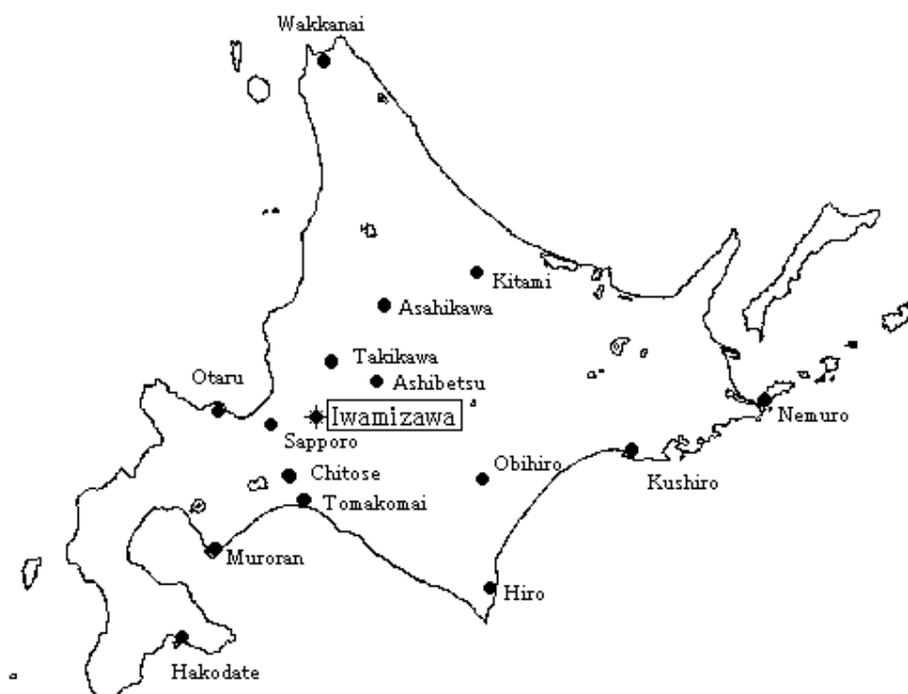


## 10. About Iwamizawa



A city of beauty and tranquillity, Iwamizawa lies in the central part of Hokkaido, approximately an hour's drive northeast of the island's capital of Sapporo.

Previously, Iwamizawa was a centre for warehousing and distribution for the area's abundant coal industry. However, when the mines closed as a result of shifting energy demands, Iwamizawa was forced to undergo a painful and prolonged change in its basic economic structure. Today, agriculture has become the main industry in the area, with emphasis on crops such as onions and other row crops in addition to the normal staple rice crop. This agricultural diversity, along with growth in the service and consumer goods sectors and the development of public and educational institutions has given stability to the regional economy.

It is said that Iwamizawa got its name from labourers constructing railroads in the area as far back as the 1880's. As these labourers would often go to a nearby river to bathe and relax, they began to call the area *Yuamisawa*, or "The Bath-Taking River". Over time, the pronunciation changed to "Iwamizawa," but to this day the surrounding rivers remain important natural assets.

Iwamizawa has made the dream of “Making A New Home Town” a reality. Numerous parks, open areas, recreational facilities, traditional shrines and local festivals reflect the deeply rooted cultural values of the people and their commitment to and respect for the environment.

On March 27, 2006, the neighbouring communities of Kurisawa and Kita merged with the city of Iwamizawa. Until the 1890’s, both Kurisawa and Kita had been part of the village of Iwamizawa, but it is only now, over 100 years since their separation that these communities have once again joined to start a new chapter in Iwamizawa’s history.

In 1985, Iwamizawa signed a sister-city agreement with the U.S. city of Pocatello, Idaho. A second sister-city agreement was established by the town of Kurisawa with the U.S. city of Canby, Oregon in 1989. Due to the merging of the town of Kurisawa with Iwamizawa, the sister-city exchange is now administered by the city of Iwamizawa.

