Contact
1/25-3/2	Tokachigawa Swan Festival "Sairinka" (十勝川白鳥まつり「彩凜華」): Come to a romantic world with a fantasy show of lights and sounds. There will be a free foot spa and other attractions.	Otofuke Town Tokachigaoka Park 音更町十勝が丘公園 0155-32-6633
1/25-3/31	2014 Shikaribetsu Lake Ice Village (2014 然別湖コタン): Come to this ice village built on top of the frozen lake, with an onsen, ice bar, ice theater, cross country skiing, and more.	Shikaribetsu Lake, Shikaoi Town 鹿追町 然別湖 0156-69-8181

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 (click on "Information for Foreigners")

"Obihiro Pioneer" is a newsletter published monthly by the Obihiro International and Domestic Relations 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 International and Domestic Relations Section or the City of Obihiro. Questions? Tel (0155) 65-4133 or send e-mail to the Editing Team at international@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp.