



MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Kuzuzangpola.

I am very happy to present our January 2018 newsletter which highlights all the noteworthy events that took place at Choki Traditional Art School during the later half of 2017.

Besides the annual and recurring events such as the annual parents-teachers meeting, study tour for the final year students, the graduation night and the annual school picnic, so many new activities have taken place during this period.

We are indeed privileged to receive Hon'ble Minister for Ministry of Works and Human Settlements Her Excellency Dorji Choden at the school which clearly indicated her emphasis on the preservation of traditional arts and culture of Bhutan as well as address youth unemployment issues in the country.

We are very proud and happy to share a wonderful news with all our well-wishers that our two former students of CTAS - Mani Dorji and Dechen Tshomo won second and third prize respectively from painting and embroidery competition during the 16th National Design and Arts Competition organized by the Royal Textile Museum of Bhutan. Similarly, we want to share that our students Tshering Tobgay, Kinga Dorji and Nima Yoezer won the first prize in wood carving, second prize in painting and third prize in embroidery respectively in the 14th National Skills Competition held by the Ministry of Labour & Human Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan. Our heartiest congratulations to all these prize winners.

A notable face lifting of the campus infrastructure has been undertaken in this period – the basketball court which was in need of immediate repair and the new concrete based footpaths which will help our students walk safely in the campus, especially during the rainy seasons. We want to thank Leila, Yannick & Claudia and friends, Fontana Foundation as well as Mr. Naomi and Jeremy for these projects (more details inside).

We have also completely revamped our school website and now includes e-commerce friendly features so that the school will be able to sell our products online. We are optimistic that this new website which has easy method of content management system will enable to share latest update news and information of the school with all our well wishers and bring us closer.

As the 2017 closed in, we want to thank our main supporters - Mario Fontana, Fontana Foundation, Koenraad Foulon, Capital Group Companies, Ustinov Foundation, Himalayan Youth Foundation, Alan & Patricia Bickell, Franz Nawratil, Nakadai Inc. (Japan), Atsuko Kubo & friends in Japan and all other individual supporters and well-wishers for your continued belief and support in us and for enabling us to continue to help the under-privileged youths of Bhutan.

A perennial issue of concern shared by the entire CTAS fraternity is the sustainability of the school and its programs in the future. The school is still working hard to achieve this sustainability goal. However, we will need support from our well-wisher(s) from both within and abroad Bhutan to achieve this long-term and important goal so that we will be able to help even more underprivileged youths of Bhutan in the future.

We begin 2018 again with hopes and aspirations to impart even better education and school life for our students and for this we look forward again to your unfailing support for this year too.

Please enjoy reading our newsletter and wish you all a very Happy New Year – 2018!

Kadichey and Tashi Delek.

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Hon'ble Minister of Works & Human Settlements Visits CTAS

On the 1st of August 2017 the minister of work & human settlement, Her Excellency Dorji Choden visited CTAS. It was a great honour for our students and the school to meet and interact with the minister. In her brief address Lympo told the students that even if they didn't get the opportunity to pursue their education yet they were fortunate to get the chance to learn the arts which will help pave the way to earning their livelihood once they have completed the training. Her Excellency also mentioned that the training they received from the school will not only help them to earn their livelihood but will also contribute to preserving and promoting our unique art and culture thereby fulfilling one of the pillars of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

Her Excellency visited all the classrooms, the exhibition room and interacted with the students and the teachers.



Parents - Teachers Meeting

The second round of Parents – Teachers meeting was held on 12th August 2017 at the CTAS assembly ground. The main objective of the meeting is to discuss the students's performance, issues, challenges related to discipline and ways and means to overcome the problems and also to bridge the gap between the information relayed by students, parents and the school. Most of the parents shared their views and took active part in the discussion. About 75% of the parents joined.

In the end of discussion on behalf of all the parents and the families of the students, Ap Tshering Dorji from northern Thimphu expressed his gratitude to Dasho Choki Dorji, all the supporters, the Principal and the staff for their full support and the opportunity given to their children. His prayers are for everyone's long and happy life.



Wellness Mock Drill at CTAS

On the 31st August 2017 the school wellness team did a mock earthquake and fire drill to demonstrate the safety measures in place before and after a possible incident. During the drill the wellness team showed the actions and measures in case of an incident and explained the precautions to take before a fire or an earthquake.

On the 7th October 2017 the specialized team from Vision tech, Thimphu demonstrated students, teachers and staff how to use the different types of fire extinguishers in which situation.

The main objectives of the demonstration is to know what to do and where to go when and if it happens.



Art Workshop at VAST, Thimphu.

The two week workshop organized by Mrs.Talitha Balan from UK in collaboration with VAST (Voluntary Artist Studio Thimphu) was held from 11th September till 23rd September 2017 at VAST). 10 students from CTAS, 4 girls and 6 boys, and a teacher participated along with the participants from VAST. The workshop was focused on developing tone and colour skills, shade and 3 dimensional techniques.

During the workshop students had the opportunity to learn and explore colour mixing, shading and a few 3D techniques to add texture and know-how to their works of art.

At the end of the workshop Mrs.Talitha Balan offered each student an appreciation certificate upon completing the workshop. The work created during the workshop was shown to the general public on 23rd September 2017.

Later on 7th October, students and Lopen Dorji who participated in the workshop presented their work and shared their learnings with the rest of the students and the teachers.



Construction of Proper Footpaths

The lack of a proper footpath from the boys hostel to the play ground, the vegetable garden, the furniture unit and the stairs from the office to the kitchen causes lots of problems especially when it rains as the footpath and stairs become very slippery and muddy and therefore pose safety risk to the students during monsoon season.

We were fortunate to received a generous support to make proper paths from Mr. Naomi Kobayashi and Jeremy Jo, who has agreed to support the project in loving memory of McKenna Frances Jo who passed away at such a young age. The project was started in June 2017 and completed in September with a budget \$4,000 (Nu. 2,55,600).

We would like to thank Mr. Naomi and Jeremy Jo for their kind support. The students can now safely walk around our grounds.



Renovation of Basketball Court

Our students are limited in options when it comes to sports facilities. The school is located 10 KM north of Thimphu City in Kabesa valley. Within the CTAS campus, we only have an outdoor basketball court that was constructed in 2009 with the financial support from Mrs. Joana Breidenbach, Betterplace, Germany. The court was built to provide the students' with a possibility to participation in extracurricular activities and also to improve their overall physical wellbeing through sports.

For the last 8 years, the basketball court has proved very useful for the students and it has helped the school management in keeping the students physically active and also refrain from other harmful activities such as substance abuse and drugs. The basketball court has been fully utilized for both casual as well as organized matches during the free and non-class hours. Until recently, it has been the most favourite sports facility for all our students at CTAS.

However, over the years of frequent use and natural wear from weather, the condition of the basketball court has worsened and it is now in need of urgent repairs and renovation to make it fully functional again.

The renovation of this project is made possible with financial support from Ms. Leila Foulon, Yannick Fourie, Claudia and friends (totaling to Nu. 292,029) with additional financial support of Nu. 312,287 from the Fontana Foundation.

These young groups of friends have work hard to generate this money by participating in a marathon and initiating a 12 hour badminton game so that our students can play basket ball again. We would like to thank all of you for bringing back this sport facility.



CTAS Upgrades its Website

We have been able to redesign our website with a content management system with e-commerce functionality to help the school sell some of its products online. The current website is very time consuming and difficult to update. With this new design we can make updates easily and efficiently.

Our website was redesigned by Mr. Sidharth from Converthink Solution Pvt, India with the help of Tashi Namgay, Boonserm Tours and financed by Mr. Alan & Patricia Bickell.

The new website was launched on 11th November coinciding our Fourth King's birthday and during the opening of our furniture exhibition in Thimphu.

In addition to their support for the new website, the school would also like to thank Mr. Alan and Patricia for their support for the extension of the furniture house, the Inventory Management System with bar code capability - Point of Sale (POS) etc.



Dashedo Choki Dorji, Founder of CTAS, launches our new website

The 16th National Design and Arts competition

The National Design and Arts event was organized by the Royal Textile Academy (RTA) and the Textile Museum under the Department of Culture. The main objective of organizing this national competition is to promote the unique arts and crafts of Bhutan by encouraging and providing a befitting platform and recognition to artisans under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck.

Until 2016, the competition was held in the categories of Weaving (which are the Gho and Kira), and Embroidery. From this year onward, the competition includes two new categories: Traditional Painting and Contemporary Art, in order to encourage artisans to continue creating fine art. This is made possible thanks to the generous support from Mr. and Mrs. Alan Bickell. The Competition was held in 5 categories- namely Gho and Kira under Weaving, Embroidery, Traditional Painting and Contemporary Art.

The inauguration of the 16th National Design and Art Competition was held on 31st October, 2017. The event was graced by Her Royal Highness Princess Euphelma Choden Wangchuck as the chief guest. Excellencies Ministers and other dignitaries also attended the event. During the inauguration, the patron/designer and weavers of the prize winning pieces were awarded certificates and cash prizes by Her Royal Highness Princess Euphelma Choden Wangchuck.

Two former students from Choki Traditional Art School also participated in this open competition and received 2nd and 3rd place in traditional painting and embroidery. The school is very proud of their achievements and hopes that many of our alumni will take part in this annual national event in future.



CTAS Organic Gardening

Ever since we have had proper fencing and drainage (made possible in 2016 by Capital Group Companies through Mr. Koenraad Foulon) the students have taken an interest in growing organic vegetables as one of our co-curricular activities in the school.

We plan to improve the student's basic gardening skill of growing organic vegetables so that they don't lose their interest and knowledge and can help their parents in the villages during their vacation.

This year we are proud to share with all our well-wishers and supporters that we have been able to grow several varieties of vegetable such as spinach, coriander leaves, spring onions, beans, radishes, pumpkins, turnips, peas etc which we cultivated 100% organically. The variety of vegetables grown has not only provided healthy food for our students, but also generated about Nu. 20,784 which will go into CTAS' sustainability fund.



Annual School Picnic

The annual picnic of our school was held on 20th October 2017 at Chari spot which is almost 25 Km North of Thimphu City. The founder Dashi Choki Dorji and his family and the families of CTAS' staff joined the school picnic. The day was filled with joy and happiness as always. This is the moment when the hard working students and staff get together as a family and spent joyful moments together.

We played games and sports and together prepared delicious meals. Prizes were distributed to the students and staffs who stood out in the game competition organized by the school captains. And finally the day was concluded with Tashi-Labey by all the students, staff and families.



Mrs. Patricia Thompson and Friend's Visits CTAS

On the evening of 17th October 2017, the school organized a simple Kaden lekso (thanks giving ceremony) to Mrs. Patricia Thompson who has taken all the efforts and time to do a fund raising event for our schools sustainability fund on 1st September at Ryde TAFE, Australia together with other Bhutanese representatives from MoLHR and heads of private institutes.

Mrs. Patricia was joined by Mr. Marty Burgess, Ms. Thomes and Mr. Karma Dorji for the ceremony. The principal and students thank Mrs Patricia and all her friends and also our Bhutanese friends who have helped in this fund raising event in Australia. It was beautiful evening and later Mrs Patricia and friends interacted with our students.



Alumni Visits CTAS

On the 30th October 2017, Mr. Sangay Khandu CTAS Alumni chairperson, Mr. Dorji Namgay, Mr. Tashi Tobgay, Mr. Chezang and Mr. Sangay Choda visited CTAS.

During their visit they met with all the painting students, visited their classrooms and shared their knowledge and expertise. Later in the afternoon in our MPH (Multiple Purpose Hall) they gave talk to all the students. During the discussion the alumni shared their work experiences, their success stories, provided important tips and guidance. They emphasized



the significance of education to become successful in life. They also answered the questions raised by the students and provided feedback.

These visits were initiated by the school to bring together our past and present students to generate greater possibilities and opportunities in the field of art and culture. They have encouraged and motivated our young students to work hard and perform well in their work and values. The second annual Alumni meeting was held on the 2nd December 2017 at Multiple Purpose Hall building. 35 alumni came together to discuss the continuous improving of the alumni program, challenges and to share feedback. After the discussion a new chairperson and vice chairpersons were elected. Mr. Dorji Wangchuk was voted Chairperson for the year 2018 and 9 new members, Mr. Passang Dorji, Mr. Phub Dorji, Mr. Thukten Tshering, Mr. Chenchu Gyeltshen, Mr. Sangay Dorji, Mr. Tashi Tobgay, Miss Sangay Lham 'A', Miss Sangay Lham 'B' and Miss Dechen Tshomo were voted Vice Chairpersons.

We would like to thank the former chairperson Mr. Sangay Khandu and all the vice chairpersons 2017 for their support extended to CTAS and the alumni program.

We also would like to congratulate Mr. Dorji Wangchuck, new alumni chairperson and all the vice chairpersons for 2018. We look forward to yet another fruitful and interesting year.

A Way Forward: Sustainability

We are happy to report to all our well-wishers and supporters that since the inception of the sustainability fund and program in September 2014, the school has been able to achieve very positive results.

We developed a 6 year plan (2015 – 2020) to generate \$ 100,000 by the end of 2020. This fund will help secure long-term support for the school as well as help fulfil its mission and vision.

As of today we have been able to generate \$ 39,231, about 39% of the target, through various activities such as contributions from our alumni, other income generating activities of CTAS and donations from our well-wishers from Bhutan and abroad. We would like to thank the following well-wishers who have contributed to the sustainability fund in 2017:

FUND RECEIVED IN 2017 FOR CTAS SUSTAINABILITY			
Updated as of 20th Jan 2018			
Sl.No	From	Total Amount in Nu	Remarks
1	Cash f/w 2017	1,739,757	Year end 2016 cash balance forward
2	Alumni contribution	80,905	
3	Bank Interest	37,679	
4	Boonserm Tours & Travel, Thimphu Bhutan	46,800	
5	Drop Out refund	82,400	
6	Short Training Program (STP) contribution	20,000	
7	Mr. Sonam Jamtsho - CEO		
8	Bhutan Karma Trails	10,000	
9	Jonathan Tsai	46,260	
10	Patricia Thompson	98,600	AUD 2000@49.3
11	Pruppe Eigenmann	4,000	
12	Druk I Tours & Travel c/o Nadine Koch	12,800	
13	Korinna & friends (Sophie's aunt)	44,375	
14	Stephanie Covington & Robert	45,375	
15	Claudia Carol & Doug Hendron	5,000	
16	Jonathan & Mary Beth (David Bidwell friend)	6,300	
17	Thomann	3,000	
18	Krishen Laetsch	6,300	
19	Tom Bates & Loni Hamcode	6,300	
20	CTAS Organic Vegetable gardening	20,785	
21	Daniel Faessler & family	126,418	
22	Donation Misc	28,512	
TOTAL		2,471,566	
		\$ 39,231	
Note: Exchnage rate as of date 1 US \$ = Nu. 63			

Furniture Exhibition

On 11th November coinciding with the birthday of our 4th Druk Gyelpo and children's day, a 10 day furniture exhibition was held in the basement of Choki Khangzang in Kawangjangsa, Thimphu from 11th till 20th November 2017. The new website was also launched that day. Many visitors, especially locals, came to the exhibition. It was a great success in terms of exposure, interaction, feedback and sales. Total furniture sales at the exhibition amounted to Nu. 198,500 and handicrafts to Nu. 62,408.

Our school opened the furniture unit in 2013 with the support from Mr. Koenraad and Capital Group Companies. The goal is to

1. Produce high quality raw materials for our carving class which will help improve the quality of the carving and to do the work as per the lesson plan.
2. To diversify the range of products and produce unique authentic Bhutanese furniture to generate some additional income for the school.
3. Offer furniture repair and maintenance work.
4. We are happy to report to all our well wishers and supporters that we have come a long way and now the school is able to run the furniture unit successfully, meeting its goals as planned.
5. This year the furniture unit has been able to generate Nu. 216,188 (\$ 3432) as net profit beside the other benefits this project has provided to the school. This fund will contribute to meeting the operation budget of the school.



Annual Driglam Namzha Presentation

In the evening of 27th November 2017 the Annual Driglam Namzha (the traditional code of etiquette) presentation was made to Dasho Choki Dorji, our founder, all students and staff at the Multiple Purpose Hall building. The program was organized by the Driglam lopen Mr. Gangkar Wangdi, a senior professional code of etiquette teacher and our embroidery teacher Mr. Kinzang Tenzin and Dzongkha Lopen Ugyen Dorji. The three teachers have taken great efforts and time to train some of the selected students in the most important code of etiquette and values that guide us in our daily life. The learnings were acted out in a 1-hour stage show.

The presentation was very effective. The students performed a short drama, which made it easy for everyone to remember the key messages. We would like to thank Lopen Gangkar Wangdi for sparing his precious time to help pass on this very important traditional Bhutanese code of conduct and etiquette to our students.



14th National Skill Competition

The Department of Occupational Standards under the Ministry of Labour & Human Resources in collaboration with the Tourism Council of Bhutan conducted the 14th National Skills Competition with the theme "Our Skills, Our Future" from November 6th – 8th, 2017 at Royal Institute for Tourism and Hospitality. The objective of the skill competition is to promote the image of Bhutanese Skilled workers and to improve the skill level of our youths.

90 students took part in traditional Thangka painting, wood carving, embroidery, wooden furniture making, traditional stone masonry and bricks/tiles laying.

9 students (7 boys and 2 girls) from CTAS participated in the competition. We are proud to inform our well-wishers and supporters that our students achieved first place in wood carving, second place in painting and third place in embroidery.



Graduation Night

A farewell ceremony for our final year students was held on the evening of 2nd December 2017 at 6 PM to mark the successful completion of their courses at CTAS. This event is also celebrated as Kaden lekso night (meaning expression of gratitude night as the dinner and party is hosted by the graduating students, their parents and guardians). In return, the current students and teachers organized the event and performed various cultural programs as a sign of their appreciation.

Dasho Choki Dorji, our founder, was the chief guest for the evening. The Choki families, alumni members, parents and families of graduating students, staffs and all students took part in the event.

This year 24 students graduated. (14 with a diploma and 10 students with a certificate). The diploma students were awarded a special medal and pen from Mr. Koenraad, Leila and Lynne to congratulate them for the successful completion of the entire course. This special gift encourages our students to work hard and motivates them to complete their studies so that they can become professional artists in Bhutan. We would like to thank Mr. Koenraad Foulon, Leila and Lynne for this beautiful and thoughtful gift.



Final Year Study Tour

This year our final year study tour was organized from 4th till 13th December. 14 students (7 boys & 6 girls) who have successfully completed their courses in wood carving, tailoring, weaving and embroidery took part. The 10 day tour was escorted by the Lopen Katru early morning with the blessing from guru statue, marchang ceremony and prayers. The study tour covered six districts of Bhutan namely Thimphu, Paro, Punakha, Wangdiphodrang, Trongsa and Bumthang.

On their tour the group visited many ancient temples, monasteries, dzongs, museums, Zorig chusum arts and crafts institutes and many other important temples and places to give them a better understanding of our values and the significance of our art and culture. During these 10 days the students had ample opportunity to interact with people from different walks of life as well as professional artists and craftsmen.



A few glimpses from the final year students' study tour

Yanka's Father Visits CTAS

The father of Yanka, who is studying in his 5th year Thangka painting, visited CTAS on 26th October 2017. He visited our school to express his and his family's gratitude for giving his son and other children who are coming from poor and financially disadvantaged families an opportunity to study art and crafts at CTAS.

Yanka's father explained that the school has not only helped his son to become a skilled artist but that the program helps children to get employed and thus help their families, neighbours and their communities as well.

As a sign of his gratitude to the school he and his son Yanka hosted a special lunch for all staff and students. The school would like to thank Yanka's father for coming all the way from his village in Wangdiphodrang to offer his appreciation and for the delicious lunch.



Dorji Wangchuk Shares his Story



My name is Dorji Wangchuk. I am from Bumdeling, Tashi Yangtshi district (Eastern part of Bhutan). I graduated in 2005 from the painting department.

I am very happy to be able to stay in close touch with this school and to get this opportunity to share my experience and story with all our friends and supporters. First of all I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dasho Choki, all the supporters of the school, the Principal and teachers for providing education and guidance. It has helped me become the person I am today.

I am happily married and have one child. Currently I am running my own business in Thimphu, near the swimming pool, and have 2 employees working for me. Before I opened my own business I worked as a painter for 8 years at the Department of National Property under the Ministry of Finance of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

I was brought up by a single mother. She could not send me to school because we were many siblings in our family. Although I wish I could have studied I had to stay in the village helping my mother. With the help of our school founder Dasho Choki Dorji and his initiative to support poor families in 1999 I received the opportunity

to attend the school at Kawanjangsa, Thimphu in the Lhadi/painting section together with 5 other students. I was very excited and overwhelmed that I got an opportunity to prove myself.

With the passage of time the school was shifted its present location at Kabesa, Thimphu in the year 2003. It was our great memorable movement to strive for knowledge and newly established school to bring in the form as it was since when I graduated in 2005 as the first batch in painting.

Now, I can proudly say that none of what I have achieved would have been possible without the valuable skills which I was able to learn during my seven years at CTAS.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank CTAS' founder Dasho Choki Dorji, the school, all the supporters and our teachers for giving me and other students like myself this golden opportunity to become a successful and productive citizen of my country. I will never forget the support and love given to all of us.

I hope that my role as Chairperson of alumni 2018, I will be able to contribute and give back whatever I can of my experience and knowledge to help all the younger students studying in this school. I wish the school lots of success and prosperity. May this school continue to grow and benefit many children across Bhutan. My humble gratitude and Kadenchey (Thank you!) to all the supporters of the school.

Pema Dema Share her Story

My name is Pem Dem. I just completed my second year in Tailoring section. My parents are both farmers and I have one brother and two sisters. My village is Agona in the Punakha district. I studied till tenth grade in Punakha and could not qualify further. I heard about this school from my friends and I got the opportunity to study in this school. From an early age I have been interested in arts and crafts.

After joining this school I first felt lonely as it was the first time that I was separated from my family. But after being there with so many friends and with the support from teachers and staff I felt comfortable.

We are very fortunate to get all the support from the school which has helped me to learn many new lessons in life and in tailoring class. Reflecting on these two years: I came here basically with no knowledge nor skills but now I understand a lot about how to behave, think positively and work in a team and I can stitch

many items and souvenirs. I feel very happy. The school has taught me the importance of respect of others and to gain respect from others too. I am also grateful to the school for helping me develop my self confidence and making us independent so that we can earn a decent living after we complete our program here.

I am happy that I got a job offer to work with a friend of one of my teachers who runs a tailoring business. I am very excited and I hope that I will gain lots of experiences working with professionals. In the future I plan to start my own tailoring business.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our school supporters, Dasho Choki, teachers, madam Principal and all my friends for the wonderful time and good memories I enjoyed at CTAS. I pray and hope that the school will continue to support and care for students like us and I will keep in heart and cherish the love, care and all the good experiences that I got. Thank you!



THE PRINCIPAL, STAFF AND STUDENTS OF
CHOKI TRADITIONAL ART SCHOOL
WISHES YOU A VERY HAPPY
EARTH MALE DOG YEAR, 2018

PLEASE CONTACT US:

We still need your continued support to sustain our programs. Please contact us through any of the contact details mentioned below:

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Newsletter Acknowledgements:

Texts Editing: Elisabeth Gehrig Zahnd, Layout and Design: Sonam Phuntsho, Photography: CTAS Photo-Kidz Club