



# Aberdeen is Canada's Chinese New Year juggernaut



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Richmond's Aberdeen Centre hosts not only the most popular Chinese New Year celebration in the Lower Mainland, it's become one of the most widely watched TV events to usher in the new calendar.

According to Joey Kwan, spokesperson for the mall, Fairchild TV's annual coverage on countdown night, which takes place in the Central Atrium area, is beamed across the country and has significant viewership in major cities, most notably in Toronto.

"It's a very popular show. It first started about 14 years ago and Richmond gets a lot of attention each time," said Kwan, who expects roughly 6,000 people to pack the mall on Friday (Jan. 27) where a large stage area is set up and is viewable from the mall's three levels.

"We are growing bigger and bigger each time," Kwan said, adding the community celebrating Chinese New Year is getting used to making plans around making the mall the place to go. "Increasingly, it's become the event that people must see, especially since we are indoors."

The countdown show starts at 8:30 p.m. and runs until 10 p.m. Then at 10:30 p.m., the crowd will be treated to personal blessings from the God of Fortune, which is usually played by Coun. Bill McNulty.

Also, from 10:30 p.m., live coverage on Fairchild TV of the countdown begins.

The event attracts plenty of national and

international media, as well.

"Even those from the U.S. and Europe, they are quite amazed to see how big the celebration here is," Kwan said. "One time a German reporter was stunned at the scale of things here. He said it was bigger than the celebrations in some other Chinatowns around the world."

The event also draws a good number of movers and shakers from the political world.

Two years ago, it was then prime minister Stephen Harper who was a surprise guest who showed up and addressed the crowd. In 2014, current PM Justin Trudeau, who was then just the federal Liberal leader, showed up.

Kwan was remaining tight-lipped last week if there was any possibility of a repeat visit along the same lines.

"No one has really told me. Perhaps, they want to surprise me, too."

Away from the hoopla, the celebrations serve as a cultural touchstone for both recent arrivals and the younger population that has grown up here.

"It's our vision to present to the second generation born here how Chinese New Year is celebrated," Kwan said.

And there's plenty for them to see. It starts earlier in January with the mall's Chinese Flower Fair which incorporates a sidewalk sale in the mall that features a steadily rising number of non-Chinese vendors who book space to sell their wares.

"It's very nice to see different cultures come and celebrate with us and really get into the spirit," Kwan said.

Once the new year rings in, that's not the end



of the festivities as there will be plenty of entertainment Saturday (Jan. 28) during the golden dragon and lion dance in the outdoor courtyard starting at 11 a.m.

Then the Chinese New Year Cultural Showcase Celebration begins in the Central Atrium at 2 p.m. with the BC Chinese Music Association. That is followed at 3:30 p.m. by the Vancouver Academy of Dance.

And, on Sunday, the Colors of Dance Academy performs from 1 - 2 p.m. and Vancouver Beauty Dance World performs from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.



■ Above, Joey Kwan, of Aberdeen Centre, is set to celebrate the Year of the Rooster with a number of centre-stage performances (top).

**Gung Hei Fat Choi!**  
May the Year of the Rooster bring you and your family good health, prosperity and happiness!

**JAS JOHAL**  
BC Liberal Candidate for Richmond - Queensborough

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## Malls not just for shopping

### Friday

Visit **Aberdeen Centre** for their Countdown to Chinese New Year event from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. on Friday.

**Yaohan Centre** is holding its flower market daily from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. until Friday, Jan. 27.

### Saturday

Ring in the Lunar New Year with the Richmond Chinese Community Society at **Lansdowne Centre**. This annual event starts at 1 p.m. with multicultural performances including a lion dance, Chinese opera, drumming, martial arts demonstrations and more. Community organizations will be hosting exhibition booths, along with booths for Chinese calligraphy and craft sales. All proceeds will be donated to the Richmond Food Bank.

Join the **River Rock Casino Resort** Jan. 28, to ring in the Year of the Rooster. Festivities begin at 5:30 p.m., including a blessing ceremony at 5:45 p.m. and a lion and dragon dance at 6 p.m. On various dates starting



■ Some of the most vibrant Chinese New Year celebrations in North America are here in Richmond, thanks to the large number of residents of Asian descent. *File photo*

on Friday, Jan. 27, Sherman Tai, master of fortune telling and feng shui, will be hosting charity fortune telling sessions by donation. All proceeds will benefit the BC Children's Hospital Foundation.

### Wednesday

On Feb. 1, the Fortune God will be paying a visit to **Parker Place Mall** at 12 p.m. A lion dance will be held at 1 p.m. On Saturday, Feb. 4, a Chinese calligrapher will be

on site in the food court. Everyone is welcome to experience Chinese calligraphy and receive free Chinese couplets while quantities last.

### February 5

**Richmond Centre** hosts a special Chinese New Year event featuring a lion dance and eye-dotting ceremony, from 2-5 p.m.

The God of Fortune will be handing out lucky red pockets with chocolate coins.