

BUSINESS

Asian media company is on the move

Building a sense of home

BY PATRICK CASEY
STAFF WRITER

A window to the Asian world
As the only national Chinese language multi-media network in Canada, Fairchild Media Group opens that window each day by reaching more than 70 per cent of Chinese households across greater Toronto.

With television, radio and print divisions, the four-year-old corporation has become the primary source of news and information for the majority of Chinese-speaking Canadians.

With its Eastern Canada television and monthly national magazine operation based in Richmond Hill — the Toronto radio division will soon move to a nearby office on East Beaver Creek Road — Fairchild's success is unquestionably tied to the local demographics.

"Our whole operation ties in with the settlement of the Chinese immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area," Calvin Wong, Fairchild's regional director of operations, explained during an interview.

Aside from all the statistics and sales figures, Fairchild takes great pride in trying to help others

With more than 23 years in broadcasting, film and television production, the graduate of the Hong Kong Baptist University joined Fairchild shortly after the company was formed, following the demise of the Don Mills-based Chinese Television Network.

"The market was created by the growth and the media support that market," he said. "At one time, there was only one Chinese newspaper and now there are several, plus five radio stations."

"And as the Chinese population grows, it's only natural that we plan ahead. The competition has guaranteed quality products."

For 18 hours each day on Shaw channel 36 and Rogers channel 68, Fairchild Television offers viewers daily newscasts from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, as well as a prime-time local version in two languages.

Afternoon soap operas consist of the legal drama *The Call of Justice* and a local 30-minute production covering community celebrations. When translated, it's called *The Maple Leaf*.

A mix of local and foreign content makes up the evening schedule before the signal is turned off at 2 a.m.



Calvin Wong, Fairchild Media Group's regional director for Eastern Canada, in the company's Richmond Hill headquarters.

Offering 17 different languages, Fairchild Radio can be found on FM 88.9 from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 10 p.m. to midnight. It has run 24 hours a day on AM 1430 for the past two years.

With its broad exposure, Wong realizes the organization has an obligation to provide the Asian population with as much communication as it can. It has teamed up with CTV to adapt its current affairs program *W5* into Chinese, as well as TVO's *Inquiring Minds*.

"We are their gateway so they can access information and entertainment," he said. "A lot of the older generation of immigrants are not that fluent in English and it is difficult for them to watch a local network."

"Through us, they can assess what is happening to their country and what is happening to their society," he said. "They know about the teacher strikes and the Canadian dollar."

Fairchild also offers a small taste of home for people who have moved from one end of the world to the other.

"So many of them are living in a different society, but some of our entertainment shows allow them not to feel so homesick," adds Wong.

The success of Fairchild Television is in the numbers, especially the \$10.6 million in advertising revenue generated last year.

And according to information from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the station has become the fifth highest rated of all Canadian pay and specialty networks.

With 270,612 cable and satellite subscribers reaching more than 400,000 viewers across Canada, it trails only TSN, YTV, MuchMusic and CBC Newsworld.

Aside from all the statistics and sales figures, Fairchild takes great pride in trying to help others.

Viewers and listeners have helped raise more than \$300,000 for flood victims in China during a recent campaign with the Red Cross, while a clothing drive collected 88 tonnes in a month.

Not bad considering organizers only hoped for five tonnes.

FAST FOOD: Chinese food franchise has faithful following



Manchu Wok CEO Brian Worts (right) and Markham franchisee owner Pak Lam.

Manchu Wok's golden touch leads to success

BY MIKE ADLER
STAFF WRITER

Consider the chicken ball. That golden-coated morsel from a deep pan at Manchu Wok — next to the bright-red sweet-and-sour sauce — tops a popularity contest in Canada.

Manchu Wok customers made chicken balls part of the company's best-selling combination plate.

But at the company's United States locations, more people want the combo with sweet-and-sour chicken instead.

That's trivia to you, but it's not to the Markham-based chain, which with 188 stores in both countries, bills itself as Canada's largest Chinese fast-food operator.

Its latest president and chief executive officer, Brian Worts, knows what North Americans like in Chinese food differs in every region — and even shopping mall to shopping mall — based on ethnicity, climate or taste for spices.

"Canadians, generally, do not like their food as spicy as people in the southern United States," Worts said recently beside the Manchu Wok franchise at the Markville Shopping Centre food court in Markham.

There is another outlet at Hillcrest Mall in Richmond Hill.

Uncoated chicken is a strong trend in fast food, so Manchu Wok is starting production of its own grilled chicken dish.

And the chain has decided to trust the instincts of its franchise owners, who run 61 of 76 Manchu Woks in Canada, when it

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