

Can anyone in this room find the common point between Hakuho, the Japanese Sumo Wrestler and me? I know it's difficult. The answer is that we are both ambassadors for Tokushima. I am not famous like Hakuho, but I am one of the "Awakko Bunka Taishi", meaning "Child Ambassador of Culture and Tradition of Tokushima". Awakko Bunka Taishi are a symbol of Tokushima, and our mission is to tell the next generation; how invaluable our culture is, how beautiful its tradition is, and how fascinating our hometown is.

For one year, I've been working as an Awakko Bunka Taishi. But, actually, ambassador activities are different from what I expected. For the past year, I have not only learned but also experienced Tokushima's culture and history. For example, I didn't realize (that) Awa Ningyo Joruri Puppetry can move so sensitively until I tried to move it myself. Also, I couldn't feel the spirit of the great camphor tree of Kamo until I touched it. Moreover, I didn't know about the warm relationship between Japan and Germany until I talked with the Germany International Exchange Staff at the Naruto German House. These experiences made me rediscover new aspects of Tokushima's culture and history, but at the same time, I had to admit our culture is facing a challenging situation.

34%; can you guess what this percentage means for Tokushima? According to Tokushima prefecture, 34% of Tokushima's total population is older than 65 years old as of July 2020. We are in a severely aging society now. Last year, I talked with an Iya soba restaurant owner, in Miyoshi City. Miyoshi city's aging rate is about 46%. The owner said that he had to close his restaurant because he did not have a successor. Like this restaurant, many cultural heritage sites are losing the successors and they are at risk of closing. I could not stand it, if I did nothing to preserve the tradition which a lot of our ancestors have made efforts to create and preserve.

For now, I have two ideas: interacting with culture and introducing Tokushima to the world. Before I became an Awakko Bunka Taishi, I felt I knew everything about Tokushima. But looking back, I think that I was naive in the past. As an ambassador: I went to see people who succeeded traditions, I went to experience the nature or culture, and finally I could take in for myself the real value of Tokushima. Because of this, I really want to interact more with my hometown. However, interaction for myself is not enough. I have to introduce what I've learned from my interactions in Tokushima, to the world. Since the number of inbound travelers to Japan was increasing before the

pandemic of COVID-19, I believe there will be more chances to appeal Tokushima's culture and tradition in the future. For instance, I am planning to spread captivating information about Tokushima in English through social media. Attracting travelers from overseas leads them to a greater understanding of Tokushima, and someone might want to be a successor for one of our traditions. As many people helped me to find the real value of Tokushima, I also want to introduce Tokushima to the next generation. Interaction and Introduction; this is what I can do as an ambassador.