

The Collaboration Project

Nibutani Ainu Craft Project

The "Nibutani Ainu Craft Project" started in 2020 with the goal of developing products that fit modern lifestyles while preserving traditions passed down through the ages. We aim to create products that bring Ainu culture closer to our lives by collaborating with local artisans, designers, and manufacturers, along with world-famous designer Junko Koshino as general director. In 2022, we made a collaborative product with "Nosaku," a long-established casting manufacturer in Takaoka City (Toyama Prefecture.) They have been in business for 107 years. We hope you will enjoy the new charm, applying Ainu patterns with graphics to metal.



Connecting to the Future

The Nibutani district of Biratori Town, Saru County, Hokkaido, is known as an area where many Ainu people lived and where Ainu traditions remain strong even today. The area is known for its traditional Ainu architecture, which is reminiscent of Ainu villages of the past, as well as various efforts to pass on the Ainu way of life to the next generation. While the Ainu culture is declining with the changing times, traditional crafts are being made on a daily basis in Nibutani.

Welcome to Nibutani



二風谷

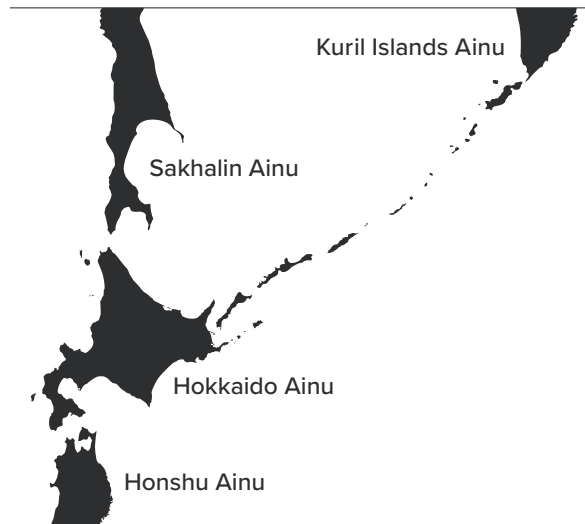
Nibutani is in the Hidaka region on the Pacific Ocean side, in Biratori-cho, Saru-gun, Hokkaido. According to legend, Kamuy (meaning "deity" in Ainu language) named Okikurumi, descended on the side of the Saru River many years ago and taught people how to hunt and make tools. Such as wood carvings and textiles, have been passed down from generation to generation ever since. There are Ainu craft workshops and museums at "Nibutani Kotan," where Ainu culture-related facilities are gathered around restored traditional houses, where you can thoroughly experience the Ainu culture that has been passed down through the years. The "Nibutani Ita" and "Nibutani Attus" crafts are made by Ainu in this region. This time around, we are pleased to welcome Junko Koshino as general design director, and we are working on new manufacturing through collaboration with creators who specializes in using traditional Ainu crafting techniques.

AINU



General Incorporated Association Biratori Urespa
www.nibutani-ainucraft.com/en

About the AINU People



The AINU are an indigenous people who live in the northern part of the Japanese archipelago, particularly on the island of Hokkaido, and have their own language, religion, and culture. They believe that all things in the natural world have souls, which comes directly from an appreciation for nature's richness. AINU language is distinct from Japanese, and the AINU people have developed their own distinctive culture, along with "Rituals," "Dance," "Verbal Literature," and "Crafts" over time. Traditional culture is still passed down today.

Traditional Objects



ITA

A shallow, flat wooden tray passed down through the ages in the Saru River basin. It has a long history, and not only was it used to serve food in everyday life, but it is also said that some items, including half-moon-shaped trays and round-shaped trays made in this area, were presented to the shogunate at the end of the Tokugawa-shogunate. In the Meiji period (1868-1912), master craftsmen began to manufacture and sell Ita with regional patterns and small items, and the techniques have since been passed down to modern artisans. It is mostly made of katsura trees and walnuts and is accessorized with traditional AINU patterns called Morew-noka, Ayus-noka, and Sik-noka. To fill in the gap, it has a carved design called Ramram-noka.

ATTUS



Attus is a type of cloth that is woven with threads made from the inner bark of halibut trees. "Nibutani Attus" is a traditional craft that is characterized by the twisting of the threads. It was considered an important trade item with Honshu (Mainland of Japan) during the Edo period (1603-1867), and it was handed down as an excellent Saru River basin product during the Meiji period (1868-1912).

Collaborative Craft 2022

i-sapte
Tableware Collection



i-sapte is an AINU word meaning "kindness / helpfulness," and it was chosen as the name of this "tableware collection" to express the heart of Japanese hospitality. This piece has no "front" or "back," which means that you can use it on both sides. Some items can be combined, allowing the user to arrange the pieces the way they want. Please spend time with your loved ones on tableware with AINU patterns, created by combining the two worlds of "Ainu patterns" and "casting."

Collaborative Craft 2021

inuye
fountain pen



These fountain pens are called "Inuye," which means "sculpture/write" in AINU. One of the AINU traditions is the "Makiri," a classical AINU knife. People pass this knife to convey messages. The word "Inuye" emphasizes the "culture of giving and inheriting," which we attempted to integrate into this fountain pen in the same way that "Makiri" did. We would like to have people embrace the AINU spirituality and emotionality through this fountain pen and its function/mood. We hope that, like the "Makiri" that a man gifts to a woman he adores, this fountain pen will become a boat for transferring feelings from person to person. The use of AINU crafts in daily life and their familiarity with people are things we hope for.