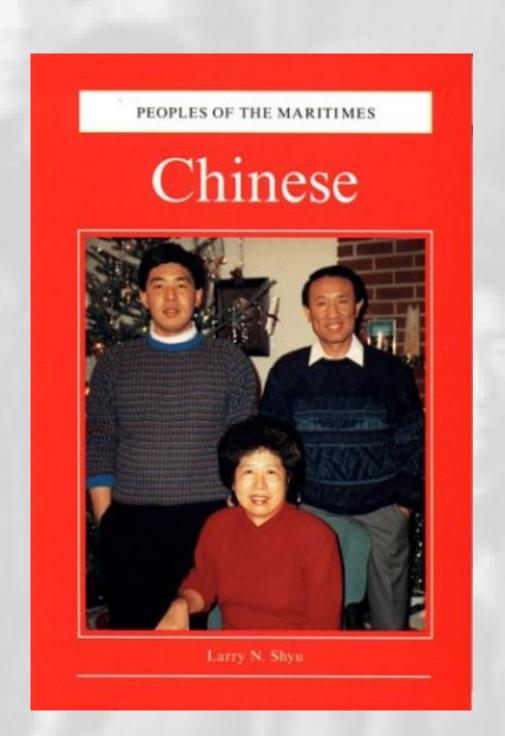
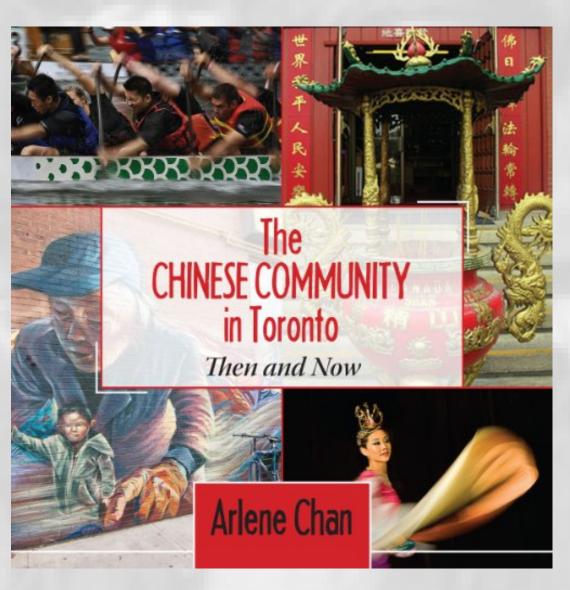
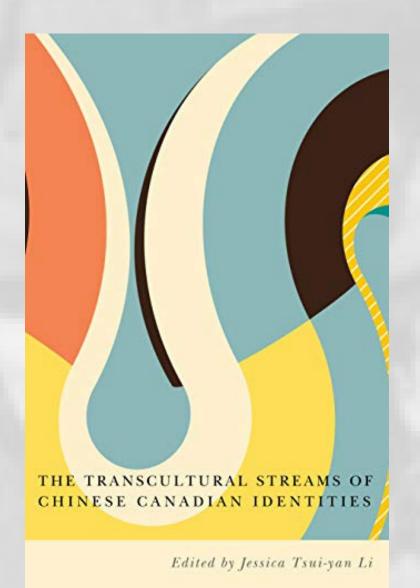
Reflecting on the 100th Anniversary of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act:

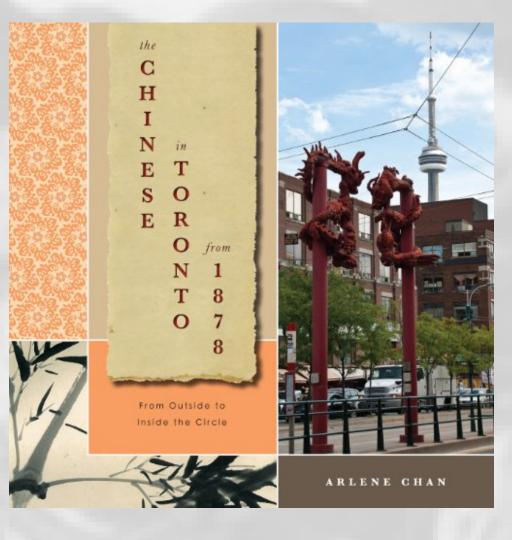
A Display of Materials from the Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library on Chinese Canadian Experiences and Heritage

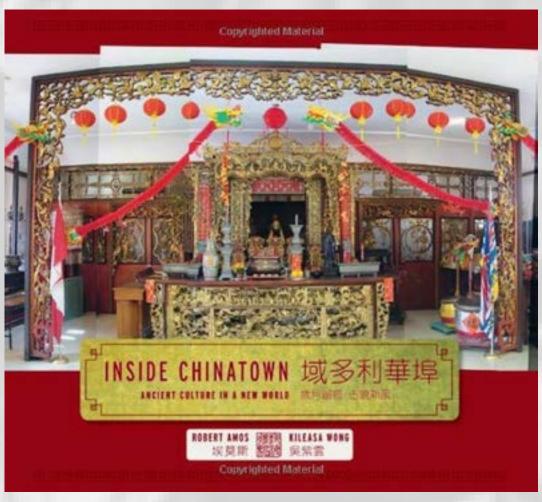
Exhibition Booklet



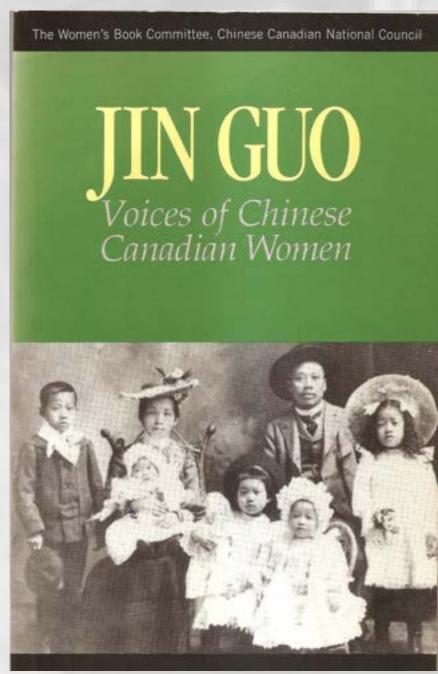


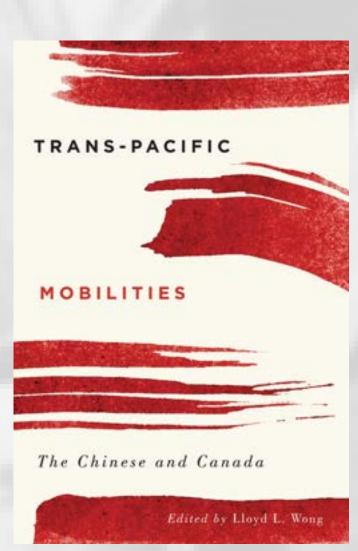


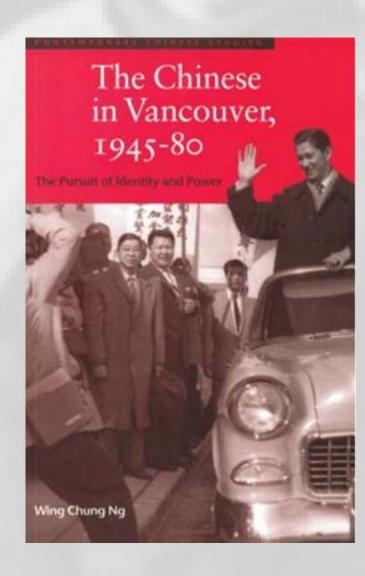


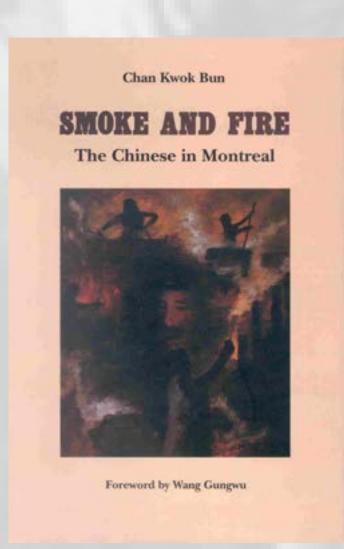


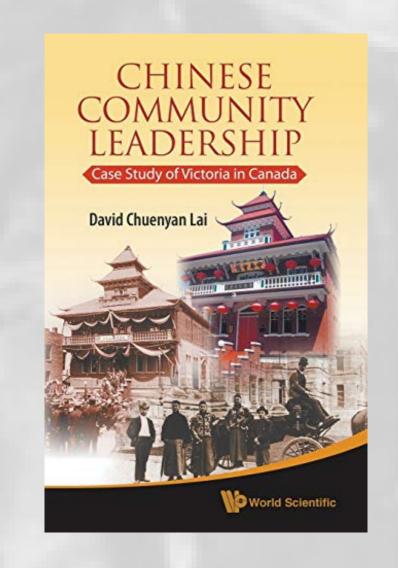


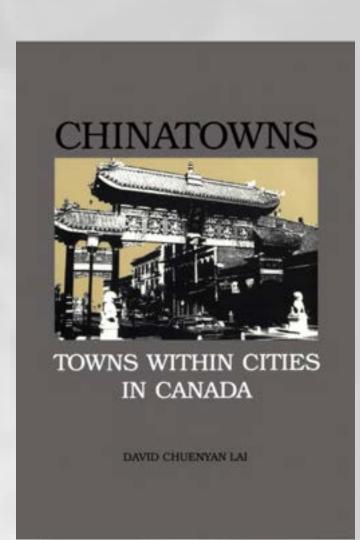












By: Maria Lau, Wendy Li, and Mitchell Ma





Exhibition Overview



On the occasion of the centenary of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, the Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library organized an exhibit showcasing books and materials from our library collection that acknowledge the experiences of Chinese Canadians. In particular, the exhibit includes a chronology of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, providing a brief account of the history of early Chinese immigrants in Canada. This history traces back to the first arrivals in 1788, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) starting in 1881, the introduction of the Head Tax in 1885 immediately upon the completion of the CPR, and the enactment of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923. The Head Tax remained in effect for 38 years, and the Chinese Exclusion Act persisted for 24 years until its repeal in May 1947.

In this small exhibit, we hope to inspire the audience's interest in exploring and learning from the past. Furthermore, we aim to foster a sense of gratitude for the extraordinary efforts and courage exhibited by our predecessors, regardless of their ethnic origins, in amplifying the voices of the Chinese Canadian community, rectifying past wrongs, and promoting integration. It is through their contributions that Canada has become a better place to be.

Maria. L.C. Lau, Director of Richard Charles Lee Canda-Hong Kong Library September 1, 2023

1788: First Arrivals

The first recorded instance of ethnic Chinese people occurred in what is now Canada. In 1788, trader John Meares recruited 50 Chinese sailors and artisans from Canton and Macao to establish a trading post at Nootka Sound, Vancouver Island. They built a dockyard, a fort, and a ship. The following year, Meares bought another 70 Chinese from Canton. However, shortly after their arrival, the settlement was seized by the Spanish during the Nootka Crisis. The fate of the Chinese workers remains unknown. No other Chinese arrivals are known in Western North America until the 1850s.

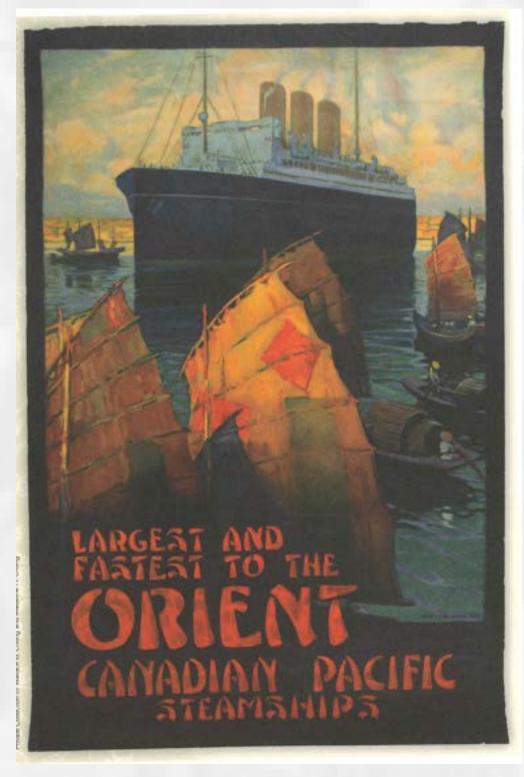


Image 1: A poster advertising ships travelling between the Canadian Pacific Coast and the Far East.



Image 2: The Nootka Sound colony on Vancouver Island, circa 1788.

1858: Fraser River Gold Rushes

In 1857, the discovery of gold in the lower Fraser Valley attracted thousands of miners worldwide, including Chinese immigrants who had previously worked in the California Gold Rush. This marked the first major wave of Chinese immigration to Canada. The first Chinese migrants arrived in Victoria from San Francisco in June 1858, with more coming from Southern China through Hong Kong. These Chinese migrants aimed to find riches both through gold mining and by creating businesses that provided services to other miners, such as laundry services. However, the gold rush declined in 1865, causing economic hardships. White workers blamed the Chinese for job losses, leading to growing hostility in the late 1860s and early 1870s.





Images 3 and 4: Chinese Miners during the Fraser River Gold Rushes, circa 1870s.

1870s: Physical Segregation

In 1871, British Columbia joined
Confederation, and the subsequent year, the first legislative Assembly passed an act disenfranchising both First Nations and Chinese people. This discriminatory attitude spread to numerous cities and municipalities in the province, resulting in the disenfranchisement of the Chinese community. Faced with increasing discrimination, many Chinese individuals were compelled to segregate themselves from mainstream society, leading to the establishment of Canada's first Chinatowns.



Image 5: Paifang (Chinese architectural arch) in Nanaimo's Chinatown, circa 1882.

Many white landlords made it clear that they would not sell or lease their properties to the Chinese unless the lands were on the fringes of the town, making them less appealing to the white community. Facing physical abuse and violence, many pioneer Chinese immigrants also isolated themselves from the white community to avoid mistreatment. These factors resulted in residential segregation and the birth of Canada's earliest Chinatowns.



Image 6: Family in front of their Laundry Shop in Vancouver's Chinatown, circa 1895.

1881: Railway Construction

British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871 with the condition that a railway linking it to the Eastern part of Canada would be built within 10 years. BC politicians and the electorate pushed for White workers to provide labor, but Prime Minister John A. Macdonald (1815 – 1891) argued that it would be too expensive and impractical. Macdonald insisted on employing Chinese labor to cut costs, stating that it was necessary for the timely completion of the railway.

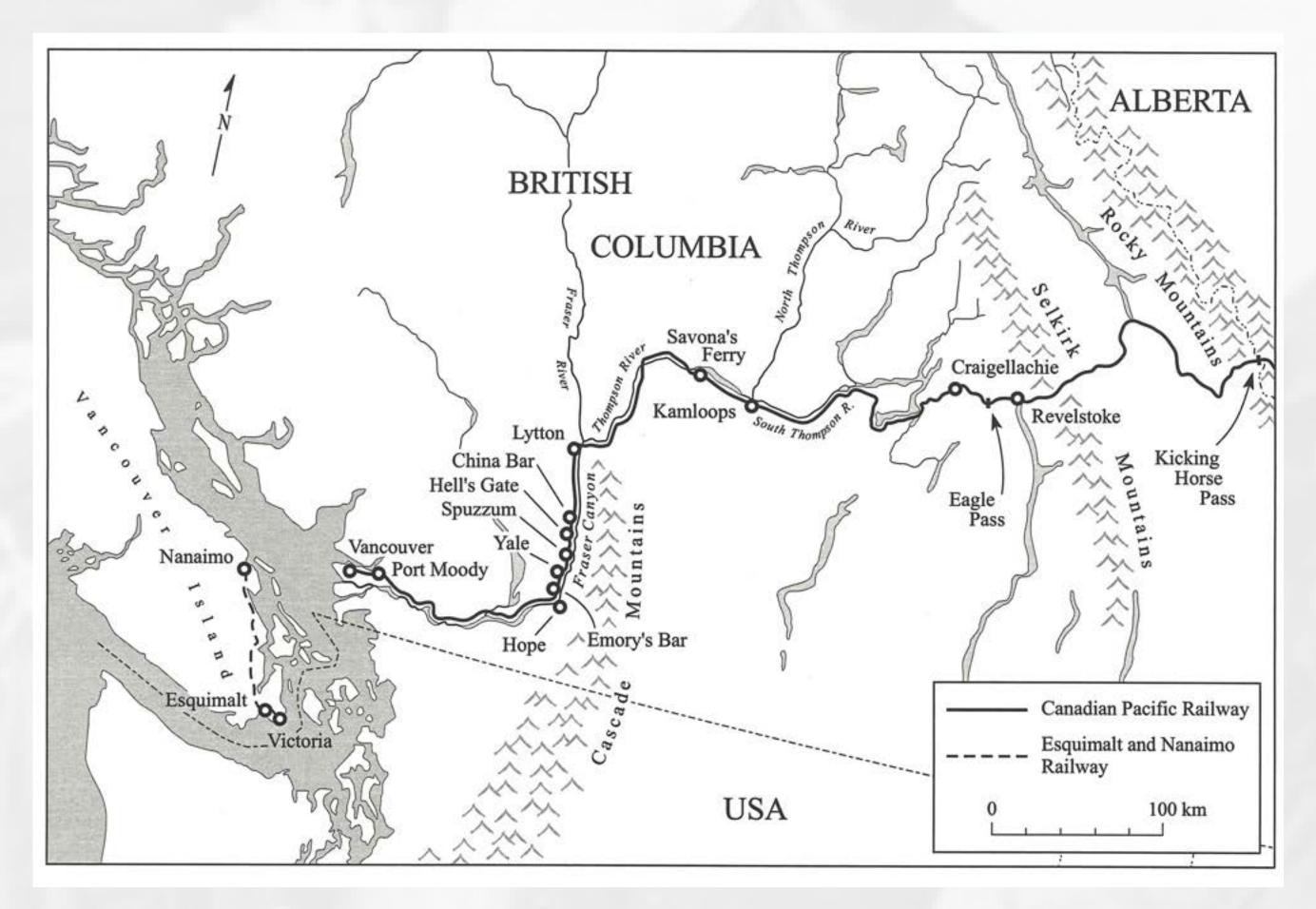


Image 7: Map showing the system of Canadian Pacific Railway lines in British Columbia.

Despite the strong resentment, it was widely recognized that having a railway connecting Canada from east to west was absolutely necessary, and the Chinese labourers' help was deemed vital for its completion. By the end of 1882, out of the 9,000 workers who worked on the railway, 6,500 of them were Chinese. Many Chinese railway workers died from accidents, winter colds, illness, and malnutrition.









Image 8, 9, 10 and 11: Chinese workers during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, circa 1880s.

1885: The Head Tax



Image 12: Head tax certificate.

Following the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Canadian Government swiftly implemented restrictions on Chinese immigration. Between 1885 and 1923, Chinese immigrants were required to pay a \$50 head tax for entry into Canada. This tax was imposed under the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885, marking the first instance in Canadian history when legislation was used to deny immigration based on ethnic background. The tax was subsequently raised to \$100 in 1901 and further increased to \$500 in 1903, an amount equivalent to the cost of two homes. The head tax was only abolished with the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned all Chinese immigrants until its repeal in 1947.

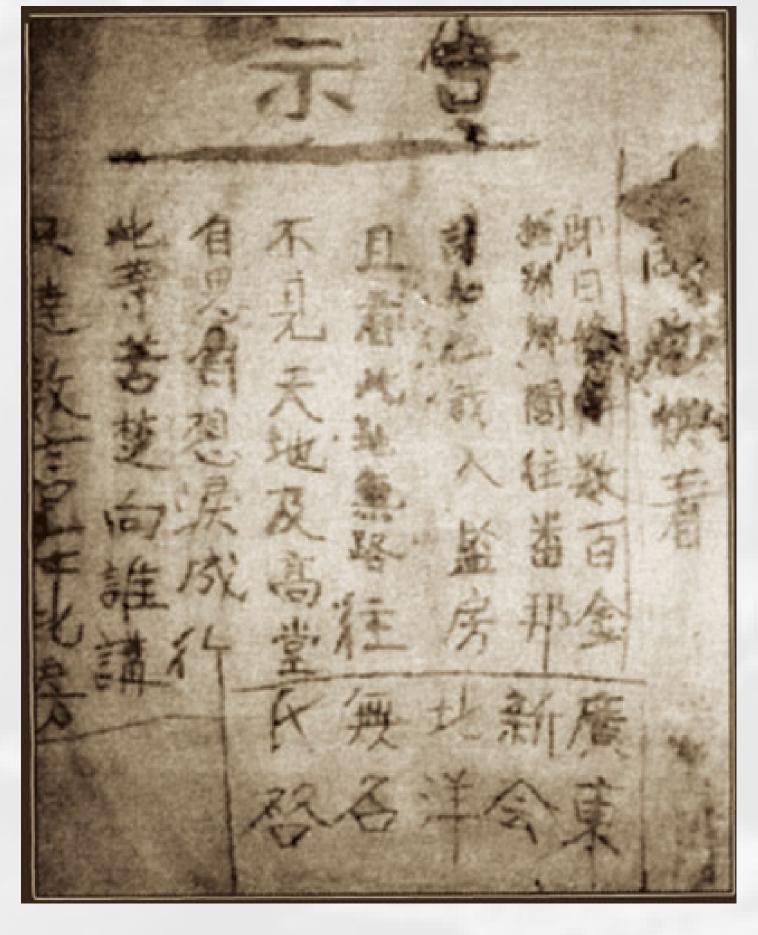


Image 13: Chinese verses on wall, expressing frustration, by early immigrants as they wait in immigration offices to enter Canada.

1923: The Chinese Exclusion Act

The federal government passed an Act in 1923 that prohibited any person of Chinese origin from entering Canada, as the head taxes failed to curb Chinese immigration. During the exclusion period from 1923 to 1947, many Chinese people in Canada endured the hardship of being separated from their family members in China. The discriminatory laws caused a gender imbalance among Chinese immigrants, as bringing dependents such as wives or aged parents to Canada became prohibitive. Many Chinese men lived alone as bachelors in the Chinatowns of Canada. A survey conducted in 1922 by Republican China's Overseas Chinese Bureau revealed that out of Victoria Chinatown's entire population of 3,681, only 456 were females.

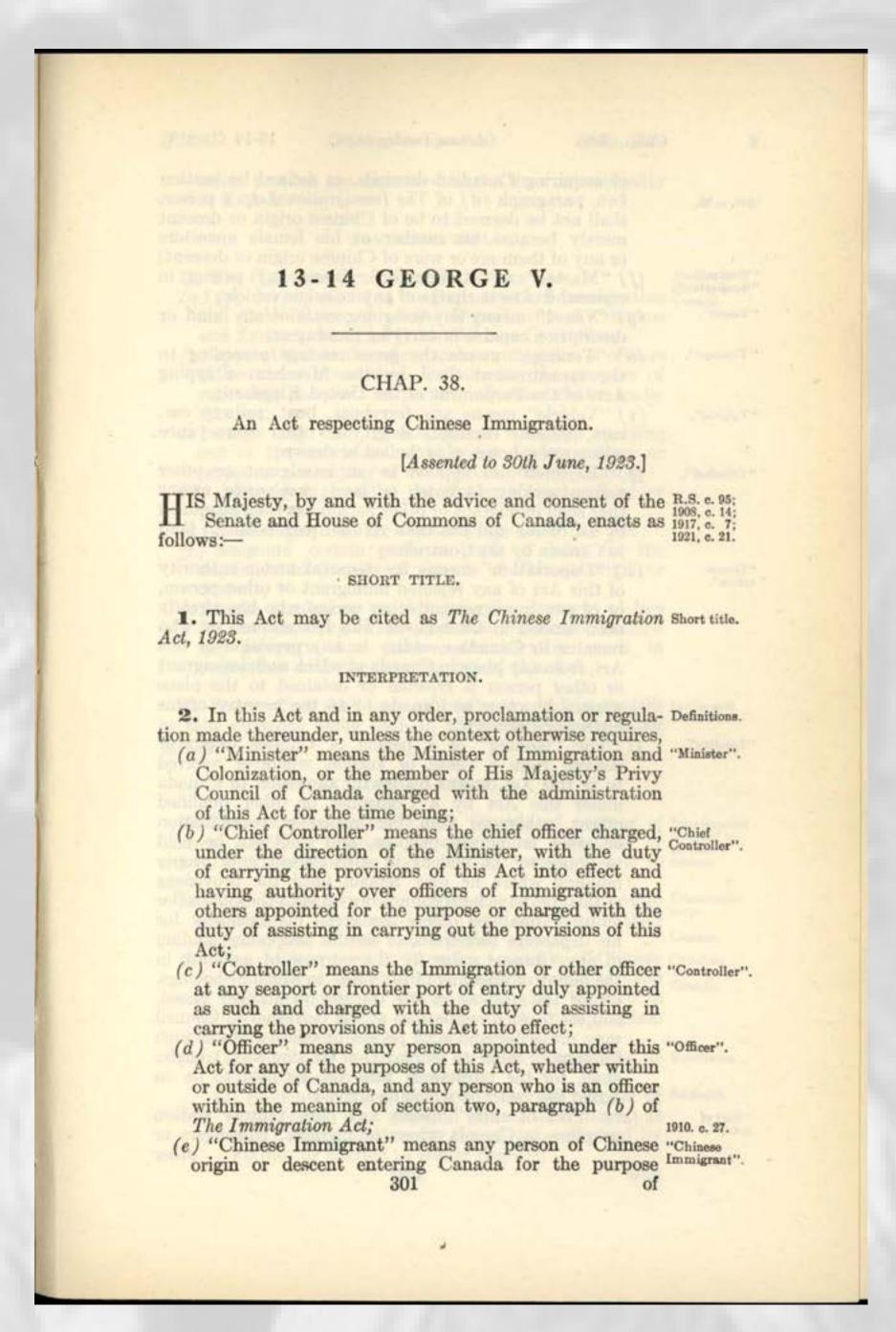


Image 14: Chinese Immigration Act, 1923.

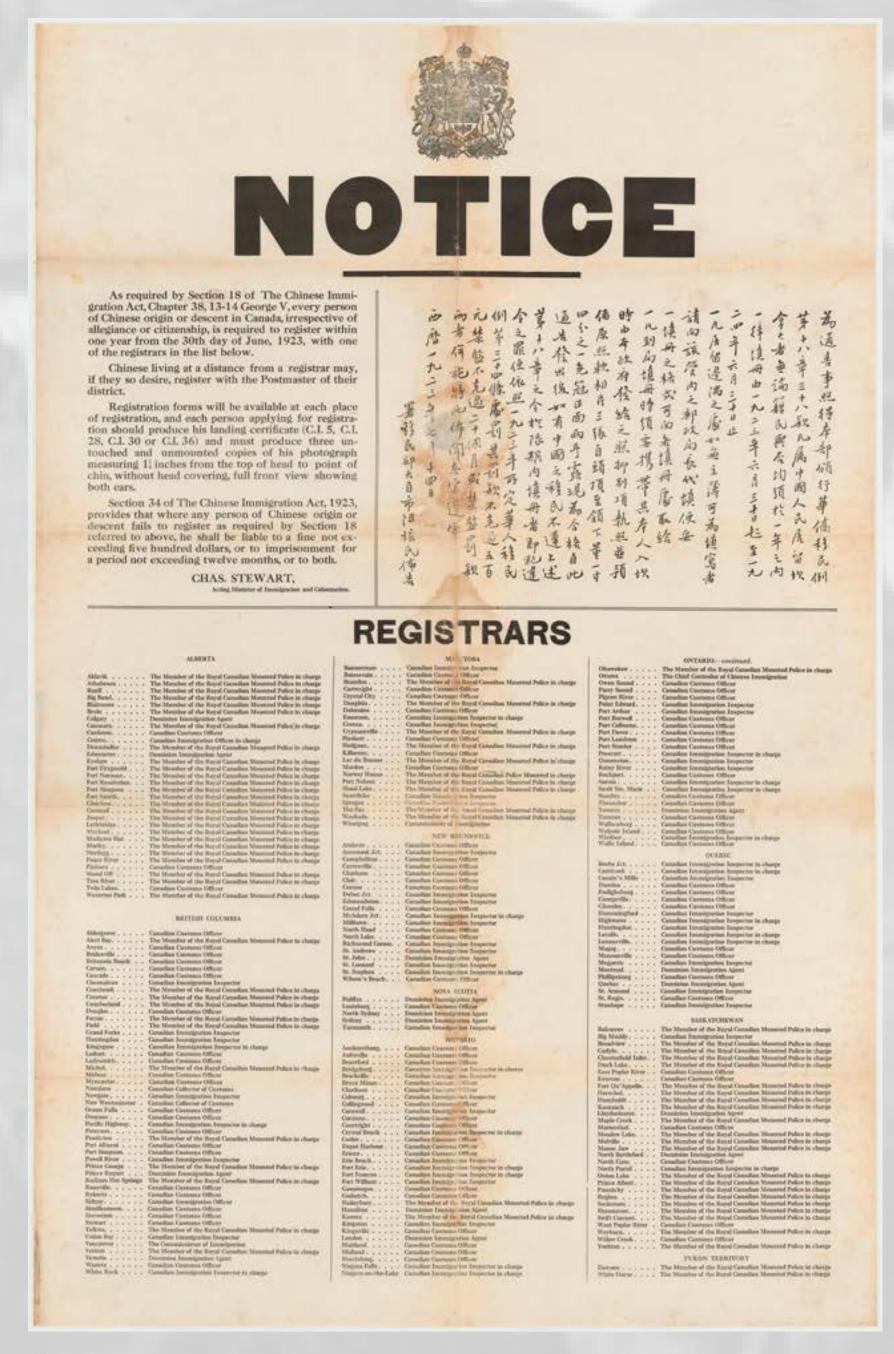


Image 15: Poster on Section 18 of the Chinese Exclusion Act and registration requirements.

1939: Chinese Canadian Soldiers of WWII

The Second World War was a pivotal moment in the history of Chinese Canadians. Numerous young Chinese Canadians showcased their commitment to Canada by enlisting as soldiers and actively participating in various combat roles on land, at sea, and in the air. As the war expanded to the Far East after Canada's declaration of war on Japan in December 1941, many Chinese Canadians were recruited as Allied secret agents operating covertly behind enemy lines in Asia, capitalizing on their ability to blend in seamlessly with the local population.



Image 16: Chinese Canadian Soldiers posing for picture, circa 1940s.

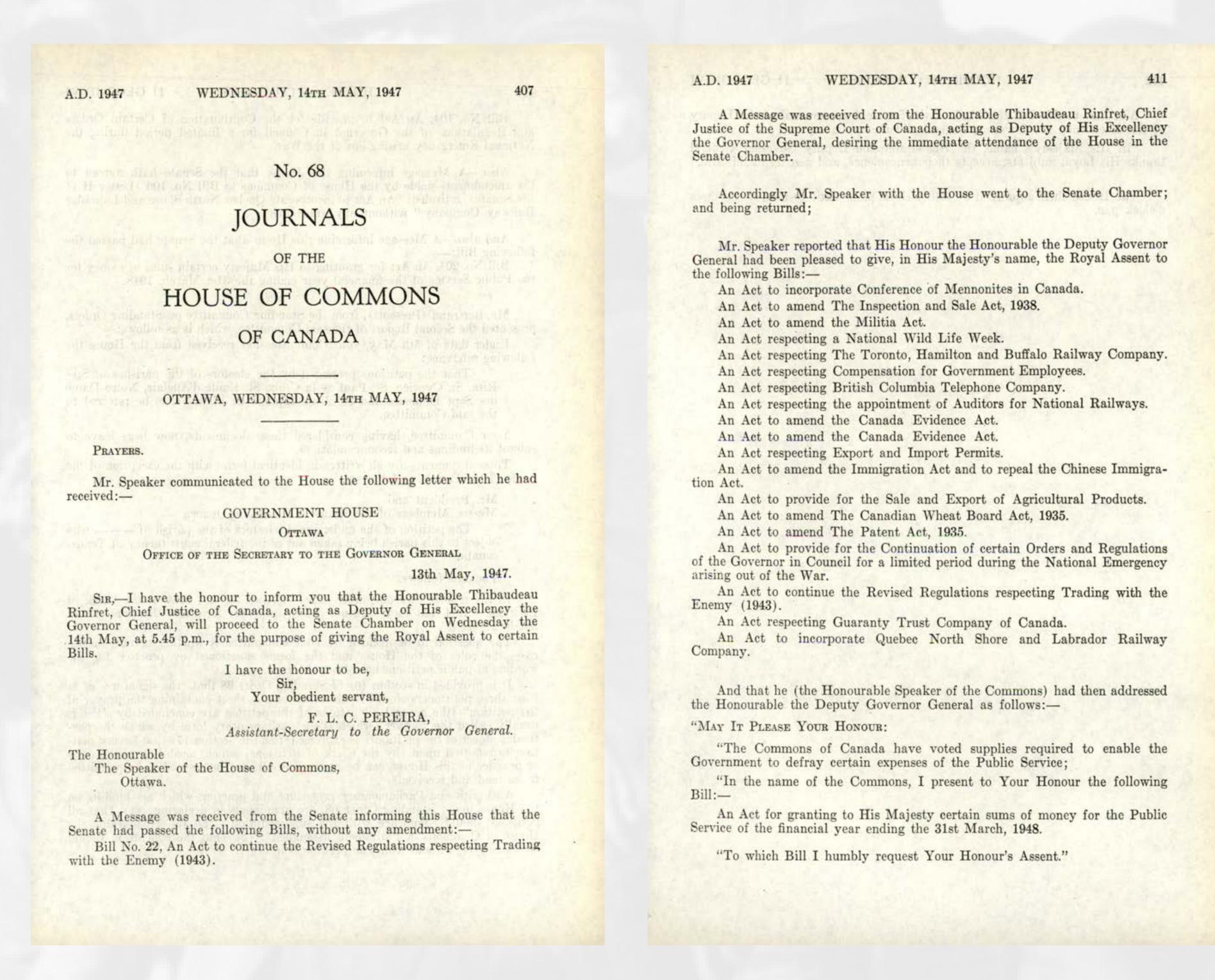
Chinese Canadians on the home front also organized fundraising events to support the war effort. By 1945, Chinese Canadians had purchased approximately \$10 million worth of Victory Bonds. Their commitment to the war played a role in altering the perception of white Canadians.



Image 17: Chinese Canadian Soldiers at Military Camp Chilliwack, circa 1944.

1947: End of the Exclusion Era

As the Second World War came to an end, Canada became an active proponent and later a signatory of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which championed the rights and freedoms of all human beings. It became untenable for the Canadian Government to discriminate against the Chinese and support the Chinese Immigration Act, which was inconsistent with what is enshrined in the international document. Consequently, on May 14, 1947, the Canadian Parliament repealed the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923. Thus, the "Exclusion Era" of Chinese Immigration to Canada officially came to an end.



Images 18 and 19: Transcript of the repeal of the Chinse immigration Act by the Canadian Parliament.

1957: Political Participation

After the Second World War, a more tolerant and open society, along with the respect earned by Chinese Canadian soldiers for their contributions to the war, allowed Chinese Canadians to become more involved in politics.



Image 20: Douglas Jung welcomed by a crowd of supporters at Vancouver airport in 1958.

Douglas Jung became the first member of a visible minority elected to the Parliament of Canada, as well as the first Canadian Member of Parliament (MP) of Chinese and Asian descent in the House of Commons of Canada. During the 1970s and 1980s, many Chinese Canadians were elected as MPs, MLAs, Mayors, and City Councilors. Dr. Vivienne Poy (1998-2012) and Dr. Lillian E Dyck (2005-2020) served as two Chinese Canadian senators, and Governor General Adrienne Clarkson (1999-2005) also has Chinese Canadian heritage.



Image 21: Douglas Jung as a member of Canada's Legal Delegation to the United Nations.

1967: Universal Immigration Policy

The Federal Government introduced a liberalized immigration policy on 1 October 1967, providing equal opportunities for people around the world to be admitted to Canada based on their education, occupational skills, and other criteria. Immigrants were identified by their country of last permanent residence, not by ethnic origin. This change led to a more diverse Chinese Canadian community, with the point system attracting immigrants with higher education, urban experience, and greater expectations for their future in Canada. During the 1960s to 1990s, Hong Kong became the main source of Chinese migrants, with over 60% of the 450,000 Chinese immigrants who entered Canada between 1990 and 1997 coming from Hong Kong, especially after the 1984 announcement that Hong Kong would be handed over to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1997.

However, discrimination persists in Canadian society, with one of the most notable incidents being the CTV's W5 program incident. On the evening of September 30, 1979, the program aired a feature that used incorrect statistics to portray Chinese Canadian university students in a negative light. This portrayal angered many Canadians, especially as Canada was moving towards a more multicultural society.

THE CHANGING FACE OF CANADIAN IMMIGRATION

Canada became the first country to adopt a "points" system for immigration in 1967. The change allowed thousands of new skilled immigrants to come from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

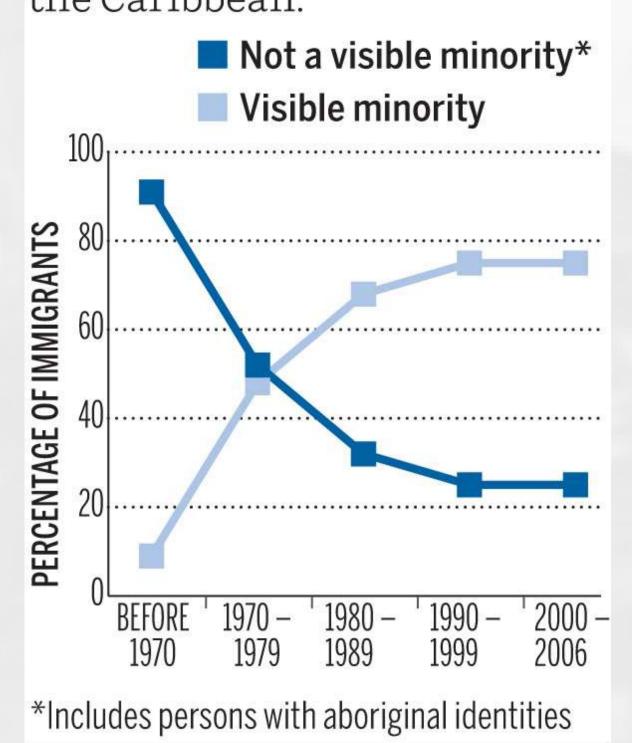


Image 22: The Changing Face of Canadian Immigration

SOURCE: 2006 CENSUS OF CANADA

POSTMEDIA NEWS



Image 23: Canadians Rallying Against W5 in Toronto

Eventually, W5 retracted the program and issued a public apology. This event served as a catalyst for a new generation of activists, leading to the formation of the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC) and the emergence of a stronger voice representing Chinese Canadians nationwide.

2006: Redressing the Head Tax

The Chinese community has actively sought to redress historical wrongs done against them. Since the early 1980s, there has been a campaign to redress the head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants who entered Canada from 1885 to 1923. Initially, the Canadian government was resistant to calls for issuing an apology. Nevertheless, thanks to the relentless efforts and perseverance of individual activists like James Poon and community organizations such as the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC), an increasing number of Canadians came to acknowledge that Canada bore a moral responsibility to redress the head tax, even if there was no legal obligation to do so.

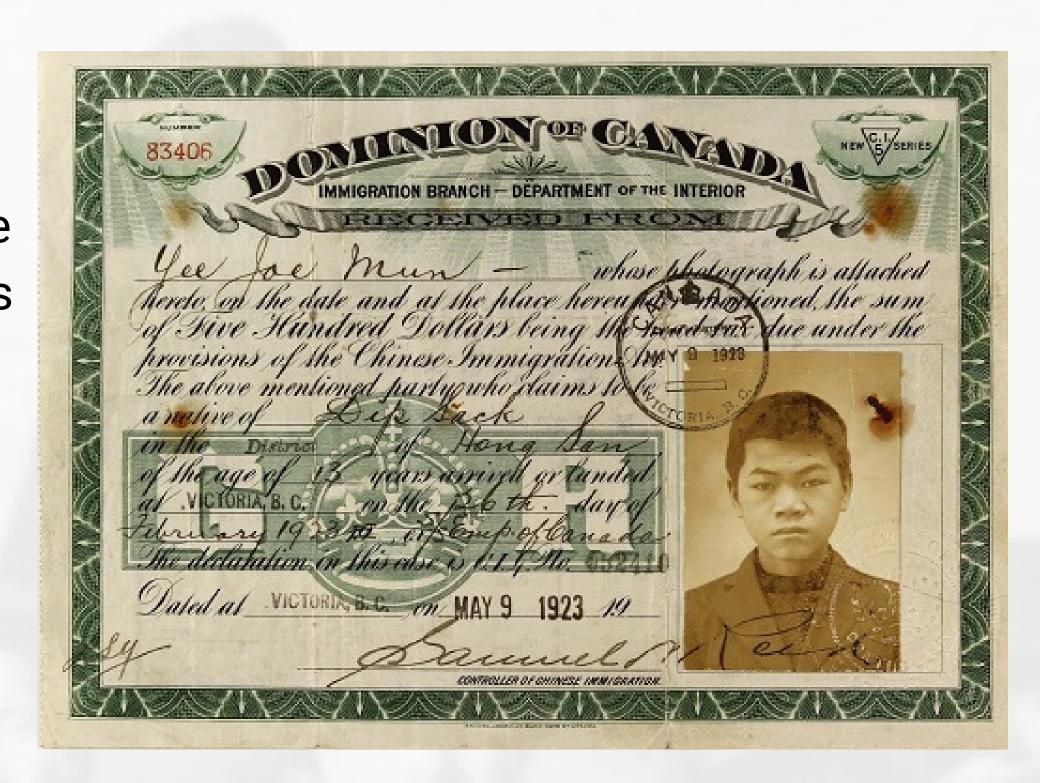


Image 24: Head tax certificate of Joe Mun "George" Yee (1910 – 1978).

In the run-up to the 2004 federal election, NDP leader Jack Layton promised to make amends by issuing an apology and offering compensation for the head tax. Following their victory in the 2006 election, the newly elected Conservative Party announced their commitment to delivering a formal apology and appropriate redress to families affected by the discriminatory policies of the past. On June 22, 2006, the newly elected Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivered a message in the House of Commons, offering an apology in Cantonese and compensation for the head tax previously levied on Chinese immigrants.



Image 25: James Poon, one of the many head tax victims, with Prime Minister Stephen Harper just before the latter issued a public apology on behalf of Canada in the House of Commons in 2013.



Image 26: Thomas Soon and Charlie Quon, two of the many who were affected by the head tax, holding the first redress payment to Chinese Head Taxpayers in 2006.

Image Attributions

- Image 1: CPR poster, State and Dollar lines poster, and rail guards' instructions. The Other Side of Gold Mountain: Glimpses of Early Chinese Pioneer Life on the Prairies from the Wallace B. Chung and Madeline H. Chung Collection, by Brain M. Evans, University of Alberta Libraries, 2010, p. 18.
- Image 2: The launch of the North-West America at Nootka Sound, 1788. Retrieved July 28, 2023, from the Official Website of British Columbia:
 https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc/history/first-arrivals
- Image 3: Fraser River Gold Rushes. Retrieved July 28, 2023, A Brief Chronology of Chinese Canadian History from Segregation to Integration: http://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/chart_en.html
- Image 4: Chinese miners introduced machinery like this "rocker" on the Fraser River ca. 1875. Canadian History: Pre-confederation, by John Douglas Belshaw, BCcampus Open Education, 2020. https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/13-9-the-gold-colony/
- Image 5: Nanaimo Chinatown. DCYL Box 141/ Folder 2, Dr. David C.Y. Lai Collection, Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Ontario.
- Image 6: City of Vancouver Archives. Family in front of Wah Chong Washing and Ironing, 1895. Retrieved July 28, 2023. The Canadian Encyclopedia: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-canadians#
- Image 7: Fig 1. The Section of the CPR in British Columbia. DCYL Box 20/ Folder 6, Dr. David C.Y. Lai Collection, Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Ontario.
- Image 8: Fig 10. Macdonald and his Chinese crew in the E and N Railway construction (BCA F-07448), photography reproduction, B.C. Archives. DCYL Box 20/ Folder 6, Dr. David C.Y. Lai Collection, Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Ontario.
- Image 9: Fig 4. Chinese work crew laying tracks in the lower Fraser Valley (BCA HP19661), photography reproduction, B.C. Archives. DCYL Box 20/ Folder 6, Dr. David C.Y. Lai Collection, Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Ontario.
- Image 10: Fig 5. Chinese camps in Kamloops (BCA HP67609), photography reproduction, B.C. Archives. DCYL Box 20/ Folder 6, Dr. David C.Y. Lai Collection, Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Ontario.
- Image 11: Fig 16. Chinese work crew on the CPR, 1884 (Photo BCA HP72553), Photography Reproduction, B.C. Archives. DCYL Box 20/ Folder 6, Dr. David C.Y. Lai Collection, Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Ontario.
- Image 12: Federal Head Tax Document, 1920. DCYL Box 141/ Folder 2, Dr. David C.Y. Lai Collection, Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Ontario.
- Image 13: Head Tax. Retrieved July 28, 2023, A Brief Chronology of Chinese Canadian History from Segregation to Integration: http://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/chart_en.html

Image Attributions

- Image 14: Statues of Canada. An Act Respect Chinese Immigration, 1923. Ottawa: SC 13-14 George V, Chapter 38. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 website: https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/chinese-immigration-act-1923
- Image 15: Poster of Chinese Immigration, 1923, textual record, MG10-C2, Volume number 8 e190281. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=190281
- Image 16: Soldiers seated. Retrieved July 28, 2023. Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society: https://www.ccmms.ca/wp-content/uploads/soldiers-seated.jpg
- Image 17: Chilliwack Training. Retrieved July 28, 2023. Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society: https://www.ccmms.ca/wp-content/uploads/Chilliwack-Nov.jpg
- Image 18: No. 68 Journals of the House of Commons of Canada. Ottawa, Wednesday, May 14, 1947. House of Commons Journals, 20th Parliament, 3rd Session: Vol. 88.
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- Image 21: Douglas Jung, MP. Retrieved July 28, 2023. Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society: https://www.ccmms.ca/wp-content/uploads/DouglasJung-MP.jpg
- Image 22: The Changing face of Canadian immigration (Source: 2006 Census of Canada Postmedia News). Retrieved July 28, 2023. South Asian Canadian Heritage website. https://www.southasiancanadianheritage.ca/history-of-south-asians-in-canada/the-changing-face-of-canadian-immigration/
- Image 23: Uncatalogued Photo. Anti-W5 Collection, Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Ontario.
- Image 24: Reid, Samuel N. This is an official government document a so-called Head Tax certificate. Issued on May 9, 1923, in Victoria B.C., it is signed by the 'Controller of Chinese Immigration. Retrieved July 28, 2023. Royal Ontario Museum website: https://royalalbertamuseum.ca/blog/chinese-head-tax-george-yees-story
- Image 25: Hanson, Tom. April 16, 2013. James Pon holds the Canadian Pacific railway's last spike to give to Prime Minister Stephen Harper before Mr. Harper issued a formal apology. James Pon led the call for Chinese head-tax redress. Retrieved July 28, 2023. Global and Mail: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/james-pon-led-the-call-for-chinese-head-tax-redress/article11300389/
- Image 26: Matas, Robert. June 30, 2010. 97-year-old Thomas Soon (L) and 99-year-old Charlie Quon holds government cheques, the first redress payments to Chinese Head Taxpayers in Vancouver, BC. Head tax redress was not enough: Chinese descendants. Retrieved July 28, 2023. Globe and Mail:
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Dr. David C. Y. Lai Collection



For scholars and researchers interested in Chinese-Canadian Studies, the Dr. David C. Y. Lai Collection, housed in the Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, offers a valuable resource. The collection contains over 34 years' worth of scholarly material generously donated to the library by Dr. David Chuen-yan Lai, who was a professor emeritus of geography and an adjunct professor of Pacific and Asian Studies at the University of Victoria.

Dr. Lai was a leading expert on the history of Chinese Canadians, the development of Canadian Chinatowns, and ethnic groups in British Columbia. He was a prolific writer and researcher, with over 260 publications, including 25 refereed academic articles, nine books, and two edited volumes to his name. He was also nicknamed the "Father of Chinatown" for his work in preserving the history and culture of Chinese Canadians and Chinatowns across Canada. The Canada-Hong Kong Library greatly benefited from his generosity. During his lifetime, he frequently chaired, moderated, and presented in numerous seminars, symposiums, and conferences at the library. This included, but was not limited to, the 2012 launch of the Canada Chinatown series, the 2015 lecture on the history of Hongmen and Chinese Freemasons in Canada, and the 2016 lecture on the classification of Chinatowns in Canada.

The collection covers research areas such as the Geography of Chinatown, Asian-Themed malls, Chinese arches, Chinese Benevolent Associations, Hong Kong triad societies, Chinese Canadian history, Chinese ethnic minorities, and Hong Kong. All of these scholarly materials are now available to the public at the Library.