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**North Asia
Centre of
Asia-Pacific Excellence**



New Zealand and Japanese schools build stronger cultural connections

High-school students in New Zealand and Japan are connecting on the big issues like indigenous culture, sustainability, and rugby, in an exciting joint-venture between Education New Zealand (ENZ) and the North Asia Centre of Asia-Pacific Excellence (NA CAPE).

In collaboration with the Hokkaido Board of Education, seven schools from New Zealand's North Island and seven from Japan's Hokkaido prefecture have begun to open a digital dialogue at a time when valuable in-person interactions are limited.

This initiative builds on the agreement signed in November 2020 between the Hokkaido Board of Education and ENZ. It further strengthens the existing partnership agreement between the New Zealand Embassy Tokyo and the Hokkaido Government by promoting collaborative opportunities in education through shared interests.

International education plays an important internationalisation role as it brings a refreshing, global outlook to education at a local level. By building deep, reciprocal relationships with other countries, internationalisation also helps international education uncover opportunities for innovation.

After online orientations for teachers, 273 students from three high schools in both countries met for the first time to introduce themselves, their school and city. Schools connected include: Taradale High School and Yubari High School; Papatoetoe High School and Sapporo Higashi High School; and Te Kura Kaupapa Motuhake o Tāwhiuau a Kura-ā-Iwi and Noboribetsu Akebi High School, which also connected with Unakami Primary school in Chiba. The remaining schools were due to connect shortly after, as Japan navigated the start of its academic year.

Sharing both economic and geographical similarities between countries, key themes for successive exchanges held in English include language and culture, indigenous culture, sustainability, primary industries, and rugby with a strategic goal of students starting student exchanges between schools in the future.

The participation of Kura-ā-Iwi in the programme is of value to both countries seeking to deepen existing indigenous cultural connections. Hokkaido and New Zealand share many similar features, including the importance of agriculture and of indigenous peoples.

Sharlene Brown, Senior Teacher at Te Kura Kaupapa Motuhake o Tāwhiuau expressed their support for the initiative.

“As the first iwi designated character kura in the world, Te Kura Kaupapa Motuhake o Tāwhiuau is absolutely committed to global, indigenous education in particular Ainu language and culture.

“This is therefore the guiding force behind our commitment to establish new relationships and exchanges with schools in Japan.”

Both NA CAPE and ENZ are focused on continued support of closer indigenous to indigenous connections between New Zealand and Japan. Hokkaido is the birthplace of Japan's indigenous people, the Ainu. As Hokkaido continues to embrace its indigenous culture, this initiative presents a unique opportunity for richer, more meaningful exchanges by showcasing New Zealand's Māori values. By connecting with other cultures around the world, students in New Zealand and Hokkaido gain a better understanding of indigenous people's experience and can uncover similarities and fostering better appreciation of other cultures.

ENZ Director of Education – Japan Misa Kitaoka said from Tokyo that despite the ongoing challenges of COVID, ENZ is committed to promoting connections between New Zealand and Hokkaido using innovative modes of virtual delivery.

“New Zealand’s unique cultural values like kaitiakitanga - protection of people and place – are woven into the threads of our education system.

We are very proud of the leadership Māori demonstrate in the indigenous education space, and are committed to furthering international indigenous connections for the benefit of all.”

Following on from the success of this international initiative, the NA CAPE plans to support additional sessions, and connect New Zealand high-school language students and their teachers with their counterparts in Korea.

North Asia CAPE (NA CAPE) is committed to building New Zealanders’ capacity to engage with the countries of North Asia. Find out more about the NA CAPE at www.northasiacape.org.nz

Education New Zealand is the Crown Agency responsible for international education to benefit New Zealand socially, culturally and economically. Find out more at enz.govt.nz.

Want to get involved in future exchanges? Get in touch with North Asia CAPE at nacape@auckland.ac.nz.

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