



CULTURE CONNECTIONS

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Celebrate Chinese New Year!

Chinese New Year is the most important of the traditional Chinese holidays. The period just before the Chinese New Year, called *chunyun*, is the busiest travel time of the entire year. All across China and beyond, you'll find people on their way home to spend this time with their families. The Chinese New Year is seen as the perfect time to do some spring cleaning. Traditionally, it was believed that cleaning house for the new year's celebrations swept bad luck away and helped ensure good fortune in the year to come. Traditional foods include fish, which is served at the end of the New Year's meal and symbolizes abundance, and a sticky fruitcake called *Neen Gow* or *Nian Gow*. Red decorations are everywhere, because the colour red is considered to be one of the luckiest colors of all.

Free Chinese New Year Events in Vancouver

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Year of the Dragon Celebration at International Village (Jan. 27 – 29)

One of Greater Vancouver's largest New Year's celebrations happens at the International Village in the heart of Chinatown. Over 150,000 visitors drop in over the three days of free fun. Festivities include live performances, entertainment, shopping, kids' activities, and more.

Vancouver Chinatown Spring Festival & Cultural Fair (Jan. 28 – 29)

Due to popular demand, the Chinese Cultural Fair which follows the Vancouver Chinese New Year Parade has been expanded to two days: the Saturday before the parade and Sunday, the day of the parade (see below). The Spring Festival & Cultural Fair takes place at Chinatown's Sun Yat-sen Plaza (50 East Pender Street) and includes multicultural performances, a special lion dance grand finale, and martial arts demonstrations.

Vancouver Chinese New Year Parade 2012 (Jan. 29)

Vancouver's annual Chinese New Year Parade features the largest assembly of traditional lion dance teams in Canada, plus multicultural dance troupes, the Vancouver Police Department Motorcycle Drill Team, marching bands, and many local community groups, attracting over 50,000 spectators each year!



NEW ACTIVITIES

Join us for the launch of Media Club!

Hello all, my name is Phany and I will be hosting our brand new Media Club within Culture Connections Program. A little about me: I grew up in Montreal, Quebec, where French is the main speaking language. Coming from the east, I decided to pack my belongings in a little suit case and off I was on a road trip across Canada!

It was a two week trip and I took my time. I enjoyed every single bit of sightseeing and experiencing Canadian nature's wonders. A few stops here and there through most provinces. I'd like to mention a few memorable places: discovering Thunder Bay where I had my best steak, bathing myself in a hot spring in Moose Jaw and being amazed at the sight of the Rockies in Banff !

After all that, I finally reached my destination: Beautiful British Columbia! I fell in love. I had no idea Vancouver would one day be a place that I could call home. When I arrived in 2009, I didn't realize how my life would be so satisfying and how many heart-warming people would cross my path. I have found my foundation and now I can achieve my dreams.

I am pursuing my education in hope of becoming a great counsellor. I have learnt that helping my community through volunteering was my starting point to discover and re-discover my passion for people.

I would like to invite you all to join me the following Wednesday, February 1st, for a Culture & Conversation Night when we will be launching our new Media Club! During this evening you can learn more about the Media Club and how you can participate! The Media Club will be a great opportunity for newcomers to improve English speaking, listening and writing skills and also, learn about Canadian culture and humour.

We will be discovering Canadian author Stuart McLean whom you might know through his radio show program, *The Vinyl Cafe* on CBC radio. He is well known for his comforting and humorous storytelling. McLean's books have won The Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for humour three times!

We will be reading his essay collection which features fifteen years of his views on his relationship with Canada and Canadians. We'll also listen to *The Vinyl Cafe* radio show and discuss it. We will learn about Stuart McLean's famous Fiction characters like Dave and his family through his short amusing stories.

I am looking forward to meeting you all. This isn't just another road trip story but the beginning of your journey as a Canadian.

Phany N



PROGRAM UPDATES

Host Profile: Evelyn Moldowin

Evelyn Moldowin has been a Culture Connections Host since 2006. In her time as a volunteer, Evelyn has been matched with 12 newcomers- sometimes with several newcomers at the same time! - from many different countries including; Austria, Burma, China, Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam, Korean and Iran.

What motivates you to continue volunteering with MOSAIC?

I enjoy volunteering in the host program; I enjoy seeing people build self-confidence, and seeing them grow in the new environment. It is great to see how some newcomers gain more confidence in their own abilities - such as speaking English in everyday lives, and to interact with others. I like working with immigrants since they face many challenges and they need help. Also, the program suits my personality since most people I met through the program are gentle, patient and very appreciative of help they receive.

Tell us about one funny experience.

Baking a cake together was one of the funny experiences. We are very excited to do it together. We got the ingredients and were very much into making it. But, in the end it flopped in the middle! Oh, dear!

What are some of the challenges when meeting with newcomers?

Of course, language barriers are often challenging, but I'd say that one of the most important things in starting a new partnership is to listen to your partner and find out what you have in common. I often kept asking about their hobbies, and once I would find few things in common, then me and the newcomer would start planning our activities around those interests. It is important to have something in common in order to build a relationship.

What advice would you give to new hosts?

Listening and being patient is the key to a successful partnership. Be there to answer questions. For newcomers, it is very difficult to be in a new place and to re-learn things we take for granted, so it is very important that newcomers feel that they can contact a host and ask questions. It is a very rewarding experience to be there for another person.



Newcomers Jane Sue (left), Vivian Duan (right) and Host Evelyn Moldowin (centre).

PROGRAM UPDATES

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars !

Sunday, January 29: *Chinese New Year Outing*
to International Village

Wednesday, February 1: Culture and Conversation Night
The Media Club Presentation by Phany Nhiek

Wednesday , February 29: *Confessions of the Other Woman*
Theatre Show by donation at Granville Island

Wednesday, March 14: Culture and Conversation Night
YMCA Presentation by Cathryn France

March Outing: *Tour of YMCA*
(date to be announced)

YMCA Connections Conversation Club

Come and practice your English at the
YMCA Connections Conversation Club!
Meet new friends, and have some fun!
We discuss a different topic every week.
This is a free, drop-in activity!

Every Thursday

Time: 5:30 PM–7:00 PM

Location: Robert Lee YMCA, 955 Burrard St.

