

Japan to recognize Ainu indigenous people for first time

20th February, 2019



Creative Commons 2.0
via Satoshi KINOKUNI on flickr.com

The Japanese government has introduced a bill to recognize the country's ethnic Ainu minority group as an "indigenous" people. It is the first time for Japan's government to do this. It comes after decades of lobbying and campaigning by Ainu people to be recognized. The Ainu are an indigenous people of Japan originating in Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, northeastern Honshu, and islands between Japan and Russia. Their official number today is around 25,000, but many observers estimate a more accurate figure to be around 200,000. Many Ainu have been completely assimilated into Japanese society and have no knowledge of their ancestry or historical roots, traditions and culture.

The Japan Today website wrote about the hardships the Ainu have faced. It said: "The Ainu people...have long suffered the effects of a policy of forced assimilation, and while discrimination has receded gradually, income and education gaps with the rest of Japan persist." Japan's government spoke about the importance of passing the new legislation. It said: "It is important to protect the honor and dignity of the Ainu people and to hand those down to the next generation to realize a vibrant society with diverse values." Ainu spokesman Tadashi Kato said: "It feels like we woke up now from a truly deep sleep....It will lead to building a society where we cohabit together. We think this is the first step."

Sources: japantoday.com / qz.com / washingtonpost.com

Writing

All indigenous people should get more rights and land. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

government / bill / ethnic / lobbying / island / observers / accurate / ancestry / roots / hardships / suffered / discrimination / education / legislation / dignity / diverse / sleep

True / False

- a) The Japanese government has passed a bill to recognize the Ainu. T / F
- b) The Ainu have campaigned for centuries to be recognized. T / F
- c) There are officially around 25,000 Ainu in Japan today. T / F
- d) Most Ainu are experts on their ancestry and history. T / F
- e) A website wrote about the hardships the Ainu faced. T / F
- f) There are still income gaps between the Ainu and Japanese. T / F
- g) Japan's government said it wanted to realize a vibrant society. T / F
- h) An Ainu spokesman said he now wanted to sleep deeply. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. bill | a. went back |
| 2. ethnic | b. fighting |
| 3. campaigning | c. honestly |
| 4. originating | d. misery |
| 5. accurate | e. self-respect |
| 6. hardship | f. draft law |
| 7. receded | g. precise |
| 8. dignity | h. lively |
| 9. vibrant | i. cultural |
| 10. truly | j. starting |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What hardships do you think the Ainu faced?
- c) What do you think of forced assimilation?
- d) How important is it for a country to be vibrant and diverse?
- e) What will you hand down to the next generation?
- f) What is the most important thing in building a society?
- g) What are the next steps for the Ainu?
- h) What questions would you like to ask an Ainu person?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. The Japanese government has | a. society |
| 2. the country's ethnic Ainu | b. accurate figure |
| 3. It comes after decades | c. or historical roots |
| 4. observers estimate a more | d. of lobbying |
| 5. have no knowledge of their ancestry | e. introduced a bill |
| 6. the hardships the Ainu | f. sleep |
| 7. discrimination has receded | g. of the Ainu people |
| 8. protect the honor and dignity | h. minority group |
| 9. a vibrant | i. have faced |
| 10. a truly deep | j. gradually |

Discussion – Student B

- What is the ethnic make-up of your country?
- What do you think of your country's minorities?
- What do you know about the Ainu?
- How can we help indigenous people?
- What do you know about indigenous people around the world?
- How proud are you of your roots?
- How proud are you of your country's culture?
- What are the best things about Japanese culture?

Spelling

- the country's ethnic Ainu mntoiiry group
- after decades of lbnyigbo
- agnrongiit in Japan's northern island
- a more acaeurtc figure
- completely aidleamssti
- knowledge of their tcasenyr
- daihhrsp the Ainu have faced
- sniitoidncami has receded gradually
- passing the new oelasntiqi
- the honor and dgntiyi of the Ainu
- realize a nibrva society
- dieersv values

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. i	3. b	4. j	5. g
6. d	7. a	8. e	9. h	10. c

Role Play

Role A – Education

You think education is the best way to build a society. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): strong police force, patriotism or low tax.

Role B – A Strong Police Force

You think a strong police force is the best way to build a society. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): education, patriotism or low tax.

Role C – Patriotism

You think patriotism is the best way to build a society. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): strong police force, education or low tax.

Role D – Low Tax

You think low tax is the best way to build a society. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): strong police force, patriotism or education.

Speaking – Build a Society

Rank these with your partner. Put the best ways to build a society at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| • jobs | • education |
| • patriotism | • strong police |
| • tolerance | • equality |
| • low taxes | • healthcare |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	F
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.