

# Lunar New Year kicks off

Asian community celebrates with lion dances, firecrackers

**BY NATHAN LIEWICKI, EDMONTON JOURNAL**

Published: Thursday, February 3, 2011



**YEAR OF THE GOLDEN RABBIT:** Keva MacKenzie, 3, offers a carrot to Thumbelina, a two-year-old Flemish Giant rabbit, to mark the Year of the Golden Rabbit, which begins Thursday and ends on Jan. 22, 2012. The rabbit is the fourth sign of the Chinese Zodiac, which consists of 12 animal signs, and is considered a lucky sign.

**Photograph by:** Larry Wong , The Journal

The Year of the Rabbit comes every 12 years, but for the first time in six decades, the Golden Rabbit will be celebrated Thursday when millions across the globe usher in the Lunar New Year with lion dances and firecrackers.

This year's combination of metal as an earthly sign and the rabbit as a heavenly sign resulted in the Year of the Golden Rabbit.

In the Chinese zodiac, the rabbit is associated with compassion, sensitivity and flexibility, says Shirley Kwan, treasurer of the Edmonton Chinatown Multicultural Centre.

Kwan said the new year will bring both stability and change.

"It will likely be a year of stability for developed countries, and we expect a little upheaval in the developing countries," she said.

Kwan said celebration festivities in Edmonton continue to grow as more and more people from Asia come to live in the city.

"It's the single most important festival of the whole year in Chinese culture and it involves the Union Dinner," she said.

"People completely clean their house on New Year's Eve, many people wear new clothes and children receive money packets."

The Lunar New Year Extravaganza was held at West Edmonton Mall last Sunday to kick off celebrations in the city. On Saturday, a Firecrackers Street Celebration will be held at noon in the heart of Chinatown.

Also on Saturday afternoon a mural mosaic showing all 12 animals of the zodiac will be unveiled at City Centre Mall. For 18 months, more than 2,000 Edmonton Chinese (Mandarin) bilingual program students worked on 3,456 paintings to complete the rabbit mural.

Kwan said the Lunar New Year is celebrated by the Chinese, Koreans and Vietnamese. For the latter, it's the Year of the Cat.

"We have no cat in our cycle," said Kwan. "When the King of Heaven assigned animals to the cycle, the cat was late and was never made one of the signs."

[nliewicki@edmontonjournal.com](mailto:nliewicki@edmontonjournal.com)