Michael Crook | Guest Speaker Bio

To our WAB community, Michael Crook needs little introduction as one of the school's founders. He is a passionate intercultural advocate and a recipient of the **Chinese Government Friendship Award**, China's highest honor for foreign experts who have made meaningful contributions to the country's development.

Born and raised right here in Beijing, Michael speaks authentic Beijing-accented Mandarin and carries on a six-generation family tradition rooted in education and service across China. As the son of David Crook and Isabel Crook, well-known pioneers of foreign language education in China and founding faculty of Beijing Foreign Studies University, Michael grew up immersed in Chinese language, culture, and educational values from an early age. He spent his entire school life in Beijing, later gaining rich teaching and international development experience across the UK, the US, and China, before founding WAB in 1994 to serve the growing international community in Beijing.

A true trailblazer in international education, Michael launched the WAB Chinese Studies programme, the very first of its kind among international schools, setting a thoughtful benchmark for immersive Chinese language and cultural learning that many schools have followed. He also lent his language expertise to a landmark national moment, carefully refining official English wording and materials for the **2008 Beijing Olympic Games**.
Beyond WAB, Michael stays deeply involved in cultural exchange, rural revitalization, heritage preservation, and inclusive education. He loves sharing Chinese culture with global audiences, using personal stories to break the common stereotype that "Chinese is too difficult to learn". He has helped students from nearly 60 countries connect with Chinese language, classic literature, and traditional culture, and often shares timeless works like Yuanqu poetry to show how approachable and vibrant Chinese culture truly is.

Michael also chairs the International Committee for the Promotion of Chinese Industrial Cooperatives (ICCIC) and serves as a director at Beijing Bailie University, continuing his family's long-standing legacy of public service and community work in China.
To this day, Michael Crook remains a well-respected voice in international education. He is endlessly dedicated to building genuine bridges between China and the world, inspiring young people to grow into open-minded, collaborative, and principled global citizens.