

# Lion dance a New Year hit

Annual performance highlights celebration in Chinatown this Sunday

Todd Devlin  
News staff

For many, the lion dance is the highlight of the Chinese New Year festivities in Victoria. And why not? The costumes are brilliantly colourful – and the dancers underneath extremely talented.

They come from the Sheung Wong Kung Fu Club, and they've been performing lion dances in Victoria for more than 30 years.

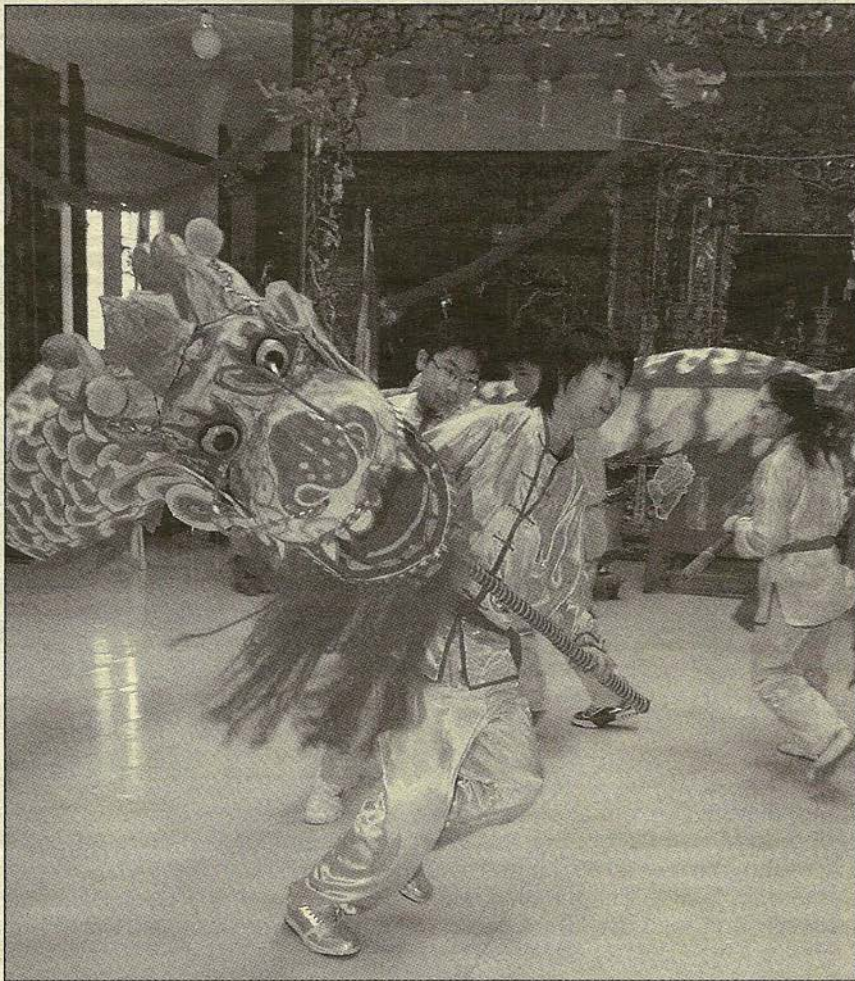
"It's an exciting event. Especially for people who have never seen it before," said Gloria Tsoi, whose grandfather founded the Kung Fu club back in 1974. "The art of lion dancing goes back hundreds of years. It's a great way to share our culture with the community."

It's certainly a captivating performance. The lion starts asleep – lying on the ground near the beautiful Chinatown gates.

"When it awakens, it yawns, it stretches, just like a cat waking up," said Kit Wong, president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association – the organization in charge of New Year's celebrations in Victoria. "But, once it gets energy, it pounces around like a little kitten."

There will be a pair of lions doing the dance this year – each with a team of 10 dancers who will trade off several times during the almost two-hour performance.

As the lions make their way around Chinatown, they stop at individual shops where they will receive lettuce from store owners – a sign of prosperity and good luck. "Green means lively," Wong said. "It means spring. It means hope."



Sharon Tiffin/News staff

**Amy Cai, 13, leads the lion dance in rehearsal at the Chinese Public School for Chinese New Year celebrations this weekend.**

Following that, they will bow to the people and to the spirit.

The lions bless the stores along the way, bringing them luck in the future.

"The lions are there to drive the

evils away," Wong said. "And when you chase the evils away, luck will come."

This year's dance starts at 12 p.m. on Sunday (Feb. 1) in Chinatown.

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