

Email Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama (111) February 1, 2019 Issue

【Visit to San Jose, Costa Rica – our sister city that has history of half century】

Hello, I'm Masao Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

39 members of Okayama Citizens Delegation visited San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, from January 24<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our sister city relationship.

You might wonder why Okayama has a sister city relationship with San Jose. Okayama and San Jose in California concluded a sister city relationship in 1957.

4 years later, when San Jose in California and San Jose in Costa Rica became sister cities, Mayor of San Jose in California gave us a suggestion. He said, "if 3 cities became sister cities, it would be a worldwide unique relationship." His suggestion became a reality in 1969.

I was surprised and at the same time I realized that the continuous effort by the predecessors of both cities makes it possible to keep our sister city relationship even though we are distant geographically and have few economic exchanges.

What I was surprised when I visited San Jose was that we received great hospitality from many people including Mayor of San Jose and City Councilors.

There was a joint concert of the collaboration with Mami Yamaji, a scene drawing pianist, the students of chorus club in Okayama Joto High School, and a local orchestra. Also Taiga Mori, a Bizenware artist, held a lecture and an exhibition. We had

exchanges with the local people through unique music and art performance.

It is rather hard to express the situation in words. However, for example, when the students sang “Furusato” and “My Neighbor Totoro”, the audience was impressed by them and didn’t stop clapping. As soon as the audience was told that the concert was over, they booed all at once. When Ms. Yamaji performed music called “The flying crane” that was inspired by scenery of Okayama along with the video, the wife of Japanese Ambassador in Costa Rica and many people from the Japanese companies in San Jose were shedding tears. It was very moving.

Costa Rica is located in the middle of Latin America. The Costa Ricans are uplifting in nature but they also like calmness. I think that is a big factor that the Japanese and the Costa Ricans can relate to each other.

Thanks to all related people including the delegation members and very hospitable Mr. Ito, Ambassador of Japan in Costa Rica, the visit was very meaningful. For the next 50 years, I hope we can nurture our friendship together with the citizens.