

**Christchurch City Council
Christchurch / Songpa-Gu Sister City Committee**

Entry in Category Two

**‘A Celebration of Ten Years of Friendship’
1995 – 2005**



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A Celebration of Ten Years of Friendship 1995 – 2005
Christchurch / Songpa-Gu Sister City Committee
Executive Summary

On the 10th February 1995 Songpa-Gu and Christchurch formalised the first sister city relationship between a New Zealand city and a Korean city (Songpa-Gu). This relationship has flourished over the last 10 years and it has played a very significant role in developing cultural understanding between Koreans and Kiwis. Alongside these contacts and friendships this relationship has led to new opportunities in business and investment as well as sport, cultural, art and educational exchanges.

A summary of some of these events and exchanges over the last ten years:

Official delegations and mayoral visits between Songpa-Gu and Christchurch, sister school relationships, sports exchanges, exchanges of choirs and performing groups, children's artwork exhibitions, promotional videos displays in Songpa-Gu, Korean war veteran memorial bridge placed in Songpa-Gu, business delegation to Songpa-Gu, a Songpa-Gu garden in Christchurch.

In 2005, to celebrate ten years of sister city relationship the Songpa-Gu Sister City Committee planned and carried out a number of projects. It is this group of projects that we wish to submit as a cultural project under category two. These projects are summarised below:

1. April 2005 **10th Anniversary** Gift of a sculpture is unveiled in Songpa-Gu.
2. April 2005 **10th Anniversary** Another sister school relationship signed
3. April 2005 **10th Anniversary** Gift of books to English Village (in Songpa-Gu)
4. Sept. 2005 **10th Anniversary** Kapahaka group from Christchurch to Songpa-Gu
5. Sept. 2005 **10th Anniversary** Tour Group
6. Nov. 2005 **10th Anniversary** Traditional Korean dance group from Korea performs in Christchurch
7. Nov. 2005 Christchurch hosts the first Korean contemporary art exhibition scheduled to coincide with the Songpa-Gu/Christchurch sister city **10th Anniversary**
8. Nov. 2005 **10th Anniversary** Civic Dinner
9. Nov. 2005 **10th Anniversary** Korean Festival in the centre of Christchurch, Cathedral Square

These tenth anniversary projects will be expanded on in the following pages to briefly explain the project and show how each project stimulated involvement and benefited the community. The school exchanges have not been included in the 10th anniversary celebrations as these would have happened anyway.

1. 10th Anniversary Gift to Songpa-Gu (April 2005)



The Songpa-Gu sister city committee commissioned a Christchurch artist to create a sculpture to celebrate ten years of friendship between Christchurch and our sister city in Korea – Songpa-Gu. The artist was Leah Fraser Henderson who created ‘Kia Ora’ a beautiful sculpture from stainless steel. The sculpture itself is a face with a generic Maori design carved on it and it is mounted on a piece of stone from Halswell Quarry Park – the site of our sister city garden. The sculpture is sited in Olympic Park - a beautiful large park in Songpa-Gu. It is near a road intersection and can be seen from several directions.

Participation, Awareness and benefits to the community

The Kia Ora sculpture is a gift from Christchurch and is proudly displayed in Songpa-Gu. The millions of people who regularly use this wonderful park as well as all the tourists will see it. The fact that Songpa-Gu Council honoured the presentation of this gift from Christchurch with such a wonderful unveiling ceremony in April 2005, left no doubt in the minds of the 800 people present, as well as the press, television and radio, that this was a very special gift of great significance. It will be seen as a permanent link between the people of Songpa-Gu and the people of Christchurch and in a wider sense a linking of Koreans with Kiwis. This sculpture also teaches about the Maori culture of New Zealand. As well as this, Kiwis visiting Korea are starting to visit Olympic park especially to see this sculpture that Christchurch gifted to Songpa-Gu.

2. 10th Anniversary Sister City School Relationship Signed (April 2005)

Christchurch already had high school and primary sister school relationships with schools in Songpa-Gu. As one of the projects for the 10th anniversary the committee had previously identified that we would like to also have a intermediate sister school relationship. Several schools in Christchurch had been approached by committee members and so it was great when Chisnallwood agreed to form a sister school relationship with Gowan Middle School in Songpa-Gu. This relationship was finalised and signed in April 2005. We hope that this relationship grows and the children of both schools have many exchanges gaining cultural awareness and friends.

Participation, Awareness and benefits to the community

The ongoing exchanges between the schools mean not just a one off meeting between the different cultures but an ongoing relationship develops and the children carry on emailing their new friends. Teacher exchanges also develop from sister school links. The value and benefits to the community from our sister school relationships can never be underestimated. Children interacting together and taking these lessons into adult life will bring about changes in acceptance of others.

3. 10th Anniversary Gift of Books to English Village (in Songpa-Gu) April 2005

Contact had been made by members of the committee with the English Village that has been set up in Songpa-Gu and some members had visited this place. It is not a private school but is semi government with sponsorship from a major Korean newspaper. Children come from far and wide to stay in this 'village' to learn English though everyday activities carried out in a controlled environment. These books were sent to Korea in February and April 2005.

Participation, Awareness and benefits to the community

After seeing that lack of English books at this school (especially English books by NZ authors), the committee decided it would be a gesture of goodwill to donate a number of books to them. We hope this gesture benefits Korean children by giving enjoyment of 'Kiwi' stories. It also raises the awareness of New Zealand culture and New Zealand English amongst Koreans who are more familiar with American English.

4. 10th Anniversary Kapahaka Group from Christchurch Performs in Songpa-Gu (September 2005)



When the Christchurch /Songpa-Gu sister city was signed back in 1995 one of the first events to mark this relationship was a kapahaka group was sent to Songpa-Gu to perform at the famous Baekjae festival which is held in Songpa-Gu every two years. As there had been no kapahaka group in the intervening ten years, the committee believed that a very fitting celebration for the 10th anniversary was to send a kapahaka group again to take part in the Baekjae festival.

A committee member approached Hillmorton High School to see if they would be interested in sending their kapahaka group to Songpa-Gu. They agreed and the following 10 months was a flurry of practising and fundraising for them. The committee helped them with finance, travel bookings, itineraries, performance places, audiences and Korean guides. Songpa-Gu provided the on ground costs for the kapahaka group for three days in Songpa-Gu.



***Participation,
Awareness and
benefits to the
community***

The kapahaka group were excellent ambassadors for Christchurch and for New Zealand. They did a wonderful job of showing the Korean people the traditional Maori culture of NZ. Even though they were high school students, the

kapahaka group acted very professionally. Their performances were visually stunning and technically polished with a wonderful repertoire of songs and dances. As well as performing at the Baekjae festival they also performed at schools and other venues to a wide variety of audiences. They wowed the Koreans and also took time to teach Maori songs and dances to groups of children as well as the adults who happily joined in after a performance. From this group going to Korea there has been ongoing link between this school and one of the schools they visited in Korea (where there was a Maori teacher). Student exchanges have already been mooted.

5. 10th Anniversary Tour Group



The Sister City committee organised an exciting eight day tour for Christchurch citizens and officials to visit Songpa-Gu to celebrate the 10 years of sister city relationship. This trip was planned to coincide with Songpa-Gu's colourful biennial Hanseong Baekjae festival. This tour group also lent support to our kapahaka group who were performing in the festival. The tour group visited a traditional village, ate Korean food, and took a trip to DMZ. This group met with the Mayor and deputy mayor of Songpa-Gu and finalised the arrangements for their deputy mayor to come to Christchurch for the 10th anniversary opening of the Korean Art exhibition.

Participation, Awareness and benefits to the community

The tour gave the travellers the chance to experience Korea by taking in the sights, tastes and sounds of Songpa-Gu and Seoul as well as trip to DMZ and They also had the opportunity to stay with a Korean family for 2 nights and really experience the Korean lifestyle. Since coming back from this wonderful trip this group have met together several times and talk about their next trip to Korea and whom they are taking with them. Another benefit is that it gave the committee confidence that they were capable of organising a really good tour and could do it again for other groups. More people are becoming aware of Korea as holiday destination. There is also opportunity for more business links with Korea through visits like this. Travel to another country and seeing people in their own surroundings is probably the best way of increasing understanding between different people and making them more culturally aware as they start to see that what they consider 'normal' is all relative.

6. 10th Anniversary Traditional Korean dance group to Christchurch



The committee decided that it would be very appropriate to bring a traditional Korean performing group to Christchurch to help celebrate the 10th anniversary and to showcase Korean song and dance. The Christchurch Songpa-Gu committee organised for them to come and financed the on ground costs.

Participation, Awareness and benefits to the community

The group did several performances in the 5 days they were in Christchurch. They performed for the opening of the art exhibition and at the civic dinner. Even though they were all young people who were studying at a performance school, they were excellent ambassadors for Korea and people in Christchurch really enjoyed the energy and effort that went into their performances. When a group like this comes to Christchurch, it also helps with the teaching of these performance skills among the local Koreans living here and helps to teach them the traditional songs and dances that they lose when they leave Korea. What was really great were the public performances they did in the Square and at the Aurora Centre. These performances were attended by hundreds of Christchurch people who enjoyed the fantastic dances and music this group performed. The cultural awareness that groups like this provide cannot be under estimated. It leads to a better understanding between people.

7. Christchurch hosts the first Korean contemporary art exhibition from Korea scheduled to coincide with the Songpa-Gu/Christchurch Tenth anniversary celebration

In November 2005 the Christchurch Art Gallery hosted 'Alchemy of Daily Life'. The National Museum of Contemporary Art in Korea developed this exhibition in partnership with the Christchurch Art Gallery. It was the first contemporary art exhibition from Korea to visit New Zealand and it was scheduled to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the Songpa-Gu sister city relationship. This exhibition featured 26 sculptures from 21 artists. Officials from Songpa-Gu, the Korean Ambassador and the Mayor of Christchurch attended the opening night.

The committee financially supported the opening night function for this exhibition as well as organising for a cultural group to come from Korea to perform at this opening function. The committee also looked after the Songpa-Gu officials while in Christchurch.

Participation, Awareness and benefits to the community

This contemporary Korean art exhibition allowed the public of Christchurch to see Korean contemporary art and understand more about modern Korean culture and its expression through art. Because of this exhibition a lot of Koreans living in Christchurch (and Kiwis) visited the Christchurch Art Gallery – these were people who have never been to the art gallery before.

8. 10th Anniversary Civic Dinner



A special 10th anniversary dinner event was held in November 2005. This function was on the evening after the opening of the art exhibition. The mayor of Christchurch attended as well as the deputy mayor and accompanying officials of Songpa-Gu. The Chch Songpa-Gu sister city committee organised, hosted and financed the dinner.

Participation, Awareness and benefits to the community

The dinner catered for about 100 people and the Korean traditional song and dance group entertained them, which gave the guests a wonderful opportunity to see traditional Korean culture. Because this event was held in the art gallery foyer it also allowed an opportunity for people to view the Korean art exhibition. Events like this are usually publicised widely and therefore raise the profile of sister cities, and the work they do, in the community as well as giving the participants more insight into other cultures.

9. 10th Anniversary Korean Festival and Market in Cathedral Square



As part of our 10th anniversary the Korean Society in Christchurch really supported the committee and organised the first Korean festival in the centre of Christchurch. They organised lots of stalls selling Korean food and other things. Alongside this there were stalls to teach people Korean writing and other Korean handicrafts. The Korean song and dance group that the committee had organised to come to Christchurch performed in the city square.

Participation, Awareness and benefits to the community

The Korean festival/market was a huge success in that it enabled a lot of interaction between the Korean people and the Kiwis. Many people who were just passing by ended up standing around eating Korean food and enjoying the Korean song and dance performances. For many people this was their first experience of seeing traditional Korean songs and dances and eating Korean food. A great event that will most likely now be on the Christchurch yearly event calendar and one which needs to be acknowledged as promoting cross cultural relations.

Conclusion

The Christchurch /Songpa-Gu sister city committee is a group of citizens of Christchurch who give their time voluntarily to promote and grow the friendship between Songpa-Gu and Christchurch. Mary Yoon chairs this committee and has put a huge amount of drive and energy into the 10th anniversary projects. She has to be acknowledged as the person, without whom most of these projects would not have happened.

With all these different activities that the Chch/Songpa-Gu sister city committee has been involved in to celebrate our 10th anniversary we have reached out to thousands of people to cross a cultural divide between Koreans and Kiwis. We were very busy and had a very full on year but we all feel it was all been worthwhile, if there is more understanding between peoples from different cultures. It was all worth it if people realise there are more similarities than differences between cultures and they find the fun, love and laughter that is to be had when different cultures meet.