



C.H.I.N.A. PROGRAMME

A Community Heritage Project promoted by the Chinese Welfare Association



INTRODUCING CHINESE HERITAGE

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Welcome to our Short Introduction to Chinese Heritage.

The Chinese community is the largest and oldest ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland, and has been part of the fabric of local communities for almost 50 years.

As one of the oldest Civilisations the rich heritage of China itself has provided the basis for a distinct Northern Irish Chinese Community which has over five decades developed its own culture and heritage.

Like our community everyone can trace their past back to an ancestor who made here their home. Each community brought something new and different with them and that process of holding the old with the new or mixing the food and folklore they brought with them with the ingredients and traditions they found here has developed a new identity with its own rich heritage.

Our wider heritage work aims to assist our community to tell its story, and to look at what is distinctly the heritage which elder members of the community wish to see handed down not just to their children but to the wider community of Northern Ireland.

We address specific issues such as a community which has a disconnect with their traditional culture and history. Many second generation Chinese may have grown up with a commercialised, public presentation of their culture which has often been shaped by the service and food sectors or modern Western culture and the use of English has seen a dilution of culture and a loss of heritage. As economic migrants

records as others. Often in a country such as Northern Ireland where culture and heritage can be divisive and politicised, it is hard for 'smaller' communities to find the public space for their own heritage.

Therefore we see a long journey ahead. The first step on that road is the CHINA Programme, which aims to lay a foundation for the future.

As we explore and understand



C.H.I.N.A. Programme - Chinese Heritage, Interpretation & National Archive

many lack artefacts or items of authentic tangible heritage, and as we look around us much of what is celebrated as heritage doesn't feel like ours..

The result is a community which has not developed the same heritage markers and historic

our own culture and heritage in its local context we would love to share that with others and start really interesting conversations.

We hope that you will be as inspired as we are to make history together.





The urgency of history, means that we need to preserve the past now, for the future.

The vision of the CHINA Programme is to preserve the past, but also to present it using modern methods and innovative media which will allow for interpretation and education.

The Ox represents strength and work. In terms of yin and yang (阴阳—yīn yáng), Chinese people feel the this year will be a new strong beginning. This is the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the Northern Ireland Chinese Community.

It is a new start and while addressing the past we believe that this can still be future looking and will help us engage with new friends and allies.

We see it as a perfect time to begin such an ambitious project and to share our vision with others.



Our Story So Far

The history of the Chinese Community in Northern Ireland traces its roots to the early 1960s, and to changes that were happening on a global scale, after the Second World War. Following the Second World War Britain was experiencing a huge labour shortage. As a practical solution, the government passed the British Nationality Act, creating an opening for people living in the remaining and former colonies to claim British nationality and freely enter and settle in Britain. This act created the opportunity for Chinese people, from the British controlled Hong Kong, to come to the UK.

The general pattern of immigration in the 1950s was characterised by the migration of male Chinese farmers from the rural New Territories of Hong Kong. Unlike the affluent island of Hong Kong the New Territories was less developed and with the decline in agricultural, during the 1950s, life became increasingly difficult. As such many people from the New Territories took up the opportunity to move to the UK. Initially immigrants went to areas of England and because of the language barrier many found themselves entering into the catering trade. Throughout the next ten years the catering market became increasingly competitive with the result that many Chinese immigrants looked to other markets, thus beginning a wave of migration to Northern Ireland. Since the 1960s Chinese people have continued to come here. Today there are over 8000 Chinese people living in Northern Ireland. While traditionally the majority of this community came from areas of Hong Kong there are now a growing number of people coming from Mainland China.

The first Chinese Restaurant, 'The Hong Kong Restaurant' was opened in Belfast September 1960. The story itself is one of love and war, with a Special Forces soldier from the Sandy Row falling in love, marrying and bringing home a Hong Kong girl he had liberated from Japanese oppression. It became a bigger love story as Northern Ireland fell in love with Chinese food and the rest as they say is history.

10 Belfast Telegraph, Tuesday, October 17, 1961.

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Chinese restaurant opened in Belfast

Varied and exotic dishes on menu

A ROMANCE IN HONG KONG between a soldier from Belfast and a pretty Chinese girl, shortly after the last war, has led to the opening of Northern Ireland's first Chinese restaurant.

Thirteen years ago Mr. Robert Wright, then a Sergeant-Major in the Commandos, brought his bride to live at Rathcoole. Frequent visitors at their home were his wife's sister and her husband, Mr. Shuion Tse, owner of a Chinese restaurant in York.

Mr. Tse thought it would be a good idea to open a similar restaurant in Belfast. Last night saw the culmination of months of planning when his £13,000 Hong Kong Restaurant in Donegall Street was opened by the High Sheriff, Alderman Major W. G. Geddis.

To ensure authentic cooking of the Chinese delicacies, Mr. Tse has brought over 14 Chinese, all of them subjects, from Kowloon, Hong Kong.

RELATED

All the Chinese in the firm are related—with the exception of one and she is to become a member of the family soon. She is Miss Lily Fung, who is engaged to Mr. Shui Hon Cheung, one of the restaurant's managers. They plan to wed in Belfast but have not yet fixed a date.

The other manager is Mr. Kowal Tse, who has brought his wife with him to Belfast.

Said Mr. Shuion Tse, the managing director: "All the staff are settling down very well in Belfast. They find the people here very friendly. The only thing they are not so keen on is the weather."

Shark fin soup at 6s, chow min at 7s, and Chicken chop suey at 3s 6d—these are only a few of the varied and exotic dishes on the menu. Diners can try their hand with chopsticks, but cutlery is also provided for the more conventionally-minded. British dishes are served as well.

Speaking at the opening, Mr. Robert Frizzell, secretary of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, said it had been claimed that Ulster people were rather parochial in their tastes.

"I do not know what Belfast people will do about this restaurant," he said. "Will they come in and ask for bacon and eggs? I hope not. I hope they will try this delightful range of Chinese food."

The High Sheriff, declaring the restaurant open, said it would add colour and gaiety to the life of the city. He congratulated the owners on their enterprise in opening the restaurant and hoped they would be rewarded with the support of the public.

Mr. J. Hepplewhite, a friend of the Chinese family, said that the idea was not so much to go into competition with established restaurants but to bring Chinese cuisine to Belfast.

Other speakers at the dinner last night were Councillor Sir James Norritt and Mr. Frank Hanna, M.P.

Uigh

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Heritage is important for Chinese people and in recent surveys and work with older people's groups there is a real sense of regret that due to immigration, economic necessities, levels of poverty and the focus on work and self betterment that more time was not invested individually and as a community in preserving and studying the past.

Many Chinese people arrived here with only a suitcase, resulting in few authentic artefacts being held; most embarked on a life of hard work which left little time for the preservation or study of their heritage.

Chinese heritage is rich and complex and given the size and diversity of the country, made up of many different ethnic groups its is a huge task to record its heritage.

Often Chinese culture has been commercialised with an almost stereotypical cultural identity replicated in restaurants and food outlets which may be good for marketing but causes problems in terms of identity with authentic Chinese heritage often lost for an assumed facade.

The inter-generational disconnect, the changes in China itself and digital developments such as social media and modern social patterns and preferences have all put Chinese heritage at risk. The final threat is the march of time itself with many first generation immigrants advanced in years with memory and facilities failing.

However despite these difficulties and challenges CWA has placed heritage at heart of what they do. Since the early 2000s a number of initiatives have explored and captured the collective memory and experience of the first generation of Chinese here.

The first such project was part of the wider strategy of The South Belfast Roundtable on Racism. It had been working in local communities to promote good relations and identify projects which effectively tackle racist attitudes. The project came about as part of this work in The Donegall Pass Area, and brought together members of the long term communities of the Donegall Pass, the established Chinese community and members of the newer Polish community to explore "How did we come here?"

Supported and facilitated by The Ulster Peoples College the groups first met together in September 2006. Individual groups then researched and collated written and photographic material before coming together to verbally share their work. By sharing who they are and how they



Interpreting the Past



came to live together in Belfast relationships and trust were built, which helped us work together to make Belfast a better place for all. CWA took a lead with the Ulster Peoples College supporting the workers, and co-ordinating exhibition materials and provided meeting space. This community heritage project showed us the real need for such a project and the high levels of interest amongst the wider Chinese community. It began to tell the story of the community and identified heritage especially oral history as a key feature of telling that story.

The exhibition was officially launched at Belfast City Hall and travelled around community centres and other venues in South Belfast.

After seeing the value of heritage in raising awareness and tackling racism, CWA began to see it as a valuable area of work in and of itself. However as a 'welfare' organisation more practical everyday areas of work took precedence.

The work around heritage became the domain of our older persons group who have engaged in a range of memory making and reminiscence activities.

We have also engaged in a number of historic events with members of our community working with young people to tell their story.

Heritage in Education

The value of cultural heritage was highlighted in a collaborative education project entitled **"The Classroom + Project"**. The Executive Office (TEO) supported and funded the Classroom+ project, with Stranmillis University College (SUC) providing the lecturers and student teachers involved.

As a pioneering project it included the InterEthnic Forum in Mid and East Antrim; Global Learning Programme; the Belfast Roundtable; Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group; Building Communities Resource Centre in Ballymoney; Mandarin Speakers Association; Sai Pak Chinese Community Association; Polish Language Culture and Affairs (POLCA) and the Social Justice Trust.

It aimed to up-skill and increase the capacity of BME trainers and others within the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) that present diversity and cultural sessions (referred collectively as 'BME and



Interpretation through Education

diversity trainers' throughout this document) in schools, that when these workshops are delivered, the contribution is not merely seen as a diversion, but as a valuable asset and integral part of the delivery of the curriculum.

Classroom+ has worked to ensure that the contribution of BME and diversity trainers to schools is enhanced so that it can support the school's the requirements set by the curriculum and is therefore viewed as essential by schools and teachers.

There is now a clear need for more heritage based educational materials to use within the framework this programme developed. Given the stakeholders it is clear that a suite of ethnic minority cultural heritage education modules are required, and would command support from not just the communities but schools and the wider educational sector.

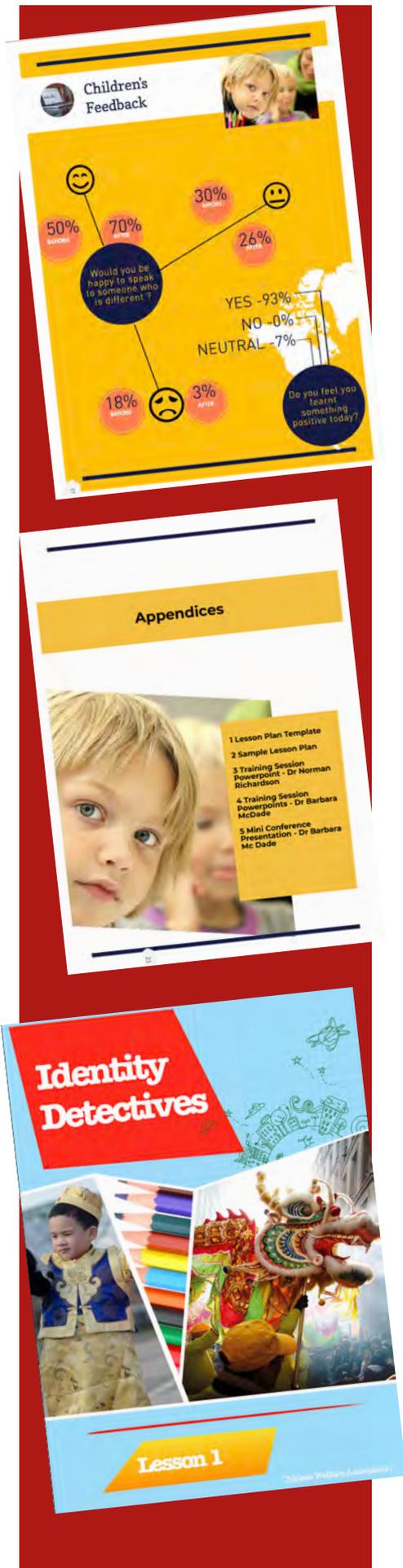
To do this will require a full study of Chinese heritage in a Northern Ireland context showing the connections that will work to improve relations.

Simultaneously, Classroom+ sought to provide the collaborating student teachers, as well as the participating schools, with a greater awareness,

understanding and appreciation of BME and diversity partners and of a multicultural Northern Ireland. Whereas school children are the foundation stone in seeking to create a more progressive society in NI that understands, welcomes and celebrates racial and cultural diversity, much hangs on the skills training of the teacher to implement this. Student teachers were given the opportunity to experience the richness of cultural diversity first hand through working with BME trainers.

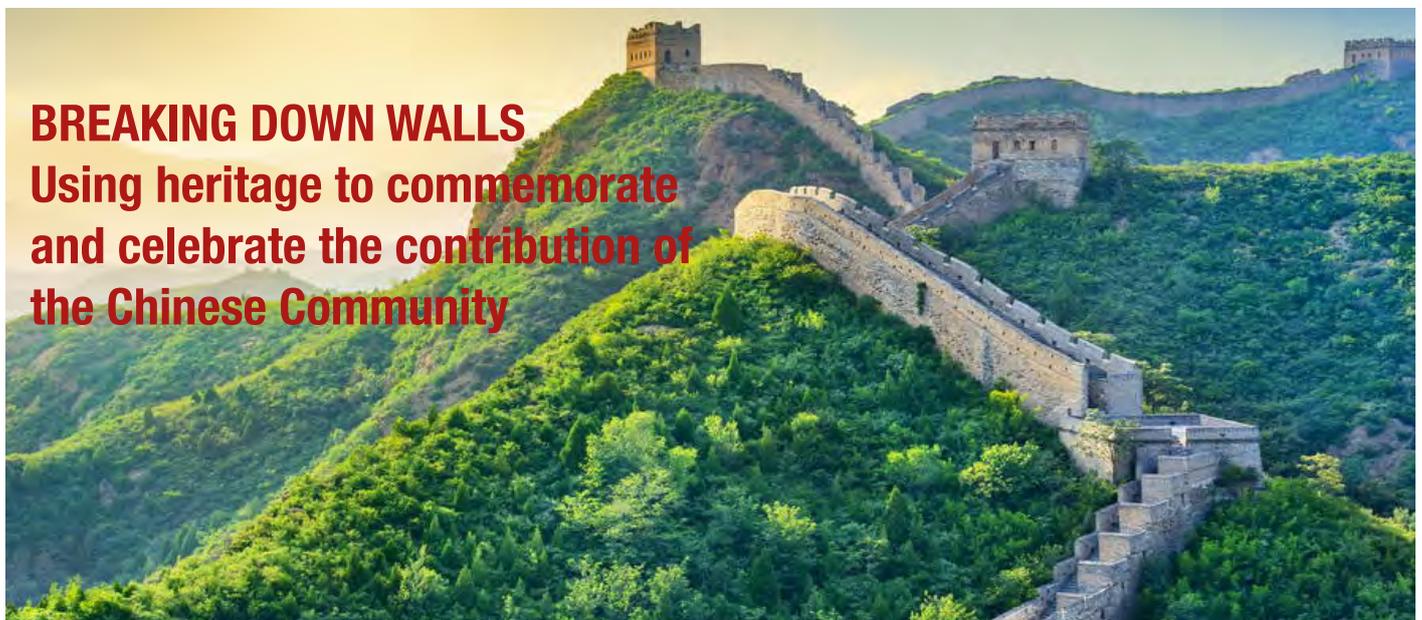
Used on this research and methodology we have integrated our education with a wider digital development of our work. With the COVID Restrictions impacting on our service delivery and with support from a number of funders and professionals we were able to take our work online and develop a Virtual Chinese Resource Centre.

Part of this exciting new initiative was CHIME - Chinese Heritage Interactive Museum Experience. This pilot programme looked at how virtual space could be used to enhance our heritage and education work.



Heritage refers to what has been preserved and passed down from previous generations. It is something that can be conserved or inherited, and something that has historic or cultural value. In a layman's terms, history is an account of events that have happened in the past, whereas heritage stands for things such as works of art, cultural achievements and folklore that have passed on from earlier generations to the present generation. Created and given meaning by people, representations of our cultural heritage have social value. The value for society can be cultural, artistic, historical, archaeological, or anthropological. It can be tangible like buildings or artefacts, or intangible practices, knowledge language music and includes landscapes and now even digital forms all of which can be handed down.

As we begin our exciting journey of discovery we would like to invite you to join us, and share the experience. One of the great symbols of Chinese heritage is the Great Wall of China. It is often associated with keeping people out and for centuries China was very closed. However today what was once a symbol of division and exclusion is one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. It shows us how heritage can be used to bring benefit and bring people together.



BREAKING DOWN WALLS Using heritage to commemorate and celebrate the contribution of the Chinese Community

Our heritage work will be not only of benefit to the local Chinese Community giving them a sense of pride and belonging but as we share it with others it will form the basis of challenging inspiring conversations with other ethnic minority groups about their heritage.

It will give them a sense of place and purpose, as well as pride. Older generations will see culture and tradition handed down to and valued by younger people. It will also see a culture mature and develop becoming more true to itself, not simply a presentation of what is expected from Chinese culture. The

various strands of native Chinese culture and then how living here has developed a distinct heritage all must be properly audited and recorded and information collated to assist in the interpretation and presentation activities. We aim to turn heritage into advantage for the community by showing them commercial opportunities.

While heritage has a range of community and individual benefits for the local Chinese community, from feeling valued, to increasing a sense of identity and confidence, we look beyond to external audiences. We aim to improve 'access' to heritage through education. This means telling an authentic story in a modern

meaningful way, which engages and inspires others.

Our unique advantage is that we can provide a Northern Ireland lens through which Chinese culture and heritage can be viewed. We can collate and curate that experience providing points of local reference and entry points as well as planned pathways through what can often be a complex culture.

Using our Virtual Chinese Resource Centre we can be a two-way portal, a bridge between China and Northern Ireland. Tourism, Business, Community and Cultural exchanges which benefit all can be facilitated. We believe heritage is the key to the future.



Heritage Features

Food & Drink

Chinese food is famous all over the world, but you may be shocked by its surprising range and variety of ingredients if you've only eaten in Chinese restaurants here. Chinese food has countless delicious and fantastic dishes. And people from different areas have different cuisine types, which can be bland, sweet, salty, spicy, or sour. The regional variations in ingredients and flavours is distinct and warrants greater study given its cultural importance.

Customs & Superstitions

From lucky numbers to colours and other beliefs the rich tapestry of superstition has real meaning even today.

It forms a part of the cultural awareness elements of China Ready programmes as local tourism providers are made aware of the traditions and customs of Chinese visitors.

Zodiac and Calendar

Most people are aware of the tradition of animal association with each new year, however the role of the zodiac in traditional Chinese life from employment to marriage is not fully understood.

The heritage of such beliefs still shapes life in China, and even subconsciously dictates the decisions of many.

History

Over-3,000-years of the history of China, is a rich mix of dynasties and revolution. China is one of the world's four ancient civilisations, and the written history of China dates back to the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600-1046 BC), over 3,000 years ago.

The Great Wall of China and other treasures like the Terracotta Army, or Ming vases all tell the story of its rich Dynamic Past.



Symbolism

Colours are important to Chinese culture as they are endowed with lucky meanings. The three main lucky colours considered lucky in people's daily lives as well as on special occasions are red, yellow, and green.

They like the symbols there are used in form a key part of Chinese artistic heritage, and cross faith and popular cultures.



Performing Arts

Dance and other colourful visual displays are woven together with music. China has a long and influential musical tradition based on the philosophy and culture of ancient China. Confucius and the Confucian school after him espoused the correct use and form of music according to their sociological and cosmological conceptions, so to appreciate the music, it helps to understand their ideals of music and their purpose.



Art & Crafts

Crafts and Products are the result of centuries of tradition and have survived dynastic upheaval and revolution and remain a part of life across China. they include Chinese Embroidery; Chinese Lanterns; Chinese Paper Cuttings; Chinese Cloisonne; Batik: Wax Printing; Chinese Silk; Chinese Seals; Chinese Calligraphy; Chinese Couplets; Chinese Painting; Chinese Paper Umbrella; Ancient Chinese Furniture; Chinese Knots; Chinese Kites; The Chinese Abacus; as well as Jade and other



Built Heritage

The Forbidden City is the palatial heart of China. Constructed in 1420, during the early Ming Dynasty, it is China's best-preserved imperial palace, and the largest ancient palatial structure in the world. It's grand halls and walls proudly display the essence and culmination of traditional Chinese architecture, fitting for the capital city of the world's largest nation, and symbolic of the built heritage of China.



Lanterns

Historians believe that the Chinese first began making the now traditional lanterns during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220). They were used both indoors and out to provide a shaded light for reading and working. The protection from wind provided by the decorative silk or paper shade kept the lanterns from going out with the breeze.



Language & Writing

Mandarin (standard Chinese) is the most used mother tongue on the planet with over 800 million native speakers. China has many languages, the most famous being Mandarin and Cantonese (spoken in Southeast China). There are many dialects and minority languages in China. Chinese Characters - What makes the Chinese language particularly fascinating is its written form. Chinese characters are the only pictorial written form in modern use. They are rich in symbolism and many have stories behind them.



Chinese New Year

China has several traditional festivals that are celebrated all over the country. The most important is Chinese New Year, and the CWA has worked with BCC and others to promote this festival making it one of the flagship cultural events not just for Belfast but for a number of other towns and cities across Northern Ireland. This is a great access point for communities into Chinese heritage and a great family festival rich in symbolism and good will.



Confucianism

Confucianism is often characterised as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than a religion. In fact, Confucianism built on an ancient religious foundation to establish the social values, institutions, and transcendent ideals of traditional Chinese society.



Outlook

The outlook on life, faith and belief as well as how people treat one another such as respect and care for elders all provide intangible heritage aspects which frame the Chinese character.

The desire to see balance and harmony with the yin and yang as well as the great belief in luck and fortune shape everyday lives and choices for many Chinese people.



Chinese Characters

Chinese is reckoned to be the most difficult language in the world to learn, but that also must make it the most interesting. It's the world's only remaining pictographic language in common use, with thousands of characters making up the written language. It's pronunciation is generally one syllable per character, in one of five tones. China's rich literary culture includes many pithy sayings and beautiful poems.



Festivals & New Year

Chinese people celebrate a lot of festivals each year. Most of these festivals take place on important dates in the Chinese lunar calendar. Some important festivals celebrated by the Chinese people, with links to specific festivals that are shared in the West, others are regional and obscure.

From New Year to Dragon Boat festivals they have become part of Northern Ireland's calendar too.



Martial Arts

Chinese kung fu also known as wushu or Chinese martial arts, is an important part of traditional Chinese culture. It is probably one of the earliest and longest lasting sports, which utilizes both brawn and brain. Different from self-defence and boxing, kung fu is more holistic, developing internal discipline with external technique.

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