

# Popoki



Newsletter

No.176 2020.4.25

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[http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/index\\_e.html](http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/index_e.html)

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It's almost May! The sun is shining, but Popoki stays home, except for exercise. Are you staying home, too? We hope everyone is well and safe!



## Popoki's Hot News!



### Coming up!

Nada Challenge! Tokagawa Park, 10:00~16:00.

<https://nadachallenge.wixsite.com/nadachallenge/cny>

The new date is 9/13!

**\*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it might be postponed/cancelled. Please check Popoki's FB, etc. to make sure if it is happening!**



### Piece of Peace

One of Popoki's friends, Rakunyan, sent the following piece of peace. "Peace" is understanding. In a basketball analogy, "peace" is like shooting hoops in a public court. "Basketball" is like international law, the game that governs relations between States, i.e., "shooting hoops." Thanks to it, States can

improve their efforts pursuing peace and, more importantly, the prevention of conflict. States might "play" individually or based on regional cooperation motivated by common interests, such as peace, that is, the "ball." "Peace" varies from one to another because it is the reflection of the limits of one's knowledge, defining one's capacity of understanding towards others. Thus, at the court, one embraces the bizarre; that is, States should have an understanding of their differences to achieve common interests, such as peace".

What sort of 'peace' did you encounter today? Please contribute a bit of peace!

Please let us know by sending a message to Popoki's e-mail: [ronniandpopoki \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:ronniandpopoki@gmail.com) !

In the morning, we exhibited the cloths of 'Popoki Friendship Story' at Oshacchi, which is the nickname of the Otsuchi Town Community Centre. We asked the local people to draw pictures on our cloth again this year, too. Through the pictures, they told us about their experiences of the earthquake and tsunami and wishes for peace. We had a very precious time in Otsuchi. A woman drew her three children and a heart. She and her husband decided to return to Otsuchi, his hometown, in order to work for the recovery after the disaster. Now they live with their youngest son, however, two of their elder daughters stay in the Kanto region apart from them. She was surprised when her thoughts appeared in her picture. I hope that the family will meet again soon and smile as in her picture.

At eleven o'clock Laurennyan gave a presentation introducing Taiwan at Oshacchi. Otsuchi International Exchange Association gave us this opportunity because Otsuchi Town is a candidate to be a host town for the Taiwanese 2020 Tokyo Olympics team. The audience asked about such things as Taiwanese food culture and we had lively conversations. Later, we joined a tea party called 'Ochakko' and enjoyed talking with local residents. The traditional dishes of Otsuchi, namasu (pickles) and oshiruko (sweet red-bean soup), were really delicious!

In the afternoon, we read Popoki books in English and Japanese at the library at Oshacchi. Ronyan's new Popoki story 'Popoki's House' was welcomed by the audience because it was attractive to very small children, as well as adults. Then, we joined in the 'SHAKE HAND' activity offered by Otsuchi Obachan Club. This is a wonderful activity. Participants decorate stuffed salmons, set a price and donate the money to Otsuchi if they are sold. Popoki's friends enjoy this creative activity every year.



Reading of 'Popoki's House'

After that, Itoh Yoko san, a photographer from Otsuchi, gave us a guided tour around town and explained the earthquake, tsunami and large fire, showing photos before and after the disaster at each location. She also drove us to the 'Wind Phone' (Kaze no denwa) and the Sanriku Hana Hotel Hamagiku. The film entitled 'The Phone of the Wind' was inspired by the a phone box in Otsuchi. The telephone for people to talk about what they cannot tell anyone or call someone whom they cannot actually meet. The telephone box showed compassion of the people.

The Sanriku Hana Hotel Hamagiku is a hotel which is located on a cliff and famous for its great ocean view. After the earthquake the tsunami flooded the middle of the building. We watched the road signs which were set after the earthquake in order to evacuate from tsunami. To my surprise, tsunami sometimes came inland, far from the shore, and sometimes did not come to places near sea, depending on the shape of the land. I realised the difficulty of making quick decisions in an emergency. The current road signs clearly indicate in which direction and how in many metres people should take refuge from tsunami, even if they are unfamiliar with the place. I was impressed with their strong wish for saving as many of human lives as possible through efforts for disaster prevention.

Thanks to the support of a lot of people in Otsuchi, we had a wonderful experience this year again. We really appreciate it.



Left: The place and the photos of the same location before and after disaster taken by Itoh Yoko san

Right: The road sign showing areas with the potential for flooding from tsunami

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the third day of our Tohoku trip, we took Sanriku Railway from Otsuchi Town and moved to Ofunato City. We reunited with Ms. Yukiko Esashi, the director of an NPO called Ohanashi Kororin. Last year, Ms. Esashi and Popoki Peace Project carried out reading and drawing activities together at the Ofunato Disaster Prevention Tourism Exchange Center (so-called Ofuna Port). However, this year our programs took place at Ofunato Nursery School and Ofunato Kita Elementary School.

In the morning, we visited Ofunato Nursery School and did reading and drawing with approximately 60 children. We read a new story called “Popoki’s House.” In this story many animals who are Popoki’s friends appear. This time, we used some English words such as rabbit, hippo, and wild pig during the reading. I was surprised that the children knew more English than we expected. After reading, we did drawing on a big paper. We asked the children, “What do you want to give to make Popoki happy?” Many of the children drew pictures of fish and the sea, which made me think, “Wow, they are the children of Ofunato!” At the end, the children sang songs for us. We were moved by them trying their best to sing.

In the afternoon, we carried out our activities with 2<sup>nd</sup>-year kids from Ofunato Kita Elementary School. The content was the same, but we used more English words during the reading. Gradually, the children started to read together in English, such as, “Please come in” and “See you.” After the reading, as we did in the nursery school, we asked the children to draw presents for Popoki on a big paper. They drew pictures which will make Popoki smile, such as cat food, cakes, and rainbows.

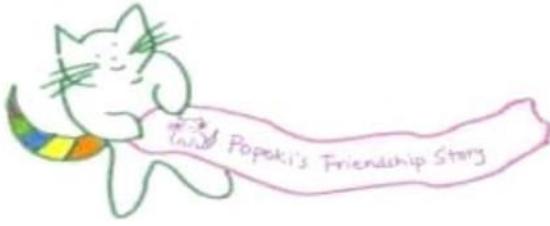
Before the activities, I was worried and nervous. However, after the all activities, the children were smiling, which made me think, “It turned out to be a great success!” It was thanks to the teachers from Ofunato Nursery School and Ofunato Kita Elementary School and Ms. Esashi. I would like to say thank you to all of them and hope the friendship between Popoki and everyone will continue.



Ofunato Nursery School



Ofunato Kita Elementary School



## \*Popoki's Interview\*

Interviewer: Naokonyan

Interviewee: Yukiko Esashi.

Ms. Esashi is from Ofunato, and is the director of NPO Ohanashi kororin.

The 2020 Popoki Peace Project activities in Tohoku were held by Ronyan, Satonyan, Nagisanyan, Ayakonyan, Laurennyan and Naokonyan. On 10 February, we visited Ofunato Nursery School and Ofunato-Kita Elementary School (2nd year) with Esashi san and we read a picture book to them. The interviewee is Esashi san, who is the director of the NPO Ohanashi Kororin. She was also interviewed in the Popoki News Letter 164, last year. In this interview, we asked her motivation toward her activities and the key tips for reading picture books.



\* The main activity of Ohanashi Kororin is reading books to children

Q. Could you tell me what made you to start this activity "reading picture books"?

A. In the past, I lived in India, and I worked as a volunteer for three years. The activity was to raise funds and collect clothes and food for the Monastery of Mother Teresa and a boarding house for students of schools for the blind. To collect those supplies, I held events for Japanese workers and their families who were living in India. I collected participation fees from them and sent the money as a donation. However, in the course these activities, I realized that if I gave the money as a donation, the relationship between us would become that of a "giver and taker" rather than equal. That made me so frustrated! Due to that feeling, I looked for another approach that would allow us to be equal. Finally, I found that Kamishibai (story-telling with pictures) enabled us to share and enjoy our time together on equal footing. Kamishibai is part of Japanese culture and can be a tool to build an equal relationship beyond borders. When I returned to Japan in 2003, reading picture books was in the spotlight, so I launched the NPO Ohanashi Kororin. The objective was to improve literacy and to cultivate aesthetic sensitivity. At the time of the Earthquake in 2011, I went around evacuation centres to see if the kids were OK. I realized that I tried to keep my mind balanced by sharing the enjoyment of picture books. I realized the importance of sharing the thoughts and mind to support each other. Therefore, after the earthquake, I continued this activity as

interaction and education.

Q. Could you tell me about your perspective?

A. I would like to encourage people to be connected, and connected to Ofunato. We used to have a custom of communication in the community, but it was destroyed due to the tsunami in 2011, so I would like to revive it. For instance, I would like to encourage people to join the rebuilding of Ofunato. I believe that if the adult generation now rebuilds Ofunato for the next generation, our children will see them and they will get involved in rebuilding like us in the future.

Q. Could you tell us the key techniques and preparation for picture book reading?

A. I believe reading doesn't require any techniques. I guess many people have an image that good readers are like theatre actors, however, I believe that natural reading style is more important. For example, if you read picture books as stage actors do, then you cannot tell more than the story in the books. Telling them of your love, that you came here to see them and think they are cute is important.

Basics of picture book reading (citation from NPO Ohanashikororin 'Yatte mippeshi yomikikase')

- Reading it naturally.
- Reading it with all your heart (This means you should enjoy the books together).
- Relaxed place and time.
- Books should be appropriate to their age.

For groups

- The venue should be appropriate for the picture book reading, (neither too big nor too small)
- Everyone can see the pictures.
- Everyone can hear your voice.

Q. Could you give us advice on the key tips to help people to understand abstract concepts? We would like to teach about such concepts as "peace" or "feeling safe" in our Popoki Peace Project activities.

A. To be honest, I believe we cannot and should not teach concepts like that. This is because different people have different definitions of those words. I would like to help children to start thinking about the meaning, rather than telling them those meanings. I believe they should define those abstract concepts for themselves, so I prefer to let them think about what is peace, what is feeling safe. People can have simulated experience by reading books, therefore reading many books enables people to think about those

concepts. Many picture books have happy endings, so it is good for children if they can simulate in the story. They can learn problem-solving and increase their confidence and hope. I also believe, on the other hand, asking what is peace, which Ronyan is focusing on is important, especially the opportunity. Without asking it, children may not have the opportunity to think about it.

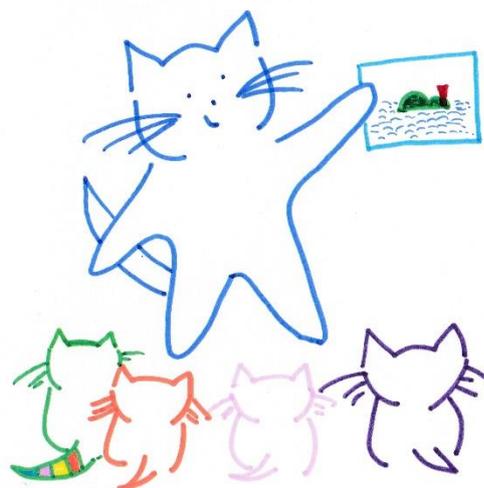
Q. Could you give us feedback on what we did today?

A. Overall, the teamwork was good. I will give you 99 out of 100! I really liked your performance at the elementary school. Those who supported the readers were good, even though they change their roles, it worked well. You gave good support to each other. Those who did not read played an important role as complementing the children's understanding. That was very nice. If I have to criticize it, it would have been much better if you could have stood more in the middle of the audience at the nursery school.

Naokonyan

In the course of the interview, I could ask Esashi-san not only about the key skills of reading but also her motivation and perspectives. That was a good opportunity for me. I could learn the wonderfulness of living our life with energy and belief. Thank you so much for your time.

Oshimai!



\* We asked Parvin, a friend of Popoki's, what it was like where she lived. She replied with this photo essay. We were so impressed, we have decided to ask other friends to share their stories, too. If you would like to share yours, please send it!

## Covid-19: A Global Pandemic

Parvin Ghorayshi

The first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in my city, Toronto, Canada, in the last week of January 2020. By the 2nd week of April 2020 the number of confirmed cases jumped to over 24, 000 in Canada. 7, 074 recovered and 713 died.

A Storm is Coming.

By mid-March Covid-19 has become the focus of social networks, media, politicians, academics, schools, businesses, hospitals, various groups and every Canadian. Rules, restrictions, and recommendations regarding social distancing and personal hygiene have been intensified. Canadian Public Health provides up-to-date daily information re: Covid-19.

It has projected 4,400 to 44,000 could die from Covid-19 in Canada.

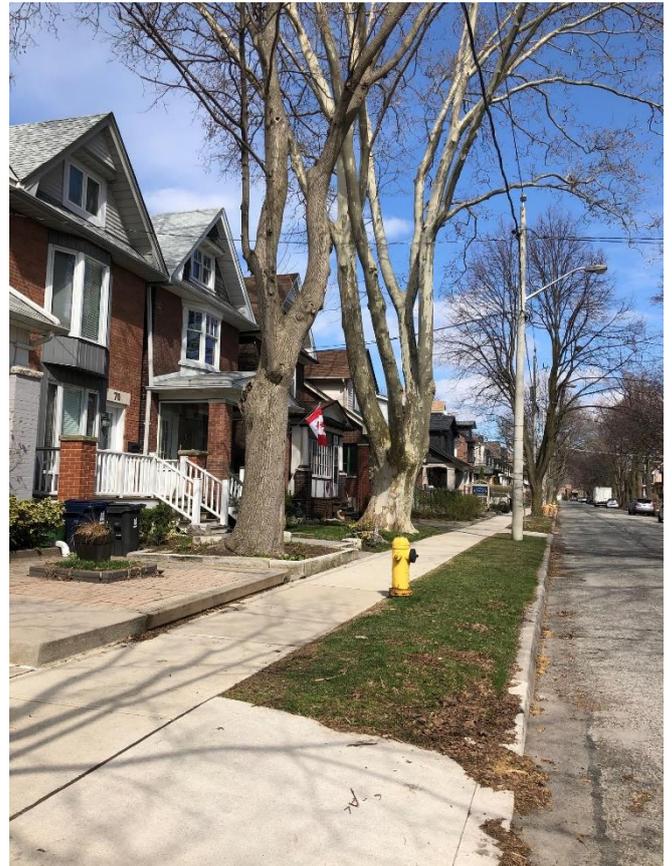
1- Stay Home



2-No one in the streets:



3- My Empty neighbourhood



4- Empty parking lots:



## FEAR

Sports Leagues suspend seasons, Theatres, Music Halls, Playgrounds, Schools, Universities, Shops, except for food, are closed. Supermarkets see panic. Churches, Mosques and places of worships announce closure. Parliament goes on break. Borders to non-essential traffic are closed. Stocks continue to fall.

State of emergency is declared.

Governments, health centres, and businesses take drastic measures to control the spread of Covid-19. Length of the lockdown, we are told, depends on the behaviour of the Canadians. Canadians are cooperating.

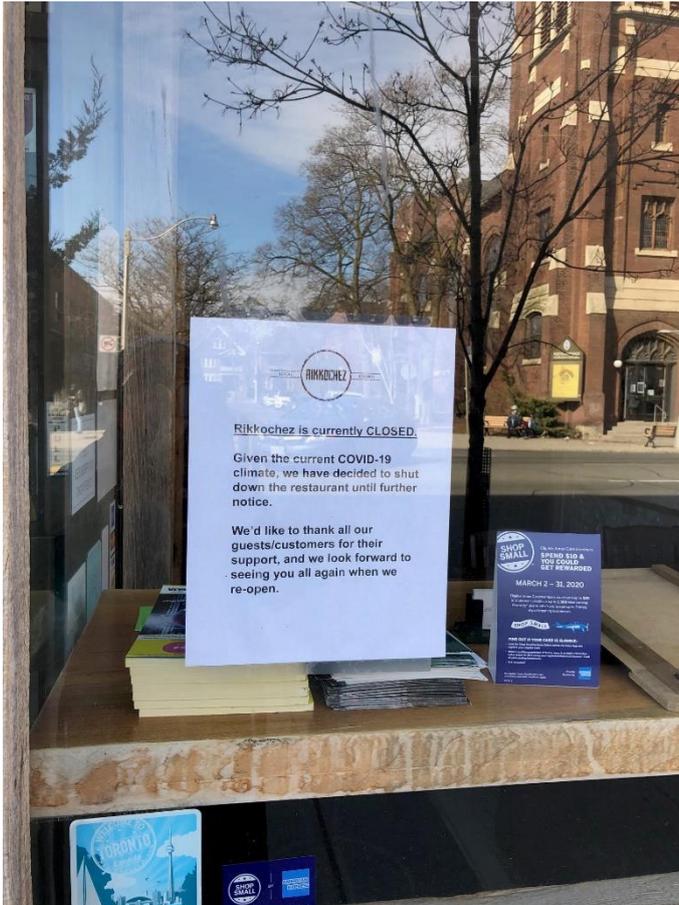
Social distancing ramps up.

State of Emergency: We Are Closed

5- No Hair Cuts



### 6- Restaurants are Closed



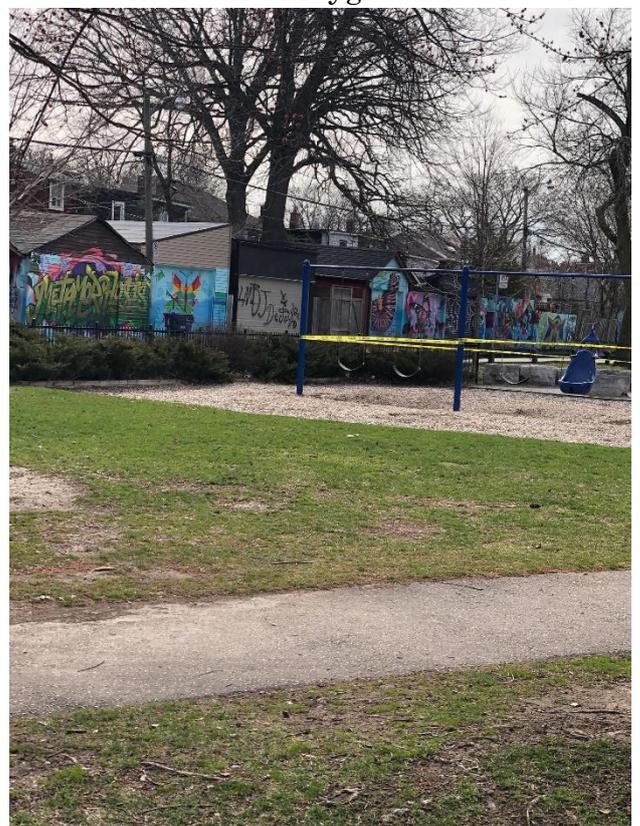
### 7- Dentistry Closed



### 8- Public libraries Closed



### 9- Schools and Playgrounds Closed



## 10- Food Lines



There is a Storm Coming, There is something bad out there:

My first reaction was fear. My sense of safety was broken. I felt the world has changed, and it has. The message is it is temporary, but it does not feel that way. I realized that my world is becoming different. There is a loss of connection, the loss of intimacy and for most people the fear of economic toll. This Pandemic, more than ever, made me think of those in poverty, those who are not connected to the virtual technology, those living in war zones, and those who do not have the means to take care of themselves in this world.

My salvation was to find what I can and cannot do. I found control and power in acceptance and in relying on the work and knowledge of those who are finding a solution to the problem. I did what I was advised to do: wash my hands; keep a safe

distance, keep informed and find out I can do as an individual and in groups. I tried to stay in the moment and not to go to the future and imagine the worst. I remind myself of other pandemics, and keep telling myself, "This is temporary". I hope this will be the case and together we will find a solution to the ills of our global world.

There is Hope: Not Everything is cancelled.

11- Hope and Solidarity is not Cancelled



I, like others, found light in this darkness by connecting with friends, family and groups via technology and other means. This pandemic showed us that we are global citizens and interconnected. "Stay Home" gave us time to question what threatens our society and the human race in this global world. Covid-19 is a warning sign and is tied with other critical issues of our time. This pandemic more than ever made many of us to question, War, Famine, Pollution, Environmental degradations, Overconsumption, Racial, Gender and Class conflicts, in order to create a better world.

## 12- Free little libraries in the Neighbourhoods



I, like others, use free little libraries in our neighbourhoods. We have established neighbourhood groups and attend to each other's needs. Those of us who know how to sew prepared masks to protect everyone; attended to the needs of elderly and the vulnerable population, etc.

## 13- We Are Not Alone



14- Individuals and Groups are reaching out Locally and Globally



15- Reaching out to Others



Governments-at different levels- increased spending in order to help businesses and individuals who are adversely affected by the closures. Banks have lowered interest rates; mortgage, tax, and rent can be postponed.

Food Banks, faith-based groups, neighbourhoods; individuals, charities: all are doing their parts. Music Halls, Art Galleries, Museums, Movie Theatres in Canada and around the globe have become free via the social networks. Schools and universities are adapting to a new form of learning and connecting. Individuals and groups are acting locally and connecting globally.

Another, hopefully better, world is on its way.

16- Another better world is on its way



17-Spring is Welcoming us: Hold on to Hope



18- Thank You



# POPOKI'S EASY POGA

Lesson 144

This month's theme is stretch!!!!!!



1. First, as always, sit up straight and look beautiful.
2. Now stand up tall, spread your arms and reach up! Hug the sun or the clouds! If you like, keep the same position and try rotating your arms.
3. Next, stretch your arms out to your sides, palms facing behind you. Try pushing your arms back, or drawing big circles in the air!
4. Now, bend over so your head is near the floor. Raise your arms, linking your fingers, and stretch up, up, up...and release! Repeat.
5. Did it? Even if you didn't succeed, you tried! It is time for the 'success pose.' Congratulations! Do you feel refreshed? Please remember to relax, breathe, laugh and practice for 3 minutes every day.

## Please join us!



Next Po-kai: 2020.5.3 @ zoom! 17:30~

7.11 Popoki @ kodomo no sato! Morning program

8.6 Hiroshima/Nagasaki Day Skype to discuss nuclear issues in Japan, U.S., Guam

9.13 Nada Challenge! 10:00 – 16:00. Popoki will have a booth and exhibit!

\* Please note that these activities may be cancelled in order to prevent further spread of the Corona virus.

Book Suggestion from Popoki's Friends

*Riokun no susumu michi – Gakko ni ikenai kimitachi he* – (Rio-kun's path: To those of you who can't go to school). Text & illustrations: Miyuki Kaneshiro. Gakken, 2019.

Otsuchi-cho (July, 2019). *"Ikiru Akashi – Iwateken Otsuchi-cho Higashi nihon daishinsai kirokushi"* (*Testimony of Living: A Record of the Great East Japan Earthquake in Otsuchi-cho, Iwate Prefecture*). Editorial Supervision: Otsuchi-cho Board of Education, others.

## Popoki in Print \* Back issues of Popoki News: [http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/archives\\_e.html](http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/archives_e.html)

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- ‘Popoki, What Color is Peace?’ *Kobe YMCA News*, 2009.3.1. No.593. p.2
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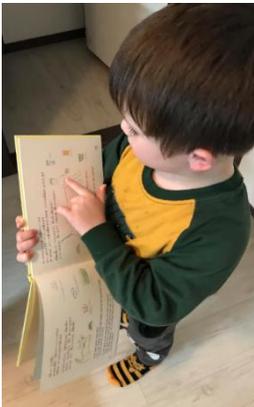
# What Popoki Means to Me

Hi! My name is Nikitanyan! And I like books!



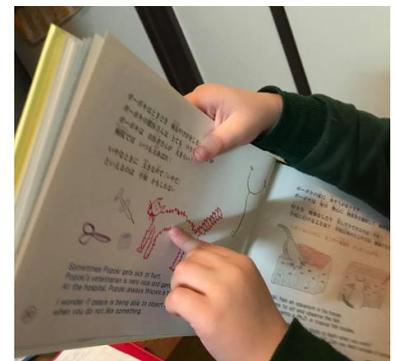
The yellow Popoki book is one of my favorite ones! Because I like cats and yellow color!

= ^ . \_ . ^ =



On each page I like to find Popoki, and Ronyan is there sometimes too!

Here I feel so bad for Popoki. I don't like shots too. Hope Popoki will feel better soon!



I have a cat too but he is black and doesn't have a colorful tail as Popoki does, but I like him too! His name is Cleopa and he is my friend! I Hope Popoki and Cleopa could be friends too!

**PLEASE**



**HELP**



## SUPPORT THE POPOKI PEACE PROJECT!

The Popoki Peace Project is a voluntary project which uses Popoki's peace book and DVD to promote peace through various activities such as peace camps, peace workshops, seminars and other activities. Since the March 2011 earthquake, we have also worked in the disaster area and in 2012 published a book about that work: *Popoki's Friendship Story - Our Peace Journey Born Out of the Great Northeastern Japan Earthquake. Popoki, What Color is Peace?* has been translated into Thai, Chinese, Korean, Khmer, Indonesian, Tetun and Bengali, Vietnamese, Arabic and Hebrew. Spanish, Farsi, Lao, Swahili, translations are underway. If you would like to translate Popoki, or have a way to have the book sold at your local bookstore, please let us know.

**How to purchase Popoki's books: *Popoki, What Color is Peace? Popoki's Peace Book 1, Popoki, What Color is Friendship? Popoki's Peace Book 2, Popoki, What Color is Genki? Popoki's Peace Book 3 and Popoki's Friendship Story***

### From outside of Japan

1. Go to your local Japanese bookstore: Kinokuniya, Maruzen, etc. (or their website)
2. Write to us at [ronniandpopoki@gmail.com](mailto:ronniandpopoki@gmail.com) and we'll figure it out!

### From Inside Japan

From the publisher, Epic: TEL: 078-241-7561·FAX: 078-241-1918

From Amazon.co.jp or your local bookseller

From the Popoki Peace Project [ronniandpopoki@gmail.com](mailto:ronniandpopoki@gmail.com)



**Contributions are always welcome!**

Popoki Peace Project [popokipeace-at-gmail.com](mailto:popokipeace-at-gmail.com)

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## THANK YOU FROM POPOKI!