

REPORT BY NICHOLAS MODINE (Exchange student 2016-2017)

I am extremely grateful that I was chosen to be the 2016-2017 Sister Cities Ambassador to Asahikawa. I truly believed that I have changed as a person since coming back from the trip. The trip really helped me learn how to break out of my comfort zone and try things I wouldn't imagine myself ever doing. The ten months I spent in Japan will truly be a pivotal time in my life when I remember it.

In the beginning one of the hardest challenges I had was to always speak Japanese. This was hard because I forget a lot of words right before going, but I was also too nervous to speak if I wasn't sure I was right. This really held me back in the beginning because I was just sticking to a few phrases for most of my conversations. However after failing a few times at speaking Japanese my first host family told me the correct way to say what I meant, and then I was able to learn from that mistake and improve as a speaker. While not being afraid of failure started with my language skills it soon branched out into other aspects of my life in Japan. In America I have had the same group of friends since 6th grade, so I really did not have the need to make new friends. However, in Japan I needed to quickly relearn how to make friends because I knew nobody in my class. And overcame the fear of not being received by a new friend group.

My new classmates were also a big inspiration to me. I was lucky enough to get put in the electrical engineering major. The people in that class were some of the nicest, most outgoing people that I have ever met. I believe that if I was put in another major that I would not have connected as much with my classmates. I got so connected with them that I would just hang out for an hour every day after school just chatting with different people from my class, and I enjoyed every second of it.

My host families also made a major impact on me. The most influential one was the first family, mainly because of their three kids. Those kids instantly saw me as their big brother and started treating me like that. It was great because not only did that help me to feel like a part of the family, but their Japanese skills were the same as mine so we could learn the language together. The parents were also very encouraging and helped me every time I had a problem. Really early during the trip they would just talk to me for an hour or two after dinner and that really helped me grow confident in my Japanese skills. I am extremely glad that I had the Satou family as my first host family because I don't know what the trip would have been like without their help.

I am still glad that I decided to spend my entire junior in Asahikawa. I do not regret the decision at all because I feel like I matured much more over there than I would have in America. I am thankful for not only the American committee but also the Japanese committee for doing all of the work behind the scenes to make this trip possible. All of you have had a really profound impact on my life. Thank you.

For more details and stories visit my blog- <https://nickinjapansite.wordpress.com/>



With host family



With classmates



With host brothers



With host family



Visiting Brewery



With committee members