



By Krystal Sato

# 国際交流員コ－ナ－

## CIR's Corner

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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

### This Month's Topic: *Playing in the Snow*

This is my 16<sup>th</sup> winter in Hokkaido. I wrote about my hometown, Seattle, in the first issue of *CIR's Corner*. It's a port city in Washington State, on the west coast of the United States. It's about a 3-hour drive north to Vancouver, Canada and a 3-hour drive south to Gresham, Oregon, Ebetsu's sister city.



Seattle and Gresham are located in the Pacific Northwest of the US.

Even though Seattle is further north than Ebetsu, the winter is not as cold as Hokkaido's. There is mostly rain, and if it snows even a little bit, the citizens of Seattle panic. First, the buses stop running. In addition, since cars are not equipped with winter tires, it is difficult and dangerous to navigate the city's steep hills.

Snow is a major inconvenience for adults, but as a child, I loved it because it usually meant school was canceled. On snow days, I had snowball fights with my friends and made snowmen. Unfortunately, the snow always changed to rain when the temperature rose in

the afternoon, and the snowmen I had worked hard on all morning quickly melted away.

I graduated from university when I was 21, and came to Japan right after to teach English. I was sent to the town of Kuriyama, Hokkaido.



My home in Kuriyama, buried in snow

During my first winter, I was shocked by the amount of snow. There was sometimes so much snow that my front door wouldn't even open. Furthermore, Hokkaido snow is light and powdery; it's quite different from the heavy, wet snow I had experienced in Seattle, and not so great for building snowmen like I had done in my youth. My other foreign friends reveled in the fresh powder and picked up winter sports such as skiing and snowboarding. I'm not the adventurous, outdoorsy type, however, so to avoid injuries, I generally spend my winters here indoors.



Inner tubing in eastern Hokkaido



My daughter loves the snow!

Now, I have a four-year-old daughter. She resembles me when I was small because she really loves snow. We often play in the snow together on the weekends. Actually, there was something I always wanted to make in the snow, but couldn't in Seattle: *snow angels*. There was never enough snow on the ground, so when I tried to flap my arms and legs to make the angel's wings and gown, all I did was expose the grass underneath. In Hokkaido, I make many magnificent snow angels with my daughter every winter. When I see her happily playing in the snow, I'm so glad to be raising her here in snowy Hokkaido.



My daughter making a snow angel

There is one more thing I've always wanted to make in the snow: *an igloo*. Making an igloo from blocks of snow is not just fun and games for the Inuit people of Canada, but an important cultural tradition. About 10 years ago, some friends, their children and I attempted to make an igloo. There were four adults and two small

children, and we built the igloo in my friend's yard in Nanporo Town. We worked hard at it all morning, but lost some steam when we took a lunch break. We ended up spending the afternoon sledding, and the adults spent the rest of the evening drinking, so we never did finish our igloo. I have so much respect and admiration for the Inuit people, who can build a moderately sized igloo in under an hour. Someday, I hope to go inside an authentic igloo. ★



Part of the igloo building team: me, former Rumoi ALT from Canada, former Nanporo ALT from Australia, and my friend's four-year-old son

### **Playing in the Snow with Ebetsu ALTs**

American ALTs Shelby Brown and Kurt Hatanaka enjoyed sledding as children. However, they were both a bit mischievous, and came up with dangerous ways to sled, such as freezing the hill with water to go faster, or building ramps to launch themselves through the air. Australian ALT Anthony Tartan could never play in the snow as a child, since snow doesn't fall in his hometown. Recently, Shelby enjoys skiing and making mazes in the snow with his children. Kurt says relaxing in an outdoor bath is the best part of Hokkaido's winter, as well as the many snow and ice festivals, which he hopes to see with his son. Anthony thought that Hokkaido's snow was beautiful when he first saw it, but once he felt the coldness and wetness in his shoe, he hasn't been a fan since.

Photos: Krystal Sato and Wikimedia Commons

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