

Kawasaki CityKAWASAKI CITY
川崎市

Representative Assembly for Foreign Residents Newsletter

Date of publication:
March 31, 2009
Issue No. 36

Edited and published by:
The Human Rights and Gender Equality Office,
Citizens' and Children's Affairs Bureau, Kawasaki City Office
<http://www.city.kawasaki.jp/25/25zinken/home/gaikoku/index.htm>

Creating and Promoting a True Multicultural City



The Representative Assembly held its annual Open Forum on December 14, 2008, at the Takatsu Civic Hall. It was a windy, chilly, and rainy day, but this did not deter approximately 120 local and foreign residents of the City—coming from various sectors—from attending this important event. True to its goals, the event created a very good opportunity for the Representatives to cultivate friendly exchanges and interactions with those who attended, listen to their insights and opinions about issues affecting the local and foreign community of the City, and further promote the Representative Assembly and its goals and activities to the other residents of the City. In both the General Assembly and two subcommittee meetings, the participants lively participated in detailed and informative deliberations and discussions on topics such as education, cultural understanding, language barriers related to health care and community life, especially during emergencies and civic participation. An exchange party was held afterwards to facilitate new acquaintances and deepen old ones. In a more relaxed atmosphere, the Representatives and the participants traded and exchanged laughter and brilliant ideas.

(Belfe PALAD)



Kawasaki Citizen's Festival

The 31st Kawasaki Citizen's Festival was held on November 1–3, 2008. The Representative Assembly for Foreign Residents once again participated in the Festival to further promote interaction between foreign and Japanese residents of Kawasaki.

Many children participated in a quiz about the world and enjoyed receiving small gifts brought by foreign residents from their home countries. Although the quiz included many difficult questions, many of the children knew the answers, making their onlooking parents proud. On the international exchange performance stage, festival-goers had a chance to try on traditional folk attire provided by foreign residents who had brought traditional costumes from their home countries. They talked about the costumes and showed people how to wear them. On the last day of the Festival, Representatives and local adults and children sang songs and performed dances on the stage. Many residents had a chance to see these performances, which won enthusiastic applause from the delighted audience.

While the visitors enjoyed this exposure to different cultures, the Festival provided a great opportunity to raise awareness about the activities of the Representative Assembly in our community.

(Shinsha UEDA)



Summary of Assembly Meetings



Third Meeting, Day 2 (November 16)

Committee on Education and Culture

- Japanese-language instruction in elementary and junior high schools

We discussed the duration of lessons provided under the City's Japanese-language tutoring program and the possibility of getting community residents involved in Japanese-language instruction.

- High school advancement and high school life

Based on our experiences as supporters, we shared ideas about high school advancement and high school life for students with foreign backgrounds.

- Japanese-language support for adults
Japanese-language support is provided in literacy classes held at civic halls and other facilities, but we discussed ways to provide language support to adult foreign residents who are unable to visit those kinds of facilities.



Committee on Society/Community Life

- Health care

We discussed the (tentatively named) Kawasaki Health Care Support System for Foreign Residents, which is intended to be easy to use and helpful for foreign residents living in Kawasaki. We also discussed the Kawasaki Communications Volunteers program (??) and looked up medical terminology that might be misunderstood even by the Japanese.

Fourth Meeting, Day 1 (January 25)

Committee on Education and Culture

- High school advancement

After investigating policies adopted by the Prefecture and City, we discussed problems faced by children with foreign backgrounds.

- Support for elementary and junior high schools

We invited a representative of the General Education Center to come and talk to us about what areas are and are not covered by the City's policies. Also, we discussed private tutoring and other ways communities can help in this area.

Committee on Society/Community Life

- Health care

We continued our discussion of the (tentatively named) Kawasaki Health Care Support System for Foreign Residents. Based on the experiences of the non-Japanese-speaking family members of committee members who have given birth or been admitted to a hospital for another reason, we discussed the difficulties of looking for a hospital when you are not able to speak Japanese, anxieties felt by patients, and practical problems that people face.

Note: Detailed meeting minutes can be found on the Representative Assembly's Web site.

★ FY2009 Meeting Schedule ★

☆ Kawasaki City Representative Assembly for Foreign Residents

Location: Kawasaki International Center **Time:** 2:00–5:00 p.m.

First Meeting: Day 1—April 19 (Sun.) Day 2—May 10 (Sun.)

Second Meeting: Day 1—June 14 (Sun.) Day 2—July 12 (Sun.)

Third Meeting: Day 1—Sept. 27 (Sun.) Day 2—Dec. 20 (Sun.)

Fourth Meeting: Day 1—Jan. 24 (Sun.) Day 2—Feb. 21 (Sun.)

Note: Assembly meetings are open to the public. Please feel free to attend.



☆ **Open Forum:** Nov. 29 (Sun.) **Location:** Takatsu Civic Hall **Time:** 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Note: Anyone may participate. This is an open opportunity for members of the general public to share their ideas with their Representatives.

● **Useful Information:** The Multilingual Consultation Office has provided counseling in more than 1,500 cases. Feel free to contact this office if you need help addressing problems or concerns of everyday life. Consultation Corner for Foreign Residents, Tel: 044-435-7000, Web site: www.kian.or.jp/soudan.html; for details, see issue no. 34 of this newsletter.

Voices from the Open Forum

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the Open Forum. Your input will help the discussions of the Kawasaki City Representative Assembly for Foreign Residents move forward. Below are highlights of some of the input received.

Assembly Representatives described the Open Forum at literacy classes throughout the city and learned a great deal about people's various problems and opinions at these events. We will strive to develop proposals aimed at making Kawasaki a nicer place to live for foreign and Japanese residents alike.

- We should create a framework that provides not only Japanese-language support for young students but also general academic support for other school subjects. We should focus on the Asao Multicultural Support Network Himawari volunteer program that was launched in Asao Ward.
- Some academic support is being provided in schools, but it is not enough. It does not seem like much attention is being paid to academic support either in school or at home.
- It would help to be told in advance about cultural differences, like the fact that the Japanese prepare very nicely arranged lunch boxes. Families would be relieved if lunches are provided in junior high school.
- Terminals that can translate Japanese into multiple languages should be installed in hospitals and pharmacies.
- A database of subtle Japanese expressions needs to be created (identifying the difference between, for example, "sharp pain" [*zukizuki itamu*] and "gripping pain" [*shikushiku itamu*]).
- I am concerned about what people with limited Japanese-language skills should do if they need to call 119.
- It would be really handy to have a multilingual hotline that people could call for not only medical issues but also general consultation services.
- Japanese society is built on the assumption that everyone understands Japanese. Making people more aware of the presence of residents who do not understand Japanese would go a long way toward making this an easier place to live in.



- Facilities that can serve as bases of multicultural activities, like Fureai Halls, need to be established in various neighborhoods.
- The project to promote a multicultural society seems to be influenced by administrative and fiscal reforms in some local governments, but I would like to see it continue in Kawasaki City.
- The Alien Registration Law is being revised. This should be discussed by the Representative Assembly.
- Further efforts need to be taken at ward office counters. Multilingual signage is provided at Nakahara Ward Office, so couldn't the same be done at other offices?

Visit Our Web Site!

Our Web site will feature important information on a variety of topics concerning our life in 2009, including ongoing economic problems from last year and new legal systems that affect foreign residents. We are working to ensure that as much of this information as possible is posted on the Representative Assembly's Web site (www.city.kawasaki.jp/25/25zinken/home/gaikoku/kaigi/). Please be sure to check it out. The following information is also available on the site.

- **Information about fixed-amount benefits**
- **Information for foreign residents working on a contract basis, such as temporary staff**

● **Useful Information: Japanese-conversation lessons are available in Kawasaki free of charge. There is a morning course and an evening course. For details, contact your nearest civic hall, education and culture hall, or Fureai Hall.**



Representatives and Their Multicultural Experiences

Volume 2

Jan-Ken-Pon (Rock-Paper-Scissors) in Indonesia



Surely you have heard the phrase *jan-ken-pon*. This is a very familiar game to most people living in Japan. It is often shortened to *jan-ken* in Japanese but is known as rock-paper-scissors in English. This game, in which rock beats scissors, scissors beat paper, and paper beats rock, is played in various forms all over the world.

Indonesia is no exception. We, too, have a game like *jan-ken*, but it is somewhat different from those played in other places.

We call it *suit*. I guarantee that every Indonesian knows this game. It is the one game that every child must master to have an amazing childhood.

The rules of *suit* are essentially the same as those of *jan-ken*, but different symbols are used. In Indonesia, they are ant, elephant, and human. The elephant is stronger than (and therefore beats) the human, and the human beats the ant. However, the ant beats the elephant.

Players hold up an index finger to represent a human, a thumb to represent an elephant, and a little finger to represent an ant.

There is significant meaning behind this game, as it is based on a story about an ant and an elephant. In the story, an ant is teased by an elephant for being so small. One day, the ant decides to fight back against the elephant. Because the ant is small and fast, there is nothing the elephant can do to stop the ant. The ant attacks the elephant's eyes. The elephant falls over and surrenders to the ant. This story teaches children that being pretentious and arrogant does not make you strong. If you behave arrogantly or hurt someone's feelings, you will pay for it in the end.

This game not only is fun but also teaches some important lessons. Try giving *suit* a try sometime!

(Asri MOCHAMAD)

The Multicultural Country of Brazil



Brazil is a multicultural nation comprising immigrants from many different places. For example, the famous Carnival originates from a festival brought over by the Portuguese, but the samba that is danced as part of the festival is based on African rhythms. Brazilian food likewise incorporates a variety of flavors coming from the Arab world, Italy, and Africa. Also, you will find towns here that have a European feel to them. Last year marked the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Japanese in Brazil, and over the past 100 years, the Japanese have influenced Brazil in a variety of ways. Each of Brazil's ethnic groups has continued to preserve the culture and traditions of its own country while creating new cultures and traditions.

In the town where I was born, I have many friends of African descent, European descent, and Asian descent, and it seemed perfectly natural to live in the middle of this mix. When I first came to Japan 18 years ago, I was surprised to find myself surrounded by only Japanese people. It made me really understand just how global a country Brazil is. Today, there are people from 120 countries living in Kawasaki, and even Japan seems to be developing into a more multicultural nation. I hope that we will continue to strive to understand the cultures of various peoples and make Kawasaki a place that is comfortable for all of its residents, Japanese and foreign alike.

(Julia Midori NAKAMORI)

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Ideas and input regarding the newsletter and/or the assembly are always welcome.