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CHOKI TRADITIONAL ART SCHOOL

“Empowering the unprivileged youth as custodians of distinct culture”



WISHING YOU A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024!

Principal Foreword



Kuzuzangpola!

Greetings from Choki Traditional Art School!

As we reflect on the passing year, our hearts swell with gratitude for the extraordinary journey we've collectively undertake. The celebration of our 25th anniversary stands out as a truly momentous occasion, marked by an abundance of warmth, joy, and the cherished presence of friends, family, and dedicated supporters of the school. The inauguration of our new classroom building was a fitting beginning, setting the stage for a year brimming with meaningful endeavors. The fundraising trek, conceived by long term supporter of the school Koenraad and Lynne Foulon along with their close friends, was a resounding success. Not only did it bridge the budgetary gap for our new multipurpose hall, generously matched by Alan & Patricia Bickell, but also raise fund to meet part of our operational budgetary needs. This venture also became a unique opportunity for all involved to witness the breathtaking projects executed by our alumni along the trail.

Commemorating our 25th year, we collaborated with World Wildlife Fund (WWF- Bhutan) to celebrate the International Snow Leopard Day, shedding light on the shared vulnerabilities between this endangered species and our traditional arts and crafts. To symbolize this unity, we proudly adopted the snow leopard as our official mascot, launching an animation video and comic featuring this majestic creature. This year also marked the inception of the student Inspirational Award, made possible by the generous support of Lynne and Koenraad, a heartfelt tribute honoring the late founder's memory.

With your unwavering support, the construction of our multipurpose hall is progressing well, promising to be a central hub of creativity, inspiration, and the sustainable growth of CTAS.

The profound impact we've had on society and the transformative journey of underprivileged youths are visible in the improved quality of their lives and the preservation of our rich arts and traditions. The exquisite works, now gracing historic landmarks throughout the country, stand as a testament to this positive change. All of these achievements are made possible because of your invaluable support. Thank you sincerely for helping turn our father's dream into a reality.

As we express our deep gratitude for your continuous support, we eagerly anticipate your blessings in the coming year. Your love and support extended to our school has enabled the only private charity art school in Bhutan to continue provide free high quality art education opportunity to many financially disadvantaged youths of Bhutan.

May the New Year bring you abundant health and happiness. Wishing you a joyful Christmas and a prosperous New Year ahead.

Thanking you and with heartfelt appreciation

(Sonam Choki)
Principal

Unveiling Achievements: A remarkable Graduation Night

This year marked a significant milestone for the school, celebrating its 25th anniversary alongside the highest number of graduates in its history – 47 in total. Among them, 15 completed diplomas, covering the entire course duration, while 32 achieved certificates. The gender distribution included 16 females and 31 males, a proud moment for both students and parents.

Sl.No	Course	Male	Female	Total	Graduation Category
1	Lhadi (painting)	6	0	6	Diploma (completing entire program)
2	Patra (wood carving)	2	0	2	
3	Tshemdrub (embroidery)	0	1	1	
5	Tshemzo (tailoring)	0	6	6	
TOTAL		8	7	15	
6	Shingtshone (painting)	15	2	17	Certificate level
7	Patra (wood carving)	8	0	8	
8	Tshemdrub (embroidery)	0	1	1	
9	Tshemzo (tailoring)	0	6	6	
TOTAL		23	9	32	

The graduates conveyed their deepest gratitude to all supporters, emphasizing the transformative impact of the opportunity on their lives. Special recognition goes to Koenraad and Lynne, whose medals and pens added weight and encouragement for diploma graduates. The school expresses sincere appreciation for their thoughtful sponsorship of this gifts, which travelled all the way from the UK every year.

The evening party, a tradition hosted by graduating students and parents, served as a token of appreciation. Mr. Rinzin Namgay, representing the late founder and family, graced the event, creating a wonderful opportunity for reminiscing and expressing heartfelt gratitude.



Norbu Receives the Inaugural Inspirational Award

This year holds special significance as the school introduces the inspirational award in loving memory of the late Founder Dasho Choki Dorji, coinciding with the 25th-anniversary celebration. Sponsored by Lynne & Koenraad Foulon, this award stands as a testament to preserving the founder's memory. Stringent criteria, encompassing positive attitude and moral character among others, were adopted to select the worthy recipient. Norbu Tshering, a 5th Year Painting student, emerged as this year's awardee. Raised by a single mother with a younger sister, he expressed deep honor for the inaugural award. Norbu sees this initiative as a source of motivation for fellow students, emphasizing its role in remembering the founder's love and compassion for underprivileged youths. He thanked Lynne and Koenraad for the opportunity, pledging to live up to the award's prestige and inspire future students.



Gratitude to Sir Peter Ustinov Foundation

The school expresses deep appreciation to the Sir Peter Ustinov Foundation for their unwavering support spanning eight consecutive years, from 2016 to the present. The Foundation's commitment has empowered the school to enhance its programs, offering students diverse skills aligned with their interests and aptitudes. The introduction of traditional boot-making and support for the carpentry unit has provided invaluable learning opportunities, while this year's venture into mask making, facilitated by Ustinov's support, holds promise for institutionalizing it within the curriculum. The school looks forward to expanding these meaningful learning experiences for its students in the years to come. We look forward to the continued support.



A Pledge to Save the Snow Leopard

In a special event marking its 25th Anniversary, CTAS partnered with World Wildlife Fund (WWF- Bhutan) to celebrate International Snow Leopard Day on October 23rd. Recognizing the snow leopards' cultural and ecological significance in Bhutan, the school identified a shared vulnerability with fading traditions of arts and crafts amidst fast-changing world of global communication, attractive opportunities abroad and shifting values, prompting a collaborative effort to bring visibility to this endangered species and the coexisting ecosystem.

The day was observed with Thimphu Dzongdag (District Administrator) as the chief guest, along with the Kawang Gup (community head), WWF-Bhutan, CTAS students, and representatives from various government agencies. Dzongdag Phub Dorji highlighted the country's commitment to addressing challenges related to human-wildlife conflict and commended CTAS for its contribution to raising awareness and equipping youths with livelihood skills over the past 25 years.



Letro, Deputy Chief Forestry Officer from the Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), emphasized Bhutan's vibrant conservation policy and community-based efforts to protect wildlife. Despite positive trends, the snow leopard remains vulnerable. Letro acknowledged the school's initiative to observe the day and sensitize the community on the importance of preserving endangered species. He praised CTAS for organizing an art competition, premiering an animation video featuring the Snow Leopard, and launching a comic book, "Cheychey the Snow Leopard," as fitting ways to discuss fading art, culture, and traditions while emphasizing the importance of preserving them and supporting underprivileged youths.



The snow leopard becomes official mascot of CTAS

Coinciding with its 25th anniversary and the observation of International Snow Leopard Day, the school has embraced the snow leopard as its mascot. A captivating animated video featuring snow leopard characters was premiered, effectively communicating the school's mission to empower underprivileged youth with knowledge and creative skills. This initiative incorporates the cultural significance of the snow leopard in Bhutanese traditions, utilizing traditional art as a powerful means to raise awareness and garner support.

Having adopted the snow leopard as the school mascot, the animated video serves as a dynamic tool for our snow leopard characters to convey our mission: empowering underprivileged youth with the knowledge and skills to protect and promote Bhutan's traditional arts. This creative endeavor provides a platform of visibility for the snow leopard, directed at children and youth.

As an institution committed to preserving tradition, CTAS recognizes its role in advocating for snow leopards in Bhutan, given their spiritual significance in Bhutanese folklore. The aspiration is that both causes – traditional art preservation and snow leopard conservation – will mutually benefit from this synergy, receiving generous support from a broader community of conservationists and humanitarians.

At CTAS, there is great enthusiasm for instilling qualities in students that foster appreciation, respect, love, kindness, and harmonious coexistence with nature. This holistic approach to life education not only equips students with sustainable livelihoods but also imparts fundamental values of love, care for all in society, and stewardship of our precious and irreplaceable environment.



Annual school picnic



Multipurpose Hall Project

Over the past few months, the construction of the three-story school multipurpose hall has made significant strides since its commencement in April 2023, coinciding with the school's 25th-anniversary celebration. The inauguration was graced by Rodger and Jeannie, son and daughter-in-law of Alan & Patricia and Koenraad & Lynne Foulon on 29th March. The completion of concrete/slab work on all three floors and the ongoing roofing phase marks substantial progress, with the entire construction expected to conclude by December next year. This new facility will provide students with ample space for meals, extracurricular activities, and a dedicated area for showcasing their products, contributing to the school's sustainability.

The realization of this project is indebted to Mr. Alan and his wife, Patricia, who kickstarted the initiative with matching grant support. Despite their generous commitment to match all donations for the building construction, the school faced challenges in raising sufficient funds. It was at this juncture that Mr. Koenraad and his wife, Lynne, proposed a solution by organizing a fundraising walk with close friends from March 30th to April 10th. Thanks to the collective support and contributions from supporters and well-wishers, this transformative project was made possible. Thank you!



Inspiring Volunteerism

The school actively participated in observing International Volunteers Day on December 5th under the theme 'If Everyone did...', in collaboration with the Department of Youth & Sports and UNFPA. The experience was profoundly meaningful, fostering a sense of volunteerism in the minds of the students, laying the foundation for their personal growth and inspiring them to contribute to positive change within the community. The event also served as an opportunity to assess the types of volunteer work undertaken by CTAS.



"Empowering Change: Monthly Zero Waste Initiative"

In an effort to promote responsible waste management and cultivate a sustainable lifestyle, the second day of each month marks the "Zero Waste Hour" at our school. Under the theme "My Waste, My Responsibility," initiated by Her Majesty the Queen in June 2019, this monthly event involves a mass cleaning campaign within the school campus and the surrounding community. This initiative, dedicated to fostering behavioral change, has proven instrumental in maintaining cleanliness in our community. The school's commitment to diligently observe this practice every month has garnered appreciation from the village headman and the local community. They acknowledge the significant impact of this ongoing effort, expressing their gratitude for the school's role in keeping the community clean and raising awareness about responsible waste management.



"Alumni Meeting: Reflecting on a Successful Year"

On December 2nd, the Alumni General Meeting brought together alumni members, faculty of 2023, graduating students, and CTAS alumni staff, including the Vice Principal, Principal, and Director, totaling 83 participants. The school extends gratitude to Alumni Chairman Mr. Thugten, Vice Chairmen, and all Assistants for their contributions to a successful year, especially significant as 2023 marks the school's 25th anniversary. The support received played a pivotal role in executing milestone events, from the anniversary celebration to the CTAS fundraising trek. The hospitality received from the alumni and showcase of their work on the trail were highlights of the trek and left a lasting impression on supporters, instilling pride in their support. Under Mr. Thugten's leadership, alumni membership reached a record 88, secured sponsorship for two students, conduct inspirational talk and projects. These achievements stand auspicious in the context of the school's 25th-anniversary celebration.



“Empowering Dreams: Impact of Equal Education”

Sangay Tshering, a pioneering member of the inaugural group of female students admitted to the school in 2009, owes her educational journey to Koenraad and his daughter Leila Foulon, whose support enabled equal opportunities. Before that the school only had boys. Initially Prompted by the eight-year-old Leila's visit in 2008, their generous contributions facilitated additional facilities, paving the way for thirteen girls to embark on a journey that forever changed their lives.

In 2014, Sangay emerged as one of the first female graduates, becoming an inspiration to others. Her dedication led to her recruitment as an assistant teacher in 2015, and she now stands as a full-fledged teacher, equipped with skills from additional training supported by the Ustinov Foundation. This invaluable support has not only enhanced Sangay's capabilities but has also enriched the school's curriculum with traditional boot making and other critical skills.

Sangay extends immense gratitude to Koenraad, Leila, and the Ustinov Foundation for shaping her destiny. Her commitment to the school is evident as she serves as a teacher, recognizing the profound impact it had on her life. Committed to giving back, she values the opportunity to shape young minds. Elected as the school's alumni coordinator, she fosters a vital link between alumni and the school, fostering growth through coordination of alumni programs and meetings, aligning with the mission of "to grow and to help grow." At year-end, she and the alumni chairperson present the Alumni Association's achievements in meeting the year's targets, reflecting the continued success of their shared mission.



Sangay's happy students (embroidery level 2)

CTAS Alumni

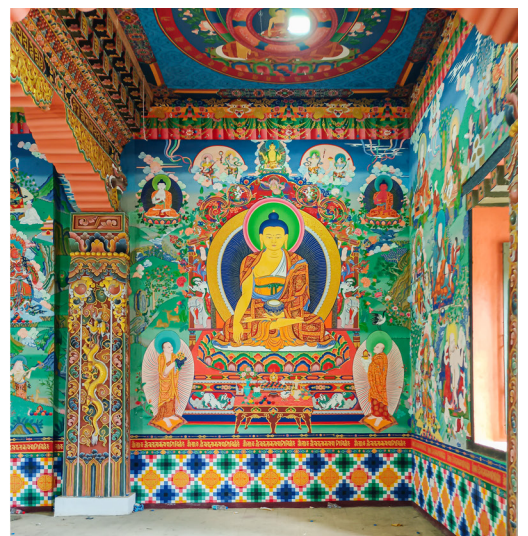
The alumni of the school have made significant contributions to the preservation of arts and culture in Bhutan, which is a vital asset to the nation. Their exceptional skills in art painting and wood carving are showcased in the intricate designs adorning monasteries and Dzongs throughout the country, serving as a testament to their dedication and efforts in keeping traditions alive.



A Fusion of Tradition and Alumni Talent

On September 22, 2023, the newly constructed Pemagatshel Druk Mijur Dechen Dzong was consecrated, symbolizing the convergence of administrative and religious functions for the people of Pemagatshel in Eastern Bhutan. The Central Monastic Body presided over the consecration ceremony. The Prime Minister, Home Minister, officials and lams and local people of Pema Gatshel attended the ceremony.

Remarkably, the intricate painting work was undertaken by our school alumni. Initiated in early 2022 by a team of three senior alumni members, the project engaged over fifteen school alumni. It's a source of immense pride for the school to witness its alumni contributing to the creation of a significant administrative and spiritual structure in a vital district of the country. Gratitude is extended to the supporters who believe in the school's mission, making such accomplishments possible.



Alumni Contribute to State-of-the-Art Royal Academy

The school takes great pride in the honor and privilege bestowed upon its alumni painters who actively contributed to the State-of-the-Art Royal Academy building in Pamesa, Paro, amongst other professional painters. As a co-educational and residential institution under His Majesty the King, the school aspires to foster a student community that embodies a balanced and diverse representation of national character and cultural experience. The recent completion of the part of the project executed by our alumni is a source of immense pride for the school.



“Dragon's Radiance and Prosperity 2024”

Celebrate the Dragon Year with a symbol of strength and fortune! Painted by the talented hands of our students, this card not only embodies the vibrant spirit of the dragon but also carries the collective wishes of prosperity, joy, and success. In Bhutanese culture, the dragon is a symbol of good fortune and power, believed to bring prosperity and auspicious changes. As we navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, may the spirit of the dragon inspire us to face adversity with resilience and pursue our aspirations with determination. Wishing everyone a year filled with success, joy, and prosperity. May the mighty dragon guide us toward new heights and illuminate our path with its mythical brilliance.

Happy and prosperous Dragon Year to all!



How you can help?

HELP EDUCATE AN UNDERPRIVILEGED YOUTH

You feed them for a lifetime

USD 2.6 can cover three meals, lodging and tuition for a day

USD 2850 - 5700 can support a student from three to six years.

Help make a difference in the life of a young Bhutanese youth.

Help a student become a professional painter, carver, embroider and weaver and succeed in life

If you have any questions, please email sonamctas@gmail.com



Your support so far has transformed lives of many underprivileged youths and preserved the cultural integrity of Bhutan. We look forward to your continuous support in sustaining the program. Please support us again through any of the contacts below, which are tax deductible and will go in full to support the deserving students at CTAS:

A - Himalayan Youth Foundation US

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

B - Himalayan Youth Foundation UK

7 Hallam Mews, London
<https://www.hyf-uk.org>
Email: info@hyf-uk.org

C- Fontana Foundation

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

OR, you may directly contact the school:
sonamctas@gmail.com/dorjiwangmo197@gmail.com



WE STILL NEED YOUR SUPPORT
THANK YOU! KADRINCHEY LA!!!