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Regional Social Theory Seminar: Collaboration with the “Let’s Connect with ‘Kumo o Tumugu’ Project” - Hospitality with Well Water and Homespun -

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Applicable
principle

Principle 9: A commitment to promoting sustainability through education

1. Activity Overview

The purpose of the “Regional Social Theory Seminar” (the second-year class of the Department of International Cultural Studies, Iwate Prefectural University, Morioka Junior College) is to make and implement a plan in the region and use it for their own learning (service learning). Based on this purpose, we are collaborating with the “Let’s Connect with ‘Kumo o Tumugu’ Project” currently being implemented by Morioka City and Morioka Matinami Zyuku and students planned what they could do using local resources, using it as an opportunity to think about the attractions and issues of the town through interaction with the town people.

In 2021, we planned to help with well cleaning, to make sweets and have a tea party using well water, and to create handicrafts with material which was something like homespun item, using Nataya-tyô, Morioka City, a famous town for well water, as a stage. At the tea party, we heard stories from people in the town about the use of well water and their lifestyles.



Listening to stories while eating sweets

2. Before Planning

In this seminar, the students first learned about the basics of service learning and brainstorming (collective way of thinking) through classroom lectures, and after hearing an explanation from Ms. Mariko Iwami of Morioka Matinami Zyuku, they walked around Nataya-tyô. In addition, as one of the themes of the novel “Kumo o Tumugu”, which is a novel set in Nataya-tyô, is homespun (textiles woven from yarn spun at home), they visited “Mitinoku Akane-kai” studio.

After that, based on this knowledge, the students discussed about what kind of projects could be made for the community building of Nataya-tyô. As a result of the discussion, they decided to adopt the idea of cleaning the well of Daizi-simizu (an old public well used from the Edo period) making sweets with the well water, and creating handicrafts using homespun items at the rest place. The project was named “Hospitality with Well Water and Homespun” and the date was set to December 17, 2021. Necessary preparations were listed and working groups were made for well cleaning, sweets making, handmade craft, public relations, etc.

3. Preparations for the Project

Each group carried out the following preparation work.

- (1) **Well cleaning group:** Checking the details of the work of the cleaning day
- (2) **Sweets making group:** Making pancakes and Mizu Singen

Moti (rain drop cake made of water and agar) using well water and making arrangements for a tea party to serve town people



Trying to create handicrafts using homespun materials

- (3) **Handmade craft group:** Listing materials for making a sheep dangle-dolly using wool felt related to “Kumo o Tumugu”

- (4) **Public relations group:** Sending prior notification to several mass media companies

4. Records of the Project Day

- (1) After arriving at the site, the well cleaning group paid a courtesy call to Mr. Yosiharu Satô, who manages wells in Nataya-tyô. Unfortunately, it turned out that we could not clean the well at that time because the pump of Daizi-simizu was not working properly, so, we changed the plan, and guided by Mr. Satô, we walked around the town to hear the history and characteristics of the Daizi-simizu as well as the history of the well water of Nataya-tyô.
- (2) The sweets making group started making sweets using well water that had been pumped up in advance, and made about 20 Mizu Singen Moti. It was the first trial to make a lot of Mizu Singen Moti, but we were proud of the result of our work, which was successful. In addition, we made a few pancakes.
- (3) Since sweets making took longer than we expected, we postponed making sheep dangle-dollies and the work was completed at the university on the other day.
- (4) Although we did not attract attention from mass media, Mr. Keitirô Wakita, who was in charge of newsletter of the Nataya-tyô Neighborhood Association, interviewed us.
- (5) We had a tea party with sweets and matcha green tea, and talked with 5 local people about local life related to the use of wells. Ms. Humiko Kanehira, a resident of Nataya-tyô told us an interesting story. According to her, in the middle of the Syôwa era, the wells were used as a place for the town people to share their lives. We discovered that the well water is still used by people inside and outside the town, and that it somewhat supports their livelihoods.

5. Review of the Project

After the project, each member wrote a report as a means for review. There were many issues that we would like to dig a little deeper, such as the personalities of the people involved in the community activities and traffic problems of the region. Some of the issues were used by students for their graduation research.