

# The Good & True

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St. George's  
College  
Old Boys  
Association

Good &  
True

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## Hakka Conference 2000, Toronto

It was great! It was wonderful! It was very enlightening! These were phrases uttered by slightly over 300 delegates who attended the Toronto conference a few weeks ago.

But what is Hakka anyway? It's the name of a group of people from China whose numbers are in the millions. The word Hakka means "Guest". Historians believe these people originally came from a Turkic tribe called Xiong Nu. Somewhere around 250AD, they moved into China from the northwest regions of what is presently called Xianjiang Province. Due to political and economical chaos, famine, hatred by others, etc., the Hakkas were constantly on the move, and over centuries, migrated all the way from the north to the southern regions of China. Then in the eighteenth century, hundreds of thousands began migrating all over the world.



Some of the delegates at the Conference. See how many Georgians you can identify in the group!

Recognizing the fact that the Hakka culture and heritage were literally unknown to many from this generation, a handful of Toronto Hakkas got together over dim sum 24 months ago, and discussed finding a solution.

Among the group was **Keith Lowe**, a Georgian who stood out at St.G.C., as a very prominent Head Boy back in the 50's. He was the most passionate of the

bunch about this topic. Why? Because someone very close to him told of the many sleepless and stressful nights he had over creating a way to solve this concern.

He and **Ray Chang** put together a conference committee, comprised of both male and female members, and a couple other old boys like **Patrick Lee** and **Ray Lodenquai**. Then they added a youth component, to get their prospective of what today's youth wanted to obtain from the conference. Keith next sought out a partnership with **Professor Gordon Anderson**, head of Asian Studies, York University. Professor Anderson eventually agreed to co-chair the Conference with Keith, and have the University host the event.

It took the committee almost a whole year to put together Canada's first Hakka conference, a most memorable event. The conference boasted speakers from China, like **Professor Fuan (Mackie) Liu**, an old boy, who left school in fourth form and moved to China. Over these many years, Mackie has been quite active socially and politically in China. There were also speakers from several Universities in Canada and the United States. Delegates attended sessions on how to make a family tree, and Hakka religious beliefs. They attended readings from Hakka books and poems. They heard Hakka songs, and sat through sessions on how Hakka people survived during hard times, Hakkas in Ontario, to name some others.

Putting this whole thing together wasn't easy for Keith, and several of his friends told him that it wouldn't work. They said it was too close to the Christmas season to hold such a thing, that admission to the conference was too costly, that with only a couple of months before the Conference, there was too much left to be done, that he would never pull it off in time. Even some of his committee members began having doubts.

But Keith persevered. With his determination, he kept his conference team together and surged ahead with the plans anyway. Result - The Conference was sold out - a smash hit. It got unbelievable media coverage; both TV and newsprint. When Canadian **Senator Vivienne Poy** (who opened the conference) sat through some of the sessions on December 29, she was so impressed, she returned for more on December 30.



Ray Chang, Professor Gordon Anderson of York University, East Asian Studies, Keith Lowe and Professor Faun Liu (Mackie) listen to a member of the audience. Mackie was at St.G.C. for a short period before going to China where he now lives and teaches.

Many Hakkas in Toronto are now talking about having another conference in the next couple of years. There is even talk of Toronto hosting the World Hakka Conference in 2004. Are Keith's friends now doubting he could make something like this happen again? If they are, they aren't saying so aloud. Heartiest congratulations to both Keith and his committee for a job well done.

*Neil Dalhouse*

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