

August 31, 2024

I took a three-day vacation to travel to the western part of South Dakota, one of the states in the Consulate's jurisdiction. First, we arrived by air in Rapid City, which reached the 25th anniversary of its sister city affiliation with Nikko City this year. Both cities are scenic and tourism is a major industry. We visited Badlands National Park, which has layers and layers of geological formations created over a long period of time by the sun, wind, rain, and other natural factors. We visited the Rushmore Memorial, where the faces of four presidents, Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln, are carved into the rocks. At this site, which is visited by more than 2 million people annually, I pondered the feelings of the American people in electing their president as head of state.



Desolate Landscape of the Badlands



Rushmore Memorial

1 Chicago Democratic National Party Convention (DNC)

The past two months have been dynamic in U.S. domestic politics: the June 27 TV debate between President Biden and former President Trump, the assassination attempt on former President Trump, the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in July, the withdrawal of Biden, and the subsequent nomination of Vice President Harris as presidential candidate.

Following the Milwaukee Republican National Convention in July, the Democratic National Convention was held in Chicago from August 19-22. The third day of the convention featured a speech by Governor Walz of MN, who accepted the nomination for vice president, and the final day featured a speech by Vice President Harris, who accepted the nomination for president. The final day concluded with Vice President Harris' acceptance speech for the presidential nomination.

The climax of the primaries, the first half of the presidential campaign, concluded with the big political events of the summer. Now comes the most important stage of the campaign, stretching from now until Election Day.



At the DNC venue

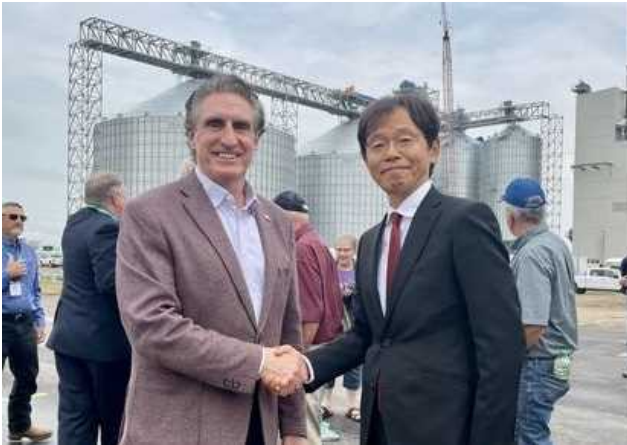


Democratic VP nominee Tim Walz
(Dec. 2023)

2 Traveled to North Dakota and Iowa

On August 7, I met with Governor Doug Burgum (Republican) at the opening ceremony for North Dakota Soybean Processors, a Japanese-American joint venture, in North Dakota. This new facility is important for the agriculture, food manufacturing, and energy sectors of the state. In addition to the Governor, the event was attended by many state dignitaries, including a U.S. Senator, a U.S. congressional candidate, and the state's Secretary of Agriculture. Governor Burgum and Senator Cramer expressed their appreciation for Japan's investment and increased focus on their relationship with North Dakota in their speeches.

On August 9-10, I traveled to the Iowa State Fair to meet with Republican Governor Kim Reynolds. The State Fair is the largest event of its kind in the state, attracting about 1 million people over 11 days, with livestock fairs and agricultural exhibits to promote agriculture as well as other industries, political speeches, and a variety of entertainment. In addition to the Governor, I had the opportunity to speak with the State House Speaker at the Capitol, the State Secretary of Agriculture, the Mayor of Des Moines, the State Democratic Committee Chairman, and others on the grounds.



ND Governor Doug Burgum(R)



IA Governor Kim Reynolds (R)

3 For Diversity and Expertise in Japanese Language Education

I attended the International Conference on Japanese Language Education (ICJLE) held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on August 1-3, 2024. This conference has been held since 2000 in Korea, China, Japan, USA (NY), Australia, Taiwan, Indonesia, and for the first time in 2018 in Europe (Venice). After a six-year interruption due to the pandemic, the conference was held in Wisconsin this time. More than 500 experts, teachers, and specialists gathered from all over the world.

At the reception, Governor Evers (Democratic Party), who is also a former educator, attended and gave a speech, and the Honorary Consul in Madison spoke in Japanese about his own experience of studying in Japan and learning Japanese, as well as his activities to ensure the continuation of Japanese language education, much to the excitement of the attendees.

In preparing my remarks, I reflected on the significance of supporting Japanese language education and learning from a diplomatic perspective. I have often said that Japanese language study leads, first of all, to an increase in the number of Japan fans. In the future, it will also lead to the development of specialists in Japanese studies through participation in the JET program and study abroad in Japan. In addition, it will also improve the environment for Japanese companies to expand and invest in the region. I would like to share with you a more essential point that was condensed in the

remarks made by the speaker from the University of Wisconsin at the opening ceremony of the ICJLE.

“Language education is important for people to understand and reflect on their own identity, society, and culture, and to understand and respect the identity, society, and culture of others”; “Language learning is essential for people to understand the differences that separate them from one another”; “Language education provides incomparable opportunities to bridge personal, social, and cultural differences and to build professional, economic, personal, and, in a sense, “spiritual” connections”; “Language education enables us to co-mingle and thrive in a globalized world”.



A well-attended reception



Governor Evers



Honorary Consul
Seaborg

4 Gatherings of Japanese, Japanese-Americans, and Japan-U.S. Organizations

The annual Japanese Community Picnic was held on Sunday, August 3rd. The picnic was full of games, karaoke, and other fun activities. Many members of the Japanese and Japanese-American community, including those from the Chicago Japanese Club and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, brought their families and friends and enjoyed the event. While the Japan Festival held at Millennium Park in June was primarily an outreach event aimed at Chicago residents and tourists, this event is mainly a place for everyone in the community to gather and have fun together.

On August 18, I participated in the annual summer “Japanese Obon Festival” in St. Paul, Minnesota's capital city. The Japan-America Society of Minnesota, the St. Paul-Nagasaki Sister City Committee, and Como Park co-hosted the event, but there were also various other groups with booths, including the Sansei Yonsei Kai (Japanese dance), several Japanese American organizations,

Nihonjin Kai, and martial arts-related organizations. The sister city exchange between St. Paul and Nagasaki is the oldest between the U.S. and Japan, and a variety of exchanges are planned for next year, which will mark the 70th anniversary.

On August 31st, I attended the St. Louis Japanese Festival. It was an overwhelmingly large event for the Midwest, reaching nearly 50,000 attendees over a three-day period. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the Sister City relationship between St. Louis and Suwa City, and I took the opportunity at the festival's opening ceremony to present the Foreign Minister's Commendation to the Sister City Committee for their involvement in the 50-year relationship. I also presented the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays which is conferred by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan to Dr. Chikako Usui for her many years of contribution to the Japan-America Society of St. Louis and the management of the Japanese Festival.

Through participation in various cultural events, we once again realize the magnetic power of sister city exchanges, the charm of Japanese gardens, and the importance of the contributions of honorary consuls in various places. It is encouraging to see how the common desire to make a festival a success and to enjoy the festivities has fostered a sense of trust, unity, and mutual support within communities, which in turn has allowed traditions and culture to be passed down to the next generation. It is also enjoyable to hear the stories of the various Americans, Japanese, and Japanese-Americans who participate in these festivals.



Japanese Picninc (*)



Como Park Obon Festival



Japanese Festival in St. Louis

(*) Photograph taken by Mr. Felix Lanier, Tohkon Judo Academy