



Lessons from Japan: Empowering Children, Promoting Disaster Preparedness, and Helping Communities Recover

Janet Borland

Department of Japanese Studies

21 May 2021

Summary of the Impact

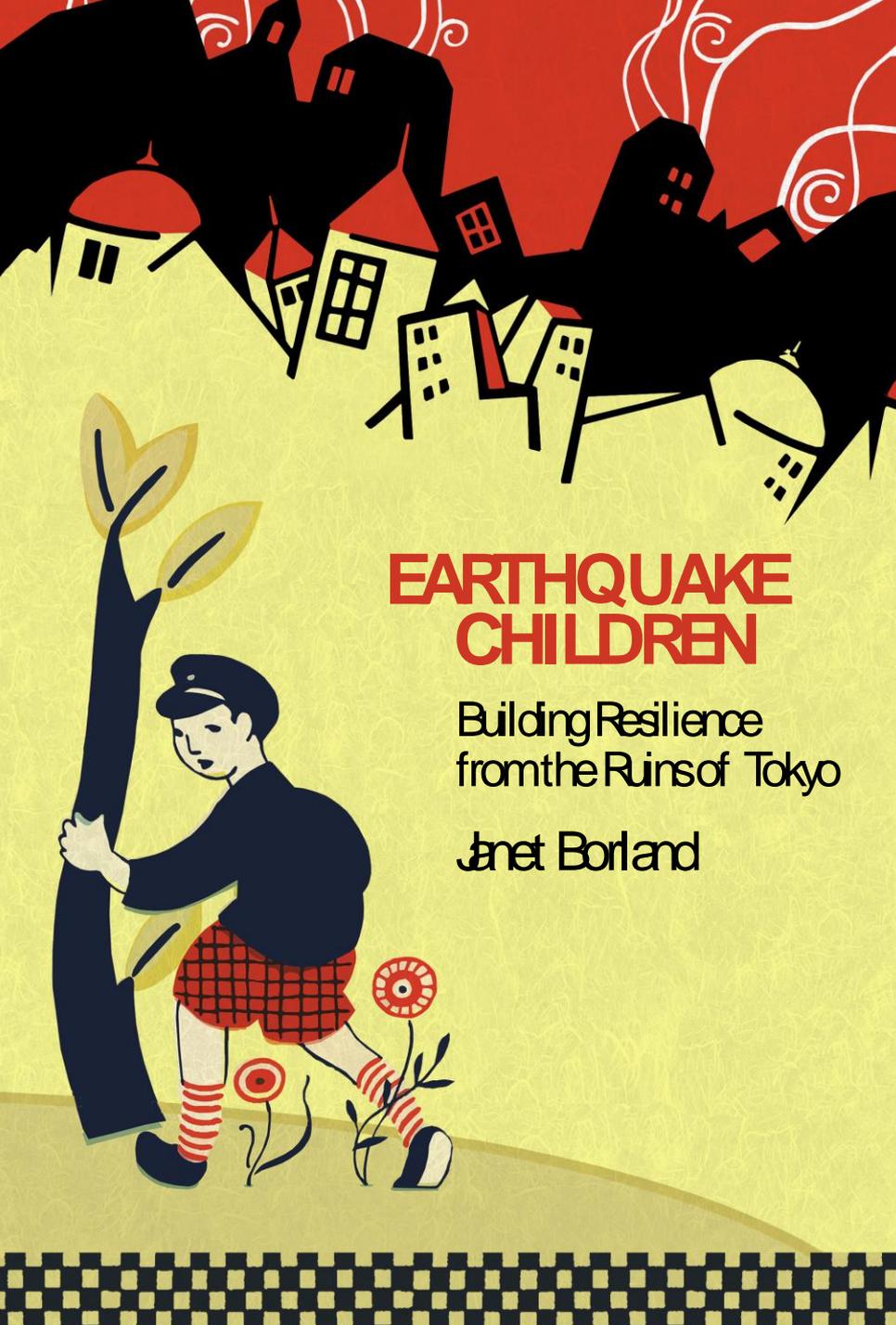
Dr. Janet Borland's research challenges the popular idea that Japanese people owe their resilience in the face of disaster to some innate sense of calm. Japan's contemporary culture of preparedness is the result of learned and practiced behaviors that began in earnest after the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake. Children, schools and education were the primary tools through which experts sought to build a disaster-prepared society and nation.

Diverse and far-reaching activities such as a joint initiative with Mitsubishi Corporation, and a Discovery Channel TV documentary, have introduced millions of people from a wide variety of backgrounds to how the Japanese have interpreted, constructed, and learned from catastrophic natural disasters over the past 100 years and become world leaders in disaster response, recovery, and resilience.



"Don't panic!" Japan's first earthquake lesson for primary school children, published in textbook for third graders.

Source: Monbushō, *Jinjō shūshinsho: Jidōyō*, vol. 3, 1936.



EARTHQUAKE CHILDREN

Building Resilience
from the Ruins of Tokyo

Janet Borland

Underpinning Research

This project is underpinned by Dr. Janet Borland’s research on the origins of modern Japan’s infrastructure of resilience and reflected in her book, *Earthquake Children: Building Resilience from the Ruins of Tokyo* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2020).

Borland illustrates that Japan’s contemporary culture of disaster preparedness and its people’s ability to respond calmly in a time of emergency are the result of learned and practiced behaviors. She traces their roots to the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake, which killed over 100,000 people when it struck the Tokyo region. *Earthquake Children* documents how children, schools, and education became the primary tools through which experts sought to build a disaster-prepared society and nation that would withstand nature’s furies.

Borland’s findings transcend not only academic disciplines—moving beyond Japanese history to encompass the history of childhood and youth, natural disasters, and recovery—but also time, illustrating real impact and potential value to researchers, policymakers, and government officials who today focus on creating “cultures of preparedness.”

Earthquake Children was awarded the 2020 Hong Kong Academy of the Humanities First Book Prize.

Underpinning Research

In the aftermath of the magnitude 7.9 earthquake and fires that destroyed Tokyo in September 1923, concerns about children were paramount: two-thirds lost their homes and also their schools. Just because children were the youngest and most vulnerable members of society, did not mean that they were absent, voiceless, or invisible in the ruins. In fact, the opposite was true. Within weeks, children returned to school and wrote about their experiences of the disaster and their hopes for reconstructed Tokyo.

Borland’s pioneering methodology uses these remarkable accounts to provide a panoramic view into children’s first-hand experiences of Japan’s worst natural disaster and daily life in the aftermath. She demonstrates how and why children played an important role as agents of recovery, harbingers of hope, symbols of resilience, and ambassadors of gratitude.

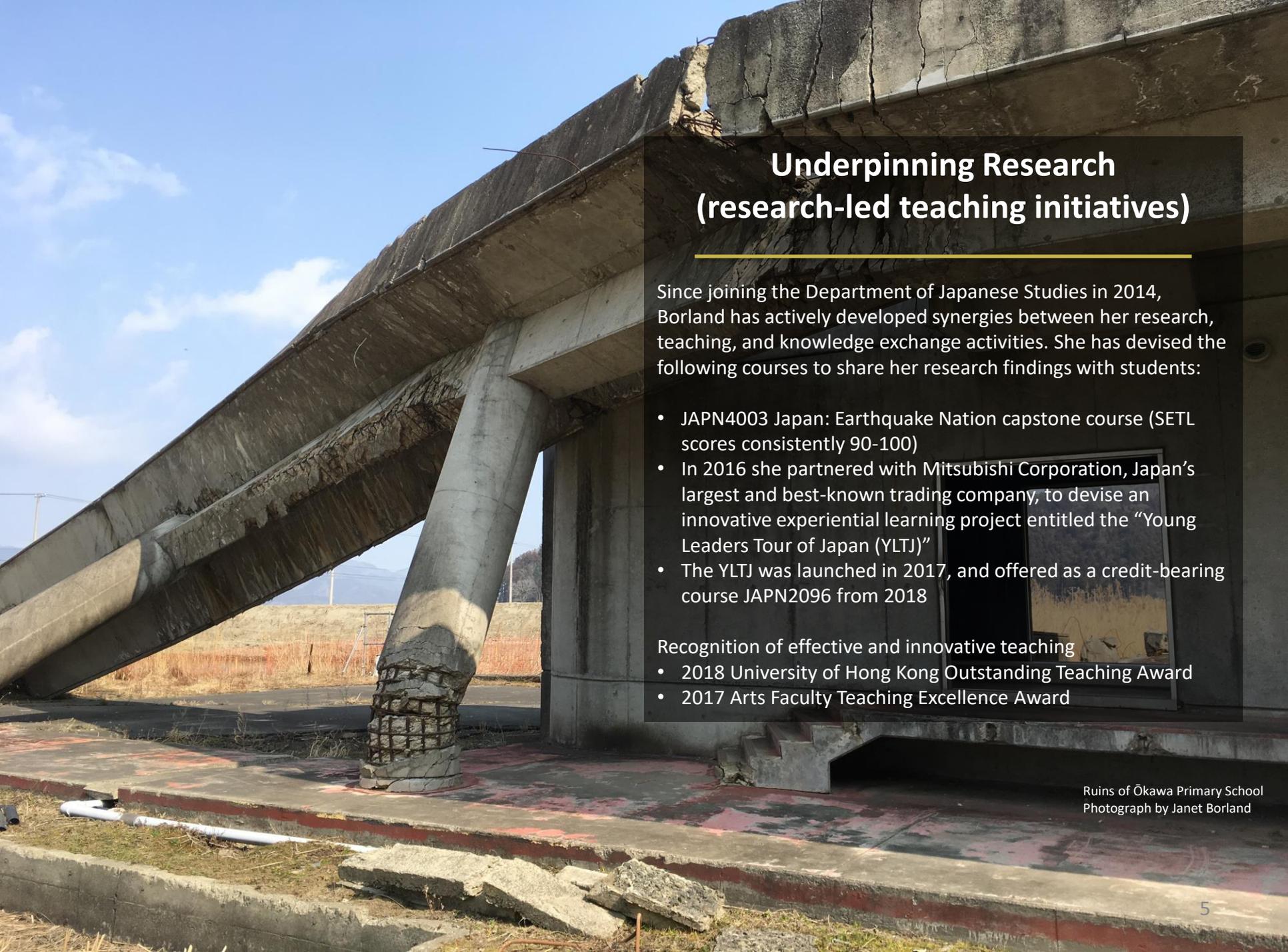
Grounded in extensive primary research conducted in Japanese archives, Borland’s innovative research not only provides unique insights into Japan’s culture of preparedness and resilience, she highlights the contemporary relevance of children who *can* and *should* play an active role in disaster-prone communities as agents of recovery with voices to be listened to and learned from.

Crayon drawing and essay, “The terrible earthquake,” by second grade student Inoue Takako. Source: Tōkyōshi gakumuka, *Tōkyō shiritsu shōgakkō jidō: Shinsai kinen bunshū*, vol. 2, 1924.

やねの上で私の名を
よぶので上を
むいたら
兄さんが
いたので私は
お母さん
と二人で
兄さんに
手を引っぱって
もらったので
やうやくやねの上
に
上りました。



深川区 明治第二尋常小學校
第二學年 井上高子

A photograph of the ruins of Ōkawa Primary School, showing a large, damaged concrete structure with a prominent, cracked pillar and a tilted beam. The sky is blue with some clouds, and the ground is covered in debris and dry grass.

Underpinning Research (research-led teaching initiatives)

Since joining the Department of Japanese Studies in 2014, Borland has actively developed synergies between her research, teaching, and knowledge exchange activities. She has devised the following courses to share her research findings with students:

- JAPN4003 Japan: Earthquake Nation capstone course (SETL scores consistently 90-100)
- In 2016 she partnered with Mitsubishi Corporation, Japan's largest and best-known trading company, to devise an innovative experiential learning project entitled the "Young Leaders Tour of Japan (YLTJ)"
- The YLTJ was launched in 2017, and offered as a credit-bearing course JAPN2096 from 2018

Recognition of effective and innovative teaching

- 2018 University of Hong Kong Outstanding Teaching Award
- 2017 Arts Faculty Teaching Excellence Award

Ruins of Ōkawa Primary School
Photograph by Janet Borland

Underpinning Research (research-led teaching initiatives)



2020 Young Leaders Tour of Japan

Application Deadline
8 November 2019

Focusing on the theme of Recovery and Renewal, the 2020 Young Leaders Tour of Japan will provide TEN eligible undergraduate students from HKU with an exciting opportunity to visit sites in Tohoku and Tokyo to learn how Mitsubishi Corporation is helping businesses recover nine years after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. As future leaders, students will be encouraged to think about global problems such as recovering from natural disasters, reconstruction, and corporate social responsibility initiatives in society. This field trip is offered as the credit-bearing course JAPN2096.

Highlights
We will visit local businesses and organisations in the Tohoku region, and conclude the tour in Tokyo with sightseeing activities, formal presentations, and dinner with HKU alumni.

Date
8-13 March 2020 (during Reading Week)

Cost
Airfare, accommodation, meals and local transport are provided. Students will be responsible for any incidental or personal expenses.

Eligibility Criteria
Undergraduate students currently in Year 2, 3 and 4 who have declared a major or minor in Japanese Studies. Students must demonstrate a medium-level Japanese language proficiency.

Further Information
Dr Janet Borland, Department of Japanese Studies borland@hku.hk

 **MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES**
SCHOOL OF ARTS, THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Department of Japanese Studies

 **Mitsubishi Corporation**



Photograph by CK Lee

Features of Young Leaders Tour of Japan (JAPN2096)

- Field trip to Fukushima, Miyagi and Tokyo gives students firsthand experience of recovery and reconstruction initiatives in Tōhoku following the 2011 Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear crisis
- This unique University-Corporate partnership is the first of its kind to support experiential learning at the University of Hong Kong and stems from Borland's GRF-funded research expertise on earthquakes and post-disaster recovery
- Aligns with and enhances HKU's vision as an institution "committed to producing well-rounded graduates with lifelong abilities to provide leadership within the societies they serve"

Engagement with the people of Tōhoku



Photographs by CK Lee

One of the stated learning outcomes of the Young Leaders Tour of Japan is to foster engagement with local stakeholders in Tōhoku, Japan. As partners, hosts, and beneficiaries, these people and businesses in Miyagi and Fukushima are endeavoring to rebuild and raise their profile after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Between 2017 and 2020, we engaged with the following:

JETRO (Japan External Trade Organisation), Tōhoku Tourism, MORIUMIUS Sustainable Learning Center, Ogatsu Primary School, Akiu Winery, GRA Strawberry Farm, Michisaki Hydroponic Farm, and Minamisoma Solar Agri Park

Engagement

Tōhoku: Northeast Japan

- Less than 1% of foreign tourists to Japan visit the six prefectures of Tōhoku
- In addition, challenges stemming from a rapidly aging society and depopulation of rural communities have exacerbated post-disaster recovery
- Abandoned school buildings serve as a reminder of the rapidly aging society and declining birth rate

The Young Leaders Tour of Japan has had a significant social, cultural, educational, and economic impact on the communities we visited in Miyagi and Fukushima, especially the town of Ogatsu.

Ogatsu: A fishing town in Miyagi, 450km north of Tokyo

- On March 11, 2011, Ogatsu was destroyed by 22-meter high waves
- 80% of houses were destroyed
- Population shrank from 4,300 to 1,000

“Welcome to Ogatsu-chō”
Photograph by Janet Borland





森 + 海 + 明日 = Forest + Ocean + Tomorrow/Future

MORIUMIUS

Opened in 2015 in a renovated primary school building, MORIUMIUS is a residential eco-activity center for children located in Ogatsu.

Beneficial engagement with MORIUMIUS is encapsulated by two innovative activities designed to empower local children—the future of Ogatsu—and promote their feelings of hometown pride.

Engagement with tsunami survivor

Borland's research has made significant contributions to raising public awareness about disaster response, the experiences of children caught up in these traumatic events, and the role of children as agents of recovery and resilience in post-disaster communities.

Fujimoto Nodoka was eleven years old when the tsunami destroyed her hometown Ogatsu.

As a young survivor, Nodoka delivers a powerful message that deserves to be heard, and in doing so, she is empowered to become an active agent for promoting disaster preparedness.

In forums held with the Young Leaders Tour of Japan in 2018 and 2019, Nodoka told her story of survival and lessons about what to do when an earthquake and tsunami strikes.

Participants shared stories about the 2011 disaster and 2018 Typhoon Manghut, and discussed ideas for building community resilience for future disasters.



Engagement with the children of Ogatsu Primary School



“Let’s Explore Our Hometown”

- In 2018, grade 3 and 4 students introduced their hometown to visiting University of Hong Kong students as part of the Young Leaders Tour of Japan program.
- Their colorful powerpoint slide presentations showcased Ogatsu’s shrines, festivals, traditions, and food, and a Q&A session followed.
- For these children—all born after the 2011 tsunami—the exchange was a unique and memorable experience that deepened their hometown pride.

Photograph by CK Lee

Impacts Achieved

Teachers and students from Ogatsu Primary School wrote:

“The HKU students told us, We feel like Ogatsu is a place we want to come *home* to, not just come *back* to; The ocean is so beautiful in Ogatsu!; Where I live, we can't really see the stars, but in Ogatsu the stars are very beautiful!”

“It was a valuable experience for the children to be able to give a presentation to people they met for the first time (and who were all foreigners) and to hear about the goodness of Ogatsu from the outside perspective. Thank you.”

6 March 2018

“We received many words of encouragement (from HKU) in response to the children's voices: We want to protect the rich nature of our hometown Ogatsu-chō.”

9 March 2018



Photographs by CK Lee

MORIUMIUS LUSAIL

Moriumius shared 石巻市立雄勝小・中学校 併設's post.
9 March at 23:04 · 🌐

先日、雄勝小学校3,4年生の子どもたちがモリウミアスに訪れ、滞在中のみなさんに向けて「雄勝まち紹介」をおこなってくれました！「ふるさと雄勝町の豊かな自然を守っていきたい」という子どもたちの言葉に、たくさんの応援の声が寄せられました。

雄勝町桑浜字桑浜60 (3,167.95 km)
986-1336 Ishinomaki, Miyagi
Get Directions
+81 225-25-6506
Typically replies within a day
Contact Moriumius on Messenger
www.moriumius.jp
Public utility company · Education · Community centre
Price range £££

5,105 likes
1,669 visits

Empowering the children of Ogatsu Primary School



Photograph by CK Lee



Impacts Achieved

Award Ceremony & Public Photo Exhibition

- Participants in the Young Leaders Tours of Japan share their learning outcomes related to post-disaster recovery and renewal with the Hong Kong community in a public photo exhibition held every April, as part of Japan Month at HKU.
- To mark the opening of the Photo Exhibition, an award ceremony is held to celebrate student achievements, and to thank Mitsubishi Corporation for their generous sponsorship of the Young Leaders Tour of Japan. Mitsubishi Corporation executives, consulate officials and media, join faculty and parents.



Above: President of Mitsubishi Corporation (HK) presents certificate to Young Leader, 2019

Below: Young Leader (center) guides visitors from Mitsubishi Corporation (left) and the Japanese Consulate-General (right) through the Public Photo Exhibition, 2018

Impacts Achieved

Inspired by their meetings with tsunami survivors and visit to the Ikebukuro Life Safety Learning Center in Tokyo to learn vital survival skills, students raise public awareness about disaster preparedness with the Hong Kong community via a public photo exhibition and engagement with the media (including Hong Kong keizai shinbun, Yahoo!Japan, Concierge magazine).



2018 exhibition photo and caption by Lam Sik Chi, Gigi, Year 3

400m to go!

Imagine a tsunami strikes. Could you stay calm and run all the way to safety? There is no time to panic. You need to be strong enough to save your own life and help others. We learned many lessons after 3.11.

Young Leaders interviewed by *Oriental Daily* newspaper, 2018



七年前由9級大地震引發的大海嘯，對日本造成重創，除了文明的破壞，當地人的內心也留下了傷痕，但在一班有心人的努力下，這些經歷過災難的城市亦重新展現了活力，逐步回復昔日的色彩。早前，有院校舉辦了日本交流之旅，參加者有機會進入正在重建的災區，認識當地的重建工作和防災教育，思考可持續發展的重要性。

撰文：吳俊賢 部分攝影：盧展程（部分相片由受訪者提供）

深入日本災區

見證震後重建

實地了解現況

「日本宮城縣交流之旅」由香港大學日本研究學系和三菱商事合辦，旨在鼓勵參加者思考自然災害發生後的復原重建工作、防災教育和企業社會責任等全球性議題。是次活動共有10位同學參加，鍾嘉寶、林卓瑛、謝嘉寶、盧子朗和劉智美均是參加者之一，一行人於今年3月前往日本宮城縣進行為期7日的交流和考察，期間透過不同類型的參觀和體驗，親身見證2011年3月11日東日本大地震對該區帶來的嚴重破壞和持續的災後重建工作。

一直有意關注新聞的盧子朗認為，過去很多報道都只聚焦輻射問題，只有少數當地媒體關注災區的重建活動，令他無法了解當地的現況，而劉智美亦表示，她曾觀看一些關於「311地震」的紀錄片，令她對重建工程的興趣大增，她說：「雖然7年過後，當地仍處於重建階段，還有居民要住在臨時屋，但亦有部分學校、設施和工業開始重新運作，因此希望親身到當地參觀，了解重建工作的可能性。」



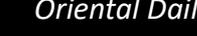
1 此行到訪了宮城縣重建後唯一的釀酒廠仙台秋保釀造所。



2 參觀以外，一行人亦有機會和當地的學生交流。



3 參加者同時參觀了多個位於宮城縣的重建項目工程。



4 同學在 MORIUMIUS 逗留了2日1夜，期間要上山砍柴和燒水洗滌。



■在東京的池袋防災館，同學學習到地震和火災等災難時的應變技巧。

■(左起)盧子朗、劉智美、林卓瑛、鍾嘉寶和謝嘉寶於今年3月前在日本宮城縣，進行了為期7日的交流和考察。

科技協助農業

是次行程中，參加者參觀了多個位於宮城縣的重建項目工程，當中包括一座位於石卷市雄勝町，名叫 MORIUMIUS 的綜合生態體驗設施。鍾嘉寶說：「這座設施由當地一所有百年歷史的小學校舍改建而成，在2015年成立，提供各式各樣的體驗活動，而我們亦在該處逗留了2日1夜，期間不但參觀了一些天然的生活設施，更要上山砍柴和燒水洗滌，與大自然十分接近，令我們對可持續發展的概念有更深入的認識。」

除此之外，交流團亦參觀了 GRA 十多哩噴農場，認識當地人在災後的農業技術。林卓瑛說：「雖然當地沒有輻射問題，但經歷了海嘯後，很多農地都被海水中的鹽分污染，變得不宜耕種，因此當地人結合各種創新科技，研發一種架空種植的方法，既可用其他地方的泥土種植，又可減少俯身的動作，令當地的農業逐漸回復正常，甚至能夠培植出品質相當高的水果，出口到世界各地。」

釀酒振興社區

了解農業以外，同學亦到訪了宮城縣重建後唯一的釀酒廠仙台秋保釀造所，謝嘉寶說：「創辦人毛利先生本身是一位室內設計師，當年因為工作關係而離開了宮城縣，亦因而幸免於難。災難過後，他為了為故鄉出一分力，不惜放棄發展了多年的事業，回到故鄉成立釀酒廠，嘗試以當地的農作物釀製啤酒，藉以幫助社區復甦，而他的產品更屢獲國際獎項，成功為災區注入力量。」

參觀以外，行程亦安排了與當地學生交流的機會，令同學可以了解當地人的心態和生活。盧子朗說：「我們與一位曾經經歷海嘯的高中生見面，發現他不但沒有因為災難而留下陰影，過去數年更走到南非等不同地方，向當地人分享自己的經歷，希望令更多人反思大自然與人類的關係。」在此行的尾聲，同學更到訪了東京的池袋防災館，學習遇上地震和火災等災難時的應變技巧。

キーワードを入力 ニュース Q +

トップ 速報 写真 映像 雑誌 個人 ビジネス 特集

主要 国内 国際 経済 エンタメ スポーツ IT・科学 ライフ 地域

香港大学の学生、東日本大震災の被災地で復興支援学ぶ 写真展も開催

みんなの経済新聞ネットワーク 4/11(火) 2:31配信



「参加の学生が集まり、写真展示のオープニングセレモニーが開催された」

香港大学構内Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campusの展示スペースで現在、香港大日本研究学部の学生による体験学習「若手リーダー日本交流プログラム」を通じて学生が撮影した写真を展示している。展示会開催に先立ち4月6日、オープニングセレモニーが開催された。(香港経済新聞)

葉に希望を込めた思いを表現した学生の写真

同プログラムは三菱商事の支援で実現したもので、東北地方における震災復興支援への関与、そして持続可能性に焦点を当てた企業の社会的責任 (CSR) の取り組みについて学ぶ機会を実現したもので、2年をかけて作り込まれた交流プログラム支援は、香港三菱商事としては初の取り組みだったという。香港でのCSRの活動といえば、そのほとんどが「寄付」に終わる。植林をするにも広大な地域があるわけだけでなく、裕福な人も多い香港市場において「どのようなCSR活動を学ぶことに意義があるのか」といった点についても、新たなアプローチを実現した事業となった。

同プロジェクトの実施に向けては、同大日本研究学科学科長のジャネット・ポランド助教授が中心となって推進。自身も神戸での震災経験があるポランド助教授の研究対象は「関東大震災後の復興」で、当時の子どもの作文や教育などを分析しながら、「当時は時代や国民の年齢構成は違っても、震災後の復興には子どもが大切。復興は教育から」という信念を抱き、教壇に立つ。

震災後に被災地各地に生まれた現象は「コミュニティーを作ること」。今回の5日間のプログラムでも三菱商事復興支援財団の支援先でもある石巻市の震災復興プロジェクトに関わる施設を見学し、参加学生は課題として写真を撮影、レポートとともに体験を報告することが課題とされた。

震災で甚大な被害を受けた雄勝町にある施設「モリウミアス」は子どもたちのための複合エコ体験施設で、廃校になっていた小学校を改修し、サステナビリティ(持続可能性)という理念に基づいて2015年にオープンしたもので、こころの震災当



Japan, one of the world's most earthquakes-prone nations, is also one of the most earthquake-ready. We visit ground zero of the 2016 Kumamoto disaster to see how a local landmark and city infrastructures were damaged and local lives altered. But while no two disasters are ever the same, each is an opportunity to draw lessons, and Japan's long relationship with earthquakes gives them an edge. And the continuous progress of engineering and technology means that measures for damage mitigation and recovery are constantly being upgraded. Learn how dedication and imagination are helping make Japan a special place when it comes to handling seismic events, making them not only an earthquake nation, but also the safest earthquake nation in the world.

Impacts Achieved: 2.7 million viewers

“Japan: Designed for Recovery”

Discovery Channel TV-documentary, supported by the Prime Minister’s Office of Japan

- Borland was interviewed as an expert on earthquakes for this TV-documentary and gave insights that were instrumental in the making of the program.
- The program used the case of the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquakes to explore Japan’s historic experiences of seismic events, and how modern damage mitigation and recovery systems make it a leader in earthquake resiliency.
- The program premiered in various countries of the Asia Pacific region between September 30 and 1 October 2016, and was repeated several times thereafter.
- It is estimated that the audience reached a total of 2.7 million viewers across the region.

Janet Borland
Historian



Foreseeable Impact



Natural Hazards Workshop, 11-12 July 2021

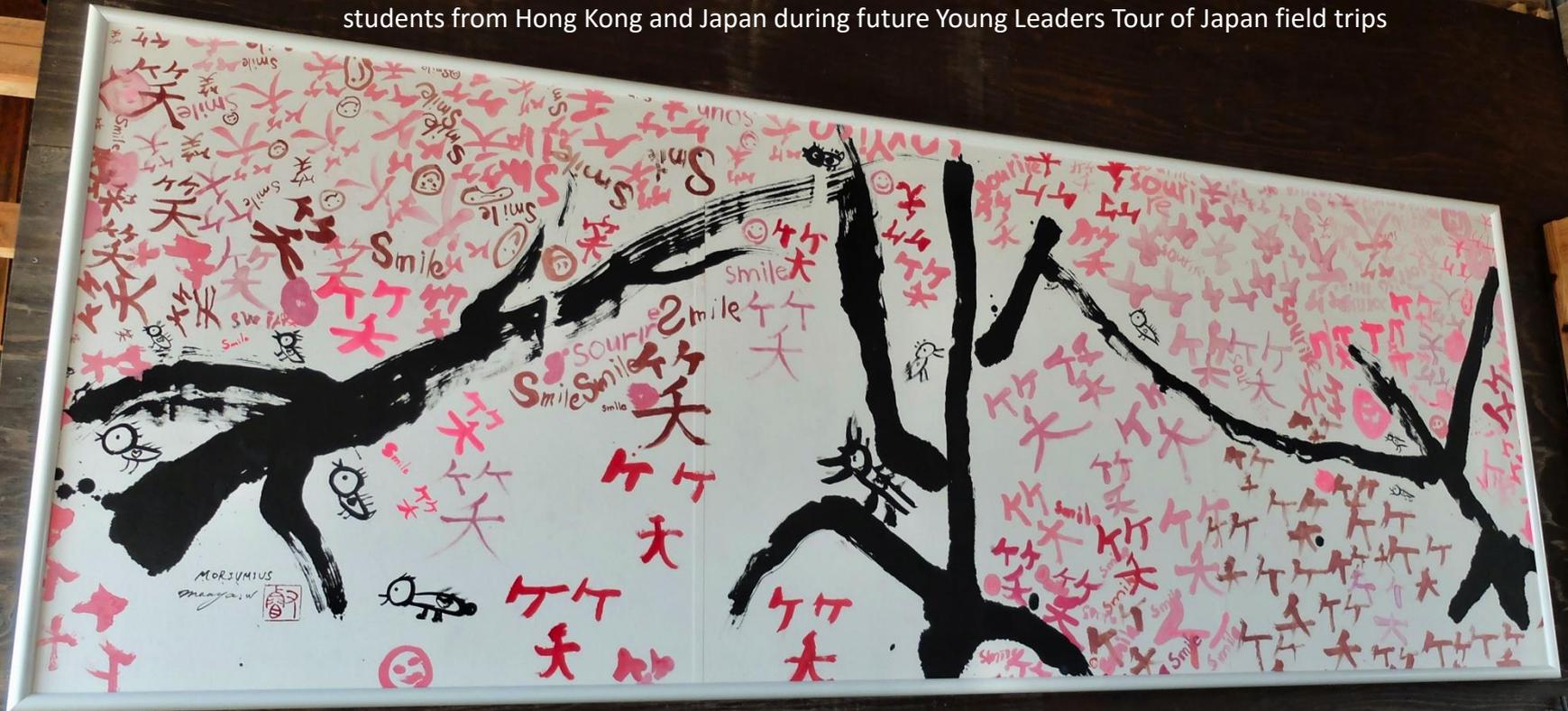
- Borland's impact on the field of contemporary disaster risk reduction can be found in an invitation to join this workshop at the University of Colorado, Boulder.
- She will showcase *Earthquake Children* at the "New Reads—Meet the Authors" forum.

FEMA and USGS

- The Director of the Natural Hazards Center recommended *Earthquake Children* to government agency workers at FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and the USGS (United States Geological Survey), the foremost institutions in the United States responsible for "helping people before, during and after disasters," and ensuring that "policy makers and the public have the understanding they need to enhance preparedness, response, and resilience."

Future Plans for Sharing Research Findings with the Public

- Create a companion website www.earthquakechildren.com
- Continue working with Mitsubishi Corporation on the Young Leaders Tour of Japan
- Partner with a new businesses in Fukushima (Ouse Winery)
- Establish a new partnership with Tōhoku University to enable joint learning activities between students from Hong Kong and Japan during future Young Leaders Tour of Japan field trips



“Smile”
Famous calligrapher Maaya Wakasugi worked with children who experienced the 2011 earthquake to create this artwork depicting cherry blossoms and the *kanji* character 笑, which means “smile”.
Photograph by Janet Borland