

What I am about to relate to you is my trip to Toronto in the summer of 2002. Oh, who am I? The student ambassador of the academic year 2001-2002, David Mai (please remember it, for it appears once only).

To undertake my duties as student ambassador - to deliver firsthand information about Wah Yan, I flew to Canada to attend the 8th International Conference, also known as IC 2002, held at the Metropolitan Hotel in Toronto.

The student ambassador of Wah Yan College, Hong Kong, Adrian Chiu, who has been a friend of mine since form three, and I, along with the principals of the two Wah Yans, the chairman of the Wah Yan College Kowloon Past Students' Association and a retired teacher of Wah Yan College, Hong Kong, departed from Hong Kong in the afternoon of 27th June, 2002.

For half the day we sat in the cabin discussing matters together, while the Air Canada plane transcended time zones, travelling half way round the globe to the opposite end of the northern hemisphere; to be received by the radiance of the morning sun at Vancouver, where we stopped by for a transit; it was not long before we took off again for Toronto.

Toronto, Ontario

27/6

By the time we left the airport, it was already 9 pm, but the outside world still seemed to be lagging in the daytime. Dinner with the IC Organising Committee in downtown Toronto immediately followed before our prolonged day of 27th June ended with yet another warm welcome from Peter Wong's family, our host family for the first four nights.

28/6

The next day began with breakfast with two of the organisers, Peter Yeung and Kelvin Tsang. We then helped to transfer bottles of wine to the Metropolitan Hotel, after which we met Dr. Joseph Wong and a lot of past students from the 90s. The afternoon went by without any of us noticing it as we mingled and exchanged information with the past students. The Registration and Welcome Reception for IC 2002 in the evening saw guests from overseas chapters coming one after the other, providing a pleasant ambience to rub shoulders and shake hands with old boys from both Wah Yans.



student ambassador scheme 2002

by
David Mai



29/6 - Day 1 of IC 2002

The big day came as the delegates from far and wide arrived for the important event to commence. The conference unfolded with the addresses given by Father Deignan, the principals and the chapter representatives. The chapter reports were not as heavy and solemn as one might presuppose; instead, the majority of them were presented with wit and humour; informative yet informal, they were even hilarious at times! I met with some past teachers and students from the Kowloon campus afterwards to fill them in on the new developments of their beloved school.

After lunch, Father Coghlan discoursed upon the issue of funding schools in China, then shared his views on controversies surrounding the Catholic church lately.

The participants went touring in the afternoon. Adrian and I took a short rest upstairs before attending a low mass held by the Jesuit fathers.

At 6:30 pm, the conference party boarded the luxurious Jubilee Queen for an evening cruise along the waterfront of the Toronto Harbour. Chatting away on the deck, we were invigorated by the gentle breeze blowing across the reflective waters of Lake Ontario. A blissful night it was; we engaged Father Chow and some others in light conversation as we sailed past countless scenic spots.

30/6 - Day 2 of IC 2002

Day 2 of the conference kicked off with the World Cup finals at the breakfast table. Relaxed, round-table discussions were then conducted on the theme of IC 2002, "Beyond Nostalgia", among members from different chapters with Dr. Li Shing-Fu as the guest speaker and coordinator. Just before lunch, Adrian and I made our respective presentations to give an update on the two schools from a student's perspective. My presentation was based on a virtual campus tour of 56 Waterloo Road, Kowloon with the emphasis on recent changes. Past students were fascinated to see their alma mater in its new form, particularly the newly renovated washrooms. I later went on to elaborate on the Wah Yan Spirit to express my view on the theme "Beyond Nostalgia".

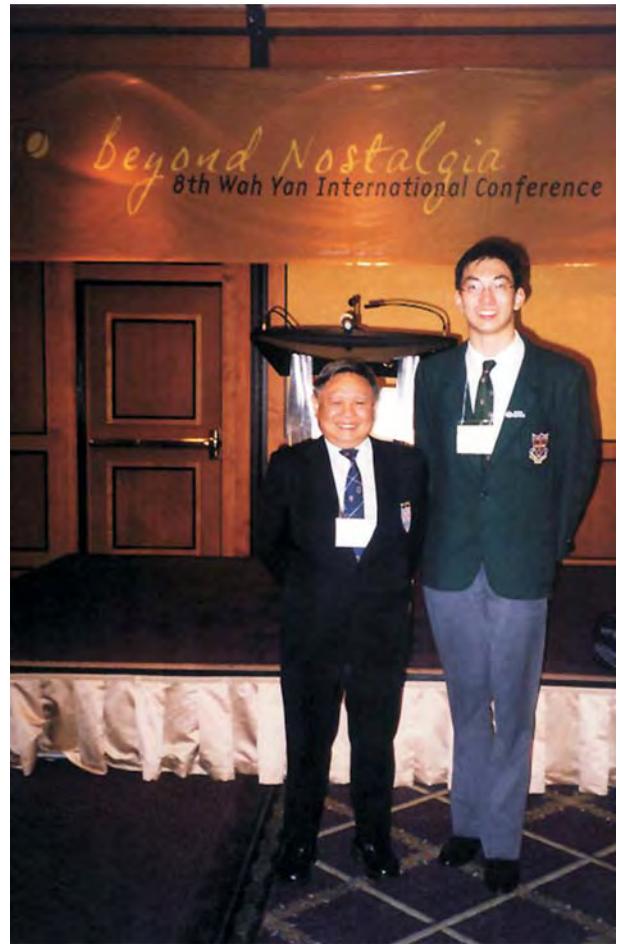
Bidding for IC 2004 began after lunch. The conference was wrapped up as Hong Kong won the bid for organising IC 2004.

Missing out on the fun of afternoon tours the day before, we decided to go on a tour of the CN Tower and the SkyDome, the renowned multi-purpose entertainment centre. Although we did not have time to climb up the tower, we did take a look inside the SkyDome, just in time to witness the display of fireworks accompanying the jubilation in the crowd as a home run was hit in the middle of a baseball match between the Expos and the Blue Jays. Real excitement, however, came from the Hippo tour, which is actually a tour around downtown Toronto on an amphibious bus called Harry Hippo. We could see people waving at us (knowing that we had to be tourists) as we shuttled down the busy streets, then cruised in the nearby waters of the city.

The two-day conference culminated in a Chinese banquet officially dubbed as the Gala Dinner, which had more to offer than a splendid meal: The electric and nostalgic atmosphere, created by the two exceptionally talented Masters of Ceremonies, also made the occasion a tremendously entertaining evening.

1/7 - Day 3 of IC 2002

Canada Day celebrations coincided with our guided tour of Niagara Falls, only to add merriment to the event. Our first



activity at Niagara Falls was a boat trip on the "Maid of the Mist", which ferried us so close to the thundering waterfalls that I was soaked to the skin even with the provided mackintosh on. We subsequently went up to the observation deck of Skylon Tower, from which the outlook over the Falls was indescribably breathtaking. After that, we watched a film on the miracles, myths and magic shrouding the Falls in the IMAX Theatre, which boasts a world-class giant screen several storeys high.

Later on in the day, we travelled back to a place behind the Falls called the Table Rock Complex. From there, not only could we enjoy a spectacular view of the Falls, but also observe how water is fed by the Great Lakes before tumbling down. There was such a thick mist across the Falls at the time that a brilliant strip of rainbow could be captured on film.

Having had dinner served at a Chinese restaurant, we moved to K. Y. Ng's house to stay for the remaining three nights.

2/7 - Day 4 of IC 2002

A Midland tour was arranged for the conference party on the following day. Our destination: Martyrs' Shrine at Midland, where we attended mass at the Shrine Church. It was definitely a hot day for outdoor activities; even so, the blazing heat of the afternoon sun could not prevent us from visiting



Sainte-Marie among the Hurons - a reconstruction of the 17th century settlement founded by French Jesuits on the original historic site. A walk around undeniably helped us to gain a better understanding of the lifestyles of the French missionaries and the Huron people at the time. But nothing could stop the inevitable: The reunion dinner at a golf clubhouse spelt goodbye for the delegates from worldwide chapters as the last day of official events for IC 2002 gradually came to an end.

3/7

Adrian and I were fortunate enough to have two past students, Kelvin Ng and Clement Tang, to guide us around the city for the day. We had the opportunity to ride on the subway (TTC) en route to Casa Loma, a mediaeval style castle formerly owned by Sir Henry M. Pellatt. Perched on top of a hill, Casa Loma is equally impressive in the grandeur of its facade and the lavishness of its decor. We left the estate to pay a visit to the Royal Ontario Museum, the University of Toronto, the Nathan Philips Square, where the new Toronto City Hall is situated, and Union Station, a multi-modal transportation interchange. Along the way, we stopped by here and there to pose outside landmarks such as the Royal Bank Plaza, the Royal York Hotel, the Hummingbird Centre and the Hockey Hall of Fame, to name just a few. After spending the rest of the day walking in downtown Toronto, we joined Dr. Joseph Wong, K. Y. Ng and members of the Ontario chapter for a farewell dinner at a Japanese restaurant. Sadly, it was time to part, and all that I would have left with me would be nothing more than the fond memories of one of the happiest times in my life.

4/7

We had to leave the next day, despite the fact that it was Independence Day in the U.S.

Calgary, Alberta

Just before noon, we landed in Calgary safe and sound for an enthusiastic reception from the Calgary chapter and the local Airport Authority, which had prepared a White Hat Ceremony - we were presented with a white stetson after making a cheerful promise.

An alumnus named Ken offered to drive us to the Heritage Park, Canada's largest living historical village, which features cowboy stuff ranging from saloons and snooker parlours to waggons and steam trains from the old West. The unique Western experience gave us insight into what the Calgary Stampede, to begin the next day, would be like. We even had a ride on the local tram on our way back. When I noticed a tower in

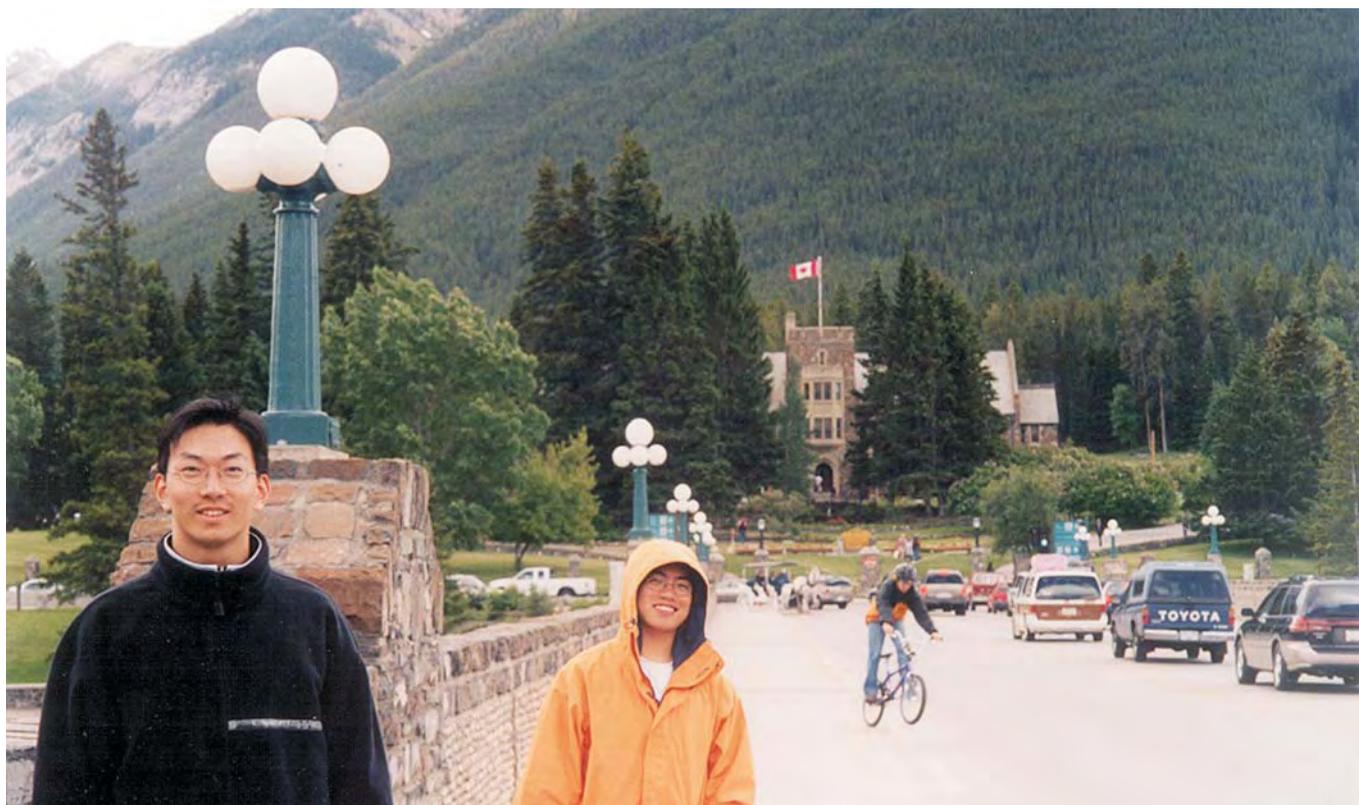


the skyline again, I had this ludicrous notion that it must be typical of major Canadian cities to have their own towers. We decided to take the lift to the observation terrace of the Calgary Tower to savour a panoramic view of the city below. Even the majestic Rocky Mountains could be beheld in the distance. An hour later, we met the alumni in Calgary at the dinner table of a Chinatown restaurant. Michael Wong was to put us up for the next two nights. We encountered a terrible scene on the way home though - a deer, having been hit by a passing car, shattered the windscreen of the vehicle on impact and limped into our lane! Luckily, no accident ensued as Michael's car came to a halt just in time for the deer to narrowly escape death.

5/7

Michael's balcony had a fine view of the Rockies, an awe-inspiring wonder especially recommended for first-time visitors. But the Stampede parade was going to start soon. Before our arrival to Calgary, we were tempted to see both during the brief stay; in the end, we decided to watch the parade on TV and see for ourselves the magnificent scenic beauty of the mountains.





The drive took more than an hour, which meant plenty of time for photo taking along the way, to arrive at Lake Louise, the Jewel of the Rockies. We could see snow, or rather white specks the size of large raindrops, descending from the sky like isolated meteors. At the foot of the mountains, we took a Lake Louise Sightseeing Gondola up the slopes. The environment was freezing cold, with temperatures reaching 0 degrees at the upper station. Strong chilling winds were blowing so hard that my ears ached as the open gondola scaled the side of the mountain. There were reports of grizzly bear sightings at the time, but we never caught sight of one both on our way up and down.

Having had an eyeful of the picturesque scenery, we went on to visit Banff, a town in the Canadian Rockies, where we took some more photos, before heading for the Bow Falls. Unlike Niagara Falls, the Bow Falls was a lot gentler and seemed more like a rapids. Exhausted, we dozed off during the long distance ride back home.

In the afternoon, Ken came to pick us up from Michael's place to drive us around the University of Calgary, downtown Calgary and Chinatown. Our final evening in Canada went by in a more local setting: we had a barbecue at Michael's house with Father Deignan and some past students.

6/7

The day came for us to pack and leave Calgary as well as to end our journey, although neither of us wanted it to terminate

so "abruptly" - we had been enjoying ourselves so much that we were quite oblivious to the passage of time.

The overseas chapters have certainly put a lot of effort into making our trip a memorable experience. How much I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to all Wahyanites, for their great generosity and kindness. There is surely nothing like the Wahyan-style hospitality, for what I deeply experienced had to be the Wah Yan Spirit, and consequently, as I said during my presentation, "As student ambassador, I hope to continue to spread the Wah Yan Spirit and to inspire a new generation of Wahyanites to pass on this message, because that is the very difference that makes us Wahyanites."

David Mai
the Student Ambassador of the Academic Year 2001-2002

