Minamata Disease **Municipal Museum**

Studying the Occurrence of a Terrible Disease to Help Create a Better Future for the Region

Respect Life - Learn From Mistakes - Live Life Fully

-Teaching the World from the Lessons Learnt From Minamata Disease -

The Minamata Disease Museum was built with the aim of acquiring and preserving valuable data related to Minamata disease, a pollution-caused illness. The memories of this Terrible disease would not fade away and the lessons and experiences of this disease may be conveyed to the world. In order to have no one else suffer from the terrible consequences of Minamata disease again, the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum offers displays on the history and current status of the disease as well as the pain and discrimination that Minamata disease victims had to endure. Talks by storytellers are also offered.

Since its opening in January of 1993, roughly 800,000 people have already visited the museum (numbers taken in 2012). These visitors are not only from Japan but are also from some 175 countries and regions all across the globe have visited the museum to learn more about the pollution, the environment and civil rights.

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URL http://www.minamata195651.jp

mimuseum@eos.ocn.ne.jp

Hours

9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

(Doors close at 4:30 PM)

Mondays

(or the following day if Monday falls on a holiday) New Years (December 29th to January 3rd)

Entrance Free

Parking Free

(Spaces available for 15 buses and 272 passenger vehicles)



Museum Tours (30 to 60 minutes) Groups must make reservations in advance. Storytelling Sessions (60 minutes) **Reservations Necessary**

Audiences have an opportunity hear the firsthand personal experiences from the victims of Minamata Desease. (Only groups of 10 or more will be free of charge.)



Minamata Memorial

The Minamata Memorial is a place to offer orayers to the victims of Minamata Disease and convey the tragedy of environmental pollution and the sanctity of life to future generations, as visitors vow to never allow a tragedy like Minamata disease to happen again.
The Minamata Memorial was established in conjunction with the Minamata Disease Museum.

Transportation Access

auto	Kyushu Expressway – From the Kurino interchange	70 minutes
	From Izumi City in Kagoshima Prefecture	20 minutes
Shinkansen		70 minutes
(Bullet train)	From JR Kumamoto Station	25 minutes
	From Kagoshima-Chuo Station	

Personal Minami-Kyushu Expressway - From the Ashikita interchange | 30 minutes

From the nearest train stations to the Museum

• From Hisatsu Orange Railway Minamata Station 7 min. by car (2.5km)



Minamata Disease is caused by

Minamata Disease mercury poisoning

due to the dumping of mercury contained industrial wastewater into Shiranui Sea by Chisso Minamata Factry.

Fish and other marine products were contaminated by this mercury, which was then unwittingly consumed by local citizens. In 1956, the outbreak of the disease was confirmed in Minamata City, but the cause of the illness remained unknown. However, even after suspecting that industrial wastewater was the cause of the illness, there was no suspension of the dumping. Japan was in the period of rapid economic development, and the damages which caused by Minamata disease grew. There used to be an abundance of fish in the Minamata Sea, which was often said that fish actually gushed from the water. People in this region enjoyed a truly idyllic existence, blessed by the bounty of the sea. However, this tranquility was suddenly shattered by a terrible disease, which the causes were unknown and effective medical treatment was unavailable to apply, and this lead to local residents die one after another. As the breadwinners died from the disease, family members and the fishing community soon fell into poverty. Minamata disease also affected pregnant women' wombs, leading to the heart-breaking tragedies of babies born with this terrible disease. At first, victims were prejudiced against from misconception that the disease was contagious, and discriminatory comments such "Don't' go out, or you'll spread the disease" could be heard regularly. Often referred to as "Chisso's caste town", Chisso also elicited strong support and victims were routinely shunned. What's more, victims, who were also residents of Minamata City. were ignored by other local residents, and this further leads to chaos between victims and non-victims in Minamata City. Victims also had a difficult time finding employment and consummating marriages due to the misconception that Minamata disease was an endemic and infectious disease. Meanwhile products bearing the name of Minamata were not be able to sell, as Minamata was increasingly_recognized by the rest of the country. In 1968, distribution of wastewater from the Chisso factory was finally being stopped; however, twelve years had already gone by since the outbreak of the disease. The same vear, the national government finally

admitted that Minamata disease was a

pollution-caused illness originated from

Chisso Minamata Factory. Victims in failing health and families in bereavement after losing their loved ones take part in legal battles and negotiations with Chisso and the national and local government from every corner of the country. These were desperate attempts to extract sincere apologies and medication. There was also an issue of victims who could not be recovered from damages because they were not recognized as Minamata disease patients. The system of recognition was being examined, as it showed that the standards for certifying were too rigid. Even though Chisso's responsibility was made clear at the trail, the government did not create any strict standard or regulation against wastewater, Furthermore, confrontations involving the government's responsibility for the escalation of damages in the trial became a protracted affair. In 1990, the court recommended that the victims were mostly aged and medication was needed to assure that they would

receive a prompt relief. Accepting this recommendation, the government presented a resolution to the issue in 1995. From the resolution, most victims could receive a relief while still alive, most organizations' groups reluctantly abandoned their dissent and consented to the government's plan. This was a painful decision. However, an organization located in Kansai region wanted to continue pressing forward until the government was found guilty. This group continued their litigation and finally, a judicial decision was reached finding the national and prefectural governments guilty in 2004. In 2009, the Special Procedures Act for "Providing Relief to Minamata Disease Victims and Resolving the Issue of Minamata Disease" was fond, leading to recognition of more extensive damages than previously admitted. In 2010, concrete relief measures offered to victims including monetary compensation, and over 65,000 victims ended up applying for the relief. There was a lot of anger involved, but human life and health could still not be recovered. Confucius said, "A man who has committed a mistake and doesn't correct it, is committing another mistake." From

Minamata disease, we know how important

mistakes that caused this terrible disease so

we don't repeat this deadly mistake in the

future. For Minamata, this is a matter of

it is to recognize and reflect upon the

human life and dignity.

Follow the Routes to Enjoy the Museum







Exhibition Room



Each corner features panel displays and TV monitors as well as photos and other display

A tranquil life ...

The birthplace of Minamata disease, Shiranui Sea. Storytellers tell their life stories that offer us to share their lifes of being fishermen and being citizens before the outbreak of Minamata disease...

Through industrialization, Japan wanted to be part of the industrial nations

Once a small village, Minamata followed the lead of the Chisso Factory and become an industrial center.

The symptoms of Minamata disease began to appear In the beginning of the 1950s, eerie signs began to appear, such as fish was dying and cats went mad ..

Finally, people were also effected

In 1956, it was formally confirmed that victims suffered from a disease of unknown origin.

As the disease continued to spread, the lives of the victims and fishermen were threatened and many fell into poverty. There were strong suspicions that wastewater from the Chisso Factory was the cause of the illness but Chisso Factory denied this. The national and local government also did nothing to restrict industrial wastewater being dumped into the sea...

The government admitted that Minamata disease is a pollution-caused illness

In 1968, twelve years after the outbreak of Minamata disease, the government finally announced that this disease was a "pollution-caused illness from the wastewater of the Chisso Minamata Factory". Victims engaged in legal actions and negotiations against Chisso as well as the national and local government to receive apologies and redresses...

To solve the Minamata disease issue

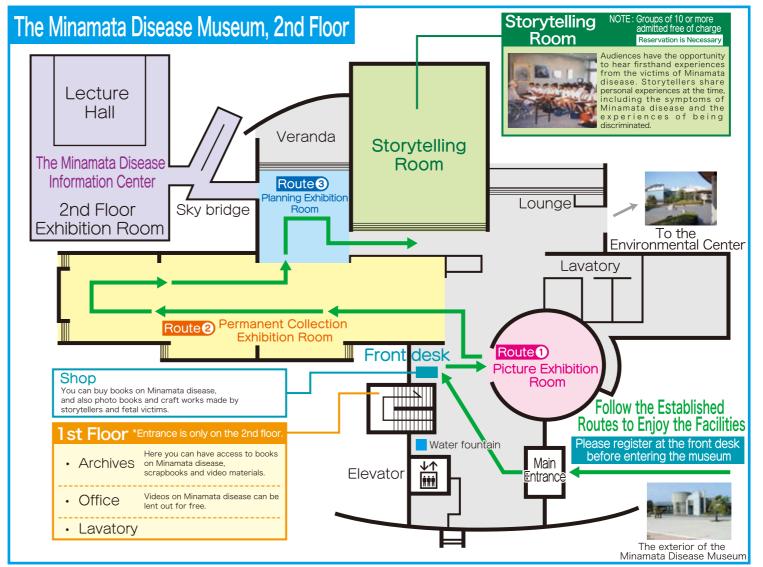
The local and national governments would not take responsibilities for the disease as the victims' pursuit of justice dragged on. The time consuming process drove many victims' organizations to consent to the government's solution plan, which conditionally required victims to forgo any future claims for compensation.

Methyl mercury flowed to the sea Methyl mercury entered into human body through contaminated fish

Methyl mercury flowed to the sea along with industrial wastewater and, became highly concentrated in seafood through the food chain. Unaware of the contamination, the people of the fishing villages in the region routinely consumed locally caught fish leaded to the tragedies.

The pathology of Minamata disease: cats being used to investigate the cause of the disease

At Chisso, experiments of having cats taken factory's wastewater confirmed the source of this disease. However, these results were been hidden and the contaminated water continued to flow in to the sea and the damages spread. Other facts were found such as different amount of mercury contained in the human body would lead to different



Children and adults were affected by the disease. The unborn were also affected

Minamata disease and its effects on adults, children and the unborn)

Minamata disease is caused by methyl mercury poisoning. As methyl mercury accumulates in the human body, it invades the brain's central nerves. Victims have symptoms such as sensory disorders of the feet and hands, shaking, numbness, narrowing of the field of vision and deafness. Methyl mercury also accumulates in the human fetus through the mother's placenta, leads to the heart-breaking tragedy of babies born with Minamata disease ·

Past experiences with Minamata disease were not capitalized upon

Introduce examples of Minamata disease in Niigata

Systems for helping victims

Introduce the systems for evaluate Minamata disease and the integrated medical treatment services available to victims' Medical treatment and research

A new set of values born from Minamata disease Treating sludge and purifying up the sea Introduce methods to control pollution in Minamata Bay

