

**Splendid China**  
**Washington State Fair**  
**September 6, 2014**

Xue Bin (SHU Bin) and esteemed members of the Sichuan Delegation, Deputy Consul General Bi Gang (Bee Gong) and other distinguished guests:

I would like to give you the warmest welcome – on this rather warm afternoon - to the state of Washington as we celebrate the opening of this exhibit, “Splendid China – a New Look of Tibetan Life in the Sichuan Province” at the Washington State Fair.

The fair just opened yesterday, and you can see by the crowds that it is very popular in our state, the biggest of all of our many fairs. In fact the Washington State Fair is the largest single attraction held annually in our state, drawing more than one million people over its 17-day run. We would like to thank those with the fair who helped to make this exhibition possible, especially on short notice. And a really big thanks as well to my good friend Jimmy Chen and his wife Rebecca for all of the hard work they did to bring the exhibition to Puyallup. I am very excited about this photo exhibition being a part of the fair this year.

As you know, Washington state and the Sichuan Province are old friends, in fact the friendship dates back 35 years now to 1979 when a small delegation from Washington visited Chengdu. On October 11 we will mark the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of our formal friendship agreement, which was signed by a former governor, John Spellman, in 1982. The following year the City of Seattle established a sister city relationship with Chongqing, which of course until 1997 was part of the Sichuan Province.

And I was a witness to the signing of a friendship agreement between the City of Tacoma and Mianyang in 2006 during our mission to Sichuan. The latest relationship to form is between our city of Auburn and Guanghan, which was signed in the spring of 2012.

So we have many, many ties to Sichuan. Throughout our friendship we have had numerous exchanges in business and trade, tourism, culture and government-to-government.

The state of Washington has also stepped in to help in times of need. For instance, in 2008 when the devastating earthquake hit Wenchuan County, causing massive damage throughout Sichuan and killing an estimated 68,000 people, Washington citizens raised thousands of dollars in relief money. This helped with the immediate life safety and shelter needs following the earthquake and with the rebuilding of schools in the months after.

Some of you here may know our friend Qiu Qiu (Choo Choo) Zhenhua, the chief representative for West China Development International Association, Inc. Through her numerous contacts here Qiu Qiu has brought in dozens of exchange students from Sichuan to complete their studies in aircraft maintenance and air traffic control at the Clover Park Technical College and Green River Community College. She brings groups of these students by my office every year.

A few years ago she arranged for a donation of a mask and two puppets to a puppet museum in Bremerton. Two of those items are now included in a temporary display in my office but will soon go back to Bremerton to take their place as part of the museum's permanent collection.

The collection of art we see here today focuses on the Tibetan area in the Sichuan Province. I had the good fortune of visiting part of the Tibetan area during my visit to the province in 2006, and very much appreciated the kindness shown to us there.

The route from the city of Mianyang to the Wanglang Panda Reserve is a long one, passing through Pingwu County and the Baima Tibetan Ethnic Township. Along the way to the reserve as stopped at Baima and were welcomed warmly by throngs of people. Their unique and colorful clothing was unlike that I have seen anywhere before!

For my late mother, who happened to be with us on that mission, this was one of the highlights of her trip. I remember drinking from wooden bowls they offered to us as part of their greeting ceremony as they surrounded each of us. It was truly an incredible experience.

While at the Wanglang Panda Reserve we were treated to a performance that was similar to the A'Ba Prefecture Tibetan song and dance group that you will see today. And, as my friend Bill Sperry who was with us on that mission and is with us now will tell you, the performance by the A'Ba group is not unlike that you will see from the Quileute Tribe from LaPush today too. We are delighted to have both groups perform for us.

I wish I could stay and join you for tonight's dinner and the rest of the show, but I must leave for another speaking engagement nearby in Federal Way. Again I would like to wish our visitors from Sichuan every success with your visit to our state, and hope you will return very soon. In the meantime, you are leaving us even more incredible memories and a reminder of why our friendship with the Sichuan Province is so strong. Thank you very much for your visit.

Now it is my honor to introduce Deputy Consul General Bi (BEE) Gang, who made the trip up from the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco to be with us today.

Mr. Bi (BEE), a native of Yongcheng City in the Shangdong Province, has had a long and distinguished career in diplomatic service for China in posts around the world since his first appointment to the Chinese Embassy in Bangladesh in 1980.

He was appointed deputy consul general from the San Francisco Consulate in 2012. For the previous six years, he served as the Deputy Secretary General for the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, and was Deputy Consul General for the Chinese Consulate in Houston prior to that. In the early 90s he was second and first secretary at the Chinese Embassy in Canada.

Please welcome Deputy Consul General Bi.