



A Canadian

“Technique without ideals is a menace; ideals without techniques are a mess.” *Karl Llewellyn, The Adventures of Rollo.*

The Canadian International School is the most recent attempt to marry technique and ideals. While not a new idea in Hong Kong, if the doors open this September on schedule the school will mark the fruition of many other attempts made in good faith.

The most recent catalyst for the school came directly from meetings held this past summer by the International Business Committee – the Government’s consultative body with local business associations and chambers of commerce – chaired by Sir David Ford. Out of those discussions a subcommittee was struck, chaired by K.Y. Yeung, then Secretary for Education and Manpower interested groups to put forward sponsoring bodies to found and operate new North American curriculum schools. Put forward it was with a sponsoring body comprising the Chinese Canadian Association’s president, Felix Fong, in addition to the presidents of both The Canadian Chamber of Commerce and The Canadian Club, Francis Lee and Vincent Lee. They signed respectively on the dotted line to create a charitable foundation under the banner of the Canadian International School Foundation.

School Foundation

Richard Wong, chairman of the foundation summed up the feelings of the founding members: “It was felt that there was a need to address the educational aspirations of Canadians residing in Hong Kong. There are other Canadian schools in Hong Kong and that is fine but not

the type of non-profit school that we envisioned.” If non-profit is one way of distinguishing the school, there are others as well.

Take one aim of the school. Ostensibly it is to combine the best of select provincial curriculums and then reinforce them with Cantonese and French language instruction.

Mary-Jean Wong, another of the founders, is no stranger to private schools in Hong Kong and knows the importance of a sound language program. It was Mary-Jean’s father, the late Clifford Wong, who built Hong Lok Yuen and with it the very successful Hong Lok Yuen International School. Hong Lok Yuen is almost alone in offering a bilingual Cantonese program. Mary-Jean, “It was felt that there are too few Cantonese language instruction alternatives available in Hong Kong for both native and non-native speakers. If we can offer a well run Cantonese program, I know that there will be tremendous support for it.”

Winnie Y.W. Auyeung Lai, from the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of Hong Kong, is also backing the Cantonese program. Lai, who sat for almost ten years on the Government’s Curriculum Development Council, is helping with curriculum design for the program. “Probably for the first time, primary school students will be learning Cantonese using phonetics rather than just the tedious old methods of memorizing characters. Very quickly, the older students should be able to read their lessons and thus progress better.” It has been a long time coming to begin teaching Cantonese to young students this way even though it is the norm in Mandarin instruction and even though the University has taught adults this way for almost twenty years.”

