

uekari cise

Cultural Exchange Hall



Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park is a center dedicated to transmitting and reviving the diverse cultures of the Ainu, an Indigenous People whose traditions have been handed down across generations in regions including Hokkaido and Sakhalin.

Traditional Ainu performing arts are an indispensable part of daily life, featured in settings ranging from ceremonies to everyday occasions. They encompass a wide variety of forms, including lyrical songs that express emotions in the moment, entertaining dance dramas, and dances that resemble animals and plants, ward off evil spirits, or portray tasks such as pounding ingredients. The art of singing and dancing has been passed down under different names in each region—including *rimse*, *horippa*, *upopo*, and *heciri*—vividly reflecting the unique characteristics of each area. Today, Ainu performers are engaged in a wide range of activities, including music and theater, and are promoting traditional Ainu performing arts to the world.

At the *uekari cise* (Cultural Exchange Hall), Ainu and *sisam** from across Japan work together, guided by local culture bearers, to transmit and revive traditional performing arts from different eras and share their appeal.

pirkano nukar yan — Please enjoy the performance.

**sisam* means neighbor in the Ainu language, referring to Wajin (ethnic Japanese)



sinre

Place Names

yaunmosir

Hokkaido

These are the regions where the performing arts introduced in this pamphlet have been passed down through generations. Beyond the traditions presented on stage, communities across Hokkaido continue to uphold the distinctive and rich diversity of Ainu culture.

*Place names are written as they were recorded when the traditions were documented.

pasenopo iyayraykere

We would like to acknowledge the cultural bearers below who provided training for us.

Debo Akibe (Akan)	Kayo Watanabe (Akan/Honbetsu)	Chieko Oshino (Mukawa)
Tomoko Taira (Akan)	Eiko Yamamoto (Akan/Honbetsu)	

Mikio Araida (Shiraoi)	Naomi Oikawa (Biratori)	Manabu Sakai (Obihiro)
Shihoko Takahashi (Shiraoi)	Hiromi Kimura (Biratori)	Nanako Sakai (Obihiro)
Kazuyuki Yamamaru (Shiraoi)	Tamaki Nagano (Biratori)	Mari Sakai (Obihiro)
	Rino Harada (Biratori)	Kana Yoshine (Obihiro)

Traditional Ainu dance is designated by the Japanese government as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property and is also inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Preservation Societies of the Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property

Akan Ainu Culture Preservation Society	Chitose Ainu Cultural Heritage Preservation Society
Asahikawa Chikappuni Ainu Culture Preservation Society	Teshikaga Town Kushsharo Kotan Ainu Culture Preservation Society
Urakawa Ainu Culture Preservation Society	Niikappu Ainu Culture Preservation Society
Obihiro Kamuitou Upopo Preservation Society	Mukawa Ainu Culture Transmission and Preservation Society
Sapporo Upopo Preservation Society	Harutori Traditional Ainu Dance Kushiro Rimuse Preservation Society
Samani Ainu Culture Preservation Society	Biratori Ainu Culture Preservation Society
Shizunai Ainu Culture Preservation Society	Mitsuihitsu Ainu Culture Preservation Society
Shiraoi Ainu Performing Arts Preservation Society	Monbetsu Utari Culture Preservation Society
Shiranuka Ainu Culture Preservation Society	



upopo newa rimse

Traditional Performing Arts

sinot
Forms of
tradition

inomi
Forms of
creation

imeru
Forms of
revival

sukus
Forms of
exchange



Opening Song

A musical welcome sets the stage for the upcoming performance.

iyomante rimse

Bear spirit-sending ceremony dance (Shiraoui)

Traditionally performed at the *iyomante* ceremony, where the soul of an animal was sent back to the world of the *kamuy* (spirit-deities), and at events and celebrations. Passed down through generations, it is cherished here in Shiraoui as it adds colour to the interactions between *kamuy* and Ainu people.

tonkori

Stringed instrument (Sakhalin)

The *tonkori* is used in various arrangements from solo pieces to accompanied works. It is played at ceremonies and celebrations, often with *heciri* (round dances). It may also accompany *yaykatekara* (lyrical songs) improvised to express one's feelings in the moment.

mukkuri

Mouth harp (multiple regions)

Mouth harps are found across Eurasia and are played by using the mouth to amplify the sound of a small reed. The *mukkuri* is one such instrument, traditionally made from bamboo or iron, and can evoke the sounds of rain and wind, animal calls, and even human emotions.

usa okay rimse

Various dances (multiple regions)

This part of the program introduces various dances passed down by local culture bearers, inviting you to connect with each region. Enjoy a surprise lineup on the day, which may include Biratori's *anna hore* (bird dance), Obihiro's *eri rimse* (millet sowing dance), or more.

Example dances:

anna hore Bird Dance (Biratori)

A dance depicting birds facing one another and competing by flapping their wings.

eri rimse Millet Sowing Dance (Obihiro)

A dance that portrays the steps of farm work, praying for a bountiful crop and celebrating the harvest.

Join the dance

A dance activity for everyone, from children to adults. Join in with the performers as you move to the rhythm and chant along. As the energy builds, feel free to dance in your own way!



Forms of exchange

As *sukus* (rays of sun) illuminate the stage, the light-soaked space is filled with song, dance, and instrumental performances.

Each element brings people together, showcasing the richness of traditional Ainu performing arts.

In the final dance session, you're invited to join the performers, sharing the joy of dance and widening the circle of exchange.

