

LUNAR NEW YEAR OF THE RAT

The Lunar New Year falls on the date of the New Moon closest to the beginning of spring between January 21 and February 21. It is also called Spring Festival. Celebrations continue for 15 days, ending with the Lantern Festival.

In legend, a monster named *Nian* 年 (whose name means “year”) is known for haunting people at the end of every lunar year. *Nian* is afraid of the colour red and fireworks, so these are both found in abundance during Lunar New Year celebrations. Observers might also visit a family shrine or set one up in their home; display couplets and decor; attend a Lion Dance; eat symbolic, lucky foods; and give or receive red envelopes of lucky money. The Spring Festival is also a time of family reunion. The associated travel rush, *Chunyun* 春运, is considered the biggest annual human migration on earth.

The Year of the Rat 2020 began on 25 January. The rat is a symbol of fertility and abundance due to the rate of reproduction.

People born in the Year of the Rat are considered to be clever and successful yet content with living a quiet and peaceful life.



**ALMA
NEWS
MARCH
2020**

Association for
Learning
MANDARIN
汉语
in Australia Inc

澳大利亚学汉语协会

The Year of the Rat is the first zodiac sign in the Chinese zodiac cycle. According to the Chinese zodiac story, in the competition held by the Jade Emperor to decide the zodiac animals, the quick-witted rat asked the diligent ox to take him on a ride to cross the river and jumped down before the ox crossed the finish line, so the rat won the race and became the first of the zodiac animals. The 12 zodiac animals are, in order: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig. A Rat year occurs every 12 years.

In Chinese element theory, each zodiac sign is associated with one of the five elements: Wood, Fire, Earth, Gold (Metal), and Water. For example, the Metal Rat this year comes once in a 60-year cycle.

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year to all our members and their families. I hope the holidays have been safe for you all as it was certainly a challenging start to the year. Despite the air quality concerns our staff were able to provide the usual child education and care services for our families. A special thank you to the families who lent the Centre air purifiers during this challenging time.

A number of parents have expressed concern regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. While two individuals at the Centre (one staff member and one child) returned from Mainland China a few weeks ago, before 1 February, they did NOT return from Hubei Province. They have already undertaken voluntary self-isolation over and above health advice, and have NOT shown any symptoms of COVID-19.

Some parents have also expressed concern at the wearing of facemasks by some staff members at the Centre. I can assure everyone that this was in response to the smoke hazard and not related to COVID-19.

I wish to express my gratitude to all members of our community for the responsible and measured way in which they have responded to this crisis, and the strong communication employed by staff in keeping the community up to date on how it has been affecting the Centre. We will continue to monitor the situation and will be following any future directions from ACT Health regarding COVID-19 and any other community health concerns.

At the last ALMA committee meeting, our current president Daniel Sheridan stepped down from his duties as president and will remain a general committee member. We have appreciated his in depth knowledge of languages and look forward to utilising this as he continues his work on the committee. The committee voted for myself (Kate Friend) to be acting president and Mandy Scott as acting vice president.



It was wonderful to watch our preschoolers perform at the Multicultural Festival. Our educators did a magnificent job ensuring they had a fun time singing in Mandarin. It was a great opportunity for ALMA and CAECC to demonstrate some of what we do to the greater Canberra community.

And finally a warm welcome to our new and returning members of ALMA and CAECC for 2020. I look forward to meeting with you at many of our events planned for the year.

Kate Friend - President

ALMA ACTIVITIES

Mandarin radio program

ALMA helps present a Mandarin language program on community radio 2XX every Friday from 7pm-7.30pm. The aim is to promote the use and learning of Mandarin in the ACT area. The program does this by incorporating children's songs and short stories in Chinese, which are then discussed bilingually to help develop the language and cultural understanding of both Chinese and English-speaking listeners. We also provide information in both languages about local news and other items of interest. Recently there has been much to discuss, from smoke, hail and fires to the direct and indirect effects on the local Chinese community of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. To listen to the program, tune into 98.3FM on Friday evenings or listen online at any time through the website at <http://www.2xxfm.org.au/> Just click 'on demand' and look for the Mandarin program in the program guide.

Mandarin community tutoring project

This project introduces fluent speakers of Mandarin in the Canberra region to others who want to practice and improve their skills in the language. Tutors and learners then make their own arrangements to meet, usually for one or two hours a week on a one-to-one basis. Registration in the project is free; there is no payment involved, though participants are encouraged to become members of ALMA.

We recently sought feedback from the 33 learners who participated in the project in 2019. Many said they spent much of the time chatting or having casual conversations with their tutor. Benefits gained included expanding vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and practicing speaking and listening. The meetings were seen as a useful supplement to the more formal courses that most learners were currently enrolled in or had followed in the past. For some, it was their first chance to use Mandarin outside of a classroom setting. One learner described it as “a valuable way to practice authentic language in an authentic setting”. The sessions also provided exposure to other accents and voices. Another learner observed that most of his teachers had been female, so meeting a male tutor “was a good opportunity to talk to men as well”. For other learners, the tutoring sessions were mainly used to work through a textbook or a list of fixed topics.

Several learners suggested it would be helpful to be able to contact others in the project and to occasionally meet socially as a group. This is in line with ideas received from a number of the tutors last year – as reported in the December issue of ALMA News. In response, we have set up a ‘Mandarin Meet-ups’ Facebook group to enable learners and volunteer tutors registered with the project to contact each other and share information and ideas.

For more information about the project, visit the Mandarin Community Tutoring page on the ALMA website: <https://www.learningmandarincanberra.org/>

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP YOUR CHINESE LANGUAGE SKILLS

Activities organised by Claire, one of our ALMA members

1. Free weekly Mandarin conversation class
 - Woden Library, Fridays 12.30pm-1.30pm
 - For intermediate and advanced level learners
 - Native speakers welcome
 - You can bring your lunch
2. Mandarin classes with University of the Third Age
 - Over 50? These Mandarin classes could be for you.
 - Beginners welcome.
 - The focus is having fun.
 - We laugh a lot, use apps, have excursions and incursions. People study what they want; some stay with pinyin whilst others tackle characters.

For more details about either of the above, contact Claire on 0412 305 538.

Language exchange at the ANU

- Mondays 3pm - 4pm from 2 March

This weekly Chinese/English language exchange is organised by the ANU branch of the Australia-China Youth Association (ACYA). The aim is to provide a casual and comfortable environment for practicing English and Chinese language skills. All language levels can attend, and food is usually provided. Anyone from the community is welcome.

For venue and more details:

<https://www.facebook.com/ACYAANU/>

The ALMA website has details and links to many courses and programs to learn and develop Mandarin language skills for both children and adults. <https://www.learningmandarincanberra.org/learning-mandarin-in-australia.html>

If you know of other programs or find that some of those listed are out of date, please let us know at canberraalma@gmail.com.

CHINESE AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE (CAECC)

澳华幼儿教育中心新闻

We had a busy start to the year with bushfires, hazardous air quality, a hailstorm and COVID-19. However, the children settled in well after the break. Due to the air quality in January, the children played mostly indoors, learning about bushfires and saving koalas, and sharing holiday stories.

We celebrated Lunar New Year, the Year of the Rat, by making delicious dumplings, and Australia Day with a sausage sizzle lunch.



Twelve children from the preschool room performed and sang beautifully in Mandarin at the Multicultural Festival on 23 February.

On 25 February we held a Parent Information Evening. This year we are implementing a new style of program with coloured hexagons linked to the Early Learning Framework and Story Park to document children's learning, processing, planning and activity implementation. We have also introduced a separate program for older toddlers in the infants/toddlers room and younger preschoolers.

We welcome Zilla's transition to role of Assistant Director of the Centre.

Please note the CAECC now has its own web domain and new email addresses:

director@caecc.act.edu.au

assistant.director@caecc.act.edu.au

Annette Chemin - Director

OTHER NEWS

Lantern Festival 2020

- Saturday 14 March, 5.30pm – 8pm
- Beijing Garden, Lennox Gardens, Flynn Place, Yarralumla
- Free entry and all welcome

Bring your own picnic (only water and snacks for sale) and enjoy the colour and spectacle of this annual event organized by the Australia China Friendship Society ACT Branch. Bring your own lantern or buy one there. Prizes for the best home-made lanterns. For more information, email acfsevents@gmail.com or ring Carol on 6247 8231 (for possible cancellation visit www.acfs.org.au).



Events at China in the World (CIW)

CIW is an umbrella institute consisting of staff and students of The Australian National University (ANU) across all disciplines, engaged in education and research on any aspect of the Chinese world: the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora.

CIW hosts regular talks and other events that are open to the public. For more information visit: <http://ciw.anu.edu.au/events>

Contributions to Future ALMA News

Please email items for the next newsletter to canberraalma@gmail.com by 15 May 2020.