

# New Zealand China Friendship Society Inc. – Nelson Branch

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## XIN NIÁN KUÀI LÈ! Happy New Year!



We hope that members have had a restful and enjoyable Christmas and New Year and are now looking forward to the coming year.

The Chinese zodiac year of the rooster officially began on 28 January and ends 15 February 2018. You may well have guessed that this is a rooster or cock year from the decorations.

As usual, we will be taking over the Eastern Cuisine restaurant in Richmond for a banquet in the following week. There will be a *short* Annual General Meeting before the banquet begins. We welcome you to join us for this occasion of good food, fellowship, and fun.



### Eastern Cuisine, Richmond AGM & New Year Banquet Sunday 12 February, 6 p.m.



To book, please contact **Barbara Markland** by **Monday 6 February**  
Phone: 544 4712 - email: erm@xtra.co.nz

Eastern Cuisine at 275 Queen Street in Richmond is well-known for great banquets and we get exclusive use of the restaurant for Sunday night, as long as we have sufficient numbers; which has never been a problem! Your family and friends are all welcome to this celebration.

The banquet charge is a very reasonable \$32. The usual juice, beer, and wine will be available for purchase from the restaurant and there will be no corkage charge if you wish to take your own wine. Other payments for drinks, you will make directly to the restaurant.

Booking will be necessary and payment can be made by internet banking (instructions below) or at the door (cash or cheque only - no EFTPOS).

You are also invited to make donations towards the He Ming Qing Scholarships on the night by buying tickets in the raffles for excellent Chinese items - tickets will be just \$2 each, or \$5 for three, so please remember to bring some gold coins and/or \$5 notes.

Please be there by 5.45pm to enable the AGM to begin at 6pm. There will be no seating plan this year so it would be advantageous if groups could arrive early and together. It is expected that the banquet will commence about 7pm.

Please pay for your banquet via internet banking to the **NZ China Friendship Society - Nelson Branch** bank account at Westpac **03-0703-0369680-00**.

Please make sure you enter your name as the reference and then email both Barbara Markland at [erm@xtra.co.nz](mailto:erm@xtra.co.nz) and Treasurer, Royden Smith, at [royden@shangrila.net.nz](mailto:royden@shangrila.net.nz) so that they can then confirm your payment has been received.

**Annual General Meeting** - The items on the agenda for this are President's Report, Financial Report, Election of Officers, and General Business to cover any items which need to be discussed. Nominations will be taken for the committee and new members for the committee would be welcome. If you think you or a friend could make a contribution and would like to be nominated, please have a talk with President Ferry.

**Meeting dates** - In keeping with our arrangement of having general meetings on the last Friday of the month where possible, the following dates have been set:

March 31	April 28	May 26	June 30
July 28	August 25	October 27	November 24

The September meeting will be a tea-party in the Huangshi Chinese Garden to celebrate the (Chinese) mid-autumn or moon festival – our event will be September 24 (first day of daylight time) although the official festival date is October 4. Please keep the above meeting dates free.

**Last meeting** - For the Nelson Branch final meeting in 2016, it was our great privilege for us to hear from Dr Rose Kerr, retired keeper of the Far Eastern Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and international expert on Chinese ceramics. Rose and husband Steve are resident in Nelson each summer. Over 50 members and visitors squashed into our venue to enjoy Rose presenting 'The Cultural Revolution Through English Eyes'

In 1975, Rose Kerr was one of a party of 12 students selected by the British Council to spend a year in Beijing to study Chinese language and culture. They arrived in Beijing for the beginning of the academic year in September and began classes the next day along with students from a range of Asian, African and European countries. It was only in hindsight they realised that they were there during the time which became known as 'The Cultural Revolution'.

At first, Rose found the language lessons difficult, as old-style teaching was used and few concessions were made. However, after two or three weeks, something 'clicked' and the enjoyment began. A huge amount of valuable knowledge and understanding came, not from the formal lessons, but from sharing time with her Chinese room-mate, a clever hard-working student from a poor family in Anhui Province. They 'talked about anything and everything'. Rose did her own exploration also, cycling throughout the city on her bike, 'The Flying Pigeon'. The Forbidden City was open and mostly empty and she could freely investigate the wonderful museums there.

She has strong memories of the icy coldness of winter, requiring many layers of clothing plus earmuffs, masks, and bulky padded coats and shoes. On Wednesday afternoons, classes were replaced by campus cleaning or military drill including practising throwing hand grenades. Students were taken to celebrations and parades for National Day, Spring Festival and May the First. Rose was at the funeral of Zhou En Lai, filing past his coffin and shaking the hand of his widow.

A significant part of 'Cultural Revolution' student life was three sessions of 'open-door-schooling', with students and teachers sent to work in peoples' communes. Rose's first deployment was to a rural piggery where she was involved with tying up huge cabbages for blanching. It was very hard work and students and teachers were 'quite hopeless'. There were bonuses, however, as the commune farmers were jolly and friendly, there were extra rations for the workers, and also entertaining evening activities. Rose's second set of 'open-door schooling' was carding wool at a wool factory which was not the least enjoyable. Finally she worked at the 'East Winds Market', selling apples and oranges at a fruit stall, where the foreign students became famous for their bumbling attempts to tie up single pieces of fruit in little squares of paper.



*Rose with her room-mate in Spring 1976*



*Students and teachers on their Open-door Schooling deployment with piggery farmer families*

It all came to a sudden end at 4am on July 28 1976, when the Great Tangshan earthquake struck, 140 km north of Beijing. It was 7.8 strength at a depth of 7.5 km, and the death toll could have been up to 600,000. It was a very hot night in Beijing and the students were very little to bed. Having managed to pull on a light wrap before rushing down the rocking stairs she huddled in a courtyard with many naked people as the aftershocks rolled in. The foreign students were evacuated by train to Xi'An for a couple of weeks, and then returned briefly to Beijing to be repatriated. Rose decided to extend her experience by returning home via the Trans-Mongolian railway, Russia and East Germany,

making a further fascinating and unexpected ending to her year.

In retrospect, Rose learned many life lessons during this time as well as developing her life-time appreciation of Chinese traditional arts. At the time she did not have much comprehension of what was going on politically, thinking that the parades, slogans, military training and work experience were just part of normal student life.

NZCFS Nelson is greatly appreciative of the chance to glimpse into those unique memories of that time and place in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese history.

**Farewell to Haley** – MLA Haley was guest of honour at a Christmas theme farewell barbeque at Tahunanui Beach. The weather was fine and suited the distinctly New Zealand occasion. A number of members of the Nelson Chinese Association attended as they also have had contact with Haley over the year she was with us in Nelson.

Your executive consider this an appropriate farewell occasion and intend to repeat this 'good-bye' to other MLAs who end their time with us in December.



**Bookclub & speaker meeting** - Helene Wong, author of "Being Chinese" will be the speaker at our May 2017 branch meeting. Helene will share her bi-cultural life story, as told in her book. In order to further explore the ideas and issues Helene highlights in her book, the branch is coordinating a membership bookclub meeting in June or July.

Helene Wong's story specifically offers insight into the realities and social challenges of being born in New Zealand to parents whose families had emigrated from China one or two generations earlier. Preferring invisibility Helene grew up resisting her Chinese identity. But, in 1980 she travelled to her father's home village in southern China and came face to face with her ancestral past. Her experience of straddling two cultures is an eye-opening and educational read.

If you have been part of a bookclub you will know the value of literary discussions that occur; conversations that offer perspectives that may not have been initially obvious. If you are interested in participating in the bookclub event there are a number of ways to purchase/read her book.

1. Borrow the book from the library (may need to reserve it) or from a member who has bought it.
2. Purchase the book through Page & Blackmore (have copies in stock, \$40) or online from Bridget Williams Books, [bwb.co.nz](http://bwb.co.nz) (\$40).
3. Purchase an e-book for reading on a tablet or smartphone. Kobo ([kobo.com](http://kobo.com)) have it for about \$16. Bridget Williams Books ([bwb.co.nz](http://bwb.co.nz)) have the e-book for \$20 and a bundle (both 'real' book and e-book) for \$50.

We are very excited to have this interesting opportunity at our May branch meeting. We hope you will be there and we really hope you will join us in our branch bookclub activity.

If you need any further information about this event please contact Lori @ 021 027 93563

**Newsletter postage costs** – The cost of posting the newsletter has risen over the years and it is now past the point where it is covered by the individual subscription. In contrast, we can send it by e-mail to a large number of people for no direct cost. With only a few members receiving the newsletter by post, at present the Society can bear the expense, but this may need to change in the future. In the meantime, if you get the newsletter by post, perhaps you can consider whether you need a posted copy or could have it delivered by e-mail.

**NZCFS AGM and Conference** – This year our conference will be in Christchurch, May 19 - 21. The theme is Rewi Alley and it will be at Wharenui School which hosts the Rewi Alley Academy in the school grounds.

### **From Nelson Executive, January**

- There was a vote of thanks to Jeanette Jones who will not be standing again for the committee.
- President Ferry has attended several events on behalf of the branch: China Business network Group; Nelson Marlborough Regional Education Partnership; a business meeting with a delegation from Huangshi which included the Deputy Mayor; Gala show in Christchurch. With Vice-President Lori he has been invited by Judith Collins, Minister for Ethnic Affairs, to a Chinese New Year celebration in Wellington.
- Vice-President Lori attended a camp for people with adopted Chinese children. President Ferry will suggest at the National Executive meeting that NZCFS offer outreach and support to the group.
- Race Unity Day, March 19, Victory Square from 11 a.m.
- Sister Cities Conference is in Invercargill, 4 – 6 May
- Capitation fee to our national organisation is now due. We are paying a little less this year as our membership has dropped slightly.

**Year of the Rooster** – This year of the Rooster extends from January 28, 2017 to February 15, 2018. It contains 13 lunar months, something which occurs every second or third calendar year. An extra lunar month (or 'leap month') will begin on July 23, 2017 to keep the lunar calendar nearly in step with the solar calendar.

In Chinese astrology, each zodiac year is not just associated with an animal sign, but also one of five elements: Gold (Metal), Wood, Water, Fire, or Earth. This year is a 'Fire Rooster' year. The combination of element-animal repeats each 60 years, so those who turn 60 in this year are also Fire Roosters. Next year will be an Earth Dog year.

Rooster people in general may be regarded as independent, capable, warm-hearted, quick minded, impatient, critical, eccentric, narrow-minded. Fire Roosters are said to be having a strong sense of time (they are Roosters after all), trustworthy, and good at managing money.