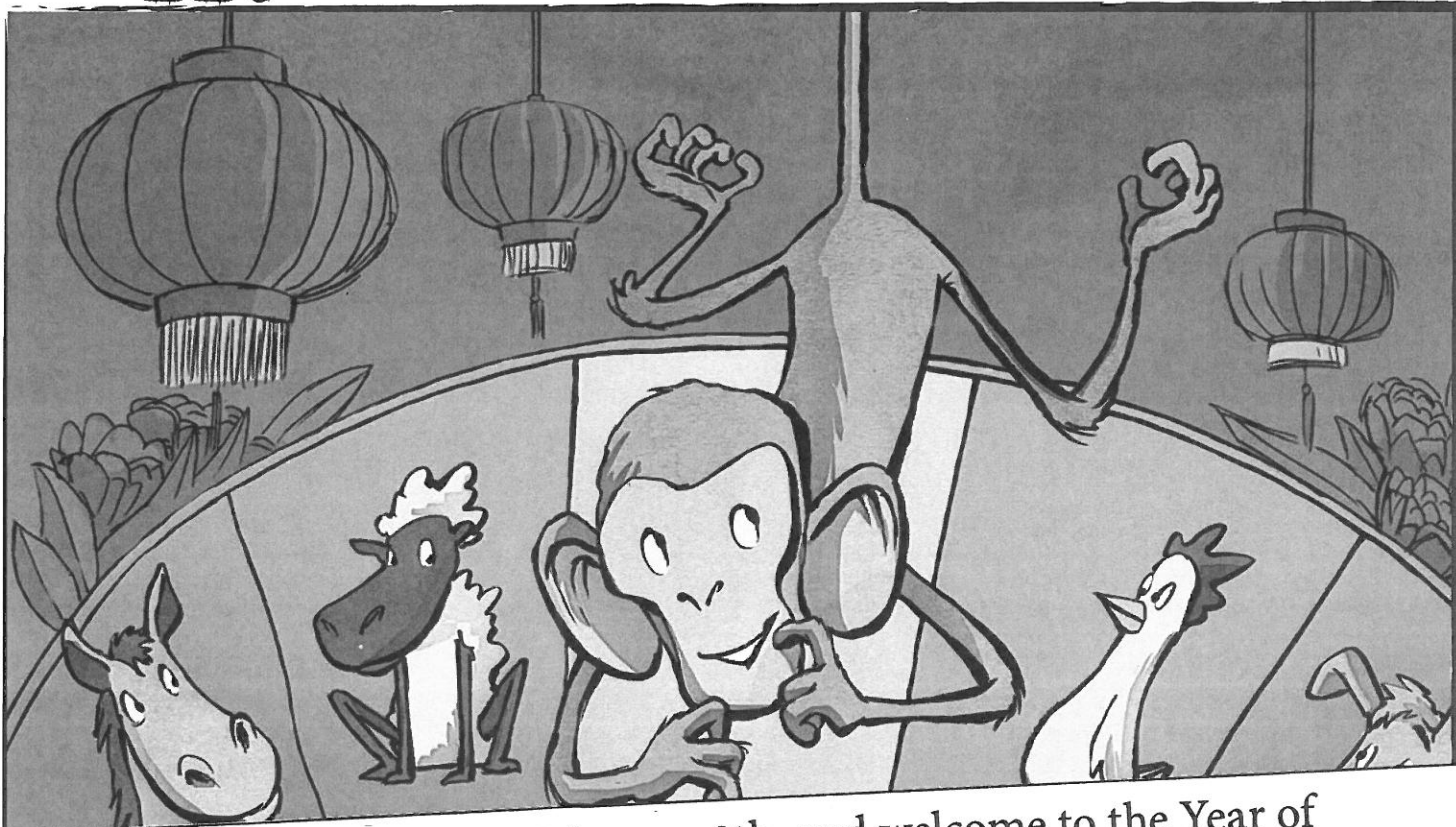


# Happy Chinese New Year!



Happy New Year on February 8th, and welcome to the Year of the Monkey! May the Star of Happiness shine on you.

Maybe you thought New Year's Day was on January 1st. That's true – if you are using the western calendar. But the traditional Chinese calendar is different. It follows the cycles of the moon. On this lunar calendar, the New Year falls on February 8th this year.

## Starting with a bang!

The excitement, though, begins the day before – on New Year's Eve. Families gather for a big meal. Fireworks send out the old year and welcome in the new. At midnight, doors and windows are opened to let the old year out.

But that's just the start. The celebrations last for 15 days. During this time, families give gifts. They spend time together. They enjoy special food. They watch performances, like a lion dance.

On the last day, the Lantern Festival takes place. That's when children carry glowing lanterns in a night-time parade.

The Chinese decorate for the New Year with blooming flowers. The blooms are a symbol of rebirth and new growth. Platters of oranges and tangerines are set out, too. They represent happiness. Candies are arranged on a tray to bring good fortune.

## Year of the Monkey

In the Chinese calendar, each year has an animal sign. There are 12 signs in all that repeat in a cycle. This year is the Year of the Monkey. The other animals in the cycle are the Dragon, Rabbit, Horse, Sheep, Snake, Rooster, Dog, Boar, Rat, Ox and Tiger.

## Chinese in Canada

More than one million people of Chinese background live in Canada. Three-quarters of them live in Toronto and Vancouver. Mainly they come from three areas: China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Some were actually born in Canada, but their ancestors moved here long ago.

The first Chinese came during the 1858 B.C. Gold Rush. Like many others, they were hoping to strike it rich.

When the Gold Rush was over, many went to work building the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). Thousands more young Chinese were brought from China by the Canadian government to help.

## Changing times

But being Chinese in Canada was not easy back then. The Chinese were poorly treated by white Canadians. Between 1923 and 1947, the Chinese were banned from coming to Canada at all.

It's a different story today, though. Over the past 30 years, Canada has welcomed many people from Chinese-speaking countries who want to live here. These immigrants have helped make the Chinese New Year a big event in Canada.

### Did you know...?

Many other Asian countries, such as Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Singapore follow the lunar calendar and celebrate the lunar new year, too.

Bring on the Year of the Monkey!



As you see it, what is the importance of this story?

