As the holidays fade into memory, we are ready for a new academic year. Every summer is unique, but for one group of teens, this one has been of particular value, because now they are more aware of the importance of communication. “We are trying to accept the differences in cultures and understand each other better,” says Steven Wong Man-chun (王文俊), a Form 5 student studying in Sha Tin.

Wong was one of 34 participants at the Sino-Japan Youth Conference in late July. Teenagers from Japan, mainland China and Hong Kong had a direct dialogue over one of the most controversial issues in the region. As this year was the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, the cultural encounter helped promote friendship among the younger generation. For more details turn to
Student-led conference

IT is the 7th year of the Sino-Japan Youth Conference, a student-led initiative held at the Li Po Chun United World College of Hong Kong (LPCUWC) in Wu Kai Sha. Around sixty percent of the college’s students are from overseas. Japanese student Chishio Furukawa (古川 知雄) launched the programme in 2009 as tension rose between Beijing and Tokyo.

“He considered the idea of bringing people from those countries together to understand each other’s points of view and cultures,” explains Eugene Chan Tsz-kiu (陳子喬), one of this year’s 30 facilitators and a LPCUWC student. All facilitators and participants are teenagers aged 13 to 18.

Learning through action

DURING the week-long conference, a series of seminars and activities was designed and implemented by the students themselves. In a session to understand the ideologies of the media, they not only discussed different perspectives, but also put themselves in the shoes of the media by making a television or radio news programme. When a Japanese participant represented China as an interviewee in a mock Chinese state-run news bulletin, laughter broke out among the Japanese in the audience.

“This conference gave me the idea to question what I see, which I was not used to doing,” says Miki Hananmura (花村 宏希), a facilitator from Osaka (大阪), Japan, and also a participant two years ago.

Friendly differences

THEY did not stop with understanding, but also learned techniques to tackle conflicts. Their vision even led them to go beyond campus. Teens from the three regions had to work together to brainstorm an initiative to engage more people in mutual understanding.

One group targeted tourists on the Avenue of Stars in Tsim Sha Tsui. “We wore kimonos (和服) and Han Chinese clothing (漢服) on the street to engage them in our game to explain the meaning of specific Chinese words,” says Claire Wang Qiusu (王秋_Speed), a participant from Chengdu (成都), China. “For example, “大丈夫” means ‘real man’ in Chinese but ‘it’s okay’ in Japanese,” she says. “We tried to convey the message that similarities and differences can happily coexist between two cultures.”

Q&A

1. Have you ever been to Japan/mainland China/Hong Kong?
2. What do you think of people from Japan/mainland China/Hong Kong?
3. How would you describe current Sino-Japanese relations and what is the main issue?
4. What can the young do to improve Sino-Japanese relations?

Tairi Goto (後藤 太利), Nagano (長野縣), Japan, 17 yrs old

1. It is my first visit to Hong Kong and I have never been to mainland China.
2. I knew many Chinese students from the mainland when I was studying at a high school in Singapore last year, but they tended to stay in their own group. Chinese students are smart in terms of academic performance, and Hong Kong students are energetic.
3. There is a misunderstanding of the scale of historical issues. I am very disappointed by the current controversies.
4. Youths must critically question ongoing controversies because the media and other publications are generally one-sided.

Claire Wang Qiusu, Chengdu, China, 16 yrs old

1. I have been to Hong Kong twice but never to Japan.
2. Hong Kong people always walk fast and speak fast but aren’t so good at communicating. Actually my teammates here are open-minded. I thought the Japanese were radical but they are actually considerate.
3. The governments work together for the economy but there are still territorial and historical disputes.
4. We young people do not share these historical issues so we should have more interaction and tolerance between both sides.

Steven Wong Man-chun (王文俊), Hong Kong, 16 yrs old

1. I have been to the mainland many times but never to Japan.
2. Some Hong Kong people do not like mainland Chinese because some tourists’ behave badly but I find my teammates to be very nice. The Japanese are polite but a bit shy.
3. The main stumbling blocks today are the dispute over the Diaoyu Islands (釣魚台) and the hatred between the older generations.
4. We should know more about history and current affairs, and improve our communication methods.

Vocabulary

initiative (n) 創意活動
ideology (n) 意識形態
mock (adj) 模仿的
brainstorm (v) 集思廣益
coexist (v) 共存
hatred (n) 仇恨