

FUKUSHIMA DESK NEWS

November, 2014

The Fukushima Conference 2014

"Let us cultivate Fukushima"

On Saturday 11 and Sunday 12, 2014, this year's "Fukushima Conference" was held. The event called Fukushima Conference was first held in 2011, and it has become an annual event since then, in order to transmit the present state of Fukushima which is not always easy for outsiders to understand clearly. This year's theme was "Cultivating Fukushima." Those present, deciding on the theme, planned to take a hoe and a plow, and bring back to the meeting of 2015 their respective suggestions in order to make new rows in the field of Fukushima.

Mr. Norio Akasaka, the elected representative of the members, said: "At the end of our long discussion, we finally decided together to create the General Corporation Fukushima Conference. The Corporation aims at building a safe society, not relying on atomic power. The new Fukushima, thus created, will share the reality and experience of March 11 with everybody while constantly developing as a place of peace. We feel that we should not concentrate on how to overcome

separation or opposition, but how to share our common image of new Fukushima and display it to everybody."

The participants of the talk session shared their impressions as follows:

"I felt strongly that out of the rich farming soil imaginative farmers will grow." (Mr. Kanno) "For farmers, it takes a long time to produce the EARTH, and the men and women called farmers are the ones who LIVE on this earth today."

(Mr. Akasaka) "Our heart was deepened as we were discussing our SOUL, and we discovered that our culture has grown out of the heritage of the deceased, as well as of the life with animals and plants. The more aware we are of the pain of the Earthquake, the more deeply we share this culture. Those who have suffered have come to the time to cultivate human hearts, and this has to start from Fukushima. Let us forge together how to cultivate." (Mr. Kamata). These words were engraved in our hearts. We must learn to start "digging around our own feet first", and we should pay heed not to lose sight of where we stand.



Moms' Power Project

In the Kitchen Garden Building where the Fukushima Conference was held, the group called the Moms' Power Project has opened a shop by the name of *Moms' Noisy Garden*. The "Moms" (Kaachan in Japanese) are the women farmers who evacuated from Abukuma area. They are creating a new project of producing agricultural processed goods utilizing their wisdom and new techniques. The aim of the project is "independence and regeneration through food and agriculture". Whenever you pass near there, be sure to drop in to the *Noisy Garden* (Waiwai in Japanese.) It has a restaurant, and a coffee shop, too .



Renewing the Pledge for Next Generations

Three and a half years have passed since the Earthquake and the accident at the Nuclear Power Plant. Various spots are getting lively with local festivals. On Saturday, October 4 and Sunday, 5, *The Home*

Town Festival 2014 was held in *Shiki no Sato* (Village for Four Seasons) by those who care to preserve traditional folk entertainment. They decided to start from Fukushima, aiming at the restoration of hearts from the pain of the Earthquake. Twenty different styles of dancing were introduced. In the individual booths, the corners for enjoying and experiencing traditional dances were offered, and the "Home Town Taste Party" attracted curious visitors. In this corner, there was a booth called "Let's color our own roly-pollies" which attracted little children, who formed a long line waiting for their turn to be creative. At the dancing corner of fishermen, *the Fishermen's Dance of a Large Catch* to the melody of *Bisa!* with a flag of a large haul won the eyes of dozens of sightseers.



The Rice Planting Dance, presented by the representatives of Iidate Village, won a large applause. It had been performed on October 26 in Otaru City, Hokkaido, at All North Japan Folk Dance Contest, as the representative of Fukushima after an interval of 20 years. The dancers, who were all refugees from

Iidate, expressed their prayer for the recovery from the damage of the atomic plant accident. The origin of the dance goes back to 1783, an exceptional lean year of that century. Modern village people had planned to hand down this prayerful dance to the elementary school children there, but due to the decrease of their number, the village had to give up handing down the tradition. Now the people of Iidate are exceedingly happy with the idea of the continuity of the Rice Planning Dance.

Return of Dad's Salmon

Fukushima Mimpo News of October 12, 2014, had a moving story of the sons of a lost fisherman, still looking for their father after three years and seven months. Tomioka River, situated within the area of evacuation since the accident of the First Fukushima Atomic Plant, has a place to plant salmon, where they later return as mature fish. Mr. Isao Ikari was the head of the organization of propagating fish in the area. Soon after the earthquake, the electricity stopped. So Mr. Ikari, with a manual generator in his hand, went to rescue the small fry salmon, 700,000 tiny creatures which would die of the lack of oxygen. Mr. Ikari's sons

were obliged to evacuate out of Tomioka that night immediately, never to return there. It was only after two years that they were allowed to visit Tomioka, looking for their father, but to this day there has been no clue to the whereabouts of Mr. Ikari. After three years and seven months since the Earthquake, the boys met the salmon which had returned to Tomioka River. How excited they were! "Look! These are the salmon that went to the Ocean in the year of the Earthquake!" "Yes! Dad used to love these creatures like his own children." While the boys were still in junior high, their father had taught them how to catch salmon with a fishing net; so they tried that day, faithfully using the method their father had showed them. The healthy, well grown up salmon were shining silver. There was no doubt the young men saw their father in their minds' eye as they handled the net.

Prayer to the Buddha

The treasured traditional event of the prayer to Buddha in Namie Machi had been automatically suspended since the Earthquake. The news of its revival on December 17, 2014, lit a warm light in our hearts. The style of this practice,

particular to Namie, is that a number of people sit on the floor and make a circle, holding a huge long string of beads. As they recite together the name of Amitaba Buddha respectfully, the string of large beads goes around the room from one hand to another, while the gong of the bell is heard from time to time. This prayer used to be customary after a Buddhist funeral in the region. The good men and women of the evacuating area had all left the village, hoping to get together one day, making sure who was keeping the beads and the bell for the group. When the former inhabitants of Namie were finally allowed to return though only during the day time, the day of prayer was organized. Thirteen were able to come. They sat in a ring, holding the beads. What did they have in their mind and heart while the name of Amitaba Buddha was being praised? With this service, they have certainly made a positive step toward the revival of Namie.

Government Built Apartment Not Popular

The investigation of the intention of the evacuees to get into the apartment complex being prepared by Fukushima Prefecture shows

that the negative answers from Tomioka Machi residents were 54.6% , and from Namie Machi, 46.3%, according to the report of *Fukushima Minpo*, October 18, 2014.

One of the reasons for their reluctance is suspected to be the delay of the completion of the new residence.

Editor: Sister Yukie Nogami. ACI