

Town of Revival

Toward the Future

The “Historical Archive Museum of Tomioka” in Tomioka Town exhibits materials and items related to the town’s history, from the Paleolithic era to the Great East Japan Earthquake and Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station accident. On August 3rd, our Team #4 of Journalism School visited the museum for coverage. Mr. Ken Monma (40), the museum coordinator and chief curator of the town’s board of education, expressed, “We want to convey the town as it truly is.”

Conveying the Past and Present of Tomioka



The pedestrian bridge, visible 24 hours on live camera, featured a banner that read “Tomioka will not be defeated”

The Archive Museum

Damaged Police Car on Display



The railway tracks of the Joban Line swept away by the tsunami



Chief Curator Monma responding to the team's questions

The Historical Archive Museum of Tomioka aims to showcase not only the disaster but also the history of Tomioka Town. One of its attractions lies in providing insight into the town’s history.

To preserve valuable exhibits such as diaries from the Edo period and Jomon period pottery in their original state, the museum maintains a constant temperature within display cases. Mr. Monma explained, “Inside the storage room, the temperature remains constant, so it’s cool even in the summer.”

Iron manufacturing was once a thriving industry in the past. In the iron industry, locally extracted iron ore and

other resources were utilized, and these iron ores are now showcased in exhibits. Additionally, various unearthed items such as fossilized shells are also on display. As a relic from the disaster, a damaged police car is exhibited. The trunk lid is detached, and the body of the car is extensively dented in various places.

In this police car, two officers were on duty at the time. They risked their lives directing the evacuation of the townspeople. However, the car they were in was engulfed by the tsunami and found near the mouth of the Tomioka River. One of the officers remains missing to this day.



A police car extensively dented all over



A nostalgic teacup from a town resident's home



Iron ore and other excavated minerals from Tomioka.



A view from the second floor of the Historical Archive Museum of Tomioka, showcasing the exhibition hall

Preserving the Memory of the Disaster: “Don’t Say It’s Someone Else’s Problem”

Curator Monma

When Mr. Monma started working as a curator in 2014, his focus was on gathering old photos to preserve the “memories” of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The archive facility development plan was established in 2015, and construction began in 2019. Of the approximately 50,000 items in the collection, 70% originally belonged to the townspeople. Among the exhibits is a teacup from the local shopping district.

Regarding the teacup from the shopping district, Mr. Monma expressed, “While the cup may not have monetary value, I hope the people of Tomioka, upon seeing it, will feel nostalgia and a sense of reassurance.” However, among those who used to live in Tomioka, some contemplated whether to abandon

the idea of returning home. The town was once lively before the disaster, but now it is covered in gravel, and the vibrancy of the past has disappeared. After the nuclear accident, residents who had evacuated gradually returned. Reflecting on the past six years, Mr. Monma remarked, “Milestones like 2013 and, additionally 2017 when reconstruction began, marked progress in recovery that was surprisingly fast beyond imagination.” Mr. Monma expressed his desire to create a new history book for the town by combining fragments of earthenware and conducting research on Tomioka’s history.

Finally, Mr. Monma emphasized, “I want everyone to think about the characteristics of the place where you currently live, without saying ‘Oh, is that so?’ dismissing it as someone else’s concern.”

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