

# BOULDER-LHASA SISTER CITY PROJECT

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## **Lhungtse's Checkup & Keyboard Lesson 20-24 October 2019**

BLSCP member Bill Warnock traveled to Chengdu to spend several days with Lhungtse and her mother. Bill used his own funds to pay for air tickets and a tour provided by Conscious Journeys.

In 2013, BLSCP raised \$19,000 to fund brain surgery for Lhungtse, whose eyesight was destroyed at age 11 by neurocysticercosis (NCC). The brain surgery did not restore any of Lhungtse's eyesight but did relieve many of her other symptoms. For the past six years, BLSCP has funded her expenses for medical checkups and anti-epileptic medicines.

Tenpa Tenzin was again my excellent tour guide, driver, and interpreter/translator. On October 21, we enjoyed a dinner together at a favorite Tibetan restaurant. On October 22, we took Lhungtse to Sichuan Provincial People's Hospital for her annual checkup by Dr. Zeng Xian Rong, Lhungtse's neurologist. Dr. Zeng ordered blood tests and a CT brain scan for Lhungtse. On that evening Dr. Li Tiaoying, BLSCP's long-time partner at Sichuan CDC, hosted all of us for a wonderful dinner at a Chinese vegan restaurant.

On October 24, I was hanging out for a while with Tenpa and Lhungtse in Tenpa's hotel room. They were engaged in a lively conversation, in Lhungtse's local Tibetan dialect. As we have also heard in past years, Lhungtse expressed her concern for future years when her mother would be too old to continue earning family income with her farm work. Tenpa responded: "Your brother Khulu is a good-looking guy. I think that he will then take care of you and your mother." Lhungtse replied: "Looks mean nothing. For example, a tree may look good on the outside. However, if it is rotting on the inside, it will have no strength and therefore is nothing." Tenpa was so impressed with Lhungtse's reply that he said: "Lhungtse is 10 times or maybe 100 times smarter and more clever than I have ever realized." This conversation reinforced my belief that hanging out with family and friends, with no agenda, is a great way to spend one's time!



**Hanging out with Lhungtse and Tenpa**

Later that day Tenpa drove us to the studio of Mr. Gan, a piano teacher, for a lesson for Lhungtse. Following my request, Dr. Li had contacted Ms. Tan, the Steinway Piano Store manager who in 2018 had arranged the grand piano that Aaron Miller used to teach Lhungtse. This year Ms. Tan identified Mr. Gan, who provided a 75-minute lesson at no charge. Following my request, Lhungtse had brought with her to Chengdu the electronic keyboard with bumpy stickers that Aaron had bought for her last year. However, instead of using the bumpy stickers, Mr. Gan focused on finding a C note by sliding the index finger down from the left black key of a pair and then playing C D E F G (do re mi fa so). During the lesson I thought that Mr. Gan was perhaps talking too loudly and being too demanding for Lhungtse. However, Lhungtse kept focused for the entire lesson, did her best, and very much appreciated what she learned!

Dr. Zeng informed us that Lhungtse's blood tests were normal and her CT brain scan showed no changes from last year. Dr. Zeng said that Lhungtse should continue taking the same doses of her two anti-epileptic medicines (Oxcarbazepine: one 300-mg tablet, three times each day; and Clonazepam: 1 mg each night before bedtime) and return after one year for another checkup if no new medical issues arise.

After my e-mail update on Lhungtse sent on October 4, we raised \$372 for Lhungtse's Medical Expenses. We spent \$497 for Lhungtse's tests and enough medicines to last until July 2020. We will hold the surplus of \$373 to be used for additional medicines and other future medical expenses.

In 2013, I learned that Lhungtse loves balloons and bubble gum. They are safe objects that make fun sounds and that she can touch and control. So again this year I brought her a large supply of each.



**Bill & Lhungtse**



**Lhungtse having some fun at home  
(photo taken by her mother the day after they  
arrived home from Chengdu)**

At one point during our time together Lhungtse proclaimed: "The past year for me has been 360 ordinary days at home and now 5 days of holiday in Chengdu!"

Bill Warnock, President  
17 November 2019