

Calgary: Where Strong Chinese Culture Blossoms

The Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre is home to 561 dragons and 16 phoenixes. They belong to a culture that dates back 6,000 years and have been artistically crafted by 22 artisans renowned for classical Chinese architectural workmanship. Their home is in the magnificently detailed dome of the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre, where 32,000 ceramic glazed tiles have been intricately and lovingly placed by hand.

Around 250,000 people visit the centre annually. A symbol of the successful cultural cooperation between the people of China, its ex-patriots in Calgary and the Canadian people, the centre is home to events, festivals and ongoing local and international exhibitions. A museum, 40,000-volume library, medicine centre, arts and crafts store, and restaurant complement the great cultural hall modeled after Beijing's Temple of Heaven.

When Dr. Henry T.Y. Fok opened the Chinese Cultural Centre in 1992, he said, "The primary reason for an outstanding culture to be able to endure thousands of years without losing its vitality is due to its ability to incorporate different ideas and philosophies from other cultures into its own."

Nowhere is this more evident than in Calgary's Chinatown. The third largest in Canada, Calgary's Chinatown was established by Chinese labourers who worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway in the late 1800s. The labourers endured grueling, miserable working conditions, and hundreds died while building the historic railway, but the community they established endures to this day.

Today, Chinatown is a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented community, filled with cultural flavour. Calgarians and visitors alike congregate for weekend dim sum or browse the shops along its streets. The neighbourhood also includes influences from other Asian countries, including Thailand, Cambodia, Korea and Vietnam.

To organize a media visit to Calgary, contact Maude Laliberté at maudel@tourismcalgary.com.

For more information on Calgary, Alberta, Canada go to www.visitcalgary.com.