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CHOKI TRADITIONAL ART SCHOOL

"Empowering the unprivileged youth as custodians of distinct culture"



Wishing you and your loved ones a very
Happy Summer!

Principal Foreword



Kuzuzangpola! Happy Summer!

The Choki Traditional Art School is pleased to share with all our well-wishers and supporters, the Summer 2022 Newsletter that captures all key updates of the school from March - July 2022. Time went by so quickly and we have already passed the half year mark. We hope that all of you are doing well and are healthy, happy and safe.

With the Covid pandemic nearly over and things are returning to normalcy, we look forward to a brighter year ahead. Since the start of the pandemic, these past two years have proved to be a difficult phase for the school as there have been a huge budgetary gap due to limited sales of student products. Had it not been for the support from the Foulons and the Bickells in bridging the budgetary gap, the operation of the school would have been very difficult. Therefore, the school would like to express our sincere gratitude to Koenraad and Lynne Foulon, and Alan and Patrica Bickell for granting us valuable time and resources to allow us to recover from the pandemic. The school would also like to convey our gratitude to the Khyenste Foundation for covering a part of the budgetary deficit in 2022.

All in all, the school is genuinely grateful to each and every one of our supporters. THANK YOU VERY MUCH! For the past 23 years, your care and support has been giving us the strength to move forward in this journey to equip the underprivileged youths with a bright future.

Over the years, the school has grown exponentially in infrastructure, facilities and quality of education. One way to keep momentum going is to have constantly greater goals. Ensuring sustainability of the program and providing continued improvements in facility with quality education has become our ever increasing goals. Towards this end, Alan and Patricia Bickell have once again extended their support to provide a matching grant for the construction of a new Multipurpose Hall that would ease the existing congested dining, meeting space and provide an improved avenue for long term sustainability through enhanced sales. Your support in the construction of the Sherub Khangzang classroom has helped us immensely and with it, we are able to provide the students with a wonderful learning environment that would further provide quality education to the students. The construction of a new multipurpose hall would further help us provide the students with a multipurpose space that would contribute to a healthy learning. Therefore, we would once again like to request you for your support in this endeavor.

We welcome any amount of support as every donation brings us closer towards our goal. It is thanks to valued supporters like you that we are able to change the lives of these youth for the better and make this world a better place. KADRINCHEY LA!

(Sonam Choki)
Principal

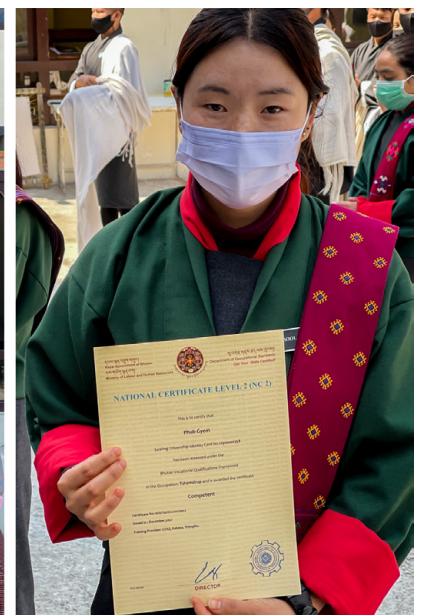
CTAS Admission 2022

This year, against the vacancy of 61 students for admission, 90 potential candidates applied. In keeping with the Covid safety protocol and to avoid large gatherings, the orientation and selection interview was broken into two separate days; April 12 and 13. Overall, the admission process was smooth and the school is pleased to be able to select and offer the opportunity to the most deserving candidates: a total of 64 new students were admitted, totaling to 150 students with 114 male students and 36 female students.



Award of National Certificate

For the first time, CTAS has sat for National Assessment in 2021 after the accreditation of its program by the Royal Government of Bhutan. The students have performed well and were awarded certificates by the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources on 25th April 2022. The students now carry a nationally recognized certificate, which will assist them in the future with employment opportunities.



2022 Teachers Day celebration

CTAS joined the nation in celebrating the Teacher's Day on May 2nd, which also marks the birth anniversary of His Majesty the Third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. This day is dedicated all the teachers in the country and to celebrate the teaching profession. In an effort to make the celebration more special and festive, the students exhibited a wonderful program with lots of beautiful dances and other entertainments for the teachers, staff and the rest of the students.



2022 School Rimdro, 11th May



Coinciding with Zhabdrung Kuchoe, (the Death Anniversary of Zhabdrung, unifier of Bhutan as a nation-state), the Annual School Rimdro (ritual) was held. The school was so blessed to have this important ritual presided by Trulku Tenzin Jamtsho, the reincarnation of Mipham Chogyal, the grandfather of Zhabdrung Nawang Namgyal. The school dedicated this merit for enlightenment of all sentient being and well-being of the students, teachers, staff and all our well-wishers and supporters.

CTAS observe Zero Waste Hour

On 2nd June 2022, coinciding with the coronation of His Majesty the Fourth King and as part of the “Zero waste Hour” Initiative, the school has organized a mass cleaning campaign around the vicinity of the school. The Zero Waste Hour campaign with the theme “My waste, my responsibility” was launched by Her Majesty the Queen on 2nd June 2019 with the aim to instill a behavioral change for proper waste management and practicing sustainable consumption lifestyle. Observing this important day provides an opportunity for the school to serve the community in maintaining a clean environment, as we believe the state of cleanliness of a society represents the mindset.



Community Development for Health

CTAS health focal person, along with a few students, had the opportunity to attend a two-day Awareness Workshop organized by the Ministry of Health on June 23-24 2022. The objective of the workshop was to create awareness on improved sanitation and hygiene in reducing the overall disease burden. During the World Toilet Day 2020, the Ministry of Health pledged to make Bhutan Open Defecation Free (ODF) by the end of 2022.

The workshop provided an opportunity for the staff and the students to interact with the health officials and the community and involved group work engagement and discussions on addressing community development. The workshop spread awareness on the different health risks, diseases caused by poor sanitation, the importance of toilets in regards to public health. Toilets also drive improvements in gender equality, education, economy and the environment. Therefore, the Ministry of Health is committed to providing all necessary support to achieve this national goal. Thanks to the supporters, CTAS students and staff have access to a good toilet facility, which was applauded by the Health officials who visited the school as part of the field inspection.



Introduction to Lenza learning

On May 16, Mr. Kezang Tshering from Tango University of Buddhist Studies conducted a training session to teachers and students on basic LENZA alphabets and their meaning. It is a Sanskrit writing system developed in the 11th century, which is now used in the monasteries. He provided a general introduction to 34 Lenza Alphabets and 16 Lenza Yangyig, alongside drawing techniques with traditional bamboo pen (Negu). He briefed on the common mistakes while drawing the Lenza alphabets and how it should be avoided. The expert also shared the background of LENZA, including its origins and application.

Based on the information session by Mr. Kezang, the students have started to practice Lenza alphabets from the given samples and the expert will visit the school again twice to assess on the progress and provide inputs to enhance their knowledge and practice. As part of capacity building, the teachers will also take part in this class to monitor the students.



Y-PEER awareness session on teenage pregnancy

On June 24 2022, the CTAS Y-PEER team organized an awareness session on teenage pregnancy. The team members made short presentations covering various topics on teenage pregnancy, ill effects and long-term consequences of lowered educational achievement, medical complications, reduced earnings, a lifetime of economic stress and limited opportunity and marital failure.

Such awareness session is a good reminder to the students and effectively reduce such unwanted incidents. One another good thing is that the team has gained enormous confidence in comparison to the previous years in terms of coordinating such youth related programs. It is very encouraging to see the students speak up with confidence, improvement in presentation skills as well as basic research capability on the net.

Y-PEER awareness session on teenage pregnancy



Alumni Association Meeting

On July 6 2022, the school had a meeting with the 2022 Alumni faculty in which the progress of the Association was accessed and their 2022 plan of action to support the school was discussed. The Association expressed their commitment to increase the membership target to 100, a 50% increase from 2021. Furthermore, they committed contributing a minimum of Nu. 100,000 to the school sustainable trust fund. They have also planned to organize expert visit to the school to validate the skills as well as share knowledge/insights into the market and how they should gear up, especially those who are graduating this year.

In the discussion with the faculty, all members, including the 2021 graduates, are gainfully employed and are all doing well with their jobs. They expressed their sincere gratitude to the school and all the supporters who have made it possible for them to become a productive citizen of Bhutan.



Alumni Chairman, Vice Chairman and Assistants 2022

Disability is not an obstacle to learning

A 20 year old boy from Wangdue, Nim Dorji was born without one arm. However, he did not let his disability obstruct him from pursuing his dream to become a painter. Having lost both his parents at young age, even with the love and care from his elder sister, life was difficult for Nim as he had a hard time overcoming the challenges of his disorder. He was often looked down upon, 'sympathized' and restricted from doing things. Now, Nim Dorji is a proud student of CTAS and is currently studying in 4th Level painting.

"Joining CTAS has been the best decision in my life" said Nim. "Not only I could pursue my passion, but also as a career to sustain my livelihood. I am truly grateful to all the supporters who made it possible for the underprivileged youths like myself to receive such wonderful learning opportunities". With the support of his teachers and friends, he said he has been able to overcome his skepticism. Initially he said that it was tough and frustrating. However, his determination and diligent practice has helped him build his confidence. "By the time I graduate within the next 2-3 years, I am optimistic of becoming a fine painter". He said he will continue to work with professional painters and build his skills further. Alongside, he has also been keen to establish his own traditional furniture business, where he could implement most of his painting works. He said his working experience gained over the winter holidays, painting houses and monasteries has been most rewarding and satisfying.

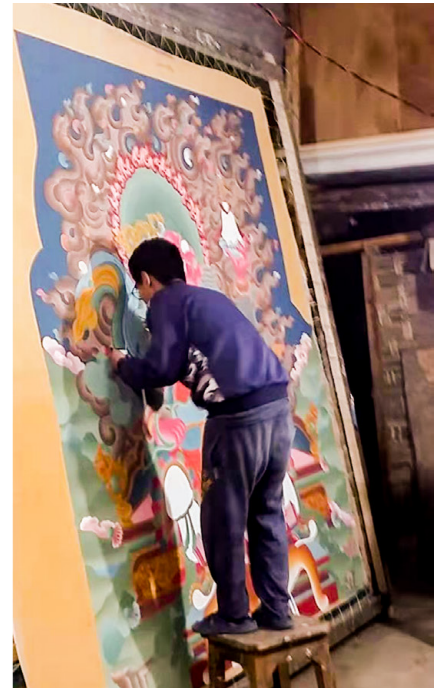
Such strong determination and goal in life should be applauded but what makes Nim even more splendid is that he did not let his disability stop him from achieving his dream. Nim feels proud of his achievements and hopes to inspire and encourage other youths with similar conditions, to keep working hard and remain determined. This is not just a success story. It is a story of PRIDE, a story of COURAGE, a story of PERSISTENCE, and a story of HOPE.



Tshewang Nidu

Hailing from Tashigang, Kangpar, Tshewang Nidu joined CTAS in 2013 under the Lhadri (Painting) program. However, in the middle of 2016 he had to drop his education due to family issues and went back to village. After a one-year gap, his passion for painting still persisted so he joined the Government Art School in eastern Bhutan (Trashiyangtse). He successfully graduated in 2019, sat for job interview in the Government and was recruited in the civil service. Currently, he is assigned as an artist with His Majesty the King.

He joined the CTAS alumni in 2021 and this year, he is serving as the Vice chairman. He said that he is grateful to CTAS for giving him the opportunity to learn in his earlier years, which has not only equipped him pursue his dream but bestowed him with values necessary in shaping a person become a good human being. He thanked all the supporters for making this opportunity available to him.



Multipurpose Hall for CTAS

The Choki Traditional Art School would like to extend its sincere appreciation and gratitude to all the supporters for the generous contributions in making it possible for CTAS to add a beautiful facility the 'Sherab Khangzang' building that has become the pride of the school. This beautiful spacious new building has enabled natural lighting for study besides creating sufficient classrooms, staff room, practical rooms and indoor toilets making learning at CTAS ever more enjoyable and conducive.

The students are extremely happy and morally boosted with such an uplift of facility in the school. The building will play a great role in imparting quality education to the students.

Multipurpose Hall for CTAS

Choki Traditional Art School is in its 22nd year of offering Art Education in Bhutan. Since the establishment of the school in the year 1999, 244 students have successfully graduated, while hundreds have left in between before completion of their chosen course of study, most often due to family and personal issues. Although unable to complete their courses, many of these students have nonetheless gone forward to earn their living through the skills acquired at CTAS. The school has therefore contributed in producing skilled and professional artisans who are now actively pursuing successful careers in arts and crafts across the country. They have not only done well for themselves but have contributed to the country's efforts in the preservation of the culture which is one of the pillars of Gross National Happiness. In fact, the CTAS alumni actively participates and supports the school's activities.

The school currently is faced with a major constraint with the existing multipurpose hall, which is located in the ground floor of the office building. The hall is used for various purposes such as dining, prayers, educational, cultural activities and conferences for large meetings. Its capacity is limited to accommodate only 90-100 people thus leading to overcrowding with more than 160 students in the campus. During the meal time, students have to eat their food sitting on the stage and outside the hall. The same issue exists during the conduct of cultural programs and other educational activities, where around 30-40% of the students have to be outside, as the hall cannot accommodate all the students, teachers and guests. This situation is worsened during rainy season and in winter, posing a huge challenge to conduct activities and programs.

Additionally, as part of a major sustainability strategy, 20-25% of the school operation budget is met through the sale of artifacts produced by the students during their training. However, due to lack of proper storage facilities and sales display at the school, it has become difficult to generate the expected revenue for sustenance, thereby posing a grave concern. The 300-year-old mud house which is currently used for exhibiting the students' products and sale is damp which damages the products especially the paintings and textiles with fungus. With a single window and poor lighting, the issue is further exacerbated when there is power failure. The floor area has limited space for display which remains wet throughout summer due to the rainy season.

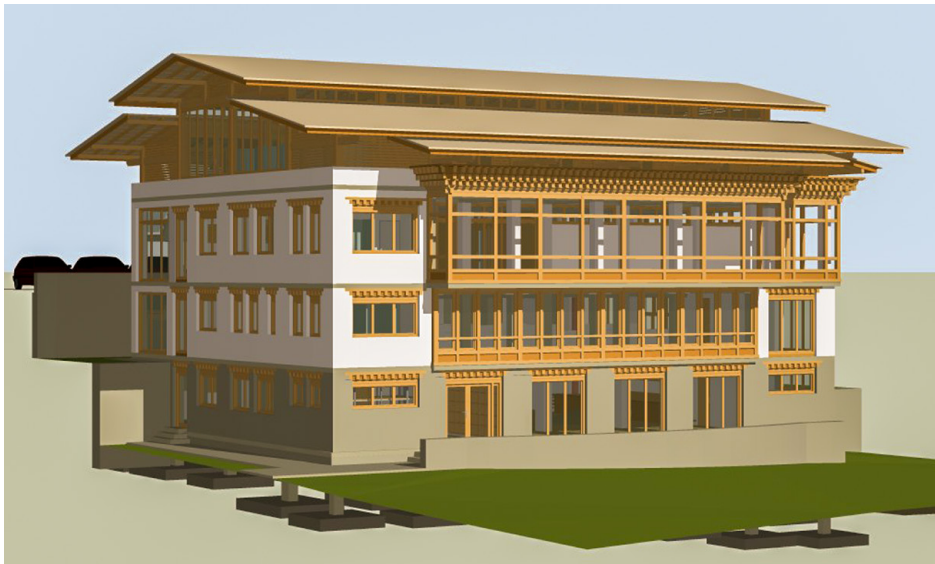
Despite the repeated maintenance of the floor and the drains to clear the water seepage, the problem has not been resolved. A permanent solution cannot be achieved without a major renovation on the foundation of the house which will be exorbitantly expensive and risky especially since the structure itself has suffered some major damages from the 2011 earthquake. Understanding these challenges faced by the school, Alan & Patricia Bickell have once again volunteered to support construct a new multipurpose hall which will ease the existing congested dining & meeting space and address the sustainability strategy through enhanced sales. Towards this construction, they will match all gifts received until December 2022. Below is the glimpse of the CTAS campus with the proposed location of construction aligned with the overall campus masterplan.



Multipurpose Hall for CTAS

With this new building, the school will have a large flexible space for student dining, co-curricular activities, conduct large scale educational meetings & conferences, and cultural programs. The students can exhibit shows, eat their meal comfortably, and participate in the educational programs and co curricular activities. Furthermore, with the superior facility, the school can expect to increase the sale of the school products and meet its targeted operation budget thereby help realize its sustainability goal. Also, with the additional space, the school can take opportunity to create a model to showcase the traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. The CTAS receives a number of small high end tour groups and expect increasing number of visitors particularly after tourism resumes from the post Covid 19 pandemic. The additional facility will enable inclusion of a cafeteria/restaurant in the new building that is envisaged to provide a conducive environment for visitors to the school and also an opportunity to generate some income through its rent.

Peter Schmidt, a Swiss architect and long-term resident of Bhutan, has carried out the technical drawings and site plan. He has extensive experience in designing Bhutanese educational facilities and government offices, including our new classroom building. The estimated cost of construction is US\$555,000 (five hundred fifty-five thousand).



This project cannot be realized without your support. Your kindness and support received so far has given us hope and inspiration to continue on this journey and make a huge difference to the lives of hundreds of youth in Bhutan. The school would not have been successful without the generous support received from each of you. The CTAS has been very fortunate to have compassionate well-wishers and supporters like you, who have all along the education journey provided support, enabling the school to reach its goal to provide high quality sustainable education program.

We would once again like to request your support to enable us to achieve this project enhance our ability to provide high-quality education and achieve sustainability. Your every donation means a lot not only to the students, but also the parents and the community at large. Apart from empowering the unprivileged youth and equipping them with a better life, your support has enabled the preservation and promotion of Bhutan's rich art and culture, which is one of the pillars of Gross National Happiness. Being confronted with these challenges, we couldn't help but solicit your contributions again. We hope to commence the construction by mid-2023 and complete within the next eighteen months (Dec 2024)

The following categories of fund support are presented below for your consideration. We look forward to your continued support. THANK YOU!

Categories	Donate Amount
Benefactors	US\$ 50000 or more
Patrons	US\$ 10000 –US\$ 49999
Champions	US\$ 1000-US\$ 9999
Supporters	Any amount up to US\$ 999



Your support has helped us sustain the program so far and we look forward to your continuous help. Please support us through any of the contact below:

Choki Traditional Art School
 Kabesa, P.O. Box 1118,
 Thimphu Bhutan
 Phone: + 975-2-380219
 email: sonamctas@gmail.com/dorjiwangmo197@gmail.com
 www.chokischool.org

Himalayan Youth Foundation
 106 S. Interlachen Avenue # 619
 Winter Park, FL, 32789, USA
 www.hyf-us.org

Fontana Foundation
 Sunnhaldenstrasse West 42
 CH-8704- Herrliberg
 Switzerland
 www.fontana-foundation.org