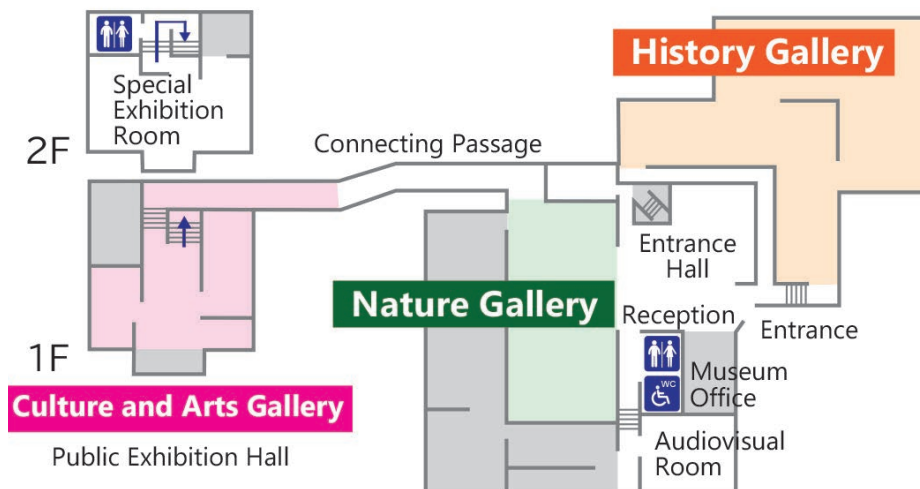


Local History / Nature / Culture and Arts

Shibetsu City Museum

Shibetsu Public Exhibition Hall





Shibetsu City Museum is a regional museum showcasing the local history, nature, culture, and arts of the area. Its well-lit interior and the incorporation of numerous materials and hands-on displays make for a visitor-friendly exhibition.

We also provide a wide variety of both on- and off-site lectures and actively share information regarding archived materials and the results of research and study activities. We endeavor to be a community-based museum and are working daily towards that goal as a repository for various local materials and information.

History of Shibetsu City Museum

1981 - Construction and opening of the museum in commemoration of the 80th anniversary of Shibetsu's settlement.

1982 - Relocation of former tondenhei settler residence (tondenhei-oku) to museum grounds.

1989 - Opening of public exhibition hall on adjoining land to serve as an art museum.

2011 - Partial renovation of permanent collection.



The History of Shibetsu

Shibetsu City is one of the towns, villages, and cities located in the Teshio River Basin and derives its name from the Ainu word *si-pet* meaning “true river”.

The development of Shibetsu City began in 1899 as a settlement established by the northernmost and final regiment of *tondenhei* settlers.

Before the arrival of the *tondenhei* settlers, this land was home to the local indigenous Ainu people. Matsuura Takeshiro, the explorer responsible for giving the island of Hokkaido its name, traveled to the area in 1857 and recorded his interactions with the Ainu people in his *Diary of Teshio District* (Teshio Nisshi).

In 1954, 55 years after settlement began, the town of Shibetsu and the villages of Kamishibetsu, Tayoro, and Onnebetsu were merged to form Shibetsu City. In 2005, the city was once again merged with Asahicho to create the Shibetsu City of today.

Since its settlement, the development of Shibetsu has continued in a variety of areas including forestry, agriculture, starch production, sheep farming, cultural arts, and sports.



Archaeology



Within the city limits of Shibetsu, the excavation of archaeological remains have been confirmed at 46 sites. One such site is the Kamishibetsu Archaeological Site which has been registered as a designated cultural property of the city.

The Kamishibetsu Archaeological Site is the approximately 6,000-year-old remains of a Jomon period settlement which was excavated in Kamishibetsu-cho and registered as a designated cultural property of Shibetsu City in 1978. With the excavation of dwelling sites and nearly 600 artifacts, including stone tools and earthenware, these remains serve as a valuable resource for understanding how people lived at the time.



The Tayoro Archaeological Site is Jomon period settlement which was excavated in Tayoro-cho and where a rare type of earthenware known as *oshigata-mon* pottery was unearthed.

Many historical remains are thought to remain throughout the city and new discoveries are anticipated with further excavations.

Pre-settlement History



Before the settlement of Shibetsu by the *tondenhei* settlers, the indigenous Ainu people of Hokkaido lived on this land. We know this from the historical records left to us by Kondo Juzo, Mamiya Rinzo, and Matsuura Takeshiro who conducted expeditions to the area in the Edo period.



In particular, the Diary of Teshio District (*Teshio Nisshi*) written by Matsuura Takeshiro, the man responsible for giving the island of Hokkaido its name, provides a detailed account of Shibetsu during the time of his expedition. From these accounts, we are able to know about the lifestyle of the Ainu people who lived in Shibetsu at the time, including details about their traditional rituals and diet, as well as about the natural environment of Shibetsu before it was settled.

Settlement



Shibetsu City was where the final and northernmost regiment of *tondenhei* settlers were deployed in 1899. This regiment was the 5th Company, 3rd Battalion of Tonden Infantry, commonly referred to as the *Shibetsu Tonden*. Headquarters for the 3rd Battalion were placed in the neighboring town of Kenbuchi and 5th Company, its fifth regiment, were deployed to Shibetsu to begin the area's settlement.

The *tondenhei* settlers of Shibetsu were stationed around what is present-day Shibetsu City's Odori 1-chome and set up official residences and housing known as *tondenhei-oku*. They cultivated the land and conducted military exercises in swordsmanship and shooting in preparation for emergencies.



In addition to the *tondenhei* settlers, Shibetsu was also settled by other groups of migrants from the main island of Honshu. These included the Yoshino Group from Nara Prefecture that settled in Kamishibetsu, a group from Yamagata Prefecture that settled in Tayoro, and a group from Tottori Prefecture that settled in Onnebetsu, as well as other unaffiliated individual migration that led to the further development of the town.

Agriculture



Agriculture is one of the core industries of Shibetsu City. Tokichi Fusho and Eita Yamazaki are two individuals that contributed to the development of this industry.

Tokichi Fusho was responsible for taking the peatlands of Tayoro Town that were unfit for farming and improving them with the clay soil dressing technique. The term "peatland" refers to swamp-like areas created by the accumulation of partially-decayed vegetation. By mixing clay into this sort of soil, Tokichi Fusho was able to turn it into a soil that was fit for cultivation and would serve as the foundation for the current agriculture industry.



Eita Yamazaki succeeded in growing rice using the hotbed method of raising rice seedlings in the cold climate of Shibetsu where rice cultivation had been difficult. As a result, it became possible to increase rice production even in chilly Hokkaido.

It is thanks to hardships like these of those that came before us that the city of Shibetsu is able to thrive as the farming town it is today.

Folk Performing Arts



Including both new and old, there are 9 forms of folk performing arts in Shibetsu City. Of these, the *Mizuho-shishimai* (Mizuho Lion Dance) from Asahicho and the *Hinata Jindai Kagura* (a traditional Shinto dance) from Tayoro-cho are two that have been passed down over many years.

It is said that the *Mizuho-shishimai* of Asahicho began in 1916 with the performance of a dance in imitation of the *Etchu-tonami-jishi* lion of Toyama Prefecture to pray for a bountiful harvest and ward off evil spirits at a festival of the Okushibetsu Shrine (the predecessor to the present-day Asahi Shrine). The dance was designated a cultural property of the former Asahicho in 1969 and was later registered as a designated cultural property of Shibetsu City. Today this dance is performed at the neighborhood culture festival as well as the annual festival of the Asahi Shrine.



The *Hinata Jindai Kagura* is a traditional Shinto kagura dance said to have roots in the *Daimon Kagura* dance from the city of Ichinoseki in Iwate Prefecture that began in the Hinata district of Tayoro Village (what is now the western part of the Nakatayoro District of Tayoro-cho) in 1908. It is said that the villagers would make a total of nine performances over three days and three nights to pray for a bountiful harvest and the prosperity of their descendants among other things at the Hinata Shrine that once stood in the district.



Education



School-based education in Shibetsu began with Shibetsu Primary School (the predecessor to the present-day Shibetsu Elementary School) which opened in 1899. The school was opened for the purpose of educating the children of *tondenhei* settlers and its schoolhouse was constructed by the Army Ministry. In 1902, Nakashibetsu Elementary School opened after being constructed with funds raised by local residents. Later, as the number of children grew along with the increase in settlers to the area, new elementary schools began to open all across Shibetsu. However, the city's population would peak at 41,218 in 1961 followed by a steep decline in the number of children due to depopulation, decreasing birthrates, and an aging population. Consolidation of the city's various small schools continued and today only six elementary schools, four junior high schools, and two high schools remain within its borders.



Manufacturing



Manufacturing in Shibetsu began with the blacksmiths that produced the farming equipment used by migrant settlers to cultivate the land. From the Meiji period into the Taisho period, the cultivation of potatoes, mint, and flax thrived and a factory was constructed for processing. Factories that produced starch made from potatoes in particular were in operation across the area and, in the early Taisho period, the starch produced in the region was so important that it dictated market prices in Otaru markets. In 1936, the sugar mill for processing sugar beets that would eventually become the present-day Nippon Beet Sugar Manufacturing Co. Ltd.'s Shibetsu Sugar Refinery began operation.



Many sawmills for processing the areas abundant forest resources also began to spring up around Shibetsu Station from the Meiji period into the Taisho period. These sawmills operated as matchstick factories during the Meiji period before transitioning to factories in a variety of other industries such as piling, pile-driving logs, railroad ties, pulpwood, and plywood. However, with the shift to steel and concrete, the demand for items such as pile-driving logs and railroad ties as a material for mass consumption disappeared and along with it went these woodworking factories.

Commerce



Migration to the Shibetsu area began to increase with the opening of railroad service to the area in 1900. Subsequently, rice dealers, general merchants, butchers, fishmongers, confectioners, drapers, and innkeepers began to open up shop along these railroad stops. As settlements began to expand into the interior of the area, towns began to spring up in Kamishibetsu, Tayoro, Onnebetsu and other areas bringing even more prosperity to these shopping districts.

After 1965, the arrival of large-scale retailers such as supermarkets and department stores to the area led to a decline in the number of private businesses. Later, the expansion of major chain stores into the suburbs, increases in the speed at which goods could be distributed, and the globalization of information, would lead to a drastic change in the commerce of Shibetsu.



Entertainment



A variety of businesses opened up shops to form a commercial quarter around Shibetsu Station. The entertainment district was lively with the sounds of music playing from phonographs in front of restaurants, banquet halls, and cafes. Theaters also flourished throughout the area presenting films and performances of plays. These films were the number one source of entertainment until the use of televisions became widespread in the area. From the Taisho period into the Showa period, affluent families who could afford a phonograph began to emerge and records became widespread in the area.



After the Pacific War, various other forms of entertainment would gain popularity in the area together with the spread of television as popular culture. It became possible to watch television broadcasts in Shibetsu in 1958. The town was lively with the operation of cafes and other amusement centers such as bowling alleys.

As life in the area began to shift to more a car-based society in the late Showa period, there was also a shift in popular culture to something more individualistic that emphasized personal preferences. Consequently, there came an increase in family cars being used to leave the city for things like entertainment and leisure.



Daily Life



Life for those that arrived to settle the area at the time began with a small hovel built directly into the ground known as a settler's hut. The shift from a self-sustaining lifestyle to a more civilized one was made possible thanks to the introduction of the area's first power plant bringing electric lights in 1916.

Drinking water was a major concern for these early settlers as the entire area of the city was covered in clay or peatland making the water unsuitable for consumption. Construction began on the city's waterworks in 1952 and was completed five years later bringing in water from the Teshio River and distributing it to each household after purification.

Telegraphic communications began with a connection between Sapporo and Shibetsu in 1901. Whereas nowadays we all have cellular phones, the settlers at the time had only two options for contacting people in remote locations: dropping a letter off at the post office or sending a telegram. Later, with the opening of the Telegraph and Telephone Office in 1949, landline telephones would become commonplace in places such as company offices and businesses. However, telephone service would not reach general households and farming areas until after the completion of the Shibetsu Area Automation work in 1978.



Transportation



Railroad service opened between Wassamu and Shibetsu in 1900. Service then opened between Shibetsu and Nayoro in 1903. These railroads carried many settlers and much cargo into the wilderness around the area. Likewise, these railroads also carried cargo such as lumber and fresh produce as well as many passengers back towards Asahikawa and Sapporo.



The Shibetsu Kido company began operations in 1920 hauling lumber and fresh produce from Kamishibetsu to Shibetsu Station via horse-drawn streetcar. While the company later thrived with a shift to steam engines in 1928, its streetcars were removed along with the Asahicho logging railroad in 1959. Afterwards, the passenger bus and trucking division of the company continued to operate. However, with depopulation beginning and family cars becoming more commonplace after 1965, the company was forced to reduce the number of bus routes it operated and eventually shift to providing transportation under city commission. Today the company continues to provide transportation services for the citizens of the city.

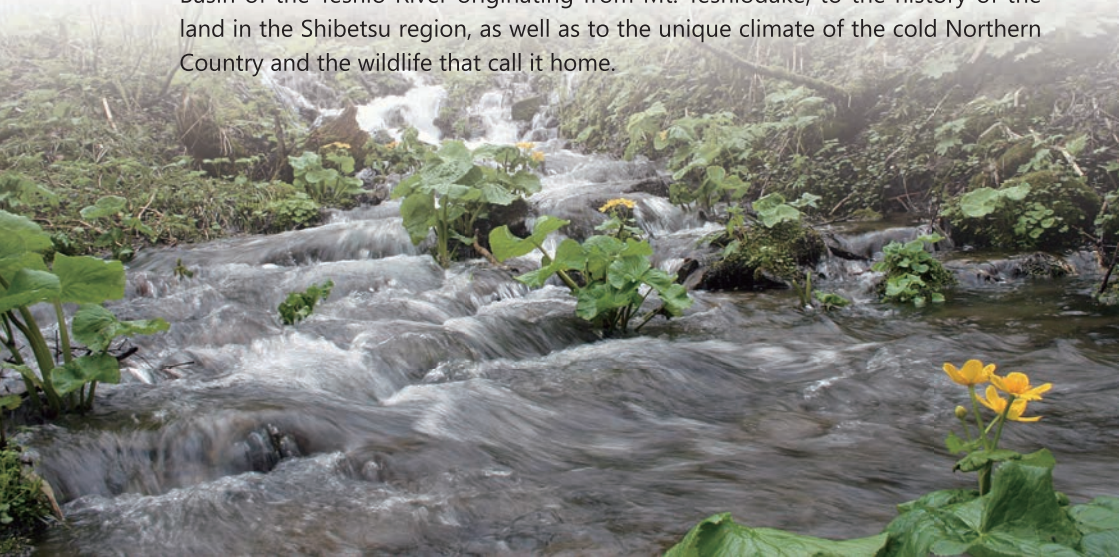


A winter landscape featuring snow-covered trees on the left and a frozen river winding through a snowy field. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

Nature in Shibetsu

Shibetsu City, located in the center of Northern Hokkaido, is a garden city with abundant water and lush greenery. It is home to the mountains of the Teshiodake Prefectural Natural Park and is where the Teshio River, the second largest river in Hokkaido, originates. To its west lie the Teshio Mountains and to its east the Kitami Mountains stretch from north to south. The center of the city makes up the Kenbuchi and Nayoro Basins. The city covers an enormous amount of land stretching 58km from east to west and 42km from north to south for a total area of 1,119.22km² (ranking 8th in Hokkaido and 21st nationally in terms of administrative area) . The city is blessed with abundance of lush green nature as 75% of its total area is comprised of mountains and/or forests.

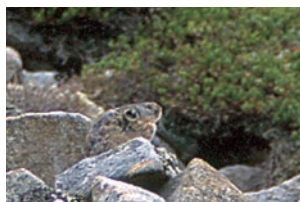
At our museum, we introduce visitors to the nature found in the Upper River Basin of the Teshio River originating from Mt. Teshiodake, to the history of the land in the Shibetsu region, as well as to the unique climate of the cold Northern Country and the wildlife that call it home.



Nature in the Upper Teshio River Basin



Mt. Teshiodake towers above the Kitami Mountains to the east of Shibetsu. With an elevation of 1,558 meters, it is the tallest mountain north of Asahikawa (excluding outlying islands). The mountain has been designated as a prefectural natural park and is home to a number of holdovers from the last ice age such as the pika and a species of alpine butterfly known as *Karafuto rurishijimi*. It is also home to alpine plants such as the yellow-flowered rhododendron.





Teshio River, the second largest river in Hokkaido, originates on Mt. Teshiodake and flows north through the center of the city before emptying into the Sea of Japan. In addition to being home to a wide variety of aquatic life, the river also brings an abundance of nature and water resources to the river basin.

A variety of freshwater fish can be found in the Teshio River. These include migratory fish that travel back and forth between the river and ocean. Salmon, trout, and other similar fish head to the nutrient-rich ocean after hatching to grow before returning to the river to spawn. The presence of migratory fish brings a sense that, despite its location far from the ocean, Shibetsu is still connected to the ocean through the Teshio River.



Through linearization, the Teshio River that once meandered along as it flowed, has left behind lakes and marshes known as oxbow lakes and horseshoe lakes along a portion of those curves. Within the city, these lakes can be found in the Hinata district of Tayoro-cho as well as in Minamishibetsu-cho and serve as a place for many waterfowl to rest their wings during the spring and fall. One of these horseshoe lakes was also used to create the pond in Tsukumo Suigo Park to provide a place of relaxation and refreshment for citizens that evoked images of the river's former course.



Formation of the Land in the Shibetsu Region



A great variety of rocks and minerals from a wide range of periods have been observed in the area around Shibetsu which has long gained its attention from researchers as a place of geological significance. The diverse geology of the area shows that the Shibetsu region is one that has experienced much crustal movement and various environments over time.

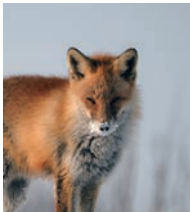
The greatest geological feature of the area is the presence of special geological bodies only found at the boundaries between tectonic plates such as accretionary prisms and ophiolite. Ophiolite is a section of the Earth's oceanic crust and the underlying upper mantle that has been uplifted and exposed due to a past collision of two plates. Ophiolite has been observed in the Onnebetsu area of Shibetsu City with many rare rocks also discovered. Judging from the distributions of Mesozoic marine deposits to the west of the region (in the Ezo Formation) and deep-sea accretionary prism deposits to the east (in the Hidaka Supergroup), it is presumed that Shibetsu City once existed on the seafloor near an ocean trench. The region is one with much in the way of interesting geological observations, including strata from its Cenozoic geology showing indications of global warming.



Nature and Wildlife in the Northern Country



The climate of Shibetsu is a continental climate with a clear delineation of seasons. From May to early September, the region has relatively high temperatures with plenty of sunlight but is characterized by its large diurnal and annual temperature variations. Shibetsu is a snow country with severely cold winters and snowfall that begins in mid-November blanketing the region with a meter of snow in the plains and over two meters of snow in the mountains for nearly half of the year. It is also possible to view natural phenomenon unique to the Northern Country such as diamond dust, light pillars, and rime ice (tree frost).



Thanks to its cold climate, Shibetsu is home to many species of northern plants and animals. For example, whereas butterflies such as the European Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies are only found in the highlands of Honshu, they are commonly found on the plains in the cold climate of Shibetsu. Additionally, wild birds such as the Black Kite, which are known to be resident birds in other regions, have been found to temporarily migrate away from Shibetsu during the harsh winters. This severe cold has a large impact on the ecology of the wildlife inhabiting the area.





星野一雄
1915年
星野一雄



星野一雄
1915年
星野一雄



Culture and Arts in Shibetsu

Shibetsu Public Exhibition Hall was constructed in 1915 to commemorate the enthronement of the Taisho emperor. At the time, it was considered to be the best example of a building in all of northern Hokkaido to incorporate facets of Western architecture. In addition to being used a chamber for the debate of administrative policy by town and city councils, it was popular among local residents as an assembly hall and community center. While the original building was demolished in 1984 due to excessive deterioration, it was reconstructed as an exhibition hall on land adjoining the museum in 1989.



Inside its walls, the works of local artists such as printmaker Nobuko Koike and sculptor Kōkō Abe, as well as materials from famous people with connections to Shibetsu like Masako Izumi and Koichi Wajima, are on display. A special exhibition room is also available on the second floor of the building.



History of Art in Shibetsu



Creative activities using modern art such as Western-style painting and sculpture became popular in Shibetsu during and shortly after the War from the mid-1940s to mid-1950s. During this time, students with specialized educations in art from Tokyo University of the Arts and Hokkaido Gakugei University (present-day Hokkaido University of Education) were dispatched as teachers to junior high and elementary schools in Shibetsu. These teachers began to teach art, not only in the schools, but also in the community.



Beginning with the foundation of the *Sodokai* led by Noboru Matsunaga in 1946 (renamed to the *Mudokai* in 1957), art began to blossom among the citizens and spread with the establishment of groups like the *Shinsodo Bijutsukyokai* (New Sodo Society for the Fine Arts) by Kumao Tsukamoto (founded in 1970) and the *Shibikai* (founded in 1979), which originated out of painting classes being offered at the community center.





Printmaking

Nobuko Koike is an internationally-acclaimed printmaker known for her copperplate prints that utilize a special technique known as single-plate, multi-color printing (the *à la poupée* technique). She was born in Kochi Prefecture in 1937 before migrating with her family to Shibetsu as an infant and living here until junior high school. After succeeding in a variety of ways as a printmaker and returning home to Japan after doing creative activities aboard, she set up a studio in her hometown of Shibetsu and continues to produce art while contributing to the promotion of culture and art in the region.



Sculpture

Kōkō Abe was a sculptor that was active during the Showa period. He was born in Shibetsu in 1906 and moved to Tokyo after graduating from the advanced course at Shibetsu Primary School. After working his way through school, he entered Tokyo School of Fine Arts and began his studies of sculpture in earnest. He broke his right elbow during a sumo match in his third year which prevented him from using his right arm freely. However, he was able to overcome this using his innately fierce spirit and a great deal of hard work. From then on, he continued to make art using mainly his left hand which earned him the nickname *Showa no Hidari Jingoro* (the Hidari Jingoro of Showa) in comparison to the legendary sculptor.

Famous People with Connections to Shibetsu



Masako Izumi is one of Japan's leading actresses who has appeared in many films and television dramas. She is also known for her accomplishments as an explorer such as becoming the first Japanese woman to reach the North Pole. In 1986, her usage of Yamaha snowmobiles during her expedition to the North Pole led her to visit Shibetsu for the first time where she fell in love with the scenery and cold weather unique to the Northern Country. Later, in 1996, she would build a vacation home on top of a hill in the city where she still regularly spends time today. In addition to materials from her expedition to the North Pole, items from the indigenous people of the Northern Territories collected by Izumi herself are also on display here.



Koichi Wajima is a former professional world champion boxer. He was born in Karafuto in 1943 and migrated to Hokkaido after the war with the repatriation of Karafuto residents, spending his school years in Shibetsu. During his time as an elementary school student, Wajima built up powerful leg muscles by commuting 7 kilometers each way to and from school.

Shibetsu City Museum

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Supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan in
the fiscal year 2020