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Historic Chinese School to Re-Open Under Chinatown Youth Advocates

This Fall, the Youth Collaborative for Chinatown -- in partnership with the Wong Benevolent Association -- re-opens the historic Mon Keang Chinese School to offer place-based learning of Cantonese language and culture in Vancouver's Chinatown. One of the first Chinese schools in the city, Mon Keang opened in 1925 on the third floor of the Wong Benevolent Association building, but closed its doors in 2011 due to declining enrolment and changing demographics.

The Wong Association building is one of Chinatown's twelve heritage-designated Chinese society buildings, dating over one hundred years and located in the National Historic Site along Pender Street. An important part of its heritage value has been use by Mon Keang School, which illustrates the value overseas immigrants placed on the Chinese language and cultural education of their Canadian-born children.

Graduates include Canada's first Chinese Member of Parliament, Douglas Jung, Canada's first federally-appointed Chinese judge, Justice Randall Wong, and historian and author, Paul Yee, whose fonds at the City Archives include an exercise book and report card from his time as a student.

"We're members of Chinatown's Chinese societies and involved in the City's programs to rehabilitate and stabilize their buildings," says Jeffrey Wong, a member of the Youth Collaborative who is also a director of the Wong Association and making the re-opening of Mon Keang School possible.

"The City's programs focus on saving the physical structures, but there's also the intangible heritage that is important to preserve. For example, the history and development of the Chinese-Canadian community as documented through photos and records, and the Cantonese language and culture that is still alive and practiced every day in the area."

ABOUT SATURDAY SCHOOL:

"Saturday School" is a special project of the Youth Collaborative for Chinatown (YCC), whose members advocate for cultural renewal as key to the area's ongoing revitalization efforts. The group is known for hosting public mahjong events to facilitate cross-cultural, intergenerational place-making and community building within a rapidly changing Chinatown.

Saturday School originally ran in 2014 as a public program of Centre A, guest curated by YCC co-founder, Kathryn Lennon. The program was popular among native-born Chinese and non-Chinese Vancouverites.

Each two-hour class is divided between classroom instruction and guided field study in various neighbourhood locations, selected to illustrate and apply "survival Cantonese" lessons, such as basic greetings, numbers, getting around and grocery shopping. Field studies also offer students an orientation to Chinatown's people, places and history.

“We’re taking a place-based approach to teaching Cantonese language and culture in Chinatown, which remains an authentic Cantonese community founded by Cantonese immigrants,” says Doris Chow, one of YCC’s co-founders. “Language plays an important role in maintaining intergenerational relationships and for community-building in the neighbourhood, given its high concentration of Chinese seniors.”

Says UBC Cantonese Lecturer, Raymond Pai, “All languages being equal, Cantonese is not just a language for a small group of people here, but also a cultural identity, and a way of life in the essential history of Vancouver. In addition to ensuring its continuous use in the community, it is even more important to educate and help the young generations realize learning this language is as useful and cool.”

Saturday School is once again taught by Zoe Lam, an activist for linguistic diversity and UBC PhD student focusing on language perception by heritage Cantonese speakers in Canada.

Saturday School at Mon Keang

Eight (8) Saturdays from October 1 to December 3, with no classes over the Thanksgiving and Remembrance Day long weekends.

Online registration is now open, with a limited number of drop-in spots available each class on first-come, first-served. To encourage intergenerational learning, a paying Parent may bring (but please don’t force) One Child Under 16 under a Family Rate of \$5 per class. Maximum 20 students per class.

For more information and to register: ycc-yvr.com/saturday-school/

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華埠青年推廣粵語 文彊學校今秋重開

關注華埠發展的義工組織「青心在唐人街」(下簡稱「青心會」)將與黃氏宗親會合作，於今年秋季重開位於溫哥華華埠的文彊學校，讓學生在相關的語境學習粵語及其文化。1925年，文彊學校在黃氏宗親會三樓開辦，是溫哥華最早的中文學校之一。2011年，因收生漸減和人口變化，學校暫時關閉。

黃氏宗親會所在的屋宇是華埠十二座歷史保護建築之一，屹立超過百年，位於國家歷史遺址區域內的片打街側。文彊學校的存在見證歷史風雨，亦反映了漂洋過海的華人希望其語言文化在土生後代身上有所傳承。

文彊的校友包括加拿大首位華裔聯邦議員鄭天華 (Douglas Jung)，加拿大首位聯邦委任華裔法官黃星翹 (Randall Wong)，歷史學者及作家余兆昌 (Paul Yee)。余兆昌 (Paul Yee)更在溫哥華檔案館存有卷宗，包括他學生時代的一本練習冊和成績單。

黃家浚是青心會的成員，亦是黃氏宗親會理事，努力使文彊學校得以重開：「我們是華埠華人社團的一分子，有份參與溫哥華市政府的建築修繕計劃。」

黃家浚認為：「市政府計劃的重點在修繕建築結構，但其實非物質遺產也很重要，例如相片和檔案中記錄的加拿大華人社區之發展和歷史，還有粵語及其文化，與當下華埠街坊鄰里的日常生活息息相關。」

週末學校簡介

「週末學校」是青心會所組織的一個特別項目。該會會員致力推動文化傳承，視其為振興華埠的關鍵之一。隨著華埠發展日新月異，青心會通過一系列的公眾麻雀活動，推動跨文化和跨年齡層的社區建設。

「週末學校」最初為2014年A中心的一個公眾項目，由青心會發起人之一姚君妍籌辦。該項目不但受土生華裔歡迎，亦吸引了其他非華裔的溫哥華市民。

每堂課為兩小時，分為課堂教學和實地考察兩部分。實地考察的目的是讓學生生活學活用「基本粵語」，例如問候，數字，簡單交流和購物。此外，學生亦可親身了解華埠的人物、地方和歷史。

青心會發起人之一周慕怡說：「來自廣東省的移民建立了華埠，直到今天依然是一個地道的廣東人社區。週末學校透過介紹華埠的粵語及其文化，鼓勵學生在身處之地活學活用。要打破年齡層之間的隔膜並建立社區，語言實在是不可或缺，尤其是在長者眾多的華埠。」

卑詩大學粵語講師白杰說：「語言無分高下。粵語不只是一個屬於小眾的語言，更是一種文化身份，是溫哥華歷史變遷中的一種生活方式。除了要保證社區能繼續使用粵語，更要通過提供知識和資源，令年輕人覺得學習粵語是有用和有趣的。」

週末學校導師將再次由卑詩大學博士生林慧雯擔任。她積極推進多元的語言生態，致力研究加拿大土生華裔對語音的認知。

文彊週末學校

10月1日至12月3日逢星期六，感恩節和停戰紀念日的長週末除外，共八課。

網上報名現已開放。每堂課亦另預留少量現場報名的空位，先到先得。為鼓勵不同年齡的朋友一同學習，特設家庭優惠:隨家長同行(但不是被逼同行)的16歲以下兒童，每人每堂學費只需\$5。每堂課學生人數上限20人。

更多詳情及網上報名:ycc-yvr.com/saturday-school/

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