



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



The mission of Bhutan Cultural Exchange is to foster awareness and understanding of diverse ideas that connect communities and lives through the exchange of cultural practices and values. Our efforts are dedicated to supporting projects that underscore the values of loving kindness and the possibilities afforded by an appreciation of Gross National Happiness exemplified by the Kingdom of Bhutan.

<https://bhutanculturalexchange.org>
Bhutan Cultural Exchange (BCE) is a registered 501(c)3
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Never a dull moment in this ever interesting and dynamic Himalayan Kingdom.

It's a vibrant time to be focused on good works in a place that generates an increasing amount of international attention. Through His Majesty's vision of the Gelephu Minfulness City (GMC) in Southern Bhutan, or Bhutan's extraordinary leadership organizing and conducting the first ever Global Peace Prayer Festival, Bhutan's light shines ever brighter in the world. The Board of Directors of Bhutan Cultural Exchange are grateful to support in simple yet meaningful ways projects that enhance the efforts of the Zhung Dratshang (Central Monastic Body) and our sports partners, Pickleball in Bhutan (PiB), and Bhutan Baseball and Softball Association (BBSA).

In 2025 we added a new collaborating partner, Bhutan Sublime Expeditions, a Bhutanese tour company. Those interested in traveling to Bhutan to experience our projects firsthand will have the opportunity through the direction and support of Sonam Choden, the owner of Bhutan Sublime Expeditions. Sonam is registered Bhutanese tour guide and BCE's newest board member.



Silver
Transparency
2025

Candid.

In 2025, BCE received Candid's Silver Seal of Transparency. This is a Guidestar program ensuring that whenever validation of our charity (nonprofit) work is required - we are visible within the network of transparent nonprofits.

In 2025 we were fortunate to have the support of a well known US artist, Beatrice Coron. <https://youtu.be/cAGFKYNrQgY?si=-nkJsxjFBcAvClbm> She volunteered to visit Bhutan for three weeks to teach a special program for the monks of the Zhung Dratshang Preservation, Antiquities & Culture Center (ZDPACC), artists, technicians from Druk Holding & Investments (DHI) and several Desuups. The Program: Ways of Seeing Sacred Objects: Paper Cutting and Design inspired creativity, collaboration and new ways to look at sacred symbols and objects.



Paper cut mask



ZDPACC Monks make detailed cuts



First cardboard cuts at Super Fab Lab



Graduation day

Through the efforts of US collaborator and supporter **Nancy Hosford**, a 4th group of US Pickleball players and coaches visited Bhutan. They came as volunteers to play and coach Pickleball at each location where Pickleball courts have been established in Bhutan.

US Pickleball players and coaches have visited Bhutan at their own expense over the last three years to teach and play Pickleball. They demonstrate the depth of character and kindness that exemplifies most Americans. They have inspired Bhutanese, shared joy and laughter and the love of Pickleball in this tiny Himalayan Kingdom. With generosity, kindness and a spirit of immense goodwill they have made a difference in the lives of many Bhutanese. Pickleball in Bhutan is a blessing gifted by citizens of the US who passionately believe in Pickleball and in giving back.

The Board of Directors of Bhutan Cultural Exchange gratefully acknowledge the efforts of **Nancy Hosford of Tucson, Arizona, USA** whose immense goodwill and passion for Pickleball is without limit. Her tireless focus on the development of young Bhutanese athletes is inspiring. The Pickleball in Bhutan (PiB) program would not exist without her.

https://youtu.be/LOBuZ9fg_rA?si=lgKT3hpeWVoPGd5V



**L: Nancy Hosford and
PiB Coach Nidup Dorji**



**R: Nancy Hosford coaching
monks at Chukha Monastery**

The Pickleball Program in Bhutan would not be possible without the support of two well known Pickleball leaders: **Mr. Seymour Rifkind and Ms. Helle Sparre**. Their experiences and comments about introducing Pickleball in Bhutan are featured in this video:

<https://youtu.be/Qe3uq0l7MFY?si=hmr23HtGDCy90-s>

Bonnie Koch is another extraordinary volunteer who coached Pickleball in Bhutan two years in a row. Thank you for coordinating the donation of dozens of pairs of court shoes, paddles and balls. Thank you for caring, for your time and energy.



L-R: Bonnie with PiB Coach Nidup Dorji - coaching at Chukha Monastery and helping Monk Sonam balance with his new shoes. Bonnie donated dozens of pairs of court shoes to the PiB Program.

Another Pickleball volunteer, **Mr. Bob Koff**, a dentist, brought an entire suitcase full of much needed dental supplies and donated them to a dentist in Thimphu, Bhutan whose practice focuses on mothers and children.



Bob gifting dental supplies to the Womens and Childrens hospital.



Thank you Bob!!



Sonam Choden, our new board member with Bob Koff and dentist Dorji Wangchuck.

Gratitude to our volunteer coach, PiB coordinator, official Tour Guide for Pickleball in Bhutan and the newest BCE Board Member. Thank you Sonam Choden, for your kindness and grace and for everything you do to support Bhutan Cultural Exchange and Pickleball in Bhutan.



The US volunteers who visited in 2025 made several additional contributions beyond their time, energy and coaching skills. It is with gratitude we acknowledge **Margy Eller and her grandson Cairan** who gifted NBA certified basketballs and premiere jerseys. The balls were gifted to Dechencholing School sports program and the Monks at Chukha Monastery. The jerseys were donated to Bhutan Baseball and Softball Association.



BBSA staff and players receive signed Renegade jerseys and a ball donated by BCE. Margy Eller (center in white ball cap) and her grandson Cairan (to her left holding jersey 13) donated exclusive Arizona Wildcats jersey #1 Caleb Love and jersey #13.



Cairan Eller joyfully donates a brand new NBA basketball to the monks at Chukha indoor sports facility.

Guests from the group of US volunteers that visited in 2025 made significant contributions to court development. Funds were donated by **Linda Fahey and her husband Brian Gagnon** to complete Phase 2 renovations at Chukha Monastery indoor court, making it possible to resurface the concrete floor. This is the first indoor Pickleball court at a monastery in Bhutan.



Donations from **Bob Koff and Tom Warfield** provided seed funds **matched by Bhutan Cultural Exchange** to build three new Pickleball courts at Tenchen Choeling Gemba nunnery in Paro. This will be the first nunnery in Bhutan with Pickleball courts.



Successful completion of three new courts at Tenchen Choeling Nunnery on the side of a mountain in Paro, Bhutan at an elevation slightly over 8,000 feet above sea level is one very special accomplishment. A gorgeous location for guests to play Pickleball with the most lovely and grateful hosts: The Nuns of Tenchen Choeling Gemba. Each visitor will be invited to evening prayers in the temple.



US Volunteer Pickleball guests at Tenchen Choeling Nunnery - standing on land that will be home of 3 new Pickleball courts.



Yangden - Tenchen Choeling Nunnery Pickleball Program coordinator and Coach-in-training.

In 2025 BCE launched a Go Fund Me Campaign for BBSA raising \$1,300 USD. Bhutan Baseball and Softball Association (BBSA) <https://bhutanbaseball.org/> continues to thrive. This is another program BCE played a large role in funding from 2021-2025. Donations can still be made through this link which contains the details:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-bhutan-cultural-exchanges-impact>



In 2025 BCE donated the first ever grant to the Zhung Dratshang Preservation & Antiquities Conservation Center (ZDPACC). The funds were matched by Dr. Ariana Maki, an art historian whose research focuses on the material and visual cultures that constitute the Buddhist world, particularly in Bhutan and the broader Himalaya. Dr. Maki is a two-time Fulbright U.S. Scholar to Bhutan (2025, 2019-20) and an NEH-Mellon Fellow for Digital Publication (2021-22).

This is the first donation to a project outside of the sports organizations that we have made donations to since 2022. The donation to ZDPACC is an example of our continued support of cultural projects that involve conservation and preservation of Bhutan's living cultural heritage.

ZDPACC is the organization that the President of BCE volunteers her time and energy and the organization where she spends most of the year when she is in Bhutan.



Senior Lopen Gembo presenting certificate of completion to one of several monks and nuns that participated in the research project.



In the year ahead our focus will shift to finishing Pickleball court details at Chukha Indoor Court and Tenchen Choeling Nunnery in Paro. This includes painting the courts and insuring the monks and nuns receive continued training. A new video will be released that explains what the life of monks and nuns in Bhutan is like and why BCE is focusing on Pickleball as a sport that provides monks and nuns with opportunities to engage in a lifetime of fitness in addition to their monastic duties.

Through our collaboration with Bhutan Sublime Expeditions we are planning on several tours to Bhutan in the fall. Our focus will be on bringing Pickleball players and coaches to Bhutan that want to play with monks and nuns and to visit the next new monastery in Gasa, Bhutan where we will introduce Pickleball.

We continue to provide consulting assistance to Paro FC regarding sports development with international sports organizations including Global Sports Partners and the International YMCA as future partners.

BCE President continues her work as a volunteer in support of the Zhung Dratshang Preservation and Antiquities Culture Center in Thimphu, Bhutan and has received a third one year visa.

Work on the US State Department AFCP grant was completed in September 2025. The grant will not be renewed. However, the work of digitizing sacred objects, paintings, sculptures, thangkhas, and buildings will continue.

A new website for BCE is being drafted and should be completed by second quarter 2026.

Donations can be made to BCE through this PayPal Link:

<https://www.paypal.com/US/fundraiser/charity/2404541>

Donations make it possible to continue the meaningful work we undertake in Bhutan. All donated funds receive acknowledgment and are used for the program the donor asks their funds be given to. Please specify which program your donation is intended for.

If you are interested in visiting Bhutan for a curated tour to play Pickleball with monks and nuns in remote locations, to learn about and experience the work of monks and nuns conserving Bhutan's living cultural heritage, or a journey to remote sacred places in the company of a monk- conservator send us a message:

connect@bhutanculturalexchange.org

With gratitude to our supporters in the US, our colleagues in Bhutan, and our friends who bless us from unseen realms.
We remain humble, grateful and always of service.

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