

J A P A N H U I

*A REPORT PREPARED IN REFLECTION OF THE ASIA NEW
ZEALAND LEADERSHIP NETWORK JAPAN HUI, 2019*

JUNE 2019 • MARGIE HUNT



こんにちわ！

YOKOMURA ECOLODGE, YAMANASHI



I, along with 15 others from around the world, had the opportunity to travel to Japan through the work of the Asia New Zealand Foundation Leadership Network in June, where we met an incredible array of people.

Day one saw us travel 2 hours out of Tokyo to meet Byron & Kaori Nagy of Yokomura Ecolodge - to help engage and empower people to reduce their ecological footprint. This is an incredibly hard task, especially in a place like Japan, where consumer habits are strongly driven by convenience. Food is a perfect example as many products are single-serve snacks, with multiple layers of packaging.

As learned on a visit to Byron's farm, farming in Japan is so very different from that of New Zealand, or many other western countries. It was a fantastic learning opportunity; especially the ways in which Byron is looking to challenge the agricultural status quo - proving more complicated than you would expect. Plots of land are the size large enough to feed a family; pictured above.

After explaining his study in permaculture, Byron described his work toward sustainable micro-greens with respect to his hopes for the future of food and his use of regenerative farming techniques, which include companion planting.



Interestingly, this is something that I learned is not perceived as a positive change due to the untidy appearance of crops; as compared to the nice neat rows that conventional farming methods offer.

The picture denotes the scale of these plots of land which are split between a number of families in the village, and each is tended to regularly.

Plots are discernible with the fence lines, and the picture above denotes five separate plots.



As a part of the Japanese sustainability experience throughout the weekend, it was a privilege to have meals prepared by Mr Ozawa and his wife (left). What was so special was that he grew his own vegetables, caught his own fish, sourced his own wood chips - (walnut and cherry)) for smoking meat himself. He raised his chickens for meat and eggs, and finally picked bamboo fresh that day for these meals, especially. It was an 8-course meal, unlike anything we had ever experienced. The potatoes, for example, had been fermented for 2 years, the eggplant was a year old which was dried and rehydrated. As a food technologist, this was a fascinating new take on food, and as a newbie to Japan, it gave us all a good insight into the food culture of Japan - with the help of Sachie Nomura of course! (Above: one of the meals prepared from Ozawa-san.)



SCENERY ATOP OF MOUNT TAKAO JUST TWO HOURS WEST OF TOKYO

Travelling to Tokyo via Mount Takao was a reminder of the parallels between New Zealand and Japan. As someone who is equally divided between the rural and urban areas in life, I was drawn toward the same separations; especially visible in the photos. The photos (above and below) were taken at the top of Mt. Takao, Hachioji-shi. Below; a photo taken whilst on the bus when travelling past the Sagami-gawa River in Uenohara-Shi.

Once back in Tokyo; no time was wasted in commencing discussions of geopolitics in the Asia Pacific region, Japan's foreign policy and Japan's online behaviour. Rob Thompson and Corey Wallace facilitated these discussions which felt to be an intricately woven web of international and regional histories, current political forces, and the current cultural climate. This conversation duly continued throughout the rest of the week; as the discussions of each sector analysed are influenced and shaped largely by these factors.



For example; agriculture, education, indigenous relations, creative arts, food, and trade, as some of the sectors which were integrated within the Hui.

An astonishing amount was scheduled over the five-day Hui; and by day four, we were at the Peaceboat headquarters, learning about the vital work which they are leading. Peaceboat is a humanitarian aid organisation which is centred on a drive to build awareness and connections internationally among a number of groups working toward peace, human rights, environmental protection and sustainable development by hosting educational cruises internationally. Their new Ecoship is being built as we speak, which will revolutionise their work.

A NEW ZEALAND BUSINESS SUCCESS STORY

*COOKIE TIME HAS HAD A FAIR
NUMBER OF SETBACKS, AS
DESCRIBED BY JASON RUSSELL*

The maiden voyage of this ship is set for April 2020. For anyone with knowledge to share, or a hunger to learn; it's easy to get involved, and urge you to do so.

Being a food tech, this was a fascinating and relatable experience to hear from Jason Russell at Cookie Time. His knowledge of the successes and failures of launching a business into a new market were interesting and surprising. It's not easy, and Cookie Time has undoubtedly had their challenges and learnings. One such example was described when Cookie Time bought back sales and distribution rights from a distributor, in a bid to win market share amidst dwindling sales.

Further; the expected performance (taste and texture) of food products is taken for granted; yet this is a crucial factor in food manufacturing and development. An (almost problematic) example of this was that the cookies made in Japan, with the original crunchy formulation were ending up soft and chewy. However, this was turned around, with the consistency seen as a positive for the Japanese market, and a point of difference compared to other cookies on the market.

NZ STORY IN JAPAN





EXTRAORDINARY RICHNESS OF HISTORY AND CULTURE

TOKYO TRAVELS

FRESH AND FROZEN TUNA AT TOYOSU MARKET, TOKYO

Immediately following; the delegates dove into an overview of the Japanese New Zealand relations as explained by Dom Walton-France at the New Zealand Embassy. Immediately following, NZTE spoke of the efforts in the promotion of agricultural trade into Japan and how the branding of 'NZ Story' is curated for the Japanese market.

Interestingly, there are many parallels between agricultural perception in New Zealand and Japan.

KŌDŌKAN, GLOBAL JUDO HEADQUARTERS



DELEGATES AT THE NEW ZEALAND EMBASSY, SHIBUYA

As such, there is a drive for the upcoming generations to learn more about the future and tech in farming, and as such, much of the information is straight from New Zealand practices.

What I resoundingly heard while in Japan, was that food production, agricultural practices and new technologies have not really moved forward. Knowledge is direct from America, and much of this is centred upon intensification and higher production of milk solids; thus importing feed. As much of the research, development, and new technical information is in English; this renders it inaccessible to many people who are working on the land; something we take for granted in New Zealand. School curriculums are changing slowly, and New Zealand is helping in the efforts to help shape and create the future of food production in Japan.

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Food, trade, sustainability, agriculture and technology are all interwoven into the work I regularly perform as a food technologist and farmer. This Hui provided valuable knowledge that I otherwise would not have learned; and instead of giving a full recollection of our trip, rather I have focused on the areas which have helped deepen learnings which have a direct impact on my career and the work that I do on a daily basis. This is just half of what was scheduled as a part of the incredible opportunity.

I thank the Asia New Zealand Foundation wholeheartedly for the opportunity, learnings and connections made during the Hui. I look forward to passing on the knowledge that I have learned, and continuing to strengthen relationships formed; both within and outside of the Leadership Network.

Background: Uenohara-Shi, Akiyama (taken outside the Ecolodge)

