

Alaska Dispatch News

Published on *Alaska Dispatch News* (<http://www.adn.com>)

[Home](#) > Drumming traditions of Japan and Inupiat converge in Arctic music collaboration

Hannah Heimbuch

April 25, 2013

Main Image:

[East High School Taiko drumming](#) ^[1]

Main Image Caption:

Two different musical traditions will meet in the Arctic this week when East High students from Anchorage travel to Point Hope for drumming collaboration.

Two different musical traditions meet in the Arctic this week as East High School students from Anchorage travel to Point Hope for drumming collaboration. Workshops start Thursday and go through Saturday.

The Taiko Drummers, led by instructor Erika Ninoyu, practice a Japanese drumming style developed in the 1950s. Ninoyu is a Taiko composer and performer. The group of students she leads has performed at the Anchorage Museum, with the Anchorage Symphony, and at fundraisers supporting relief for Japan earthquake and tsunami victims.

Ninoyu is the band teacher at East High, and spends summers training with the popular Japanese performing group Shidara. With the help of a grant from the Mockingbird Foundation, this trip is likely the Arctic's first opportunity to learn Taiko drumming.

The opportunity to share the two musical conditions is even more rare.

"As usual, the really good stuff in Point Hope comes through collaboration," said Marlene Bean, Tikigaq School's vice principal, "just like a successful whaling season. I guess that would be my personal goal, that we rededicate ourselves to working together in a positive way for the community's enrichment."

Exposure to this new musical tradition will only support dance and drum traditions Point Hope leaders are trying to nurture, Beam said. One of those leaders, she said, is Tikigaq School's Inupiaq language teacher, Lillian "Aana" Lane.

"Dancing has really been revitalized among the young people in Point Hope and a lot of that is due to Aana's efforts," Beam said.

The visiting group will host youth workshops and collaborate with Point Hope's dance and drumming group.

"The Mockingbird Foundation and Alaska's Kids have provided the East Taiko Team with a rich educational opportunity for all involved," said Ninoyu in a release.

"My students and I look forward to collaborating with students and community members of Point Hope to celebrate the universality of music and drumming. A partnering of Taiko drumming and Alaska Native drumming and dancing will surely be an impactful experience!"

The East High students are excited to make the trip up north, both to share their skill and maybe learn some new ones.

"As an original member of East High's first Taiko group, I am overcome with an uncontrollable enthusiasm upon being given the opportunity to travel to Point Hope with members of my team,"

said East High student Jeremi Harleston in a release. "This is the first time we have had the chance to venture outside of our home town to not only perform for, but educate others about the art of Taiko drumming. I am most thankful for being able to savor such a rare event. I hope to spread the happiness, excitement, and love that I have gained for Taiko."

The group is traveling through Alaska's Kids, an Anchorage-based nonprofit that supports cultural projects for Alaska's youth. The Mockingbird Foundation is a volunteer-run organization that supports music education. It has distributed more than \$700,000 in such grants since its incorporation in 1997. There will be a Friday evening performance and potluck at Tikigaq School at 7 p.m.

Watch video of Ninoyu and the East High drummers:

This article was originally published in The Arctic Sounder and is reprinted here with permission. Hannah Heimbuch can be reached at [hheimbuch\(at\)reportalaska.com](mailto:hheimbuch(at)reportalaska.com) [2].

Source URL: <http://www.adn.com/article/20130425/drumming-traditions-japan-and-inupiat-converge-arctic-music-collaboration>

Links:

[1] <http://www.adn.com/image/east-high-school-taiko-drumming>

[2] <mailto:hheimbuch@reportalaska.com>