

Sights and culture of Taiwan spark dialogue at Library



By Brock Weir

The colourful temptations Taiwan has to offer are available for all to see this spring at the Aurora Public Library with a new photographic exhibition celebrating the sights, sounds, and culture of the bustling country.

The exhibition in the Library's Colleen Abbott Gallery was opened Tuesday by Winton Chan, Director of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Toronto and Library CEO Jill Foster.

As someone who has firmly established himself with his country's missions to fly the flag in Ontario, Manitoba, and the Maritimes, Mr. Chan sees this exhibition as a way to create a dialogue about his island nation, formally known as the Republic of China, which is often thought of simply in context of its contentious relationship with its mainland counterpart, the People's Republic of China.

"We have committed ourselves to reach out and promote the image and interest between Canada and Taiwan," said Mr. Chan. "We want to promote the exchange between two peoples. Our first goal [of the exhibition] is for people to understand our position, our philosophy, and our customs. Some people, not many, have the opportunity to see the country, so we are providing pictures which show our religion and the people's activities and this is very useful for people to understand because to be seen is to be believed!?"

23 countries now recognize Taiwan was the "legitimate government of the Republic of China", said Mr. Chan, and creating the exchange not just between Taiwan and Canada at a high level, but also between communities, is essential going forward.

"We are regarded as a free democracy and a country which respects human rights and the rule of law," he said. "I think Taiwan and Canada are very likeminded. We try to facilitate two societies to have more of an exchange. One is a dialogue with Canadians and the other is a dialogue with mainland China. At the end of the day, there will be dialogue between the three. We have a close exchange and there are very exciting developments going on nowadays between Taiwan and China."

This exchange and conversation is also essential in forging the future growth of the country, he added.

"We can't put all our eggs into one basket," he said. "We have to have more trade with China, the United States and the European Union."

This is the second year this colourful photographic exhibition has graced the walls of the Aurora Public Library. The positive reception the first time around promoted them to be proactive in securing it for another showing.

"People came through and they loved the colour and the vibrancy," said Reccia Mandelcorn. "We actually had a number of people

who scouted out different photographs and asked if they were for sale. I hope [people] take away from the exhibition an extra portion of the world that they may not have known about.

?People have walked by and said, ?I have to take a vacation there! It was not on my bucket list, but I want to go there.' So I hope they take away some new knowledge and excitement about a different culture.?

The show runs through the spring, coinciding with Asian Heritage Month in May.