

Davis Projects for Peace 2011

"TOUCHING EAST AND WEST"

AUSTRALIA

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE - UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Dandan Jian (China), Tessa Lumsden (Australia)

Section I

- a. This project was designed to aid in bridging the gap between the local Chinese community and those of our residents here at International House through awareness and celebration of cultural differences. Through a process of sharing experiences and knowledge about differences and similarities, it is through this process that the concept of peace was intended to emerge.
- b. We do have fund-raising which contributes to our project. In the course of our involvement with the November Viva La Gong Festival in Wollongong, through our promotion of traditional Chinese artworks and interactive games, we intend to fund-raise for a youth venture in the area of the Community Drug and Action Team entitled 'Twilight Tournaments Youths Diversions'. Briefly, this program aims to give disadvantaged youths or 'youths at risk' the opportunity to participate in sports programs and life skills workshops. The youths involved in this program come from a range of differing cultural backgrounds and ages up to 18, we believe that our involvement with them furthers the goals of this project because it is intended that when they leave the program they will go into the wider community and further its messages.
- c. Education was the primary tool used to implement this project; this was facilitated through an intercultural exchange of the personal experiences of our residents. We as student leaders provided the opportunities for this interpersonal exchange by organising events and by promoting continued conversation with the local Chinese Community and that of our residents.

The vision under which we operate here at International House Wollongong is 'Global Wellbeing Starts Here', envisaging essentially the goals of this project. Essentially that through this cultural exchange our students will continue into the workforce and on with their lives living this very vision, we believe that will maintain the impact of this project for years to come. Our project serves to be integral to the positive development of both our world because it is so diverse and dynamic and our incredibly multicultural country. Each semester here at International House boasts more than 30 differing cultures and as such we designed our project to be an overlying theme of the entire year to increase the impact it would have, we planned major activities and made sure all activities spanned the year of 2011 to maximise the extent to which we could fulfil our goals.

We implemented events and facilitated many intercultural forums and discussions internally with a view that this would prove an important reflective tool to measure the progress of our project. Externally these are the events that occurred; a trip to Chinese Garden of Friendship in Sydney, Global Highway, celebration of Chinese Mid-autumn Festival and Viva La Gong.

The city of Sydney boasts a large Chinese community. To provide our students with a first hand experience of Chinese culture we organised a day trip to the Chinese Garden of Friendship and Chinatown. Thirty of our students from ranging cultures attended and were provided with the opportunity to view Chinese culture and learn about the history of Chinese migration to Australia. Global Highway is an annual event organised by students living on campus. It celebrates their many nationalities and cultural diversities. We used this opportunity to promote the Chinese culture to the other university residences and wider community. At our stall

participants were involved in Chinese calligraphy, paper cutting and were given Chinese souvenirs. At International House we held our Mid-autumn Festival, which incorporated many Asian cultures in the form of decorations and food. Our students participated in the same games that occur back in China to gain an understanding of a differing cultural festival. Our final event will be our participation in Wollongong's Viva La Gong Festival. Like our project, it aims to celebrate the City's creative spirit and cultural diversity.

Whilst every project has some unanticipated difficulties, we feel that this term would be incorrect in our project we would prefer further enlightenment. As mentioned, we boast over 30 nationalities, many of which are Asian. Chinese culture was chosen as a 'springboard' to promote Asian culture as a whole, we did not anticipate when choosing the title 'Touching East and West' that students of other Asian backgrounds would feel overlooked. As a response to this we had to market our remaining events to be Eastern culture rather than specifically Chinese in nature to ensure the full involvement of our Asian students. Our other difficulty was facilitating the involvement of Hanban which unfortunately proved difficult to achieve within the time constraints of our project, this is something that we aim to fully implement in 2012.

As stated consistently we believe this project has been an extremely useful experience both for our students and those Chinese community members who were involved. The future of this project is bright as it resides within these people and will go with them to further the initial goals of this project with their families and social networks.

Section II

We define peace as an atmosphere of harmony. It manifests itself when people from a number of differing cultural backgrounds coexist with an understanding and respect for their differences in culture, experience and values.

The peace achieved by our project here at International House we believed is evidenced in its very operation as an intercultural family. Here students from over thirty differing cultures exist and live together participating in a daily cultural exchange in which they are learning, understanding and caring and sharing. Short-term this project fosters an understanding and acceptance of common ground between cultures and broadens the knowledge of our students regarding non-western culture through interpersonal interactions. It also implants within our students the importance of language as a tool for enabling cultural conversation. In the long-term, as stated above, it is intended that our students use these skills to move forward to be our intercultural ambassadors and through their individual encounters achieve a state of peace externally to what they experienced here at International House.

This project has changed the way we think about the world and the idea of peace. We see the world as a myriad of cultures and concepts to learn about and embrace. To ignore and overlook the breadth of knowledge contained within the world we would see as detrimental for an individual human being to develop to their full potential.

"I learnt that Peace is not simply a word or action that is accomplished by an individual, but the atmosphere that needs the consistent contribution of every single person. The understanding of 'Peace' will direct me to achieve global wellbeing by contributing to our society." (Dandan Jian)

"For me, facilitating this project reinforced the importance of intercultural exchange especially between younger generations. I believe that if our generation lives within this discourse that the concept of peace and its achievability becomes an increasingly tangible reality for our society." (Tessa Lumsden)

Photographs



Chinese Garden of Friendship and Chinatown in Sydney 22/07/11



Global Highway 25/08/11