

## **Contemporary Ainu Craft and Culture**

Ainu culture is vibrant and adaptive. Despite decades of suppression of their language and traditional lifestyles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ainu have managed to preserve key aspects of their heritage. Today, they are revitalizing traditional designs and adapting them for modern uses. In 2008, the Asahikawa City Museum commissioned Ainu craftspeople and musicians to create works that highlight their cultural legacy.

A central theme in Ainu belief is the power of nature to protect, nurture, and test humanity, and this connection to nature continues to influence contemporary expression. Traditional motifs are embroidered and appliqued onto modern garments and accessories. In the accompanying video exhibits, project participants explain their creative processes, and young musicians perform an Ainu song, blending past and present.