

# The JET Programme: A Great Way to Experience Japan

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## Sharing the Charms of Life in Japan

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I began studying Japanese in high school as a third language after English and Thai. I then went on to major in Japanese as an undergraduate and graduate student with the aim of becoming a Japanese language instructor. Desiring to experience living and working in Japan, I applied for the position of Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) in Higashikawa, a picturesque town in central Hokkaido Prefecture.

Living in Higashikawa, I have been enchanted by its abundant charms, including its delicious ground water fed by the snowmelt of Mount Daisetsu and the stunning views of Mount Asahi that greet me as I gaze out the window each morning.

Opportunities for international exchange abound in Higashikawa, which has Japan's first municipally run Japanese language school and counts around 200 foreigners among its 8,000 residents. I am one of a team of five CIRs, along with colleagues from Latvia, South Korea, China, and Uzbekistan. Our responsibilities include supporting exchange programs between Higashikawa and its sister cities overseas, promoting interaction between foreign and local residents, and sharing attractive aspects of our native countries with the local residents.

At the town's Kurashitanoshiku Festival, which promotes local products, our team of CIRs, with the help of international students from the Japanese language school, set up booths introducing the cuisines of our respective countries and offering food for sale to visitors. I decorated my booth with photos of Thailand and put up a panel with explanatory information to give visitors a sense of my homeland. The international students actively cooperated with us at this event, taking advantage of the opportunity to get to know Japanese people.

In addition, I periodically offer Thai language and Thai cooking classes. I adjust the recipes so that the dishes can be made with locally available ingredients. Hearing participants say "Oishikatta"—"That was delicious"—is my motivation.

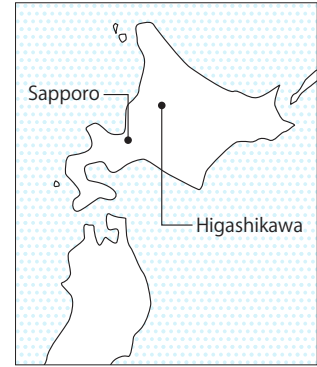
Higashikawa, which has declared itself the world's first "Town of Photography," began holding the International High School Students' Photo Festival Exchange in 2015. The event involves participants from 10 countries who in teams of three search out and snap photos of scenes capturing the allure of the town. With the assistance of CIRs and international students as interpreters, the event serves as a wonderful opportunity for students and local residents to interact and promotes the town globally through pictures shared over the Internet.

In the future I hope to help organize events that will allow more overseas visitors to experience the charms of Higashikawa and bring together visitors and townspeople of all ages. Upon returning to Thailand I intend to share my personal and cultural experiences from Japan with as many students as I can and guide others looking to learn more about the country.



**Chidchanok Hongtipparat**

Goes by the nickname Nok. Born in Thailand. Earned a master's degree in Japanese from Chulalongkorn University. Arrived in Japan as a JET participant in 2014 and currently serves as a CIR in Higashikawa. Prior to coming to Japan worked as an interpreter for a Japanese company in Chonburi Province, Thailand.



Nok (left) served as an interpreter during the International High School Students' Photo Festival Exchange in Higashikawa. Here she stands with the team from Thailand.



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1. Nok explains an information panel about Thailand used at a recent town festival. 2. The Kurashitanoshiku Festival features a stall offering different ethnic cuisine. Here Nok serves up a Thai dish for visitors. 3. Since coming to Higashikawa, Nok has begun practicing kendo. Here she faces her partner before starting practice.