Alumni Summer Homecoming

Alumni returned to campus in August for the annual Summer Homecoming event. This occasion was notable for the number of young children that attended, so the bouncy castle came in handy! Former students had a great time over lunch connecting with friends, listening to updates on the school from Head of School David Baird, Upper School Principal Tim Kaiser, and Director of Admissions Emily Pong.
Alumni Winter Homecoming

Alumni got into the festive spirit at the Winter Homecoming event, with Alumni Events Manager Pamm Kwok ’02 leading the way. During a night of drinks and nibbles, alumni also challenged themselves with a Christmas themed quiz and a word association game centred around Christmas carols.
Class of 2008 Reunion

Before Christmas, members of the Class of 2008 gathered for a reunion to celebrate 10 years since graduating from CDNIS. The former classmates met up at school, and it was a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends. Alumni also had the opportunity to go on a school tour, exploring old haunts and taking in new features of the school, while reminiscing about happy memories.

London Dinner

Head of School David Baird hosted a dinner for alumni living and studying in London this January. He had a lovely evening with the former students, hearing about their lives in the UK and talking to them about developments back at CDNIS. The alumni also met the incoming Head of School, Jane Camblin.
The opportunity to interact with past students is one of the many pleasures of my job as Head of School at CDNIS. Whether it is at an event like Summer Homecoming, or over dinner when I am overseas, it is always nice to meet with alumni. I know many of you have pleasant memories of studying at CDNIS, and it is certainly encouraging to see the number of alumni children attending CDNIS increasing every year!

I hope that you will enjoy reading this edition of The Totem, and seeing what has been happening in the CDNIS alumni network. In addition to featuring alumni events, this issue highlights three alumni, Jonathan Lam ’09, Angues Chan ’10 and Jeff Ma ’10. These three friends have started their own business, Butler, which is a premium one-stop home management system platform. I am proud that our alumni are active contributors to their professions and to their communities around the world and it is wonderful to see friendships made at CDNIS extending into adulthood and beyond.

In October, the school unveiled Strategy 2021, the school’s three-year strategic plan which highlights the future priorities for CDNIS over the next few years. One of those initiatives is to ensure our facilities match our pedagogical goals. The school is currently working with an outside consultant on the creation of a Facilities Master Plan, which will see the school refurbish and redevelop various learning spaces over the coming years to ensure exceptional 21st century learning environments.

One of the first spaces to be updated is our 9/F Pre Reception and Reception classrooms, which will be transformed in a new Reggio Emilia inspired Early Years Environment (EYE) ahead of the 2019/2020 school year. One of the other priorities is the establishment of a development programme and we are currently in the final stages of appointing a Director of Advancement, who will oversee the school’s development initiatives, including strategic engagement with alumni. Strategy 2021 provides an exciting new chapter and will ensure a robust and sustainable future for our school.

When I meet with alumni, they often ask me what they can do and I encourage them to get involved. Get involved with the alumni association and help organise an event. Touch base with the Upper School Guidance Office and offer to be a guest speaker or mentor for a soon to be grad. Great schools have active and involved alumni. Donate your time as well as your financial resources. For some, this will be an hour or two every month, for others a few hours annually. As for giving, the amount is not important, know that you will be committing to partner with CDNIS to inspire excellence in our students.

I am always happy to see former students plugged into the school community, and we hope to see this alumni network flourish. Whether it is through the reboot of the alumni mentoring programme, or some other initiative, the school is keen to see alumni involved in the life of the school. A strong alumni network is the bedrock of any school, and if you have any ideas on how we can involve alumni at CDNIS, we are excited to hear your suggestions. And when you have time, come back and visit CDNIS for Summer Homecoming or another event. Many great changes have taken place on our campus, but I know you will find that there are still many reminders here that will take you back to your days at CDNIS.

Wishing you all the very best in the new year.

Sincerely,

David Baird
Head of School
The paths of Jonathan Lam ’09, Angues Chan ’10 and Jeff Ma ‘10 first crossed in Grade 5 at Canadian International School of Hong Kong (CDNIS), where they created many fond memories together, including playing on the basketball team. After attending university in the UK, they decided to take the plunge and do what all good friends dream of doing, start a business together.

The genesis for Butler came when the three friends were lamenting the fact that none of them had the time or energy to do chores such as laundry or make Chinese soup, as they were often working long hours. They then hatched a plan to launch Butler, a “premium one-stop home management services platform that takes care of all of your household chores in a bespoke manner.”

“When we looked at the home management industry, we noticed that there hadn’t been many changes in recent years,” explained Angues. “We wondered when the revolution was going to come, similar to how Uber and Deliveroo have disrupted their industries. The status quo wasn’t broken, but we wanted to see how we could improve it.”

Butler offers an alternative to live-in domestic helpers, by offering services performed by their team of butlers, which range from housekeeping to closet management and grocery shopping. Instead of just tidying up, their housekeeping service aims to improve the lifestyle of the client, by organising household items and tidying spaces.
in order to create additional living space, among other things. “Our butlers treat our clients as if they were staying in 5 star hotels, and that’s the difference with our service,” said Jonathan. Customers can choose from a range of services offered on the Butler app.

All butlers are trained in-house before they are sent into the field, and this is what gives them the edge over freelance domestic help. “Having hired freelance domestic help before, I know that the quality can vary,” said Jonathan. “Our butlers come into the training program with experience already, but the training focuses on their vision and mentality, as our service is not just domestic help, but striving to improve the lives of our clients. This is how they are able to deliver consistency and quality.”

Butler is aimed at young professionals, especially expatriates, who may need help settling into life in Hong Kong. The team of butlers can arrange for services not easily accessible to English speaking clients, for example electricians, plumbers or setting up Internet access. Larger families who may need extra help around the house from time to time, but not want to hire an additional domestic helper, are also a key target audience.

When asked about the challenges they have faced, Angues and Jonathan are quick to reel off obstacles. To start with, it was difficult for them to attract the right kind of personnel, as they were brand new to the industry. They also had to battle to successfully brand Butler, as many clients saw it as another cleaning service. All this was on top of juggling their full time jobs.

“Our client feedback keeps us going,” explained Jonathan. “To hear one client say that they are excited to come home after work because they know that their butler has done a good job, to another that said they were able to go to their son’s recital because having a butler freed up their time, it’s nice to hear these stories.”

“The fact that the three of us are close friends helped us enormously,” said Angues. “We were able to freely give constructive criticism, and bounce off new ideas. We are grateful to trace the start of our friendship at CDNIS.”

Jonathan and Angues credit their time at CDNIS with forming them into responsible global citizens. Jonathan states that the academic programme allowed them to be open-minded, and that he benefited from the focus on the arts. “Being encouraged to take risks at school is something which we still do today, and what led us to start Butler,” said Jonathan. “I miss the sports culture a lot, and some of my favourite memories from school are playing on various sports teams, including basketball and track and field. The lessons I learned from playing sports are lessons for life, including the value of teamwork and cheering each other on.”

When considering the guiding voices during their time at CDNIS, Angues and Jonathan both agree that Michael Balo was the teacher that had the most influence on them. “I was a bit nervous starting at a new school, but Mr. Balo, who was my first homeroom teacher, really embodied the friendly culture at CDNIS, and made me feel right at home,” said Angues. Jonathan agrees with this, noting that he still keeps in touch with Mr. Balo to this day, and remembers him as a great basketball coach and mentor.

To learn more about Butler, and to try out the service for yourself, visit their website at butlerasia.info.
What are they up to now?

Dorothy Chan ‘15 recently graduated from Berklee College of Music in Spring 2018 with a degree in Electronic Production and Design. Under her current artist project, “Sundial”, she writes and produces electronic pop music that has garnered millions of plays across Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube and other streaming platforms. Her most popular songs, “your text”, “Dive”, and “who cares!” have charted on major Spotify playlists, including US Viral 50 and Taiwan Viral 50. Last November, she performed at Clockenflap, Hong Kong’s premier arts and music festival.

Michelle Au ‘17 is a sophomore majoring in film and minoring in marketing at the University of Southern California and is currently the executive producer/show-runner of USC’s entertainment news show “The SCooP” on Trojan Vision, which covers everything Hollywood and popular culture. One unique aspect of the show is that students have the chance to attend exclusive Hollywood events from movie premieres such as La La Land, and award shows such as the Oscars and the Emmys, interviewing today’s leading acts in entertainment and creating packages to air.

Share Your Story

The alumni newsletter is seen by more than just alumni. Students, parents and staff read it. Share what you are doing with them; you never know what contacts and opportunities could come your way. Whether it’s a new job you’re starting at, or a new addition to your family, please send your story and pictures to the alumni office. alumni@cdnis.edu.hk
This year, we are celebrating a unique group of graduates from CDNIS. These 18 members of the Class of 2019 belong to an exclusive club as they walked into CDNIS as part of the inaugural Pre Reception class 15 years ago, and have thrived at school ever since. CDNIS arranged a special celebration for the group, which was a poignant occasion as they were reunited with their first teacher, Gillian Little, who is still teaching at school!

Take a look at CDNIS at a glance, which showcases the dynamic nature of CDNIS, highlighting the many achievements of the 2017/2018 academic year.
When did you start at CDNIS, and what were you hired to do?
I started in 1999, and I was hired to be a Chinese teacher.

Where were you before CDNIS, and what were you doing?
Before coming to CDNIS, I was a teacher at a local school in Hong Kong. In between that, I also lived in Canada and Thailand.

Can you name any students from your first year at CDNIS?
I can name three! I remember Curtis Ip ’03, who I taught for my first three years at CDNIS. I also taught Lily Chan ’03, who’s now a teacher here. Ronald Kan ’02 was also a memorable student, I enjoyed reading his Chinese journal.

What profession other than teaching would you have liked to attempt?
I would have liked to be a newspaper editor. I’m very interested in the Chinese language, and I’m quite good at spotting mistakes where people have misused language.

What’s your favourite memory with an alumni?
It’s always nice to bump into alumni in the street in Hong Kong. I was even treated by a former student who is now a doctor at the hospital once, which was a pleasant surprise. It gives me a warm feeling when old students call me to catch up.

What’s been the biggest change at CDNIS that you’ve witnessed?
There are so many! When I first joined we were quite a small school, but we are much bigger now.

What is your happiest memory at CDNIS?
Once, when I asked my Chinese class at the end of the semester to recall their favourite moment, one of the students did an impersonation of me teaching. It made me happy to see that he’d enjoyed my classes.

What’s the funniest thing a student has done in your class?
I still remember once when a student pretended to ask me a question and I went over to their desk. Instead, they tried to scare me by playing a trick video on their laptop. I was scared but thought it was pretty funny.
Get the latest news.
Update your contact details with us at alumni@cdnis.edu.hk so we can share with you the latest news about the school or upcoming events.

Live the Experience Share the Moment

Attend an alumni event.
Catch up with former classmates during our Summer Homecoming or Alumni Winter Reception. Details are always shared on the alumni Facebook page and in The Totem.

Contribute to The Totem.
Our alumni magazine is published twice a year. Send in your announcements, let us know what you have been up to, share a story idea and more. We want to hear from you!

Volunteer at CDNIS.
There are so many ways for alumni to get involved. We are always looking for alumni to share their knowledge, skills and experience with our students. Just ask!

To find out more about how you can be involved, please get in touch. Email alumni@cdnis.edu.hk.