

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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> Responses to Information Requests

## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment please email [Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca](mailto:Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca).

10 April 2013

### CHN104384.E

China: Language of instruction for ethnic Koreans in the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning; list of Korean schools in Muling, Heilongjiang since 1960  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an associate professor of History and Asian American Studies at Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois, who has conducted research on ethnic Koreans in China, explained that, to her knowledge, there are two types of schools that ethnic Koreans might attend in the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning (Associate Professor 8 Apr. 2013). She stated

Both types are publicly funded. One type is the standard public school that would be found throughout China -- the primary language of instruction in these schools is Mandarin. The other type is ethnic Korean schools funded by local governments under China's policies of cultural autonomy for ethnic minorities. In these schools, the primary language of instruction is Korean, but Mandarin is also taught and used. Graduates of these schools generally emerge bilingual in both Korean and Mandarin, although there is some indication that the written ability in Mandarin is somewhat lacking compared to graduates of standard public schools. In addition, the Korean language used in this region of China is not quite the same as that used in South Korea. There are small but significant differences in vocabulary, expressions, and usage, something akin to the differences between British English and American English. From the 1960s through the 1990s, the overwhelming majority of ethnic Koreans in northeastern China would have attended Korean schools. Since the 1990s, however, an increasing number of ethnic Koreans have been attending standard schools as younger parents believe that complete cultural and linguistic immersion in Mandarin and the acquisition of Han Chinese schoolmates is beneficial for social and professional advancement. (ibid.)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a professor emeritus of Government at Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, California, who has visited the three provinces and written books about China's Korean minority and China-Korean relations, stated

An ethnic Korean student in all three northeastern provinces may attend a school where the main medium of instruction is Chinese or a school where the main medium of instruction is Korean. The three provinces have Korean-language schools. If an ethnic Korean student attends a Korean-language school, he or she has an opportunity to study Chinese. However, the degree of fluency in Chinese varies. (Professor Emeritus 8 Apr. 2013)

The issue of schools for the Korean minority in China is also addressed in *Becoming a Model Minority: Schooling Experiences of Ethnic Koreans in China*, a 2010 book written by Fang Gao, a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Advancement of Chinese Language Education and Research at the University of Hong Kong (Gao 2010). The author states

There are two types of schools in the highly-concentrated Korean communities in Northeast China: one is Korean and the other is Chinese. In Korean schools, students are given options to be educated and tested in their own language. Korean is the medium of instruction and Chinese is taught as a subject. (ibid. 2010, 22)

According to Gao, when the Cultural Revolution was launched in 1966, the government cut funding for Korean schools, many Korean schools were closed as a result of parents transferring their children to Han Chinese schools, and students who remained in Korean schools were required to increase the amount of time devoted to learning Chinese (ibid., 21). Gao notes that, at the end of the 1970s, during the reform period following the Cultural Revolution, Chinese authorities "adopted a pragmatic and conciliatory policy towards minority nationalities," which included measures to promote bilingual education for ethnic Koreans (ibid., 22). She characterizes the number of Korean schools, students and teachers as "remarkable" in comparison to other ethnic minorities in China (ibid., 23).

## Demographics

Quoting the 2000 census, sources indicate that there are approximately 1.9 million Koreans in China, with the majority residing in Jilin, Heilongjiang and Liaoning provinces (Gao 2010, 9; *Ethnologue* 2013a). Quoting figures taken from the 1990 census, Gao indicates that 62 percent of the ethnic Koreans reside in Jilin Province, 24 percent in Heilongjiang Province and 12 percent in Liaoning Province (2010, 10). Similarly, according to the 2013 edition of *Ethnologue*, a reference work that catalogues world languages (*Ethnologue* 2013b), 60 percent reside in Jilin, 20 percent in Heilongjiang and 13 percent in Liaoning (ibid. 2013a). *Ethnologue* indicates that 1.2 million are "monolinguals" (speaking only Korean), while 700,000 also use Chinese (ibid.). In contrast, Gao states that the "great majority" are "literate bilinguals" (2010, 23). Using statistics from the 2000 census, sources indicate that approximately three percent of Koreans in China are illiterate (ibid.; *Ethnologue* 2013a), which Gao notes is the lowest illiteracy rate in China (2010, 23).

A list of Korean schools in Muling, Heilongjiang since 1960 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

## References

Associate Professor, History and Asian American Studies, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. 8 April 2013. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

*Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 2013a. 17th ed. "Korean." Edited by M. Paul Lewis, Gary F. Simons and Charles D. Fennig. Dallas: SIL International. <<http://www.ethnologue.com/language/kor>> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2013]

\_\_\_\_\_. 2013b. 17th ed. "About the Ethnologue." Edited by M. Paul Lewis, Gary F. Simons and Charles D. Fennig. Dallas: SIL International. <<http://www.ethnologue.com/about>> [Accessed 9 Apr. 2013]

Gao, Fang. 2010. *Becoming a Model Minority: Schooling Experiences of Ethnic Koreans in China*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books.

Professor Emeritus, Department of Government, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, California. 8 April 2013. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** A professor at Purdue University was unable to provide information.

**Internet sites, including:** China – China Internet Information Center, Ministry of Education; Factiva; Minorities at Risk; Minority Rights Group International; United Nations – Refworld.

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