



## The Otemae-Nagashima UNESCO World Heritage Service Learning Project



by Kathryn Tanaka, Tomohisa Tamura, John Jackson and Koji Ozaki (Otemae University)

### Introduction

This short article introduces an EFL service-learning project partnership between Otemae University in Hyogo and Nagashima Aisei-en hospital in Okayama. The project is designed and administered by Otemae faculty member Kathryn Tanaka and Nagashima Aisei-en curator Tomohisa Tamura. Otemae University is a small, private university located in Western Japan with a student body of around 2,500 students. The students who participated in the project ranged from 1<sup>st</sup> year students to graduate students. The first year we had 9 participants, and the second year we had 22.

Nagashima Aisei-en is Japan's first national hospital for the treatment of Hansen's Disease (leprosy). It was established in the year 1930 as a quarantine hospital for the treatment of people diagnosed with the disease. The institution has a long and important position within the history of Hansen's Disease and human rights, not only in Japan but globally as well. The history of the institution has been well documented in Japanese, but little is available about Nagashima in English.

### Nagashima Aisei-en and Its Mission

In Japan, there is a sense that the problems of Hansen's Disease were resolved after a group of survivors sued the government for violating their human rights and won in 2001. In reality, the re-conciliation process is ongoing. Former quarantine facilities remain home to survivors of the illness.

Today, Nagashima Aisei-en is home to 197 survivors. Their average age is 84. As survivors age, some residents have begun movements to articulate and ensure the legacy of their stories of struggle with illness and discrimination. Many see this as a mission of global importance. With the question of legacy a driving force, residents of Aisei-en launched a movement to earn the island UNESCO World Heritage Site recognition.

### UNESCO World Heritage Status

The movement for the institution's remaining buildings and the sites themselves to be registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site began in 2013 with Nagashima Aisei-en, Oku Kōmyō-en, and Oshima Seishō-en, all Hansen's Disease sanatoria in the Inland Sea of Japan. The recognition, if achieved, would be an important step in the realization of a

society where human rights are respected. It would also serve to display the strength of the residents, appeal to society, preserve the landscape of the institution, and demonstrate the nation's position on human rights.

Thus, Nagashima's goal is to achieve UNESCO World Heritage Site status and articulate the place of Japan in the global history of Hansen's disease. More fundamentally, however, our goal with our partnership is to raise awareness of the disease and end discrimination.

### Otemae Service Learning Project

Otemae launched this project with specific goals for our students. First, we wanted students to support Nagashima and help it achieve its goals. In doing so, we also wanted to demonstrate how the history and language that students learned in the classroom was immediately applicable and important in their daily lives in Japan. Together, we wanted a project that made students realize the impact of what they learned in the classroom could have. We wanted to raise students' awareness as part of the larger project. Our ultimate goal, therefore, was to take what we learned in the classroom and make a difference in society with it.

We set up the project to last one week. The first day was a day of intensive study in the university classroom. Students arrived at 9 AM and we went straight through to 6 PM. Students learned the history of Hansen's disease in Japan from Otemae history professor Kōji Ozaki. They learned the local history of Nagashima from Hiroyuki Matsuoka. They learned about the history of volunteerism and activism from Otemae tourism professor Yoshiaki Shikata. Kathryn Tanaka taught them some fundamental translation skills and highlighted the importance of language sensitivity in our work. This day was bilingual, with courses taught in both English and Japanese.

The next day, Kathryn accompanied the students to Nagashima where we stayed for four days and three nights. We started our work with a tour of the facility with Tamura-san. We also were able to arrange a lecture given by a person affected by Hansen's disease about their life experiences. Like other hospitals in Japan, Nagashima Aisei-en has a Residents' Association whose members do community education as part of their activism. We have been very lucky to have them support our project and speak with our students.

After the tour and the lecture, students began the translation work they were assigned. We gave them a packet of materials that needed translation, and students decided amongst themselves the best way to divide the work. Students with weaker English would often pair with stronger students. Even students with a low level of English were able to contribute meaningfully to this project and experience great personal growth because of it.

Because they were seeing the history with their own eyes, and hearing the stories of people who had experienced Japan's quarantine policies, students became very passionate about their work and about doing a sensitive, thorough translation. They visited archives, talked to Tamura-san and spoke to the survivors themselves. The translations were therefore a powerful tool for communication between students and the Nagashima community.

### Impact and Results

The personal connections that students made on Nagashima not only made them more conscientious and passionate, but also contributed to the success of the project overall. Seeing the history and hearing the personal stories made students more aware of the importance of their translations. They were careful in their language to reflect nuance as well as direct meaning, and were sensitive to the lessons survivors wanted them to learn.

One of the most important things that our students learned was not to feel fear or pity for the people who live on Nagashima, but to understand the importance of their stories and help to share these stories with the world. As one student wrote, the dedication of the survivors to tell their stories inspired them: "I don't join this project just for fun. I kind of have a sense of mission."

The project has been very successful in its results. Thus far, we have produced English translations of the museum exhibits, an English hiking course guide (with explanations of historical landmarks on the island) and an English GPS audio guided tour, thanks to students' translation of the script. We also have a list of guidelines in English for touring the island. An English translation of the web-

site and 24 survivor testimonies were completed this year. Chinese and Korean translations of the hiking course brochure will be available in the near future.

In terms of less tangible results, all of the students reported tremendous personal growth. Most have repeated the project and plan to go again next year. Another result we did not foresee was the way students shared their experience and growth on social media. They did so enthusiastically and respectfully, which we think serves to raise awareness among their peers as well. Many of the posts were bilingual, and many were further shared by friends of our students. The dialogue on social media was very inspiring to us as educators.

### Conclusion

This project will continue for the foreseeable future. Otemae and Nagashima have signed a contract to become sister institutions. Otemae will continue to provide logistical support such as transportation for its students. Nagashima faces a long road in gaining UNESCO World Heritage Site recognition, but Otemae is prepared to continue working with Nagashima to achieve this.

There are also exciting future possibilities for cooperation with other institutions. As survivors articulate their legacy and send their message out into the world, English becomes an important tool to reach a wider audience. This is true not only in Japan, but almost anywhere. We hope that, through this English translation project, the history of Nagashima will become known globally, and that this will play a small role in helping to raise awareness about Hansen's disease and contribute to ending discrimination against survivors.

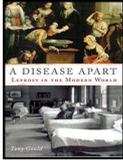
For more details, see: Tanaka, K., et al. (2016). *Journal of Research and Pedagogy*, Vol 2: 39-57.

[https://otemae.repo.nii.ac.jp/index.php?active\\_action=repository\\_view\\_main\\_item\\_detail&page\\_id=33&block\\_id=62&item\\_id=1147&item\\_no=1](https://otemae.repo.nii.ac.jp/index.php?active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&page_id=33&block_id=62&item_id=1147&item_no=1)

**Kathryn M. Tanaka**

Otemae University, Osaka, Japan

E-mail: <k.tanaka@otemae.ac.jp>

<p><b>Leprosy in Japan</b> &lt;<a href="http://www.wikipedia.org">www.wikipedia.org</a>&gt;</p>  <p>For info on <b>Leprosy in Japan</b>, check out this Wikipedia article which covers the history, social issues and key figures in Japan.</p>	<p><b>A Disease Apart: Leprosy in the Modern World</b> by Tony Gould (2005) \$16</p>  <p>This cultural history of leprosy chronicles the ignorance, fear and prejudice that have haunted the disease and its sufferers.</p>	<p><b>World Leprosy Day</b> &lt;<a href="http://leprosy.org/world-leprosy-day/">leprosy.org/world-leprosy-day/</a>&gt;</p>  <p><b>World Leprosy Day</b> is January 29, 2017. See the website above to learn more and to prepare a lesson on this topic for your classes!</p>
--	--	---