

## Chinese Lunar New Year Celebration

By Yuhong Wang and Caixia Qian

This year's Lunar New Year celebration at Charles G Fraser Junior Public School was marked by genuine cultural integration. It was held on the Lunar New Year's Day, February 3, 2011. The whole school was actively involved in a productive partnership with Culturelink - the teachers from Adult ESL Program, the Parenting Center workers, Parents Council Chair, and other school teachers played an important role in this event, alongside of the event organizers - School Settlement Worker YuHong and Host Program Staff Caixia.



The event started with a festive dragon dance. With a dragon made by the Kindergarten kids, the dance crew, consisting of ESL adult learners, their teachers, some parents, and the Parent's Council Chair, cheerfully paraded the school building. Along the way, they distributed the "Red Pockets" which symbolized good lucks for the new year. The adorable children beat their small drums while saying "Gong Xi Fa Cai" - Happy New Year in Mandarin to people. This was one of the many highlights of the whole event. At the same time, laughter and cheers were rocking the festival venue. After the dragon dance, all participants made delicious Chinese dumplings together. Chinese people believe that making and eating dumpling together on the New Year's Day will bring prosperity and good health to the New Year. All participants took pride in this cultural celebration. As Lunar New Year is traditionally a family festival, by celebrating the cultural ritual and sharing wonderful food together, the newcomer parents, the adult ESL students and the school teachers felt that they were part of the multicultural family.



The final and most exciting part of the event was the spectacular performance of our participants. The beautifully decorated room, skillfully displayed tables and plenty of food helped create a festive atmosphere. After the principal conveyed his best wishes to everyone, the performances started. The belly dancing opened everyone's eyes and the traditional Chinese music and songs lifted people's soul. The participants' faces sparkled with excitement and satisfaction. This is truly an unforgettable event. This event brought the newcomers in touch with their roots and showcased their colorful traditions and culture. It made them feel welcomed and look forward to a bright future in their new country.

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### **"At CultureLink we believe that:**

- **Newcomers are critical to Canada's future;**
- **Our staff and volunteers are our organization's most important resources."**

## Can-Asian International Dance Festival

by Dolora Leka

Last week of February, the Host Program organized an outing to the CanAsian International Dance Festival at Harbourfront Center. To all 25 participants, it was such a great fulfillment. The countries that represented their cultural pieces of art were Cambodia, India, Japan, Korea and Turkey. Among diverse artistic shows, we were pleased to attend the performances of five young and talented Cambodian dancers from Amrita Performing Arts (Phnom Pemh) and as well a solo performance of a few dances in a selection of Kathak dance from North India..

The traditional and contemporary performances were really eye-catching and affected the audience in very different ways. They really touched our soul on both the emotional and spiritual level. One of the most inspiring Cambodian dances was the folk dance that serves as story telling performances of everyday life. They used a complex alphabet of hand and body positions to convey their story and sometimes with the accompanying foot movements. They conveyed to us different thoughts and concepts. We were also informed, through a video clip from Cambodia,



about the origin and the history of the Cambodian classical dance. During the Khmer Rouge regime in the mid 70s, the Khmer Dance, which was known as the dance of the Royal Wealth, did stay alive. It was said that more than ninety percent of the classical Cambodian dancers were executed during the regime's rule over the nation. It was a time where all forms of personal, religious and artistic expression from the society were fiercely being removed. Those dancers that managed to survive spent their lives hiding away in colonies where they could secretly practice the dance form. Refugee camps became the re-launching protection for Cambodian classical dance. It was in these camps that the few surviving dancers began to teach the classical dance style to other refugees. With the passage of time Khmer dancing was exposed again and was formally institutionalized and taught in fine arts schools and colleges. When watching the performance, I felt so proud that our Host Program has been actively helping refugees from Cambodia. My understanding of refugee culture was deepened by leaning about the history behind the show.

The other charming performance was the Kathak dance, a predominant dance of North India. This form of dance gets its name from the word "Katha" (story), since it originated from the devotional narration of the storytellers who were attached to the temples. The dress worn by the dancer was very similar to the sculptures of the Indian temples. All the fascinating performances depicted the beauty, the original style and the hard work of the physical demands that are required in order to generate an authentic rendering of their cultural dances. I believe all our participants had thoroughly enjoyed the evening and gained more appreciation of other cultures and the kaleidoscope of diversity of our multicultural society.



## Egypt is Free to choose their destiny!

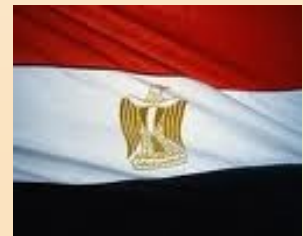
By Hilda Warren and Eman El Atawy

On Monday, February 14, at 9:28 AM, our colleague Eman El Atawy, a native Egyptian, sent the following email to CultureLink staff, and even brought two cakes to celebrate the historic moment with all of us. We shared our admiration for the Egyptian people who utilized the latest and greatest technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the wisdom deriving from a civilization of more than 5,000 years to achieve what most people thought as impossible just a year ago - they ousted the dictator and obtained the freedom to choose!

Hi All,

**'Egypt is free at last'**, thanks to all of you for all your support. I have never felt lonely when I was thinking about all the unrest in Egypt. Everybody was around asking and updating me of the situation back home. I am so happy that the situation got resolved peacefully and my family and friends there are safe.

Eman El Atawy  
Program Counsellor



More .....on next page ...

.....Follow the Egyptian story on this page .....'Egypt is Free to choose their destiny! '

They were in the middle of EI TAHRIR square with nothing to defend themselves. That (the Egyptian amours) is what I call creative!

- Eman El Atawy



Final Note: brave people, regular citizens with principles of respect, dignity and determination got together to achieve what the world thought unachievable



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**CultureLink** is a settlement agency located at Bloor and Dundas West in downtown Toronto. For twenty-one years, we have upheld our mission:

**CultureLink** is dedicated to facilitating the independence and full participation of newcomers in Toronto's diverse community. CultureLink works within an anti-discriminatory framework to ensure a respectful, safe and inclusive environment.

We hope you have enjoyed Volume Two, Issue 3 of our Welcoming Community Newsletter, and that you will enjoy future issues.

**VISIT US AT:**

**[WWW.WELCOMINGCOMMUNITY.CA](http://WWW.WELCOMINGCOMMUNITY.CA)  
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The Welcoming News invites you, the members of the CultureLink Community to share your story with us. Please send your story, comments and thoughts to:

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