

Statement of Respect for the Indigenous People of the Land on which Hokkaido University is Located

We acknowledge that Hokkaido University's Sapporo Campus, where we study and work, is situated on the traditional lands of Ainu People, an Indigenous People of Japan, who have lived here for generations and sustained their lives and livelihoods on these lands. We also recognize that wooden fishing gear used in the 17th century has been unearthed from the riverbed of the Sakushukotoni River, a tributary of the Ishikari River that flows through the Sapporo Campus. The name Sakushukotoni is derived from the Ainu language. These finds affirm that Ainu livelihoods were already established here at that time. We also recognize that nearly the entire Sapporo Campus lies within the K39 archaeological site, which has yielded numerous cultural materials dating to earlier periods of Ainu history, when earthenware pottery was still in use.

Available evidence shows that these Indigenous Ainu ways of life continued here into the early Meiji period (1868–1912). According to documents and maps from the time, the Seronpetsu River basin along the western edge of what is now the campus grounds was home to an Ainu *kotan* (village community). The *kotan* was located around what is now the Sapporo Experimental Nursery, part of the Sapporo Experimental Forest (Forest Research Station, Field Science Center for Northern Biosphere) at the southwestern end of the campus. Since the Seronpetsu River also joins the Kotoni River, itself a tributary of the Ishikari River, this settlement is sometimes referred to in recent years as Kotoni *kotan*. The Kotoni River merges with the main channel of the Ishikari River at Barato, in northern Sapporo. In the Ainu language, groups of Ainu People based in the Ishikari River basin and its tributary basins are called *iskarunkur* (literally, “people of Ishikari”). Edo-period (1603–1868) documents written by Wajin (people whose roots lie in the other main islands such as Honshu and who regard Wajin-style culture as their own) also indicate that *iskarunkur* lived in Sapporo. We recognize that the Sapporo Campus stands on the traditional lands where the *iskarunkur* Ainu have long sustained their lives and livelihoods.

We also recognize that part of the land on which today's Sapporo Campus stands, long a home for *iskarunkur* before the Meiji period, was initially recognized by the

Kaitakushi (the Hokkaido Development Commission) as land owned by Ainu living here. However, it was later incorporated into the Kaitakushi's agricultural breeding and trial station ("ikushujō") and is thought to have subsequently been transferred to Sapporo Agricultural College as part of its landholdings. Around the same time, in Meiji 11 (1878), citing the protection of fishery resources, the Kaitakushi prohibited salmon and trout fishing in tributaries of the Ishikari River, including the Sakushukotoni River and the Seronpetsu River, making it impossible to sustain Ainu ways of life grounded in fishing. As a result, many Ainu People who had lived in what is now Sapporo City were forcibly displaced, first to Barato on the Ishikari River's main channel, and then to Ainu "protected land" at Chikabumi, Asahikawa, a government-designated resettlement area established under the "protection" policies of the time.

Ainu histories, including the long continuity of Indigenous Ainu life and the post-Meiji challenges that followed, such as the forced relocation of Ainu communities, are acknowledged in the areas now occupied by Hokkaido University's research forests, research farms, and other facilities throughout Hokkaido. Hokkaido University recognizes, and will continue to pass on, the history by which projects described by Wajin in the early Meiji period as "kaitaku" ("development") severed Ainu ties to the land, and by which the University's campuses were later established on that land. We express deep respect for the unbroken history of the Ainu People that the University's lands, including the Sapporo Campus, have witnessed.

Today, Hokkaido University is home to students, faculty, and staff with diverse attributes and values, including Indigenous Ainu People, alongside members of the social majority commonly referred to as Wajin. We are advancing initiatives to build a place to study and work in which each individual—across gender, disability, nationality, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and other dimensions of diversity—is treated fairly and justly, with mutual respect. Building on the history of the land on which the University campuses stand, and as part of the University's mission, Hokkaido University is committed to building an environment where members with Ainu roots can study and work safely and with peace of mind, and to advancing initiatives for coexistence with Ainu people within and beyond the University, together with all members of the University community.

Hokkaido University, March 2026

Notes

1) In English and other languages that use the Latin script, the term used both for “human” and for the ethnicity is written as “Ainu.” In Ainu orthography, however, it is written as *aynu*, and Ainu-language (*aynu-itak*) words are conventionally written in lowercase.

2) *aynu* words are written in italics.