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City opens cultural showcase

Chinese kick off series of exhibits

Eric McGuinness
The Hamilton Spectator

Gold-and-green dragons the length of a bus danced to rapid drumbeats as Hamilton's Chinese community opened a month-long cultural exhibit at City Hall on the weekend.

Organizer Solomon Ngan said the display in the second-floor foyer is intended to "celebrate the diverse cultural makeup of this warm and welcoming city."

He said the Chinese Canadian Cultural Committee wants to "educate, inform and entertain all Hamiltonians about the richness of the Chinese civilization."

Officials from the Ottawa embassy of the People's Republic of China and the consulate-general in Toronto attended the opening ceremonies Saturday morning with Mayor Larry Di Ianni, Revenue Minister Stan Keyes, Hamilton West MPP Judy Marsales and several city councillors.

Keyes spoke of shared citizenship, saying, "Each of us cannot be defined by one culture or even a combination. We are part of the tapestry we call Canada."

The exhibit is the first of a planned series to showcase various cultures. The idea came from the Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative, a project aimed at increasing interfaith and intercultural understanding, fighting racism and encouraging civic leadership.

Content of the display will change over the next three months, focusing at various times on Chinese traditions, philosophy, art, history and food. Visitors are welcome whenever City Hall is open.

Ngan is chair of Hamilton's mundialization committee, responsible for maintaining ties with Hamilton's original eight twin cities, including the Chinese city of Ma'anshan, and the link between Dundas and Kaga, Japan. He's also vice-chair of the board of elders of Hamilton's Chinese Alliance Church.



Barry Gray, the Hamilton
Spectator

Alice Liu conducts the Hamilton/Halton Chinese singing group at a performance Saturday that kicked off a month-long Chinese exhibit at City Hall.

A native of Hong Kong, Ngan immigrated to Canada in 1972 and moved to Hamilton in 1980. He first worked for Stelco and for the past 16 years has been an executive of Cambridge-based Kromet and its Hamilton affiliate, Alumabrite Anodizing Ltd.

He readily accepted an invitation from Di Ianni's office to chair the exhibit committee because: "I believe strongly in social conscience and social care as a Christian. I jump into community activities with both feet.

"So I pulled together Chinese community leaders and challenged them to take on this opportunity to really showcase Chinese culture and to bring understanding and harmony to the city. We want to bring some colour, arts, joy, culture and fun into City Hall."

Ngan said the exhibit is being staged at no cost to the city. Materials on display come from local residents, city businesses and the Chinese embassy.

"The big thing about this to me, the major success, is that we can pool resources of all the different Chinese groups for one city-wide event. There's no one denomination or school or business featured."

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