

Kakehashi Report Misty Su

After 2 long years of delay due to COVID-19, we were finally able to go on the long awaited Kakehashi Project trip to Japan, and while it did take a while, it was still worth the wait. After such a long time of keeping distance from people, it was truly a breath of fresh air to experience and explore an entirely different country and culture.

Upon landing in Japan, we met Nakata-san and Soma-san who would be our coordinators for the trip, along with many other members of the Canada group, before riding a bus to our hotel. The first thing I really noticed was it was not nearly as cold in Japan as in Canada, which meant my winter coat and boots were left to collect dust in my suitcase during the trip.

The first day after landing was the first of two courtesy calls, where we needed to dress in more formal attire, and met the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Kihara Seiji, at the Prime Minister's Office. The second courtesy call took place on the fifth day of the trip, where we met Deputy Director-General / Deputy Assistant Minister, Mr. Miyamoto Shingo, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). During both meetings, we were able to learn more about politics in Japan, and ask various questions whether it be in regards to Japan, or in regards to Mr. Kihara and Mr. Miyamoto's roles in the government.

We also met students from Kanagawa University on two different days; the first of which was primarily touring the school building and conversing with them in Japanese, and the second of which was exploring the area around Yamashita Park along with the Kanagawa students, who showed and informed us about various different locations in the area. Both times were great opportunities to really practice speaking in Japanese, and I could really feel my confidence growing in terms of speaking a language I am not often able to speak outside university.

Several of the places we visited were shrines, each with their own special kinds of souvenirs. It was quite amazing to see so many different shrines in only a small section of Japan, and really showed how popular they were to the Japanese, as there were many people buying good luck charms and praying at the shrines, which you would not really see at all in Canada. Along with the shrines, we also experienced other tourist attractions that were both popular and futuristic, like TeamLab, and more antique like the Tin Toy Museum in Yokohama that showcased a large collection of old toy cars, airplanes, figures such as Mickey Mouse and Popeye, among others.

I truly had a wonderful time in Japan thanks to the Kakehashi Program as well as our coordinators from JICE. It was thanks to them that the trip was able to run smoothly as well as be



a fun and educational experience. Even with everything we were able to see on the trip, there was so much more in the locations we visited that I wish I had the time to see. I also know what we have seen is still only a small part of all of Japan, so I look forward to when I will have the opportunity to return, now more than ever.