

# DOES VANCOUVER CHINATOWN DESERVE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE DESIGNATION?

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# Outline

- Who am I? Why do I care?
- The importance of collaboration
- What is a UNESCO “World Heritage Site”? Why should we care about the past?
- The Cantonese Pacific in the shaping of the world
- Cultural Heritage Assets - “Intangible Cultural Heritage” (ICH)
- Storytelling and heritage as an affective intergenerational process of place-making and meaning-making
- Do we actually want UNESCO World Heritage Site designation?

# A Time Line of Collaborative Projects

- Historic Study of the Society Buildings in Chinatown (2005) CoV and Chinese Canadian Historical Society of BC <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/historic-study-of-the-society-buildings-in-chinatown.pdf>
- Chinatown Trust Report
- Vancouver Chinatown National Historic Site (2011) Government of Canada [https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=12951](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=12951)
- Vancouver Chinatown Intangible Heritage Values Report (2017) Heritage BC <https://heritagebc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Vancouver-Chinatown-Identifying-Intangible-Heritage-Values-Report.pdf>
- Historical discrimination against Chinese people (2018) City of Vancouver <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/historical-discrimination-against-chinese-people.aspx>
- Vancouver Chinatown Social Cohesion Report (2020) hua foundation [https://huafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Report\\_VanCTSsocialCohesion.pdf](https://huafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Report_VanCTSsocialCohesion.pdf)
- Vancouver Chinatown Cultural Heritage Assets Management Plan (CHAMP) Strategic Framework (2022) <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/chinatown-cultural-heritage-assets-management-plan.pdf>
- Establishing a Chinatown Cultural District - City of Vancouver (2024) <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/chinatown-cultural-district-framework.pdf>
- Chinese Canadian Museum (2019-2023) and Chinatown Storytelling Centre (2022) CoV

**Yeung Sing Yew 楊星耀**



**Low Suey Fun 劉瑞芬**

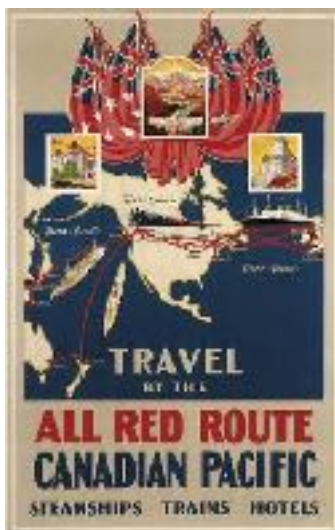
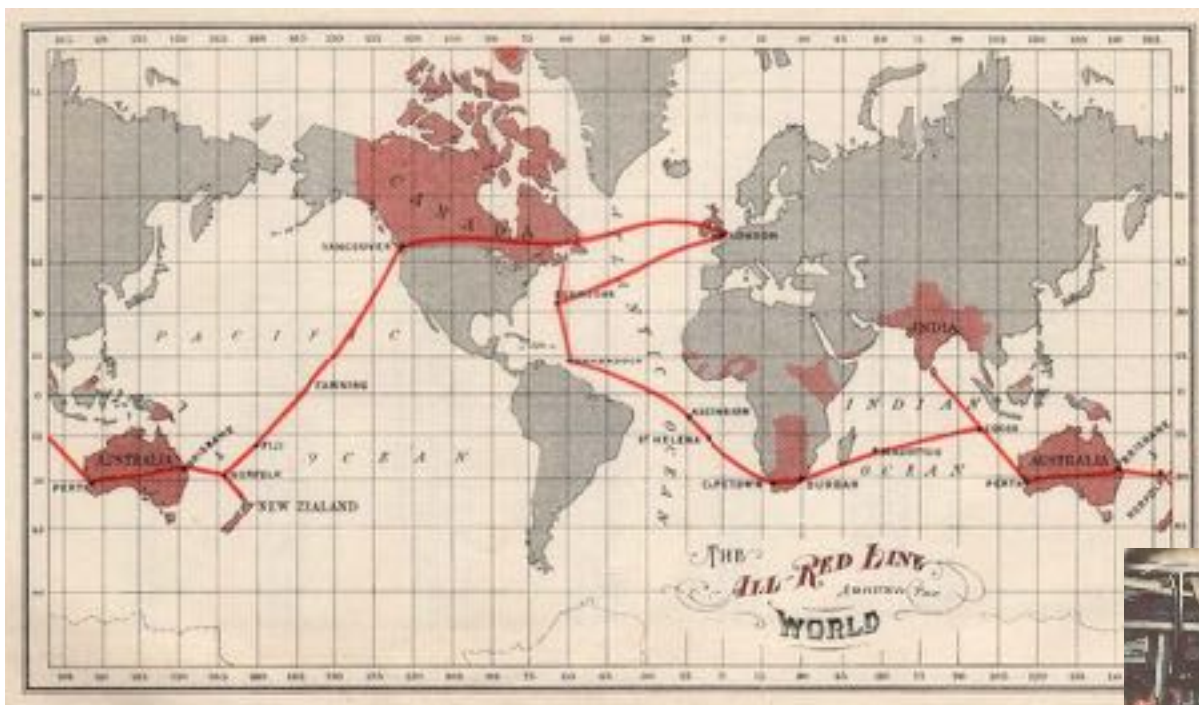


**Youngest of four brothers, all joined their father in BC; returned once to China to get married in 1937**

**Returned to Vancouver before his daughter Yeung Kon Yee 楊幹頤 (my mother) was born**



# The CPR and the global business of empire and imperial migration



Grandfather worked for CPR over 30 years as a cook (butcher #2)



Spencer K. Gung took this picture of some of the Chinese galley crew in 1962 on board the CPR's *Princess Louise*. He worked for several summers as a mess boy on the coastal steamers. (Gung family collection)



## The personal and familial impact of legislated racism



**My grandmother and my mother finally able to come to Vancouver in 1965—my mother met her father for the first time in her life at the age of 28**



**I was born in 1967—  
Canada's Centennial  
—the first Canadian-  
born child**



# Found by Catherine Clement, Curator of Paper Trail to the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act

The CI-44 certificate of my grandfather Yeung Sing Yew 楊星耀 as a teenage boy using the paper name “Low Jang Git” in 1923

**Department of Immigration and Colonization**  
CHINESE IMMIGRATION SERVICE

C. I.  
44

This is to certify that the party described below registered at this office pursuant to Section 15, Chinese Immigration Act, Chapter 44, 12-14 George V.

Registration No. **16545**

Name **Low Jang Git**

Otherwise known as .....

Address **5000 Granville St. Vancouver, B.C.**

Present Occupation **Student** Age **16** Sex **Male**

Married  if (husband) Single  if (wife) in Canada give name and address. Also names and addresses of children, if in Canada.

Born at **Hak Toi** **Yeung San** **China**

Originally admitted to Canada at the port of **Vancouver**

Ex. No. **Express of Canada** Date **Feb 26th 1925**

Amount Head Tax Paid **\$500** Is in possession of certificate C.I. **5** No. **92463**

Height: **5** feet **3** inches.

Facial Marks and Physical Peculiarities:—

**Nit centre forehead**

**Mole over right ear**

**Mole right eyelid**

Remarks: **file 20379**

This is to certify that the party registering (is) (is not) the party whose photograph appears on the certificate above stated.

Signature of Registrar *A. J. Gifford*

Title **REGISTERED OFFICER OF CHINESE IMMIGRATION** Place and date **Vancouver B.C. 1925**

This space for use of Department.

Arrival verified.  
C.I. 4 No. **37775 Vancouver**  
C.I. No. ....  
File No. ....  
Serial No. ....

CERTIFICATE C. I. No. **92463**  
ENDORSED **June 12 1925**  
*A. J. Gifford*

# Does Chinatown meet UNESCO Criteria for designation?

*Criterion iv:*

Vancouver Chinatown reflects the history of the Chinese who helped build Canada, especially the Canadian Pacific Railroad. It reflects the significant role played by Chinese in the development of British Columbia, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the continuing links between the Chinese community in BC/Canada and the Chinese communities in China, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia and other places around the world.



# Heritage or History?

- The past exists in our present historical consciousness just as the future does
- Old things aren't significant just for being old, they have meaning in the present as a memory of the past
- Belongings not artifacts, stories that give an object, or a place, or a person, a narrative of meaning and significance

# Heritage

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- **Tangible** and **Intangible**
- **Tangible**: Buildings, architectural details,
- **Intangible**: What goes on in a building and the sidewalks and streets—the people, the sense of community, the produce on the sidewalk, the smells, the sound of Cantonese, elders playing Mah Jong, arts and cultural activities, legacy businesses, **FOOD**

# Conservation & Development

*“In fact, conservation is a kind of development, it is not about retaining the past and resisting change, but about managing the pace of change in our built environment. It is to bridge the past and the future.”*

Dr. Selia Jinhua Tan, Lead Researcher

Kaiping UNESCO World Heritage Site Proposal

# HERITAGE AS BUSINESS

## Heritage conservation is a form of development

1. Asian UNESCO sites, Malacca/Penang/Kaiping, designated in 2008

NOT EUROPEAN sites designated in the 1970s

2. Focus on cultural heritage and cultural tourism

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## Examples of Heritage Development in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia

-post-1997 reversion of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China

-sense of loss of Hong Kong culture

-in Singapore and Malaysia—explicit investment in cultural heritage for tourism and local self identity

-intangible culture of everyday life and adaptation of public and consumer spaces





**Conservation Principles for INTANGIBLE heritage  
International Council on Monuments and Sites declarations (ICOMOS as evaluator)**

*Emphasis on community in place rather just  
saving than the buildings*

- *Respect for local lifestyle and local  
craftsmanship (Hoi An Declaration 2003 by  
ICOMOS)*
- *Conservation of historical setting (Xi'an  
Declaration 2005 by ICOMOS)*
- *Preservation of spirit of place (the people)  
(Quebec Declaration 2008 by ICOMOS)*

# Why UNESCO for Chinatown?

## Chinese migrants *and* anti-Chinese politics *are global history*

- U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand—all targeted Chinese and others considered ‘non-white’
- Chinatowns are places created by racism BUT also are symbol of resistance to racism
- Chinatowns are diverse places that reflect the confluence of many global migrations

An aerial photograph of the Pacific Ocean, showing the dark blue water and surrounding green and brown landmasses. A large, dark blue rectangular area is highlighted in the center of the ocean, representing the 'Cantonese Pacific'. The text 'The Cantonese Pacific in Shaping the World' is overlaid in yellow on this highlighted area.

# The Cantonese Pacific in Shaping the World

**1880s**

## **Anti-Chinese Legislation in Settler Societies**

### **Taxes on Chinese in Australia, New Zealand, Canada**

### **Exclusion from United States**

- United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand: Anti-Chinese laws in the 1880s followed anti-Chinese political movements in the 1870s
- 1881 Chinese Immigrants Act (restriction of numbers and poll tax), New Zealand and “poll taxes” in the Australian colonies
- 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (no new laborers), United States
- 1885 Chinese Head Tax (\$50 tax on new migrants), Canada



## 1900s

### Anti-Chinese Legislation using English Language Test

- 1900: The use of English-language tests to exclude Chinese, other Asians and Pacific Islanders in Australia and New Zealand
- 1899 Immigration Act 1899 (immigration application in European language), New Zealand
- 1901 Immigration Restriction Act (dictation test), Australia: “White Australia Policy” at founding of Australia as nation in 1901; main instrument was the Dictation Test (need to pass a written exam in English)
- 1907 Chinese Immigrants Amendment (English-language reading test in addition to poll tax), New Zealand

**1920s**

**White Supremacy Triumphs**

Exclusion acts and immigration restrictions designed to keep nations “white”

1920 Immigration Restriction Amendment Act (non-British and non-Irish needed a permit), New Zealand

1923 Chinese “Immigration” (Exclusion) Act, Canada

1924 National Origins Act, United States

# 1960s-2010s The Movement Towards Inclusion

- 1965 Immigration Act, United States
- 1967 “Points System,” Canada
- 1973 End of “White Australia” Policy, Australia
- 2002 New Zealand apologizes for Poll Tax

Apologies in Canada for anti-Chinese Legislation:

- Canada’s Federal Government, 2006
- British Columbia’s Provincial Government, 2014
- City of Vancouver, 2018

# City of Vancouver Official Apology in English, 白話, 四邑話 on April 22, 2018



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwePhIqbNqI>





**Who are we apologizing to...? Why not at City Hall? Why in Vancouver Chinatown?**



**Over 500 in Simon K.Y Lee Hall, 1000s more outside in the streets of Vancouver Chinatown. 100s of media passes, press coverage worldwide**





**What are we apologizing for...?**

# What are we apologizing *for*...?

## **CoV apology process (2015-2018)**

- 1. Voting Rights: From 1886 to 1948, Chinese residents could not vote in Vancouver city elections.**
- 2. City Council disqualified the Chinese from voting in 1886, the year the Vancouver was created.**
- 3. No voting rights meant the Chinese could not run for public office, practice in key professions like law and pharmacy, or own properties in some parts of the city.**
- 4. During BOTH World War I and World War II, Chinese volunteered to fight for Canada; after the wars, Chinese Canadian veterans and Chinese Canadian community asked for vote.**
- 5. Voting rights granted by the provincial Govt in 1947 and federal governments in 1948 to all Canadian-born Chinese.**
- 6. The City of Vancouver, after some delay, finally granted municipal voting rights to the Chinese in 1949.**



**Exclusion from immigration:**

**The City of Vancouver advocated continually for discriminatory immigration policies, succeeding in creating Federal legislation:**

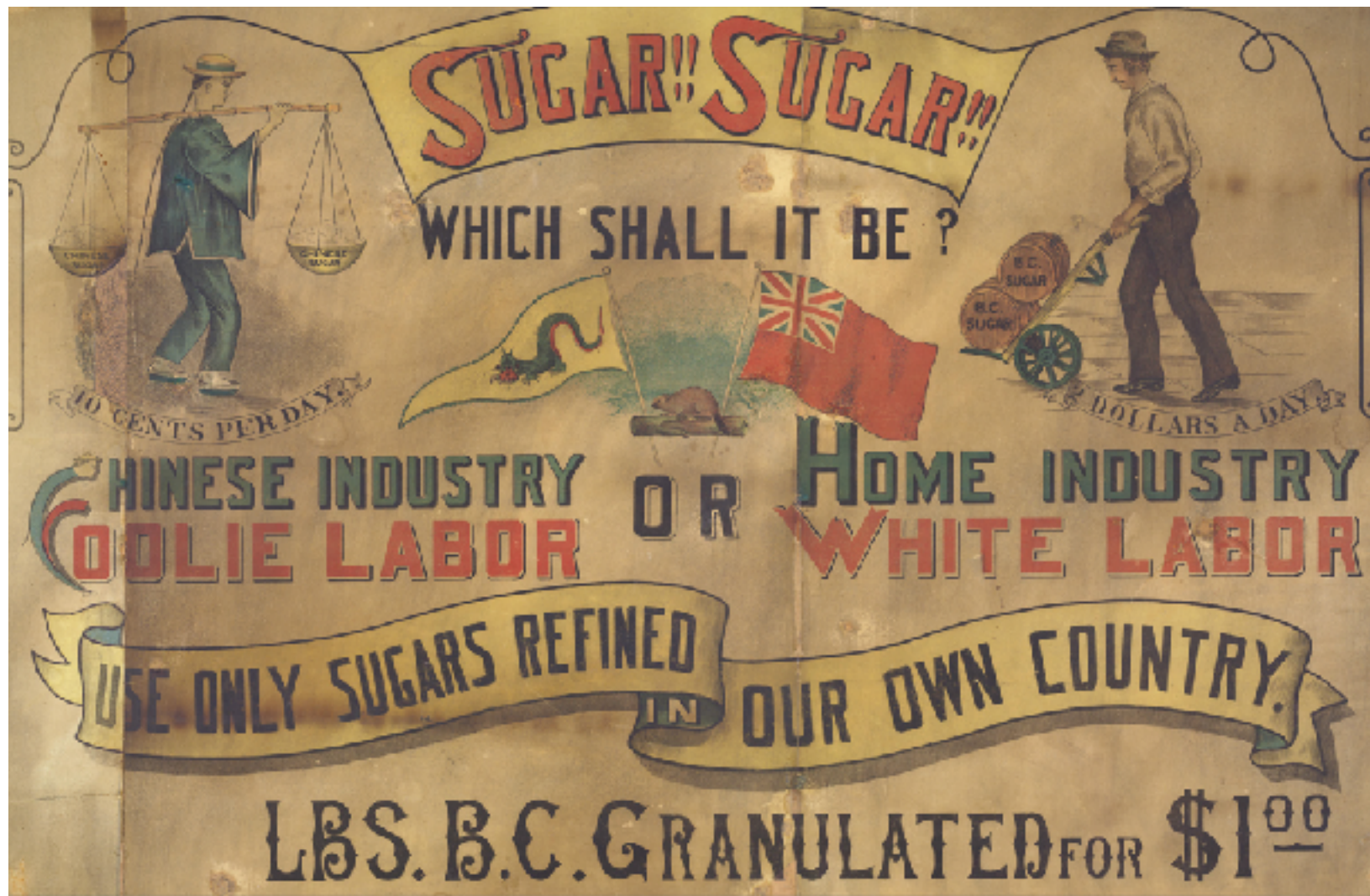
**Chinese Head Tax 1885-1923**

**Chinese Exclusion Act 1923-1947**

# **Restricting livelihoods:**

**City by-laws, licenses, and formal labour regulations were used to constrict Chinese livelihoods in industry, business and labour. Chinese were barred from civic employment from 1890 until 1952.**

**City imposed anti-Chinese clauses in contracts, so that companies could not have Chinese workers or be owned by Chinese to receive a contract from City of Vancouver**



For example, this clause was found in a contract with Rogers BC Sugar: “he nor they (the company) will at any time, employ any Chinese labor in and about the said works”. (City By-law 94 passed on March 17, 1890)

# **Segregation**

**A Municipal Act in 1919 enacted by the provincial government forbade Chinese restaurants from employing ‘white waitresses’. City started strictly enforcing the Act in 1937, even after “white waitresses” held a public march outside City Hall to protest.**

**Chinese were also restricted from renting or owning properties in certain residential areas.**

**Chinese had to receive treatments in the basement of Vancouver General Hospital. As a result, Mount St. Joseph’s Hospital, which did not discriminate against Chinese patients, received donations from Chinese Canadians and became the “Chinese” hospital.**



**In 1928, Chinese children and their parents were barred from the only public swimming pools in Vancouver and Victoria (both named Crystal Pool) at the same time as white swimmers, and this temporal segregation remained in practice until 1945.**

Crystal Pool, the only public swimming pool in Vancouver







# Quon Louie and the Chinese Canadian Veterans

## 华裔加拿大退伍军人

### Even if I Die: Chinese Canadian Veterans

Many Canadian-born Chinese such as Quan and Ernie Louie, sons of privilege did not see military service as an opportunity to prove that Chinese Canadians did not deserve to be treated as second-class citizens. After the war, some 600 Chinese Canadians returned from defending Canada in the Second World War. Veterans including Ernie Louie, Roy Mah, Douglas and Arthur Jung, then organized a single community leaders to fight for their civil rights. In 1947, the Exclusion Act was repealed and Canadian citizenship was granted. Chinese Canadians finally regained the right to vote and work, the freedom to work and live as some choose.

Some of those who went to fight never made it home. Quon Louie was one of those who never got to witness the re-entranchisement of Chinese Canadians. Quon was a born leader, a star athlete in high school and UBC, and great things were expected of him—it was said that he might even become a future Mayor of Vancouver. When he volunteered for military service, many Chinese Canadians would have voiced concerns over the potential loss of such a talented young man.

Quon volunteered for the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1942 and became a bombardier, serving with bravery and courage. He died when his bomber was shot down over Germany in January 1945. His loss not only affected his family, but also the whole community, who could ill afford losing even a single member of his younger generation because of the Exclusion Act of 1923. With a lack of Chinese Canadian families being able to form families and raise a child at the time, the sacrifice of even one child, particularly one so full of potential like Quon Louie, was devastating.

### 即使犧牲性命也不可惜：華裔加拿大退伍軍人

許多在加拿大出生的華人，如曠晉發和曠 H.Y. Louie 以及劉和 Ernie Louie，均不以從軍視為證明華人不容忽視的平等公民的途徑。戰後約有 600 名軍人從第二次世界大戰中平安返回。H.Y. Louie, Roy Mah, Douglas 以及 Arthur Jung 曾領導軍人與社區領袖合作，爭取華裔居民的公民權利。聯邦政府在 1947 年廢除排華法案，華人獲得取得公民身份及投票權，並自由地自由選擇其工作。

不過許多人從軍後就再也沒有回家了。曠侯勇是其中一位華人而遺憾終身。曠侯勇 Quon Louie 是一個天生的領導者，在高中和 UBC 都是明星運動員。許多人都期待他在未來的成就——很多人說他甚至可能成為溫哥華未來的市長。當他自願從軍時，許多華人表示擔憂，把這層層阻礙與一個如此有才華的年輕人。

曠侯勇於 1942 年加入皇家空軍，成為投彈員參與作戰。1945 年 1 月，他的轟炸機在德國斯圖加特市上空被擊中，他跳傘降落。這影響了他回國與他的家人團聚。實際上，許多軍人戰死在回國途中。曠侯勇 Quon 是其中一位犧牲的年輕人，他的犧牲對華人社區是一場巨大的打擊。





# The Story of Vivian Jung



## 今日我們同心合力：Vivian Jung與她的同儕

在學的時候，因為每日生活中一些小小的瑣事的行動，便帶來巨大的改變。最近，Vivian Jung 是第一位在反對行動的第二天，為了成為老師，她必須向她的多數同學請罪。當時 Crystal Pool 的門，對她關閉了。有人覺得她對大家說，她見知此不公，她的心和同學們的舉措相稱。但除了 Jung 的人或一些她所教的人游泳。因為她沒有行動。在一個偏見中，的公共游泳池的 1928 年進行的歷史性抗議，終於在 1947 年結束。Vivian Jung 後來成為溫哥華學校區中第一位擔任公共學校系統教員的華裔教師。

這些不是個人的故事——千禧年也進入一個新的階段。長期的故事，現在 Vivian Jung 和她的同儕在 Crystal Pool 的抗議也重新開始——它把我們帶回，在公共場所實現平等和包容，但更重要的是，它是一個更好的社會。

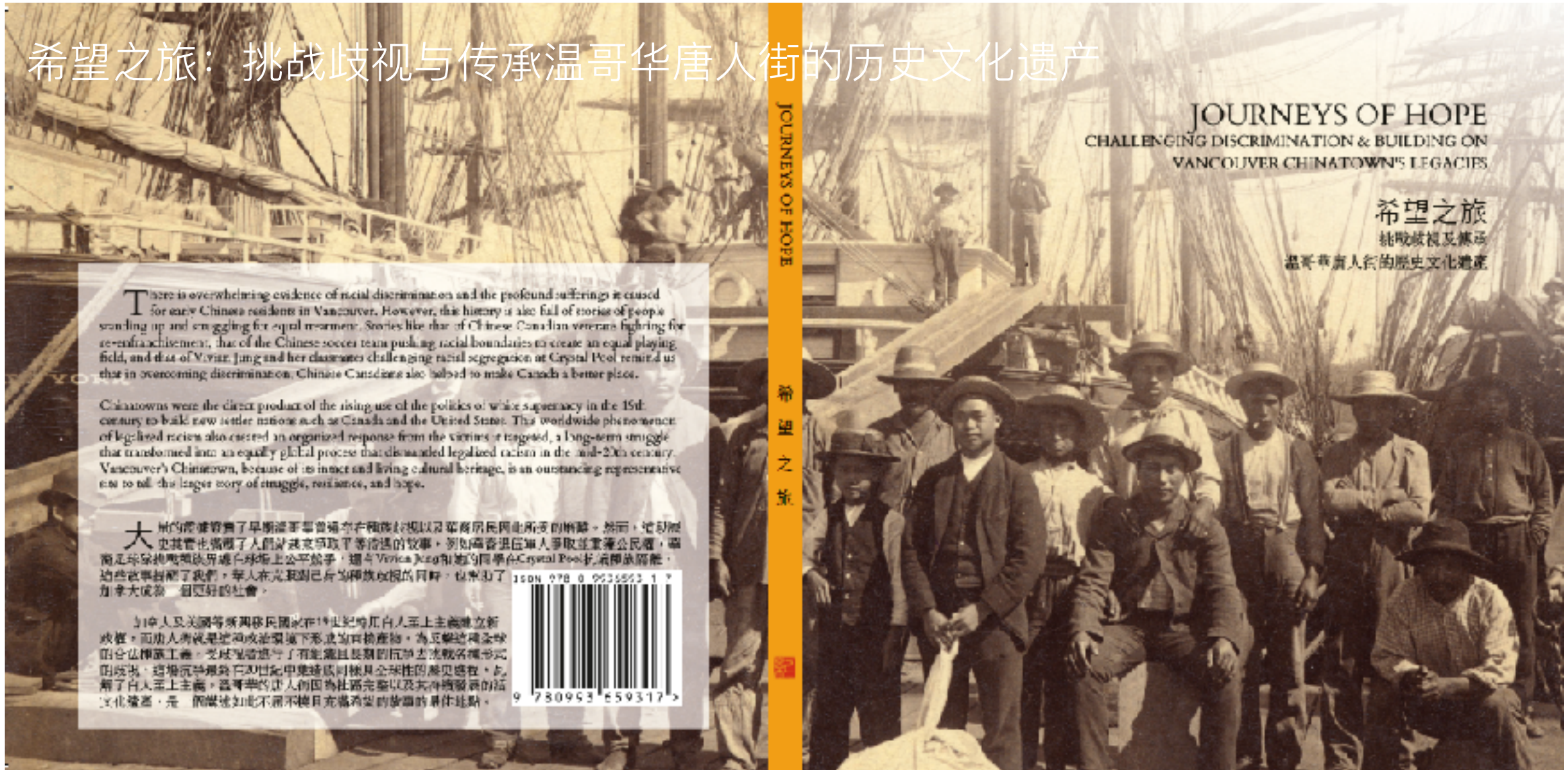
## Today We Make a Stand: Vivian Jung and Her Classmates

Social changes often come about through small yet courageous acts where people gather together to make a stand or have their voices heard. Vivian Jung, a young student teacher in training who needed to obtain her swimming lifeguard certificate to become a teacher, was denied entry into the Crystal Pool—the City's only public swimming pool. This was witnessed by her group of fellow student teachers. The rest of an angry mob of their protest, saying that they would not enter the pool unless Jung was also allowed. With that act of protest, in 1945, the long-standing racial segregation that had originally been in place in 1928 finally ended. Vivian Jung eventually became the first Chinese Canadian teacher hired by the Vancouver School Board to teach in the public school system.

Stories like that of Chinese Canadian veterans fighting for equal franchise rights and that of Vivian Jung and her fellow student teachers challenging racial segregation at Crystal Pool remind us that, in overcoming racial prejudice and discrimination, Chinese Canadians also helped to make Canada a better place.



# 希望之旅：挑战歧视与传承温哥华唐人街的历史文化遗产



JOURNEYS OF HOPE  
CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATION & BUILDING ON  
VANCOUVER CHINATOWN'S LEGACIES

希望之旅  
挑战歧视及传承  
温哥华唐人街的历史文化遗产

JOURNEYS OF HOPE

希望之旅

There is overwhelming evidence of racial discrimination and the profound sufferings it caused for early Chinese residents in Vancouver. However, this history is also full of stories of people standing up and engaging for equal treatment. Stories like that of Chinese Canadian veterans fighting for re-enfranchisement, that of the Chinese soccer team pushing racial boundaries to create an equal playing field, and that of Vivica Jung and her classmates challenging racial segregation at Crystal Pool remind us that in overcoming discrimination, Chinese Canadians also helped to make Canada a better place.

Chinatowns were the direct product of the rising use of the politics of white supremacy in the 15th century to build new settler nations such as Canada and the United States. This worldwide phenomenon of legislated racism also created an organized response from the victims or targeted, a long-term struggle that transformed into an equally global process that discredited legalized racism in the mid-20th century. Vancouver's Chinatown, because of its intact and living cultural heritage, is an outstanding representative one to tell this larger story of struggle, resilience, and hope.

大片的證據證實了早期華裔居民在種族歧視以及華裔居民因此所受的煎熬。然而，這些歷史其實也揭露了人們為追求平等待遇的故事，例如華裔退伍軍人爭取並重獲公民權，華裔足球隊挑戰世界足球場上公平競爭，還有 Vivica Jung 和她的同學在 Crystal Pool 打破種族隔離。這些故事提醒了我們，華人在克服自己身為種族歧視的受害者，也參與了加拿大成為一個更好的社會。

加拿大及美國等新興移民國家在15世紀時由白人至上主義建立新政權，而唐人街就是地緣政治環境下形成的直接產物。為反抗這種全球性的合法種族主義，受歧視者進行了有組織且長期的抗爭並挑戰各種形式的歧視。這場抗爭最終在20世紀中葉達到同樣具全球性的巔峰階段，瓦解了白人至上主義。溫哥華的唐人街因為社區完整以及其持續發展的活文化遺產，是一個講述如此不屈不撓且充滿希望的抗爭事件地點。

ISBN 978 0 963593 1 7  
9 780963 659317

Apology on April 22, 2018 accompanied by a book:

***Journeys of Hope:***

***Challenging Discrimination and Building on Vancouver Chinatown's Legacies***

**Legacies of Apology:  
City of Vancouver and Province of BC  
sign an MOU in 2018 for**

- 1. Explore UNESCO application for Vancouver Chinatown**
- 2. CoV Chinatown Transformation Team:  
“Chinatown Reimagined” <http://www.chinatownreimagined.ca>**
- 2. Creation of the Chinese Canadian Museum (Province of BC + CoV)**





Photo courtesy of Chinese Canadian Museum Society



CHINESE  
CANADIAN  
MUSEUM

華裔博物館

Chinese Canadian Museum opened with a temporary exhibit at Hon Hsing Building in Vancouver Chinatown in August 2020

Second temporary location of the Chinese Canadian Museum opened in February 2022 in Fan Tan Alley in Victoria Chinatown

Permanent main location of the Chinese Canadian Museum in Vancouver Chinatown opened on July 1, 2023, with another permanent location in planning for Victoria Chinatown

The Chinese Canadian Museum symbolizes the future as well as the past:


***A symbol of who we were—but also of who we aspire to be...***

**July 1, 2023**

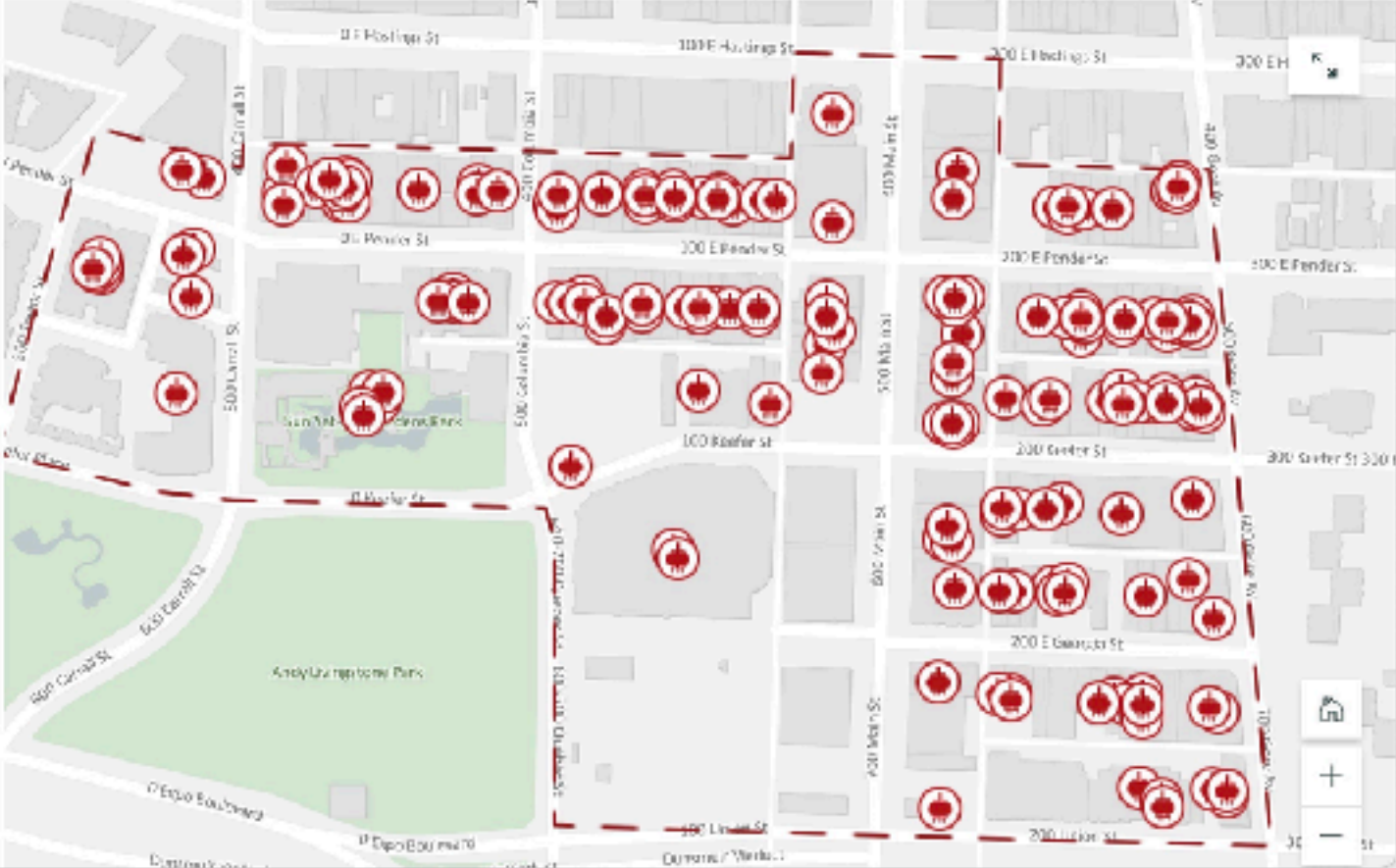



# Chinatown Neighbourhood Assets Map

https://maps.vancouver.ca/portal/apps/storymaps/stories/cb5a64d22f94414816515e21f62d42a

 Chinatown Neighbourhood Assets Map

Introduction Chinese societies Examples of Chinese societies ... Cultural assets Examples of cultural assets Food Examples of food-related as: →





In Chinatown, a cultural asset is something that expresses the neighbourhood's identity and culture.

- 
- 
-

# What is an intangible expression of culture?

- Oral traditions and expressions
- Performing arts
- Social practices, rituals, and festive events
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- Traditional craftsmanship

These ways of expression are defined by UNESCO in its five [Intangible Cultural Heritage \(ICH\) Domains](#).

<https://maps.vancouver.ca/portal/apps/storymaps/stories/>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtliS97nfOQ&t=5s>



卑詩省與華人的遷徙

Chinese Immigration  
and British Columbia

卑詩省与华人的迁徙

May 22, 2020



May 28, 2020 Hon Hsing Building

A feature exhibition on view at

MOV

Chinese Localities Exhibition 25 E. Pender

Exhibitor Collaborators



Supported by



一席之地：卑詩省与华人的迁徙

## “A Seat at the Table: Chinese Immigration and British Columbia”

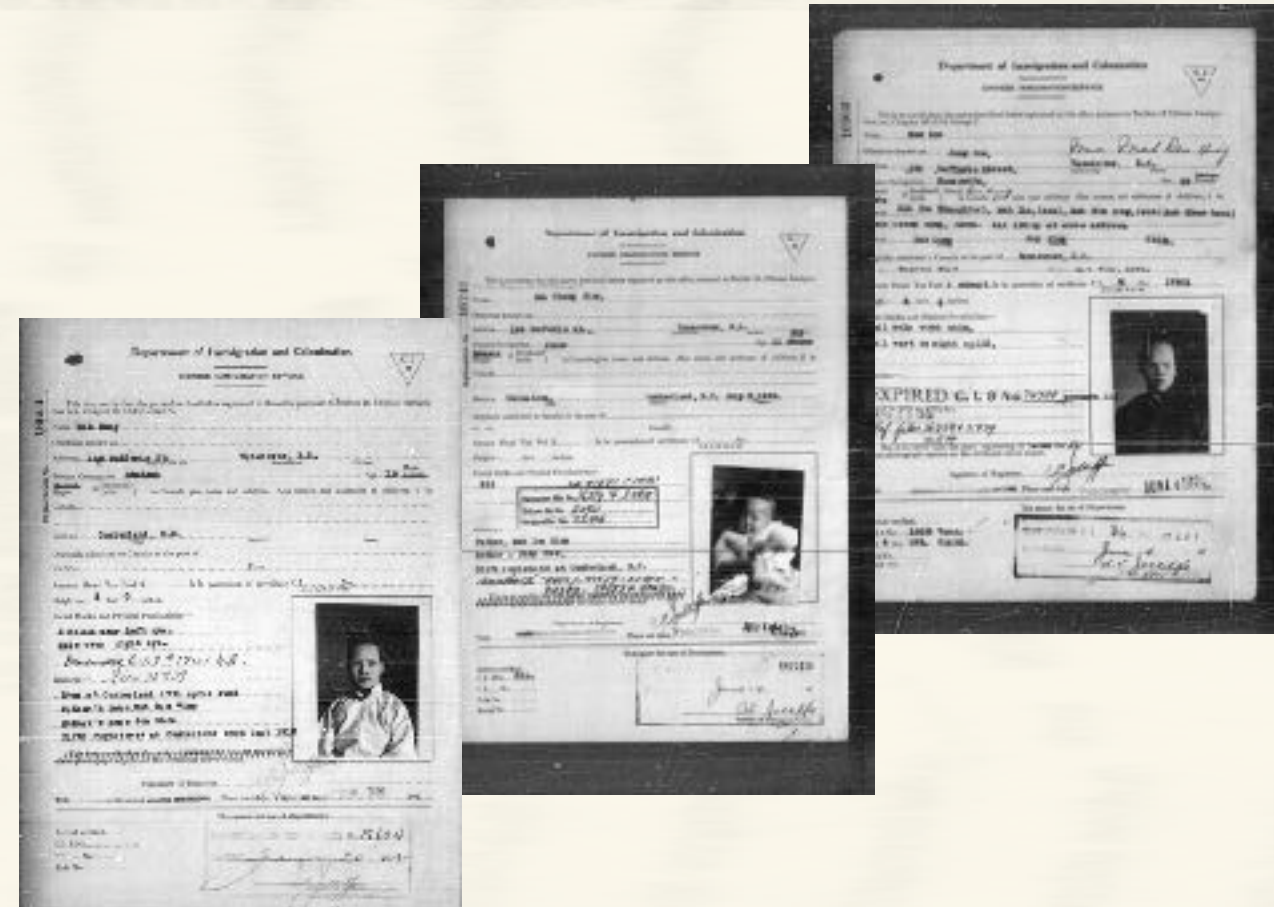
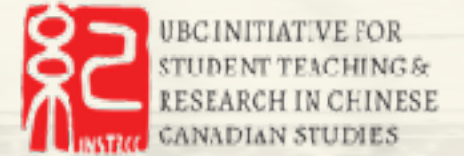
- Not just what was done to Chinese Canadians, but what they were doing in Vancouver and BC
- Themes—food, mobility and global connections, the struggle to make Canadian society more fair, just, and inclusive for ALL Canadians



# Why Research/Tell the Stories of PAST Chinese migrants in the PRESENT?

Heritage tours to rural villages of Guangdong (2015-2024)

Collaborative Community Co-Curated Museum Exhibitions (2018-2026)



## CHINESE IMMIGRATION (C.I.) CERTIFICATES

IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA, 1885-1949, C.I.9 CERTIFICATES SERIES, LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

CHINESE IMMIGRATION RECORDS: C.I. 44 FORMS AND INDEXES, HERITAGE CANADIANA

# CACHE

(Community Archives, Collections and Heritage Exhibitions)

UBC AtOM

UBC LIBRARY  
RARE BOOKS & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Quick search  
Search hierarchy

### Collection RBSC-ARC-1838 - The Paper Trail collection

- [Collection] RBSC-ARC-1838 - The Paper Trail collection, 1893-1915
  - [Series] Registration and identification certificates, 1893-1915 (predominantly 1912-1914)
    - [Item] DC-0001 - C.I.S certificate of Wong Chang Lum, 4 Apr. 1913
    - [Item] DC-0002 - C.I.S certificate of Hum Kim Jan, 14 May 1913
    - [Item] DC-0003 - C.I.S certificate of Lum How Yuen, 23 Jan. 1913
    - [Item] DC-0004 - C.I.S certificate of Choy Lee, 6 Feb. 1917
    - [Item] DC-0005 - C.I.S certificate of Lee Gin, 18 Jan. 1922
    - [Item] DC-0006 - C.I.S certificate of Jang Shu Cong, 22 Jan. 1924

- How do you bring the past alive in the present?
- Challenges of using surveillance documents
- From historical evidence to story-telling elements
- The use of digital tools



# The Cold Brutality of Surveillance Documents

***“This certificate does not establish legal status in Canada”***



THE PAPER TRAIL COLLECTION, UBC RARE BOOKS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

- Held by the person in their day-to-day life
- Issued to anyone of Chinese descent in Canada



Didn't have grandkids who they knew were going to keep a memory of them alive  
他們也知道沒有子孫會記得他們



I was thankful my blood type matched my father's.  
我很慶幸我的血型與我父親的相匹配。



It's these men who paid the greatest price for what happened  
正是這些男人為其付出了最大的代價

## Affective narratives of time

- “Structures of feeling” Raymond Williams
- Stories as meaningful, affective vocabulary and grammar for expressing material social structures
- temporal displacement and spatial displacement expressed as stories

## When? Re-storying and Restoring

- When do we narrate the past?
- Narrating in the PRESENT moment the emotional and material life of Chinese migrants in the PAST

## Why and How Do We Narrate the Past?

- How do different disciplines/fields (cultural studies, literary studies, historical monographs) and different genres (museum curation, literature written in the present moment about the past) tell stories about the past in the present

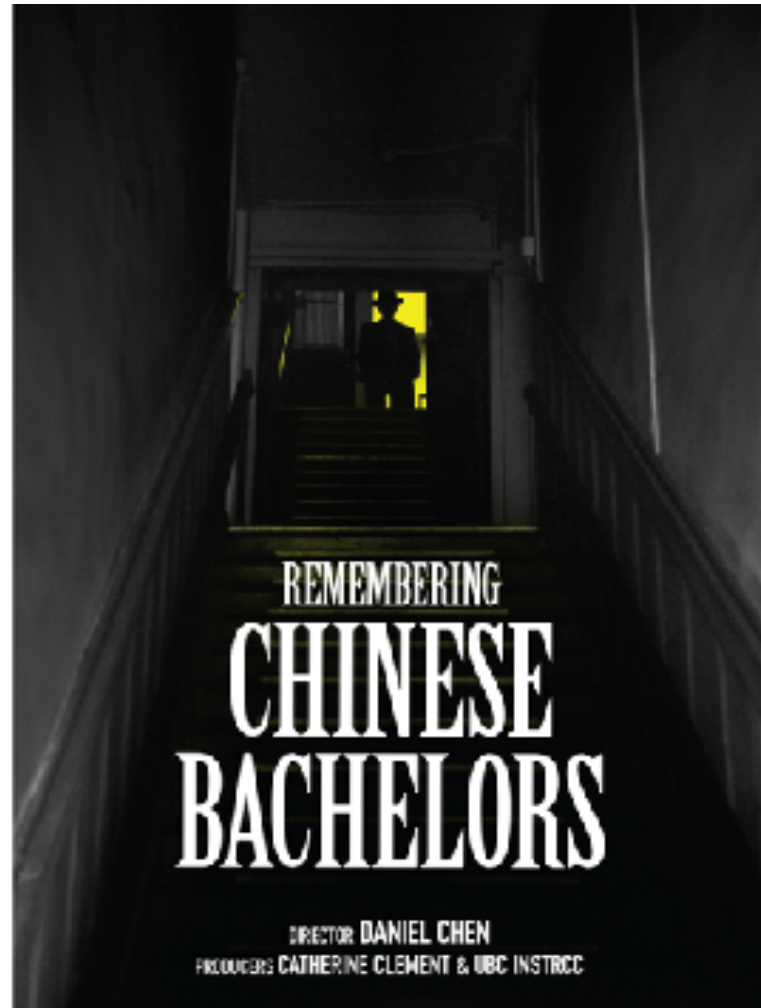
## Oral History as Method and End

- Archive for communities and for families
- May be the only time documented and shared

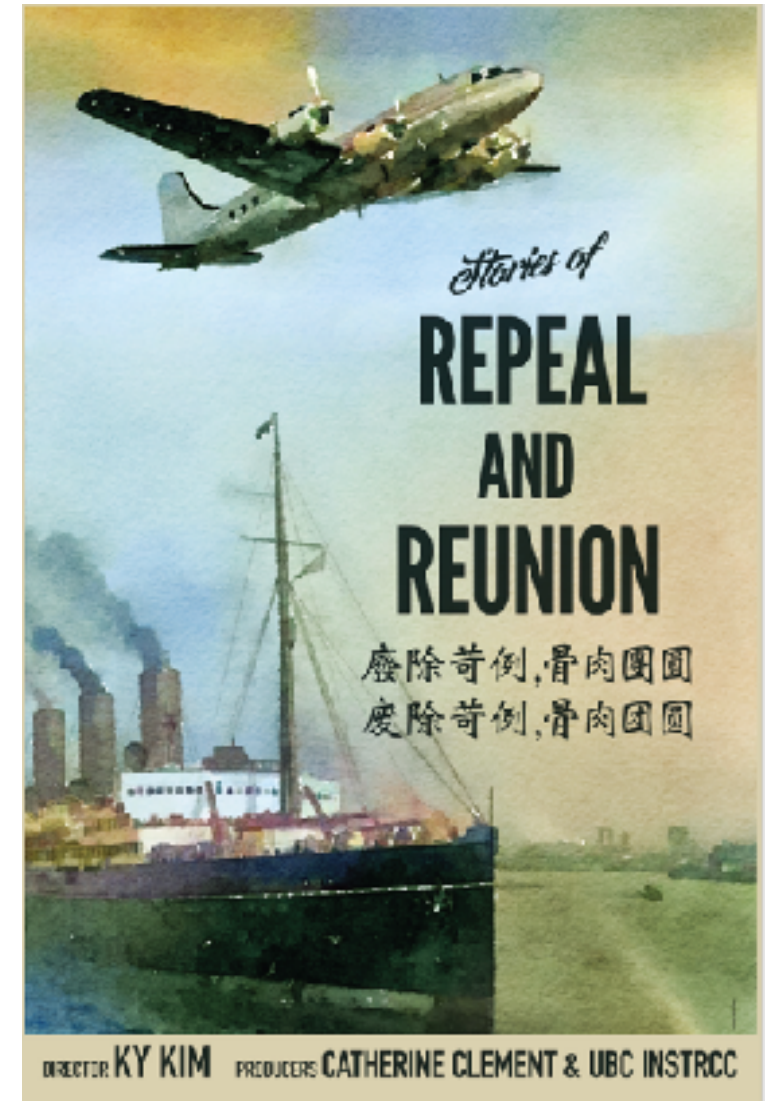


# Why We Use Films Created from Oral History Interviews

- More interactive, multi-layered sensory aspects (i.e., Audio-Visual)
- Engaging affective reactions through hearing and seeing the person speak and the emotions in their voice and in their facial expressions
- Bridges communication gap between younger generations with older generations through translation and subtitling and confronts/engaging diasporic feelings of loss, silence, detachment, distance



[https://youtu.be/5k2PxImdV\\_0](https://youtu.be/5k2PxImdV_0)



<https://youtu.be/kCC7qSx9zOs>



# HONOURING OUR PAST. SHAPING OUR FUTURE.



Vancouver Chinatown Foundation



# ***SHOULD* we pursue UNESCO World Heritage Designation for Chinatown?**

- Goal of a sustainable “**cultural heritage economy**” that supports a “living cultural community” that houses and respects its community elders and knowledge bearers
- Is CHAMP and the Chinatown Cultural District strategic framework already enough?
- **Managing Cultural Heritage vs Preservation of Site and Buildings**
- **The threats of unmanaged mass tourism**
- **UNESCO Memory of the World: Intermediate or Final Step?**



# UNESCO Memory of the World

- ▶ Last update: 24 April 2023 <https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world/about>
- ▶ UNESCO launched the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme in 1992 to guard against the collective amnesia, calling upon the preservation of the valuable archive holdings and library collections all over the world and ensuring their wide dissemination. The Programme's vision is that the world's documentary heritage belongs to all, should be fully preserved and protected for all and, with due recognition of cultural mores and practicalities, should be permanently accessible to all without hindrance.
- ▶ The Programme's **objectives** are thus to:
  - ▶ Facilitate preservation of the world's documentary heritage
  - ▶ Catalyse universal access to documentary heritage
  - ▶ Enhance public awareness worldwide of the significance of documentary heritage
- ▶ **A Vanguard of the World's Documentary Heritage**
  - ▶ Documentary heritage is a legacy of humankind, through which we can look back into the past, enrich our present lives, and look into the future with the boldness forged by enduring memories.
  - ▶ That is why we all must be vigilant to safeguard our shared heritage, celebrate it as a marker of human civilization, and pass it on to the next generation.

# Memory, Writing and Durability

- ▶ The power of writing to tell a story in detail, and to “freeze” the story in the moment at the time of writing
- ▶ Added to the durability of the material upon which a story is written (stone, metal, parchment/paper)
- ▶ The utility of writing and of durable objects in the fulfilment of archival desires
- ▶ The desire and ability to archive a story from the present is highly correlated with the desire and ability to destroy the stories and enduring presence of “enemies”
- ▶ The desire of conquering and colonizing states to erase the presence of conquered peoples by erasing their historical past

# Contrast to Oral Cultures

- ▶ Societies and communities that rely on the oral transmission of meaningful stories generally denigrated by those whose archival desires are the strongest
- ▶ “Spoken words” were seen as ephemeral, only existing at the moment of being uttered, lost to time UNLESS recorded in writing
- ▶ Oral cultures were considered inferior to written cultures if the criteria of the durability and endurance of written stories is important for evidence/proof of legitimacy
- ▶ Oral history considered inferior to written and material evidence of the past because it was considered easier to distort, change, destroy



# Wordless Archives, Embodied Memory

- ▶ “Lion Dance” as an embodied practice, a story about the past beyond archival written texts and beyond material objects
- ▶ In Canada’s Chinatown, associated with clan and district associations, with tradition and community elders/knowledge bearers, but also with youth and the passing on of the past onto the present and future generations
- ▶ How do you learn as a young person about the past? Is it better to “read it in a book”? Or is it better to learn by doing, by practicing and hearing the story about the meaning of a bodily movement?

# The Endurance of Embodied Memory

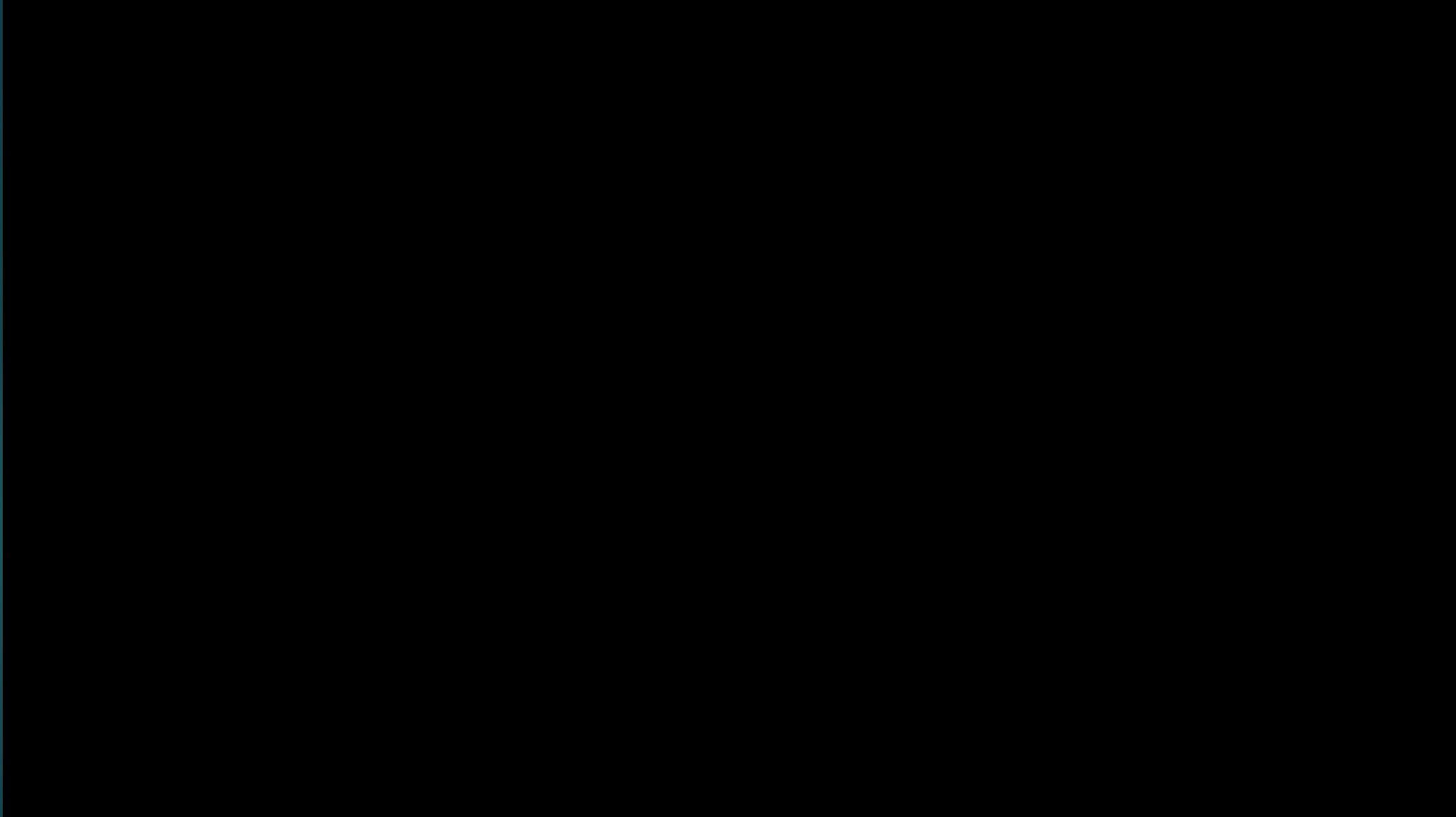
- ▶ The word “practice” captures the continuous, recurring, repetitive manner in which significant bodily movements are learned and improved—they become embodied memory, a “body memory” that eventually becomes unconscious and without need for thought or words
- ▶ “Embodiment” as a bodily practice in this sense describes both a process of creating memory within an individual person AND the manner in which these embodied memories are passed on from generation to generation
- ▶ The “embodiment of memory” within practices such as dance movements, martial arts techniques, and “Lion Dance” rituals can endure across generations and long periods of time



# Ways Embodied Memory are MORE Effective/ Affective than Written Words

- ▶ 1) Embodied memory is mobile and can escape attempts at destruction (the practices of Shaolin monks can survive the destruction of a temple and its heirlooms/treasures)
- ▶ 2) Embodied memory can be passed on from old to young, and from young to young, it can be shared/taught/received through social means that reinforce the importance of the stories/messages/memories through communal tools
- ▶ 3) Embodied memory can create meaning and reinforce the depth of meaning through affect—the emotional meaning of memory—the memory of meaning in the body is amplified by affect/emotion

# Lion Dance as Embodied Memory



[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YZdUYB2lyIP\\_mAekP6Y5tPAOXjyyZNNP/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YZdUYB2lyIP_mAekP6Y5tPAOXjyyZNNP/view?usp=sharing)

# Remembering and Renewing Ourselves Through Rituals and Traditions | 回想傳統，傳承儀式，更新自己



▶ <https://youtu.be/LJ2WZq98dSw?si=TLMBkjRDogZzUxsl> (with Chinese subtitles)