A Historical Brief of Chinese Canadians in Ottawa Ontario Canada

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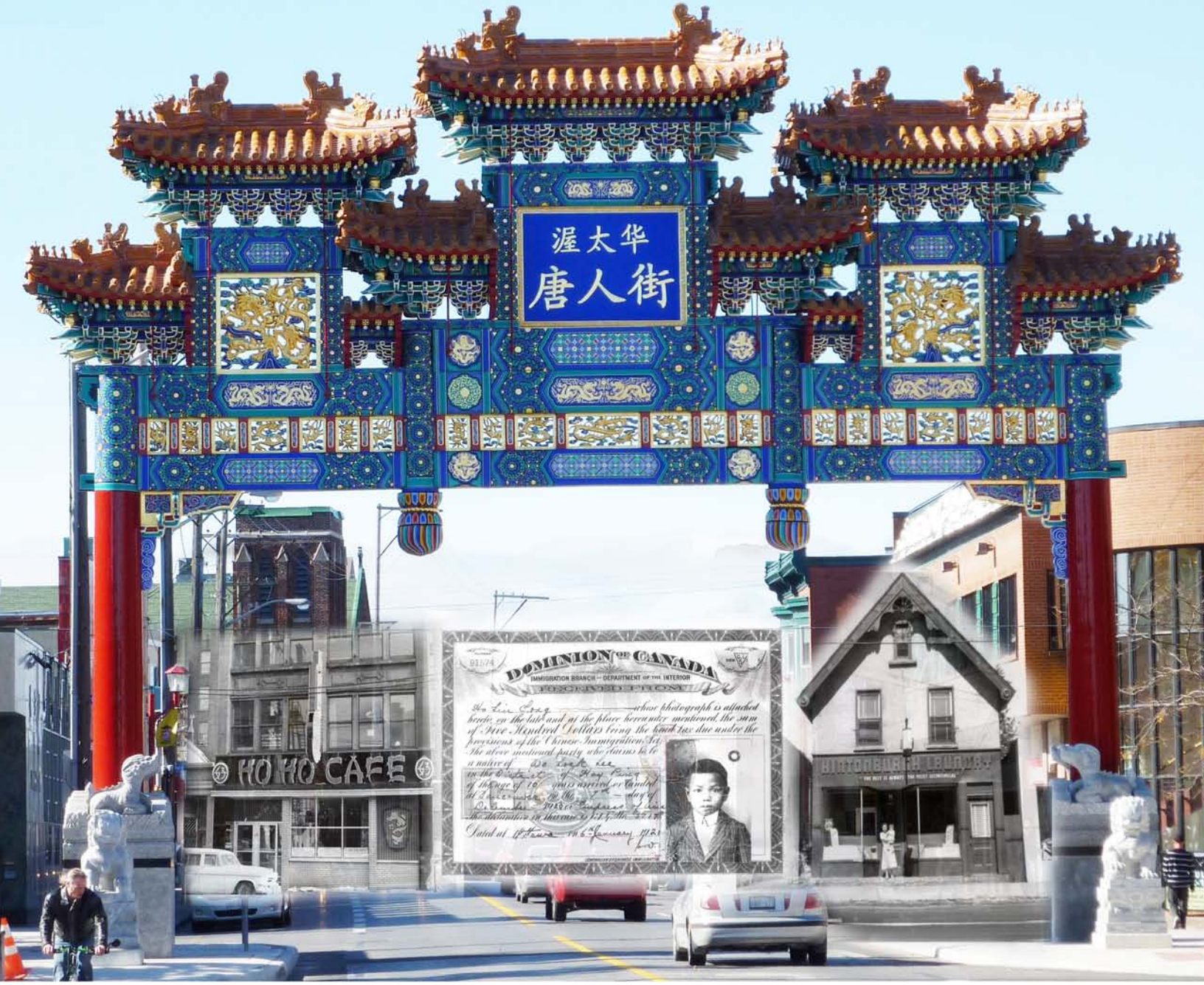

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加拿大東安省台山同鄉會
EASTERN ONTARIO HOY SUN ASSOCIATION CANADA

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Historical Background

The first Chinese arrived in today's British Columbia in 1788, when Macau-based China trader Captain John Meares recruited 50 artisans from south China's Guangdong province to Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island to help develop a sea otter pelt trade between Guangzhou (the capital city of Guangdong, also known as Canton) and the British colony of Victoria. Guangzhou was then the only port-city decreed since 1757 by the Manchu government (founded in 1644) to deal with foreign merchants.

In the 18th century, many countries in Europe recorded increasing trade deficits with China because of the rapid growth of imports of Chinese silk, tea and other "exotic chinoiseries". In an attempt to correct the imbalance, the British East India Company began selling opium to China in 1773, resulting in a growing addiction problem in China's major coastal and interior cities. This harmful habit led to the officially organised burning of confiscated opium in southern China. The Opium War (1839-1842) between Britain and China and the ensuing Treaty of Nanking (1842) were devastating not only to China's national economy and its international reputation; but also to the unique status of Guangzhou as China's premier international trading city. The island of Hong Kong at the Pearl River estuary was ceded to Britain. With its deep water harbor and strategic location, Hong Kong rose rapidly in the following decades as the new entrepot and key trading post for the British and other European merchants on the south China coast.

Starting with the Opium War of 1839 to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China had gone through more than 100 years of political upheaval, social chaos and economic turmoil, punctuated by foreign invasions, internal rebellions, peasant uprisings and civil wars, pushing millions of unemployed urban laborers and displaced rural peasants to seek a way out of destitution and despair.

Beginning in the 1820s, large numbers of young men from poverty-stricken coastal towns and villages in Guangdong and Fujian provinces were forced to embark on an uncertain journey out of China in search of a better livelihood overseas, giving rise to the infamous coolie trade in 1845. Thousands upon thousands of Chinese were bundled out to toil drudgingly in European-owned plantations in Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Hawaii, the Caribbean and Central America. The coolie trade was officially outlawed in 1859 and replaced by a contract system.

When gold was discovered in California in the late 1840s, 25,000 Chinese men from Guangdong's Pearl River delta scrambled across the Pacific Ocean between 1848 and 1852 to search for gold on the U.S. West coast. In 1858, a new "Gold Mountain" was found in the lower Fraser River Valley in the British colony of British Columbia. On June 28, 1858, the first batch of 300 Chinese arrived in Victoria from San Francisco. They were soon followed in 1859 by more than 4,000 from southern Guangdong via Hong Kong. The Chinese who landed in Victoria after 1858 were free immigrants, they came voluntarily to work on the gold mines and coal mines, independent of the exploitative Chinese labor contractors working for white employers in Canada.

These young men belonged to the first major waves of Canada-bound migration from China, taking a 35-day voyage from Hong Kong to Victoria, paying about $70 for passage and taxes. Victoria was, at one time, being commonly referred to as "Little Canton" because of its fast growing Chinese population. At the height of the Canadian gold rush in the mid-1860s, it was reported that there were about 7,000 Chinese digging for gold in the Fraser River Valley.

Between 1858 and 1880, thousands of Chinese peasants arrived in a land imbued with a sense of European superiority and paternalistic Protestant evangelism, buttressed by the popular view that the Chinese were "backward and weak heathens". The Caucasian society's biased notion of white supremacy could be attributed partly to its successful subjugation, often with brutal force, of the native peoples across the North American continent. Its widely subscribed "survival of the fittest" social Darwinism, rooted in an individualistic frontier mentality, was a

major barrier to easing the apprehension of the nervous and bewildered young Chinese immigrants. On the other hand, the xenophobic fear of the white male population that they might soon have to compete with an "inferior alien race" for work at lower wages frequently triggered rowdy and un-Christian collective social reactions.

Since the 1850s, the Chinese population was subjected to numerous racially-motivated legislative restrictions and occupational exclusions. Many white people had the discriminative notion, most blatantly in British Columbia, that the Chinese were "uneducated and unsociable non believers in Christianity." Therefore, they were deemed to be unfit for assimilation into a predominantly Christian society. As a result, the largely Anglo-Saxon population, being the overwhelming majority, proceeded to launch a series of exclusionist practices aimed at keeping the timorous new arrivals from the "Celestial Kingdom" from voluntary participation in a wide range of mainstream economic and social activities. These widespread misconceptions were in the meantime frequently reinforced by the misinformed and biased North American (and European) media with its derogatory commentaries and cartoons, fostering an increasingly intolerant climate in which Asians were considered to be racially inferior and thus socially unacceptable, and leading to more obnoxious anti-Asian immigration and social policies.

Meanwhile, historical records show that, in 1860, the first entire Chinese family of Chong Lee arrived to settle in Victoria; and in 1861, Won Alexandar Cumyow was the first Chinese born in Canada at Port Arthur, British Columbia. Cumyow grew up to become a well-known figure in early Chinese community on Canada's west coast.

The ending of the American Civil War in 1865 unleashed a massive westward shift of its population in the United States, causing growing political concerns in London, England. In order to protect its North American colonies, the British Empire proceeded to create Canada as a Dominion with its four eastern provinces and the Northwestern Territories. To adequately safeguard its real estate holdings north of the 49th Parallel, Canada sought and encouraged new European immigrants to settle in its thinly populated western regions. Combining the twin purposes of nation-building and national defence, politicians in Ottawa developed a "National Dream": to construct a transcontinental railway, linking the eastern provinces with the newly-created United Colony of British Columbia which joined the Canadian Confederation in 1871, following the earlier amalgamation of the colonies of Victoria and British Columbia in 1866.

According to the 1881 Census of Canada, there were 4,383 Chinese in Canada in 1880-81, of which 4,350 (99.24%) lived and worked in British Columbia. There were 22 in Ontario and seven in Quebec. When tenders for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) were called in October 1879, they triggered the second extensive influx of Chinese laborers to Canada. From 1880 to 1885, an estimated 15,000 to 17,000 Chinese from Guangdong arrived in western Canada. Almost all the Chinese CPR workers never planned to settle in Canada. They were called "sojourners" because their main purposes were to come to Canada, work hard, save up some money and return to a better life in their native villages. For the very few who initially entertained the idea of staying on, their intention was dampened, if not outright squashed, by the widespread racial discrimination and social segregation that they experienced on a daily basis in a society with significant linguistic, social and behavioral differences. As a result, they gave up the idea of establishing a future home in Canada because they did not wish to expose their young families to the ethnic animosity prevalent in the land. To achieve their objectives, these young workers were prepared to pay the painful price of long separation from their families, opting to live a bachelor's life in a harsh and lonesome land until the day they could return home with their hard-earned savings.

In the spring of 1881, the first groups of about 2,000 young Chinese workers arrived in British Columbia from Hong Kong to work on the CPR. By 1882, of the 9,000 men working on the CPR's construction, 6,500 were said to be Chinese. It was claimed that between 500 and 600 Chinese workers

perished during the construction of the line, averaging three lives for every kilometer constructed. Some estimates went as high as 1,500. Those young Chinese died from work injuries, illnesses, malnutrition and the severe Canadian winter cold. All of them came from the warmer climate of southern China where they had never seen snow before their arrival in British Columbia. Those who died at the work sites were buried where they dropped.

Although the young Chinese workers were free to choose their own destinations in the 1880s, their options were basically limited only to cities where they could find work through clan and or district connections. Their new life in Canada was filled with uncertainty and apprehension. They had to put up with extremely harsh working conditions, severely cold winter, abject poverty, unhygienic living environment, social isolation and long separation from family. In those early days, the mostly uneducated peasants had rarely seen a "foreign devil" in their native villages. Now they had to live and work amidst large groups of foreigners with "red-beard and green-eyes", in an unfamiliar and often unfriendly environment thousand of miles from home. Many soon became dispirited and despondent, feeling frightened and insecure; some fell into utter despair.

Towards the end the 19th century, the work ethics, frugality and peaceful nature of the Chinese workers unfortunately made them convenient targets for the racist trade unionist and vote pandering politicians who, for protectionistic and political reasons, unabashedly turned these time-honored Christian virtues against the Chinese, accusing them of undercutting the white workers' income, bringing down the average standard of living and creating a constant drain on the Canadian economy by sending all the money home. A major cause of the white majority's resentment against the Chinese laborers could be attributed to the big Canadian corporations which, in their avaricious greed to maximise profit, had no qualms about exploiting the readily available source of cheap labor from China by bringing in shiploads of young workers through their Chinese middlemen in Hong Kong and San Francisco.

Beginning in 1884, a series of racially discriminative laws were enacted either provincially or federally prohibiting the Chinese from gold-mining and many other lines of work as well as taking part in provincial elections. Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, once described the Chinese as "having no British instincts, feelings or aspirations, therefore ought not to have a vote."

The driving of the last spike at Craigellachie, British Columbia on November 7, 1885 marked the beginning of massive unemployment for the thousands of Chinese workers. They were being laid off without compensation or assistance. Despite their frugality, many failed to save enough money for the voyage home. Some others were too proud to return without any visible measures of success to show off to their families and fellow villagers. They had no other choice but to stay on, accepting whatever jobs that they could find to stay alive in an unwelcome and ungrateful land. On the other hand, there were also a handful of enterprising risk-takers who had come to Canada with a business plan, a small capital and some hometown connections to start up an import-export business, or to venture into retailing, serving the poor but sizable Chinese community as well as certain segments of the host society. Once their hard work and entrepreneurship began to pay off, they would feel comfortable and secure enough to send for their families and make Canada their future home.

Beginning in 1886, close to 3,000 Chinese laborers drifted out of their construction camps, moving eastward across the Rockies along the railway track, through the prairies towards the eastern and Maritime provinces. Many chose to settle in small towns and cities in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Some entered Ontario through Kenora, Sudbury, North Bay, Pembroke, Renfrew and Ottawa in the north, or along the north shore of Lake Ontario through Windsor, London, Hamilton, Toronto, Belleville and Kingston in the south. A large number stayed in Toronto, while others continued eastward to Montreal, Quebec City, and points further east like Halifax (Nova Scotia), St. John (New Brunswick), Charlottetown (Prince

Edward Island) and the British colony of Newfoundland. In those big cities and small towns, the uncertain and insecure Chinese workers would always stay closely together for mutual support and reassurance. In some larger centers, rudimentary ghettos, commonly called Chinatowns emerged over time, not by design but by sheer necessity of survival.

Most of these young job-seekers invariably engaged themselves in the types of work that only a few white people would want to do, such as vegetable gardening in small plots, hand-laundries and later on, "greasy-spoon" type of eateries. They would stay put, work assiduously and save hard so that they could afford the voyage back to China once every few years to visit family or to get married. Then they would come back to work even harder to send money home to support their young wives (and children) whom they would not be able to hold and hug for many long years to come. These Chinese settlers were trapped in the bottom strata in the host society because of social isolation, occupational discrimination and abject poverty. They could barely speak the English language because none had learned it in China before they came; and when they arrived to work on the CPR, they were immediately thrown into a fundamentally segregated environment which offered few incentives for them to learn a new language so that they could one day integrate into the host society and become a contributing member. These negative factors further fostered their sojourner mentality.

Towards the end of the 19th century, anti-Chinese feelings continued unabated in western Canada. The white majority became more antagonistic in the face of deepening recession as Canada's boom-and-bust commodity-based economy was once again hurled in a downward spiral. Following the completion of the CPR and the ensuing extensive layoffs, Canada's working men became increasingly resentful of unwanted competition in a shrinking job market, especially from an alien ethnic minority. Echoing this public sentiment, Mackenzie King, when he was Deputy Minister of Labor, said in 1908 that Canada should remain a white man's country because it was not only desirable economically and socially, but also highly necessary on political and national grounds. He warned, "if restrictions were not imposed, million more of Chinese would come and eventually overthrow the existing social order of things and take over the means which laboring white men have to earning a decent livelihood."

In Canada, the idea of imposing a special racially-based head tax on the Chinese immigrants entering the country was first "inspired" by the 10 pound sterling head tax imposed by the legislature of Queensland, Australia in 1877. The British Columbia legislative assembly passed on September 2, 1878 the Chinese Tax Act, by which every Chinese over 12 years old would have to pay $10 every three months to take out a residence permit in the province. This racially discriminative Act was later declared "unconstitutional and void" by a British Columbia Supreme Court Justice who pointed out that only the federal government had the power to pass an act concerning immigration to Canada.

At the agitation of the white-dominated trade unions in British Columbia, and supported by the opportunistic crowd-pleasing politicians, Canada imposed in 1885 a $50 Head Tax on new Chinese immigrants through the Chinese Immigration Act, shortly after the completion of the CPR. It was estimated, at that time, a Chinese laborer could earn an average of $235 a year and save only $43 after all expenses and taxes. Between 1886 and 1890, only a few hundred Chinese immigrants managed to pay the Head Tax to enter Canada annually. However, after 1890, Chinese immigration began to rise again, albeit slowly. By 1901, there were 17,312 Chinese in Canada. The Head Tax went up to $100 in 1901 and $500 in 1904. Despite the hefty increases, poverty-driven young Chinese peasants kept landing on Canadian shores to look for work in Canada's depressed economy.

In order to regulate the intake of Asian immigrants in a more predictable pattern, Canada successfully negotiated with Japan in 1908 a so-called "gentleman's agreement" to limit immigration of Japanese laborers and domestic servants to 400 per year. Deputy Minister of Labor King went to Beijing in 1909, but failed to persuade the Manchu government to impose similar annual restrictions on Chinese immigrants

to Canada in exchange for the removal of the Head Tax. By 1911, there were 27,831 Chinese living and working in almost every part of Canada except the Yukon and Northwest Territories. Of the total, 70% concentrated in British Columbia. There were also 1,700 Chinese in Alberta; 160 in Saskatchewan; 900 in Manitoba; 2,800 in Ontario (with the highest concentration in Toronto and only 162 in Ottawa); 1,000 in Quebec (mostly in Montreal); and 200 in the Maritime provinces. The $500 Head Tax apparently had failed to curtail the inflow of Chinese immigrants into British Columbia and neighboring Prairie provinces.

When economic depression hit Canada hard after World War I with extensive unemployment, the white unionists, fearing escalating competition from the new arrivals who would willingly work for longer hours for lower wages, began calling for drastic measures to totally shut off Chinese immigration. This growing sentiment was further provoked by the vote-hungry politicians at both the provincial and federal levels in their bigoted attempts to exploit the mushrooming public resentment. By the summer of 1922, the Canadian government decided against negotiating with China's Beijing-based northern government on limiting the annual influx of Chinese immigrants. It is understood that Ottawa's decision was based principally on the fact that the northern government, which Canada diplomatically recognised, could not effectively control the Nationalist-held southern provinces, including Guangdong, the biggest source of Chinese immigrants into Canada. This geo-political division also rendered practically unfeasible any enforcement verification attempt by the Canadian consul stationed in Hong Kong.

Ultimately, the infamous Chinese Exclusion Act was implemented on July 1, 1923, despite official protests from Chinese diplomats and a rare united front of Chinese organisations across the country. Their actions were also openly supported by the Christian church and sympathetic individuals and organisations in the mainstream society, mostly in Ontario. The federal legislation first listed four exempted classes of Chinese -- children born in Canada; consular officials and their families; students attending university; and merchants. Christian missionaries were later added to list as the fifth exempted category following strong protest and sustained lobbying from the Protestant church. By the time the Head Tax was abolished 38 years later, the Canadian government was said to have collected a total of $23 million from 18,000 Chinese immigrants between 1885 and 1923.

The Exclusion Act severely retarded a normal development of the Chinese diaspora in Canada. The Chinese population suffered a visible shrinkage nation-wide (from the height of 46,519 in 1931 to 32,528 in 1951). Apart from the sudden cut-off of a steady injection of the much-needed new blood to an anemic community, other contributing factors to the drastic decline included the decision of many elderly immigrants to return to China because of the worsening economic situation in Canada and the growing anti-Chinese sentiment across the country; and an obvious absence in Chinese communities, big and small, of healthy females in the child-bearing age group, a pathetic result of a grossly imbalanced gender ratio (12:1 in 1931) created by decades of male-only migration pattern because of the discriminatory Head Tax. It was reported that in 1941 there were 21,877 Chinese families in Canada, of which a staggering 92% (20,141) was categorised as "separate, wife outside of Canada." On the other hand, intact Chinese families accounted for only 5.4% (1,177).

For close to a century, the Hoyshan dialect was "lingua franca" of the Chinese diaspora across North America. An overwhelming majority of Chinese who came to Canada during the 65 years between 1858 and 1923, plus the few who managed to come in during the 24 years of Exclusion between 1923 and 1947 were from the Siyi region (the four districts of Hoyshan, Sunwei, Yunping and Hoiping) in southern Guangdong. The first 27 years (1858 to 1885) can be categorized as the "free entry period" when almost all who came were young single male gold miners and laborers hired to work on the CPR construction. They were not required to pay any entry fees. The following 38 years (1885 to 1923) were the period when widespread anti-Chinese sentiment was legislated into the exorbitant racially discriminatory Head Tax, applied only to Chinese immigrants. It

began with $50 and increased 10-fold to $500 in 1904; and remained at $500 for almost the next 20 years until it was replaced by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923.

The typical Chinese immigrants who came during this period of time were rural-born males in their late teens or early 20s, mostly uneducated and illiterate. They spoke only the Hoyshan dialect and did not have any knowledge of the English language. In the 30 years that followed until the early 1950s, this characteristic remained basically unchanged.

Sino-Canadian Relationship, Military Service and the Status of Chinese in Canada

Old-timers frequently pointed out that although Ottawa's China community had always been insignificant in size (growing from 273 in 1921 to 275 in 1941), historically it always enjoyed a more important political status, for the mere fact that it is situated in the nation's capital. Generations of its leaders had witnessed the visits of numerous political notables, from the imperial envoys of the Manchu government in the late 19th century, to vocal advocates of various Chinese reformist and revolutionary movements at the turn of the 20th century, as well as top national leaders of successive Chinese governments since 1911. Ottawa's Chinatown was also "home away from home" for many patriotic young Chinese Canadian men and women who served in Canadian armed forces during the World War II years.

The official relationship between Canada and China often impacted directly on the well being and welfare of the Chinese in Canada. After its defeat in the Opium War of 1839, China was generally considered by the European imperial powers as "backward and weak". As a result, the Chinese living and working in Canada in the following 100 plus years, were also being viewed with the same disparagement. It was not until after the World War II in the late 1940s that Chinese Canadians were given the rights and respect to which they were entitled as Canadian citizens.

At the turn of the 20th century, one of the most telltale results of the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration into British Columbia was the federal government decision in 1904 to increase the Head Tax on Chinese immigrants from $100 to a whopping $500. Although the predominant view in the province clearly expressed at the hearing was solidly opposed to immigration of all Asians, yet there were no immediate and significant actions taken by Ottawa against immigration from Japan.

A few years later, the infamous anti-Asian riots broke out in Vancouver in 1907. White mobs smashed their way through the Chinese and Japanese quarters in the city. The Canadian government quickly issued an apology to the Emperor of Japan for the treatment of his subjects in Vancouver. The Japanese victims also received prompt payment of compensation for properties damaged during the riots. At the same time, the misfortune of the Chinese victims was completely ignored. The apparent reason was that China had been for decades ridiculed internationally as the "Sickman of Asia"; obviously Canada never expected the weak and ineffectual Manchu government to lodge a strong protest and forcefully demand an official apology and compensation for its people. The disparity between Ottawa's treatments of the Chinese and the Japanese victims of the racial riots could be explained by the significant difference of the two countries' positions on the world stage. Japan had been an ally of Britain since 1902. It was also a fast-rising military power, having recently defeated a major European-Asian imperial power in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. China, on the other hand, was mired in the throes of continuous revolutionary upheavals and political instability and was clearly not in any position to exert any significant influence internationally.

During the first three decades of the 20th century, political and military struggles for the control of the whole of China amongst various factions continued to affect federal and provincial governments' treatment of the Chinese in Canada. The 1927 split of the Chiang Kai-Shek-led Nationalist (Kuomintang, KMT) government

in China with the communist Soviet Union was positively received in capitalistic Canada. After its hard won unification of China in 1928, Chiang's government gained international diplomatic recognition. However, the fortune of the Chinese diaspora in Canada did not improve accordingly. The situation prompted the Nanjing-headquartered KMT government to move quickly to systematically organise Chinese communities across North America. In order to stop the KMT initiative, the oldest Chinese fraternal organisation in Canada, the Chinese Freemasons (previously known as the Chee Kong Tong, CKT) entered, in the mid-1920s, a brief and futile association with the short-lived Chinese monarchist Constitutional Party (Bao Huang Tang) in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. In the 1920s and 1930s, both the KMT and CKT leadership in Canada had endeavored to solicit mainstream society's approval of and support for their long-running struggle for control of the traditional clan and district based associations. As a result of the infighting and disunity, there was never one single organisation at the national level to speak authoritatively and collectively for the Chinese population in Canada throughout the 20th century.

Chinese Canadians had a long history with the Canadian armed forces dating back to World War I. When Britain declared war in 1914 on Germany and Austria, a number of Canadian born and naturalised Chinese Canadians in British Columbia, despite the existence of the racially discriminatory Head Tax, volunteered for military service to demonstrate their loyalty to their adopted country, but they were turned away because of the Military Service Act of 1917, which specifically excluded all Orientals from conscription. Many patriotic Chinese Canadians had to travel to Alberta and Ontario to enlist. Historical records show there was at least one platoon of about 60 men composed mainly of Chinese Canadians in the 52nd battalion (the new Ontario Battalion) who fought at Ypres, France in 1917. China became an ally of Britain and Canada when it joined the war in 1917 on the side of the Allies. However, the Head Tax remained in full force until it was replaced in 1923 by the Chinese Exclusion Act.

In 1937, China began its long and lonely war of resistance against Japan's full scale invasion and that succeeded in uniting the Chinese communities across Canada. In December 1941, Japan mounted a surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. China once again became an ally when Britain (and Canada) declared war on Japan in the same month. While the U.S. took the initiative in 1943 to repeal its 1882 Chinese Restriction Act as a gesture of friendship to China, Canada took no similar action to end its 1923 Exclusion Act.

Even before the outbreak of the war, Canada had been consistently unwilling to enlist Chinese Canadians in its armed forces. This reluctance stemmed mainly from a Cabinet war committee decision in late 1940 to ban compulsory military service of Asian Canadians. According to military historians, it was done principally on racial grounds. The necessary policy change in Ottawa occurred late in World War II only as the direct result of persistent requests from the British War Office which at that time was trying to recruit a number of Chinese Canadians for employment with its famed Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Asia. It has been reported that the British government had to "apply pressure" on Ottawa in 1944 to persuade it to change its racially discriminative military recruitment policy. As a result, Chinese Canadians, mainly from British Columbia, were accepted into the Canadian army and that would allow the British SOE to recruit volunteers for its clandestine espionage and sabotage operations in Japanese-held territories in Southeast Asia and the China theatre.

Meanwhile, on the diplomatic front, Canada and China proceeded in 1941 to upgrade its bilateral diplomatic relationship to ministerial level, then to full ambassadorial level in 1943. The Canadian consulate in Nanjing which had been under the Canadian Legation in Japan since 1931 became an independent legation with General Victor Odlum as its first ambassador. China's consulate general in Ottawa reciprocally became an embassy with Dr Liu Shih-Shun as its first ambassador. China also moved in 1943 to set up consulates in Toronto and Winnipeg.

After World War II, the Chinese consulates in Toronto and Vancouver were upgraded to become consulates general.

China's war-time finance minister, T.V. Soong, brother-in-law of president Chiang Kai-Shek had visited Canada in 1943 and 1945. His sister, Madame Chiang Kai-Shek (Mei-Ling Soong), was invited by Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King in the spring of 1943 to Ottawa to give a speech to the joint session of Parliament. Madame Chiang used the opportunity to lament the "grossly unjust treatment" that the Chinese received in Canada, pointing out that even though Canada and China were allies, the Chinese were the only nationality that Canada prohibited from free entry. Ottawa later signed a reciprocal immigration agreement in 1944 with China, guaranteeing entry into either country on the basis of temporary permits.

Following the outbreak of World War II, Chinese Canadians were allowed to enlist first in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in 1942, then the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) in 1943, and finally the Army in 1944. During the war years, Ottawa's Chinese community had played host to many Chinese Canadians who were trained or stationed in military establishments in and around the nation’s capital region, veteran community leader William Joe recalled. British Columbia born and bred Jean Suey Zee Lee was the only Chinese Canadian woman in the RCAF to be stationed at the RCAF's Eastern Air Command depot at Rockcliffe, Ottawa. She even had a rare opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Mackenzie King in her uniform during her posting in Ottawa. RCAF Corporal Daniel Lee also served with the 168 Heavy Transport Squadron at Rockcliffe. William K. L. Lore was not only the first commissioned officer of Chinese ancestry in the RCN, but also "the first in the whole of the British Commonwealth navies". Shortly after his graduation in June 1943, Lore was dispatched to Ottawa to work at the operational intelligence centre, RCN Headquarters.

Several Chinese Canadian graduates from the S-20 Japanese Language School in Vancouver had been posted to Ottawa to help translate intercepts received at the radio station at Camp X in Oshawa, Ontario. A group of 25 Chinese Canadians, recruited from the Canadian Army by the legendary British SOE commander, Major H.J. Legg, briefly stayed in Ottawa, in February 1945, en route to India for further training. Their mission was subsequently canceled when the war ended several months later. Alumni of these two units included Captain Wilfred B.T. Seto and the first Chinese Canadian Member of Parliament, Sergeant Douglas Jung. The number of Chinese Canadians who served in World War II was relatively small, but their contribution was unique in the southeast Asia and southwest Pacific theatres. Some of them had also served in Italy and northwest Europe as well as in Hong Kong and China.

After the war, Chinese communities across Canada started clamoring louder for the repeal of the Exclusion Act. In 1946, Vancouver's Hoyshan Association pioneered the fight by passing a resolution calling for a compromise solution, replacing the Act with a quota system, similar to the one implemented in the U.S. The association's president Wong Foon Sien repeatedly visited federal politicians in Ottawa, tirelessly lobbying for the repeal which ultimately became a reality in 1947. Amongst the other major contributing factors were the growing support for a more racially equal society within the predominantly white population, the emergence of a younger generation of politicians with a more inclusive socio-political perspective, replacing the parochial and racist views of the older players, and Canada's newly acquired prestige in the international fora had apparently made it honor-bound to improve the status of the ethnic minorities within its borders. China's coming out of the war as one of the world's four great powers and the active participation of young Chinese Canadian men and women in the military service also helped persuade the Canadian government to readjust its discriminatory policies against the Chinese population.

Locally born and naturalised Chinese Canadians who enlisted for military service during the two World Wars have been applauded for their pivotal contributions to the enfranchisement, after World War II,

of all Chinese Canadians. "All those Chinese Canadians who were called up under National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) in British Columbia in July 1944 would seem to be the group to whom credit is due for obtaining the franchise for all Chinese Canadians in the services in that province," said historian Marjorie Wong. She pointed out that the franchise and military service were intertwined in Canadian political minds, noting that federal Under Secretary of State for External Affairs Norman Robertson had openly supported British Columbia Premier T. D. Pattullo's definition of compulsory and voluntary military service. Robertson said, "voluntary enlistment did not give as compelling a claim to enfranchisement as did compulsory enlistment."

In 1947, British Columbia granted franchise to its Chinese residents. Saskatchewan, the other province which denied its Chinese Canadian residents the right to vote since 1908, removed that discriminatory restriction earlier in 1944. Other than British Columbia and Saskatchewan, Chinese Canadians could vote municipally, provincially and federally in all other Canadian provinces. And finally, Canada's new Dominion Elections Act of 1948 no longer required that the voter's name be also on the provincial lists.

Immigration certificate dated 1912, showing head tax charge of $500.

Mr. Wong Foon Sien

Airwoman Jean Suey Zee Lee meets
Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

Chinese man washing gold on the Fraser River,
British Columbia, circa 1875.

Canadian Pacific Railway construction:
a Chinese workers' camp near Kamloops,
British Columbia, circa 1886.

A Chinese housing area in Victoria, B.C., 1886.

Ottawa's Chinatown

Chinatown in Ottawa started with a few shops on Albert Street, less than 10 minutes walk from Parliament Hill. It followed more or less the same pattern of development of the Chinatowns in other Canadian cities, starting first near the train station then moving further away as the Chinese population and businesses grew and more affordable properties became available over the years.

The first Chinese families who chose to settle in Ottawa most likely did so because their fathers, uncles or cousins were already here; but most of their descendants did not really know how and why their ancestors came. The reluctance of the first generation immigrants to share their bitter experiences with their children was frequently cited as a major reason for the scarcity of relevant information about life during the early years of the Chinese community in eastern Ontario. There is no established detail of the first Chinese residents in Ottawa. It is commonly acknowledged that most of them, if not all, came from the Siyi (Four Districts) region in China's southern Guangdong province. They were not necessarily the gold miners or railway workers who first arrived in the 1850s in British Columbia. Official records show that in 1881, there were already 10 Chinese living and working in Toronto. They were joined later by another 90 after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1885. By 1891, out of the 9,129 Chinese in Canada, 8,910 (97.6%) were in British Columbia. There were 97 in Ontario (with five in Ottawa) and 36 in Quebec. Although Ottawa is in eastern Ontario, its Chinese community traditionally maintains closer ties with the much bigger and better developed Chinatown in Montreal, Quebec.

It has been reported that the first Chinese who reached the city in the late 1880s were surnamed Hum (also pronounced Tom or Tam). They were soon followed by their kinsmen from the same village. Outsiders usually found it extremely difficult to find work in the close-knit clan and/or district based networks as everybody was struggling to survive in a foreign land which was culturally, sociologically and behaviorally different. The small business owners, mostly operators of hand laundry shops and, later in the early 20th century, Canadian-style cafes, felt duty-bound to look after their own families and relatives first, then close friends from the same villages.

During those pioneering days, the new immigrants had little, if any, idea of the provincial boundaries within Canada. They would simply go anywhere there was already a family member or relative who might need some extra help. Not very many of them would venture into unknown territories to work for a total stranger with whom he could not even communicate. It was not unheard of that some Chinese job seekers also made use of Ottawa as a way station to the numerous underground channels linking the border towns on both sides of the long and largely unguarded Canadian- U. S. border to look for work or to join their families down south.

At the end of the 1890s, there were several Chinese families in Ottawa. Most notably was the family of Hum Mong, a merchant who was said to be the first Chinese to be naturalised as a Canadian on December 31, 1897, and his younger brother Hum Quon. Their descendants said the Hum brothers came from an industrialist family which operated a fertilizer factory and a match factory in Hoiping, Guangdong. There were 83 Chinese in Ottawa by 1901, a large majority of them was single men living at the back of the place where they worked, or in crowded rooming houses.

Ottawa's Chinatown shifted over the past 75 years from its humble beginning on Albert Street to today's Somerset Street West between Bay and Preston Streets, just above Little Italy, about 30 minutes by foot, west of the downtown core. Between 1911 and 1921, about 15 Chinese owned and operated cafes began to appear in Ottawa. However, the 40 hand laundry shops scattered in different neighborhoods remained the major source of employment of the predominantly all-male Chinese population which had gone up during the decade from 160 to 270, up a healthy 70%.

The 1910s saw more young Chinese men arrive in Ottawa from the western provinces to raise their families here. The best remembered first families were those of Joe Sim (whose original surname was actually Joe), Shung Joe, Sue Wong, Shing Wong and James Hum. Their many children formed the core of the first generation of Canadian born Chinese (CBC) in Ottawa. They were also the first to receive a proper English public school education. Many of them became successful in later years, transforming the family business from the traditional hand laundry shops to restaurants and a real estate holding company. Some went on to become teachers, medical doctors and other professionals.

According to University of Ottawa Professor Jean-Guy Daigle, Joe Sim initially made his home in Hull, Quebec in 1903, had his spouse join him in 1919 before getting involved in the restaurant business on both sides of the Ottawa River, with Chinese cooks and white waitresses to ensure a better rapport with the local customers. Shung Joe's family was well known in community for its generosity in helping the new arrivals. Son William, a well-connected and well-regarded community leader, and a few community-minded contemporaries had been actively involved for many years in managing the Chinese plots in the city's Beechwood Cemetery for many a single man who died penniless in Ottawa. As early as the 1910s, the heads of the Hum and Wong families went beyond clan loyalties to promote the collective interests of the Chinese community in Ottawa. In the following decades, their voluntary and generous community service succeeded in fostering a sense of identity within the Community and motivated many younger ones to follow their examples.

Sue Wong arrived in Ottawa from Guangdong's Hoiping county in 1902 when he was 13 years old to work in his uncle's hand laundry shop. He went back to China to get married in 1911 and returned to Canada in 1917. Three years later, he saved up enough money to send for his wife, Woo Shee Wong. Daughter Gladys Chin, a retired school teacher recalled, "father had to pay $500 Head Tax for mother to come to Canada. She was the second Chinese woman to come to Canada at around that time. The only regret for my parents was they had to leave their three-year-old daughter, Kam Oi with the Wong grandparents as there was not enough money to pay for the additional Head Tax and passage. Mom often recounted the poignant story of how she promised her little daughter at the pier as they said goodbye that she would bring her a gold bracelet when she returned. Mom always regretted that she was not able to fulfill that promise." Sue Wong's long-held plan to visit his old hometown with his seven Canadian-born children (five girls and two boys) in October 1937 was abandoned when Japan launched its full scale invasion of China in August of the same year. As a result, Kam Oi had to wait for 37 long years before she could see her parents again in 1957 after she and her husband emigrated to Hawaii.

At the beginning of the 1920s, Sue Wong and his wife worked at Murray Street Hand Laundry. Then after their first two daughters were born, they moved to 201 Albert Street where they opened in 1924 the Yick lung Chinese grocery store in the middle of the small Chinatown, retailing Chinese goods as well as dispensing Chinese herbal medicine. Son retired dentist Douglas Wong remembered that all the supplies were shipped to Ottawa by train and/or by bus from Chinese companies in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

Sue Wong was said to be the first Chinese in Ottawa to own a car, an Essex in 1932 and later a Ford in 1940. That enabled him to deliver groceries to his customers in neighboring towns such as Perth, Smiths Falls and Carleton Place, and to maintain close ties with isolated Chinese families in those outlying areas. With his car, Sue Wong often volunteered to drive the Ottawa Chinese hockey team, the Chinese Aces, to play in Ottawa Valley towns in the early 1940s. Community leader William Joe was a member of the all-Chinese team which created a strong sense of pride and inclusiveness amongst the Chinese residents in the region. However, Douglas Wong said he chose to play basketball.

The Wongs' store-cum-home was a regular rendezvous spot in Chinatown, the popular meeting place of many single

workers as well as the "married bachelors" who left their young families in China. Douglas Wong remembered the visitors would usually gather in the open area in the middle of the store to socialise and to have a few draws on the ever-ready water-filled bamboo smoking-pipe, compliments of the gregarious and generous owner. During the World War II years, the Wongs made artificial flowers to sell to the Chinese to raise funds for the war cause. Sue Wong also traveled frequently, visiting Chinese families in the Ottawa Valley, collecting donations in support of China's war efforts. The Wongs were known to have helped many local Chinese residents to survive the war years by supplementing their wartime rations.

At the turn of the 20th century, an overwhelming majority of the Chinese population in the nation's capital region was bachelors, mostly former CPR workers from the western provinces with a handful from Montreal and the Maritime provinces, and a few from the U.S. northeastern seaboard. Many of them lived together in crowded rooming houses (Fangkau) owned and operated by a few Chinese merchants in the city. A new arrival in Ottawa at around that time reportedly wrote, "it was very difficult for a Chinese to rent a room. We rented a whole house. There were about 10 of us, but people kept moving in and out. All of us paid a share of the rent. Those who were unemployed paid a smaller amount, but would have to do the cooking and housekeeping. Clan brothers from out-of-town would stay over at our place for the night."

The working conditions in the Chinese operated hand laundry shops and cafes were harsh and the hours were long. The employer, quite often the father or uncle or a distant relative, paid very little to the employees. The general rationale was that the first generation labored with their sweat and blood in a difficult and inclement environment to build up the business, so the newcomers should be thankful that they had a job waiting upon their arrival and should not expect anything easy.

There were many reported cases of the young sons leaving their fathers' employ after a few years to venture out on their own, often in other cities. They raised funds through the credit clubs organised by the clan or district associations; or went into business with numerous partners, sometimes as many as eight or ten. Many of these partnerships worked well and lasted for decades while some broke up after a short period of time because of financial arguments and/or personality clashes.

Outside of the national capital region of Ottawa and Hull, William Joe and other interviewees recalled that there were also Chinese owned and operated hand laundry shops and cafes in surrounding small towns and villages, such as Campbell's Bay, Quyon, Fort Coulonge, Shawville, Eganville, Arnprior, Golden Lake, and Aylmer in western Quebec; and Carp, Carleton Place, Smiths Falls, Perth, Brockville, Morrisburg, Prescott, Kingston, Cornwall, Hawksbury, Renfrew, Pembroke and Petawawa in eastern Ontario.

By the 1920s, Ottawa's Chinese population still numbered less than 270. A small Chinatown began to emerge on Albert Street, stretching from O'Connor Street westwards to Kent Street with three laundry shops, a restaurant and two grocery stores: the Wing On, owned and operated since 1914 by two Hum brothers of the first families; and the Yick Lung, opened in 1924 by Sue Wong, also one of the first families. The commercial area gradually extended to include five street blocks along Albert, Slater and Laurier Streets between Elgin Street on the east and Kent Street on the west. During the early 1940s, China's governing party, Kuomintang (KMT) and Canada's first Chinese fraternal association, Chee Kong Tang (also known as the Chinese Freemasons) also set up their branches in Ottawa's Chinatown. Around the same time, interviewees remembered that, apart from the two grocery stores, there were five well-established Chinese eateries and three social clubs on Albert Street. The restaurants were the Cathay (opened by William Joe and partners in 1946 and closed in December 2010), Canton Inn, Ding Ho Cafe, Stan's Chow Mein and Ho Ho Cafe.

In the 1940s, there were several Chinese cafes, such as Ho Wah, Uncle Ho, Lux and Paris in the Hull side, with their legendary opening hours often long past the 3am closing time for all the bars in Quebec.

These cafes were well known as the favorite early morning snack joints amongst the late night pub-crawling revelers from both sides of the Ottawa River. One old-timer said "the customers were usually noisy but seldom unruly. There were of course occasionally a few who tried to get away without paying. But that was quite rare because they knew they would have to come back some time in the future." One of the first settlers in Ottawa, Joe Sim and his family used to own the Paris Cafe and the Star Cafe in Hull, the Champlain Cafe on Victoria Island and the Tea Gardens on Sparks Street in Ottawa.

Noted physicist Dr Robert Hum recalled that his father, well-respected Chinese community leader Hum Cheong Sam (also known as Tom Do) and some partners operated the Sun Cafe on Bank Street, between Laurier and Slater Streets until he returned to China in 1947. Apparently, William Poy, father of the first Chinese Canadian Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, often ate there with his family when they first arrived in Canada from Hong Kong. Dr Hum said his father came back to Canada in 1949, followed by his mother, Loo Shee Hum at the end of 1950. Hum senior with several kinsmen opened and managed the Ding Ho Cafe at 219 Albert Street from 1949 until 1956. The head chef at Ding Ho had previously worked for the ambassador of the Nationalist Chinese government and the restaurant was probably the only one that served authentic Chinese BBQ (open flame pit) pork and duck in the capital region. Hum Chong Sam with partners Thomas Hum and William Poy opened the Ho Ho cafe at 248 Albert Street which operated between 1956 and 1967.

Ottawa never grew to become a major centre of the Chinese Canadian population in eastern Ontario. The community was so insignificant that no clan or district association bothered to set up a branch in Chinatown until the 1940s. The Chinese population began to increase in the early 1950s following the arrival from China of the children of the early immigrants, after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1947. From the 1920s to the 1940s, several major domestic and international events combined to bring Ottawa's Chinese community closer together and strengthen its internal solidarity. Notably amongst them were: its rally to support the unemployed Chinese hard hit by the Great Depression; its active participation in a failed nation-wide campaign to fight against the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act; and its many fund raising drives, led by the first families, in Ottawa and the smaller Chinese communities in neighboring towns to support China's eight-year war (1937-45) against Japanese invasion and China's participation in 1941 in World War II on the side of the Allies.

In 1919, well-known bilingual Chinese community leader Hum Quon and a few like-minded contemporaries formed the United Chinese Association in Ottawa to officially petition the Chinese Consul representing China's Beijing-based northern government to lobby the Canadian government on various discriminatory immigration issues. In 1920, the Ottawa Chinese community followed Toronto's lead by starting local protests against the hefty Head Tax. In 1923, in a last-ditch attempt to stop the Chinese Exclusion Act, a United Chinese Association of Canada was founded in Toronto in late April with representatives from major Chinese communities across Canada. An eight-member representative committee was formed shortly afterwards to come to Ottawa to lobby the Canadian Senate to amend the racially discriminative bill. Of the eight members, three were from the Toronto Chinese Christian Association; two each from Calgary and Montreal; and Hum Quon was the sole representative from the nation's capital. Despite the united effort of the Chinese diaspora, the last minute appeals from the Chinese government as well as the open support of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican churches in Canada, the Chinese Exclusion Act went into effect on Dominion Day (July 1) in 1923. The weakness and instability of China coupled with the long-existing disunity of the Chinese community in Canada were often cited by historians as amongst the major reasons for the failure.

Since the anti-Chinese feelings in Ontario and Quebec had never been as rampant and volatile as those in British Columbia and other western provinces, old-timers recalled that the Chinese Exclusion Act, on the whole, did not create any significant negative impacts on the Chinese residents in the national capital region. Apart from verbal taunts and racist

sneers from young bullies, the pulling of the long queues of a few elderly Chinese men by the rowdies, and occasional derogatory newspaper comments and cartoons, they did not remember any lasting physical or verbal attacks that they or their elders had suffered prior, during and after the Exclusion years.

The first generation Canadian-born Chinese (CBC) began to appear in the 1920s in families fortunate enough to be reunited before the Exclusion Act came into effect. In the ensuing years, young CBC in Ottawa began to show up in junior positions in private sector offices. Some endeavored to seek employment in the public sector. The number continued to grow from the 1940s onward as more and more young Chinese Canadians were accepted into all three levels of civil service. Gladys Chin, of the Sue Wong family, went to the well known Lisgar Collegiate at the same time as Adrienne Clarkson, Canada's first Chinese Canadian Governor General. Chin then went to the Ottawa Teachers' School and was employed, upon graduation, by National Defence to teach primary school at the Rockcliffe Air Base. Another common phenomenon in Toronto, Ottawa and other major Ontario cities was that many CBC succeeded in breaking into various previously inadmissable professional occupations such as engineering, medicine, law, pharmacy and banking. Chin's elder brother, Dr Douglas Wong graduated from McGill University in the same year as Dr Neville Poy, Clarkson's elder brother. Wong was the first Chinese Canadian dentist east of Toronto while Poy became one of the first plastic surgeons of Chinese ancestry in Canada.

This obvious lack of blatant discrimination and resentment against the Chinese in Ottawa was also due, in no small part, to the fact that the small community with only a handful of families neither created any burden on the city's educational services, nor posed a tangible threat to the employment opportunities of the white working class. Moreover, the traditional Chinese associations were also here since the early 1940s to provide mother-tongue welfare services to the needy and the elderly in the largely Hoyshan dialect-speaking community. The Protestant church, with its Chinese pastors and devoted Causacian volunteers jointly provided Chinese classes for the younger generation and English lessons for the adults.

During the Exclusion years, the number of Chinese in Canada suffered a significant decline from 1931's 46,519 to 1941's 34,617. In Ottawa, the Chinese population also decreased from 300 to 275. Without a steady influx from China, the adult population was plagued by a visible vacuum in the middle as the single men and married bachelors grew older while the younger male population continued to shrink. The locally-born Chinese Canadians were the only group that recorded a slow but steady growth. As the younger bilingual generation grew up in the 1930s and 1940s, some of the more active ones would most likely be "drafted" by the clan and district elders to act as interpreters/ translators for the non-English speaking members of the community in their dealings with local authorities and business contacts. They would also sometimes play a junior role to the community leaders, assisting them in conducting "foreign affairs" with mainstream politicians and government officials. Most of the Canadian-born children of the early immigrants were fluent in both the English language and the Hoyshan dialect. Compared with their parents, they often enjoyed larger circles of friends, both Chinese and Caucasians from the school and church that they attended.

During the 10 years between 1945-54, the racial relationship between the mainstream society and the Chinese community in Ottawa and other major Chinatowns in Canada had briefly experienced a roller coaster-like turbulence. In 1945 right after World War II, Nationalist-led China was one of the major powers in the world and a close ally of Canada. However, with the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and its participation in the Korean War of 1950-53, China as a country abruptly changed overnight from an ally to an enemy. The "Red Scare" rekindled in certain quarters of Canadian society the long smoldering animosity against and distrust of the Chinese population. Chinese Canadian cafe operators in small towns outside Ottawa still remembered being occasionally

told, sometimes sternly, by some of of their white customers to "go home."

By 1947, the Chinese population in Canada totaled about 40,000, of which 95% were male. More than half of these men had wives and children in China. When a widespread purge of the land-owning class erupted in the early 1950s in China, especially in Guangdong, it caused serious concerns in the Chinese communities throughout North America. As a result, many of the older generation abandoned their long-cherished plans to retire back in China and decided to stay in Canada and become proud Canadian citizens. The first post-World War II waves of young Chinese immigrants began to arrive in Canada when many of the "married bachelors" rushed to sponsor their long separated families and sons and "paper sons" to come for family reunion. ("Paper son" is a term used to describe young Chinese men, who came to Canada under false pretense, carrying fake documents purporting to be sons born in China of naturalised Canadians. Some of them even changed their surnames to fit the personal information contained in the official papers.)

In 1951, Ottawa's Chinese population slowly edged up to around 400. The belated "population boom" came in the second half of the 20th century. This upsurge was triggered by several major federal immigration policy changes. First and foremost was the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1947; then the explicit discrimination against Chinese applicants was lifted in 1962 under the new quota system; and finally in 1967, the implementation of the uniform point system that suppressed any reference to race or origin for all immigration applicants.

Since the 1950s, Ottawa, as with other major Canadian cities, was the destination of waves of Chinese immigrants from diverse sources. The Hoyshan dialect-speaking young people from Guangdong's Siyi districts were joined in the following decades by Chinese families from different dialect groups such as the Cantonese-speakers from British Hong Kong and Portuguese Macao, and a smaller group of Mandarin-speaking Chinese from the island of Taiwan. It did not take long for divisive linguistic barriers to emerge, resulting in the appearance of distinctive subgroups inside the Chinese communities. Interactions amongst these groups of young people were described as mainly "event-specific". The common topics for both the Hoyshan dialect-speaking CBC and the new arrivals from the old hometowns were basically about employment and settlement. The local born Chinese Canadians mingled quite often superficially with the Cantonese and Mandarin speakers, mostly at campus and church activities and sporting events where English was often the commonly-used language.

Other significant roadblocks existing amongst these groups included the fundamental differences in their socio-economic, cultural and educational backgrounds. The rationales for their being in Canada -- as a locally born and bred Canadian citizen, rejoining one's long-separated families and learning to adapt to the Canadian way of life, or simply taking refuge in a temporary safe haven away from the political turmoils in the home countries -- were also influential factors in the formation of their respective expectations and outlooks. Interviewees from the Hoyshan dialect-speaking group recalled that the relatively better-off and perhaps more sophisticated Hong Kong immigrants seldom socialised with Canadian-born Chinese or the new arrivals from the old hometowns. Some students from Hong Kong and Taiwan went to work in the Hoyshanese owned and operated Chinese eateries as weekend waiters only for the wages and tips and the free Chinese meals. Their relationship with the employers and their families, for the most part, did not extend outside the restaurant dining rooms. However, it was a commonly accepted fact that it was a mutually beneficial arrangement: the students apparently appreciated some extra pocket money and a few free meals, while the restaurant operators could use English-speaking servers who were more readily available and willing to work for less pay than a white hostess.

Nevertheless, there were also the unavoidable murmurs of discontent from both sides within Ottawa's Chinese community. The Chinatown bosses were criticised for being "too clan or district centric" in their hiring practice; and the CBC

were "not inclusive enough to reach out and embrace" the newly-landed Cantonese and Mandarin speakers. One Hong Kong-born professional who came with his middle-class parents to Canada in the 1940s explained that the CBC, while better-adapted socially, often felt uncomfortable, if not outright embarrassed by their own lowly family background. On the other hand, disgruntled old-timers criticised, quite disapprovingly, that most of the immigrants from Hong Kong and later on from Taiwan and Mainland China seldom showed any genuine interest in the public activities of the predominently Hoyshan dialect-speaking community and rarely participated in traditional Chinese celebrations. This internal division became increasingly visible with the influx of more and more Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia in the 1960s and Mainland China in the 1990s. Over the last few decades, sporadic attempts by successive generations of the leadership of these subgroups had been made to foster greater unity within the Chinese community. However, these efforts have so far proved to be futile.

Since the turn of the 20th century, even though there were no official records in Ottawa and presumably throughout Canada, of inter-racial marriage or co-habitation between a Chinese male and a Caucasian or First Nation female, it was not uncommon for a Chinese man and a local woman to live together, often shying away from public view. Mixed marriage was not only socially frowned upon in both Chinese and white communities, but also openly discouraged by the Protestant and Catholic churches. On the other hand, due to the abnormally high demand and near-zero availability, cases of Chinese women marrying Caucasian men during those years were practically unheard of. There were a few off-springs of the Chinese-white unions in both eastern Ontario and western Quebec towns. They often stayed away from other local-born Chinese youngsters to avoid being badgered and teased. There were also cases of successful Chinese entrepreneurs in the nation's capital region who, after prolonged separation from their wives back in China, decided to take another wife locally. As a result, noisy family feuds did erupt occasionally in certain Chinese homes when children from the first marriage arrived in the 1950s for family reunion with their long-absent fathers.

Old-timers also narrated stories of the "Gold Mountain Wives", women who chose to stay behind in the old hometowns, living off the remittance sent by their hard working husbands and indulging themselves in comfort and opulence. Some even considered themselves to be "pretty smart" because they could enjoy a good life that was the envy of many in the village, and did not have to worry about dirtying their hands in back-breaking domestic chores and toiling side by side with their husbands in running the family business in Canada.

Almost all of them had to make a reluctant and hurried exit, many with their younger children, from their native towns in the Siyi districts to Hong Kong in the early 1950s when widespread purge of the land-owning class was launched by the newly-established People's Republic, leaving behind their big houses and other valuables. Some interviewees remembered their mothers and/or family members quietly digging big holes at night in the family home's backyard to bury strongboxes containing land deeds, cash and jewelery. These refugees then would stay in the British Crown Colony and wait for the Canadian official permits to join their husbands in Ottawa and other Canadian cities, totally unprepared for the bone-chilling Canadian snowy winter that they were going to experience.

The 1923 Exclusion Act dealt a devastating blow to whatever hope many Chinese workers might have had of bringing their families over so that they could spend their lives together in Canada. Many became despondent and would often spend many of their off-work hours in the social clubs, not to gamble away the few dollars that they earned with their sweat and blood; but to seek solace in the company of other lonely "married bachelors" who were also deprived of the joy and love of family life. The only other gloomy alternative for them was to go back to their bare bunks in the dark, damp and filthy rooming house to pine away in painful silence. These dejected single men, overwhelmed by gnawing self-pity, would invariably fall into deep depression and bitterness. These feelings of loneliness and hopelessness were often

exacerbated during the festive days of the lunar Chinese calendar, especially around the Chinese New Year. Old-timers were quick to explain that the social clubs where small-wager gambling was conducted, often on a regular basis, had in fact provided the much needed emotional and psychological support to many aging "married bachelors", who had no direct families in Ottawa. Those clubs also traditionally functioned as a community meeting place for festival celebrations, social interactions, and exchanges of news from home and travelers' tales from other Chinatowns.

While Ottawa's small Chinatown has been spared of criticisms from the conservative and religious segments of the host society because of the non-existence in its midst of two of the three vices usually associated with the Chinese in North America -- opium dens and whorehouses, the living conditions in the Chinese quarters, nevertheless, were always of serious concern to the white majority. The main complaint generally centred around over-crowding in dilapidated and filthy boarding houses with no proper refuse and sewage disposal. The unhealthy and unhygienic environmental conditions, hot and humid in the summer and cold and damp in the winter, together with the long working hours and serious malnutrition were often lumped together as the key contributing factors to the existence of widespread pulmonary tuberculosis, one of the major causes of premature death within the Chinese population. Many old-timers woefully recounted that the Chinese workers often refused to seek medical care even though they were gravely ill because of the language barrier and the sad but true fact that they could not afford the expenses of seeing a doctor and getting the prescribed medication. Interviewees lamented the heart-wrenching phenomenon that "a sick Chinese man would show up in the hospital only when he knew he was going to die."

Up until the early 20th century, for any single man who died in his bunk or in the hospital, his fellow workers and friends would usually arrange a temporary local burial and then later on shipped his remains back to his native village when the clan and district associations, often with the Hoyshan associations across Canada playing the lead, organised the periodic nation-wide bone-collection rituals. For those who died penniless and with no close relatives, donation boxes would be set up at the social clubs and the clan and district associations for the money needed to take care of the expenses.

Interviewees recalled the Hum, Wong and Joe families together with other prominent Chinese merchants were very enthusiastic in raising fund to secure a Chinese plot in the Beechwood Cemetery, which was opened in 1873, to meet the growing needs of the community. The first recorded purchase by the Chinese community took place in 1925, by H. Q. Hum on behalf of the community for 40 lots at $5 each. Hum used his business address at 219 Albert street as the correspondent address. In 1937, the Chinese Benevolent Society made another purchase of several dozens of lots at $7 each. When the cemetery first opened, the price for a single 3ft by 7ft lot was $7.35. In 2010, the price for the same size lot was $4,000. The first "Chinese plot" included Rangs (Rows) 8-11, No. 11 being the earliest from 1926-29, No. 8 being the latest, from 1935-37. Its official name was later changed to the "Chinese Benevolent Society Plot" in 1937, from Rangs 12 to 17. The last recorded burial in the plot was in 1947.

Amongst the earliest recorded burials prior to 1926 at Beechwood Cemetery was a 41-year-old laundryman, Lung Chung, who was buried on August 2, 1905. He died in the Ottawa county jail of abscess. The others included 46-year-old laundryman John Lee, buried on January 12, 1907 and 36-year-old lunch keeper Leung Yen, buried on December 20, 1909. The remains of these three single men and possibly a few others were exhumed and removed on July 20, 1916 to be shipped back with many others in Ontario and other provinces to their respective native villages in China for final burial. The Tung Wah Hospital in Hong Kong regularly helped to coordinate the transfers. The second bone collection on record at Beechwood Cemetery took place on April 11, 1926 for those who were buried in 1912, 1913, 1915, 1918; the third and presumably last one, was on September 8, 1934, for those who died in 1920, 1922. Beechwood Cemetery records also showed the burial

in 1933, of a 50-year-old laundryman who died of syphilis and another 56-year-old man who died of insanity, and in 1944, a 42-year-old waiter died of hanging. The deaths all occurred during the 1923-1947 Exclusion years.

Annually, leaders of various clans would organise and conduct the ritual of visiting the Chinese plots at Beechwood Cemetery to pay homage to the pioneers who were buried there. Gladys Chin remembered that her parents, Sue Wong and his wife, and other community elders would raise funds, prepare traditional offerings (food and flowers) and arrange transportation for members of the Chinese community to participate in the graveyard memorial ceremony.

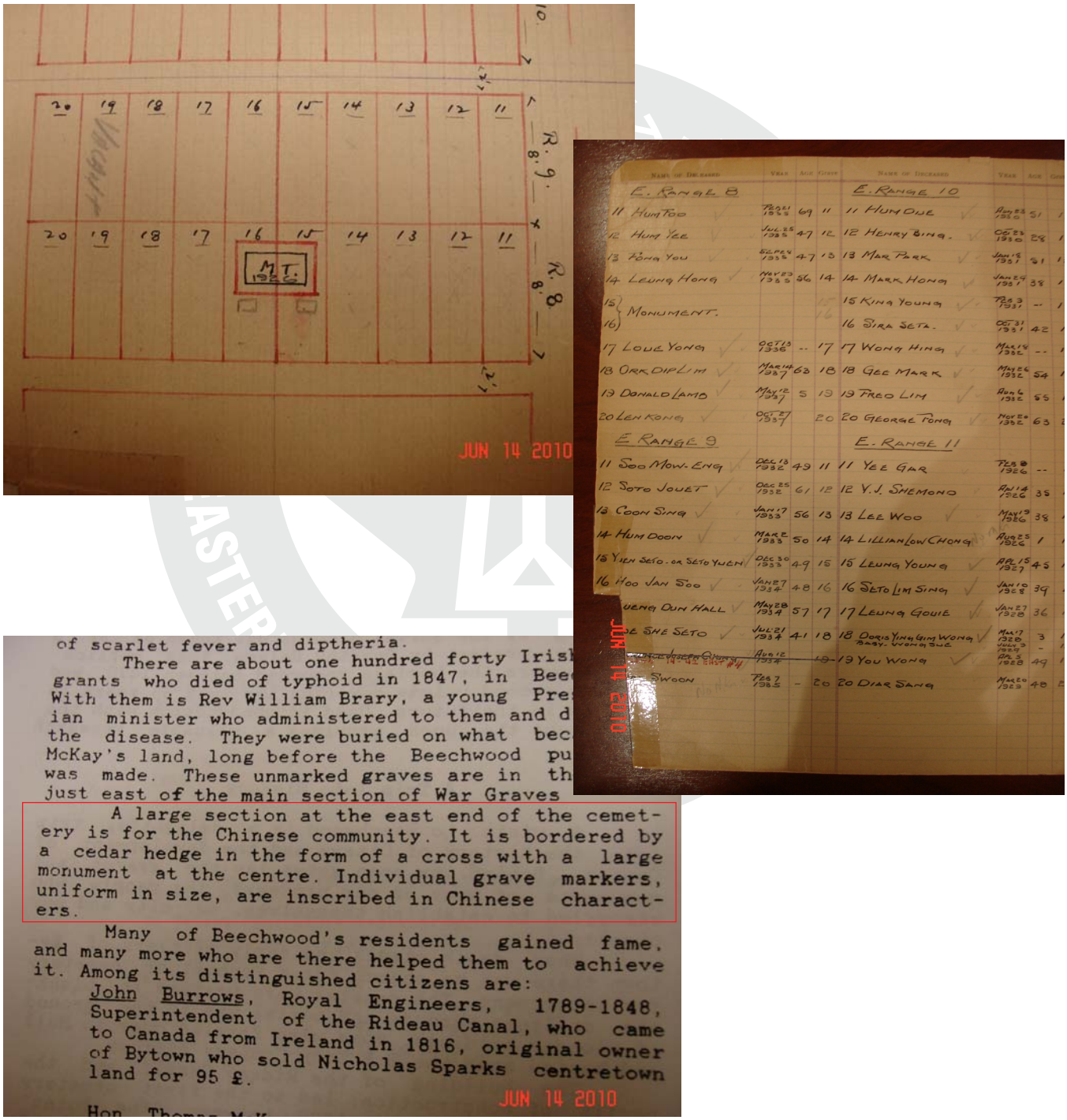
In Ottawa, as elsewhere in the country, Chinese Canadians always have to deal with the dilemma of how to integrate into mainstream society while still maintaining their heritage and traditional values and ethics. These two opposing forces can be illustrated by the example drawn from the family of William Poy, who was, in the 1940s, living on upscale Sussex Street with his wife and two children. Son Neville said his father took the family to Canada in 1942 from Hong Kong via a long and tortuous sea journey, after working for 10 years for the Canadian Trade Commissioner's Office in the British Crown Colony. The Poy family obtained Canadian citizenship by special Order in Council in 1949. Ottawa University's Professor Daigle said the English speaking Poy family had many friends in mainstream society. The children went to the best public schools in the city and would soon be sent to McGill University in Montreal and the University of Toronto for their tertiary education. Son Neville later became one of the first Chinese Canadian plastic surgeons and his wife, Vivienne, was the first Chinese Canadian appointed to the Senate of the Canadian Parliament in 1998. Daughter Adrienne first worked as a journalist, and was later appointed in 1999 as Canada's first Governor General of Chinese ancestry. Daigle said that "the Poys might cook Chinese food at home and got acquainted with the best known members of the small Chinese community on Albert Street, but they definitely never felt any of the prejudices and adverse conditions affecting the Chinese immigrants living and working in Ottawa in those days." Old-timers agreed that the Poys had for a long time, lived in an entirely different socio-economic circle outside Canada and were "practically strangers" to the close-knit Chinese community in the national capital region.

Following the repeal of the Exclusion Act, the 1950s witnessed once again the arrival of the first batch of "mail brides" in Ottawa from Guangdong province and the British Hong Kong. Mrs Marion Hum Yee (nee Ha Kwok-Chun), a young journalist who came in 1958 from Hong Kong, remembered that, under the Chinese Immigration Act, anyone in the Chinese community in Ottawa who applied to sponsor his fiancee to come to Canada for marriage would have to first deposit $1,000 with the federal immigration authorities. If the wedding did not occur within 30 days of the arrival of the bride-to-be, the government could and would use the deposit to purchase a return air ticket to send the woman back to where she came from. After protracted and hard negotiations with the federal government, these harsh and inhumane restrictions were gradually withdrawn in the early 1960s.

The status of women in Ottawa's Chinese community has long been suppressed for a host of reasons. In mainstream society, a woman was legally recognised as "a person" only since 1929. In the Chinese community, the centuries-old Confucian feudalistic tradition of a male-centric power structure was transplanted, undiluted, from across the Pacific Ocean and was readily accepted in mainstream Canada which was itself, even in the early 20th century, also very much a male-chauvinistic society. Very few Chinese women were educated. Those who had received secondary education from better-off families in China and Hong Kong would have to fight with their "teeth and claws" to have their voice heard at home. A man's decision was always final and his wisdom should never be challenged by either his wife or his children. Women were mostly banned from taking part in business discussions between their husbands and their partners. A few determined ones were allowed to take part in organising social welfare and fundraising activities for the Chinese community at large. Dr Robert Hum's mother, Loo Shee Hum, like the wives

of some open-minded heads of the first families before her, often got together with members of other merchant families in Ottawa to organise visits during Chinese festivals to isolated Chinese families and single male workers in nearby small towns and villages throughout the Ottawa River valley. She was well respected for her enthusiasm and leadership in community service during the 1950s and 1960s.

Some of the old records of the Chinese plot at the Beechwood Cemetery.



Mr. and Mrs. Sue Wong and their children in 1961 at their 50th wedding anniversary

Mrs. Sue Wong and her children and grandchildren, including the eldest daughter, Kam Oi, and her husband and younger son (1969)

Chinese Associations

The discovery of gold in the Fraser River Valley (1858-1859), coupled with a surge in demand for cheap labor triggered by the construction of the Cariboo Wagon Road (1863-64) and the Canadian Pacific Railway (1880-85) made British Columbia an alluring destination for thousands of poverty-stricken young Chinese workers from the rural area in southern Guangdong province. After the completion of the railway and with the onset of the ensuing depression, unemployment was widespread across the country.

The jobless and helpless Chinese laborers were forced to drift eastward over the Rockies to look for whatever work that was available in cities and towns along the railway tracks that they helped built. The federal government, under the mounting pressure from the exasperated trade unionists and vote-pandering anti-Asian politicians was compelled to impose, in 1885, a $50 Head Tax to discourage more Chinese from coming to Canada. However, the tax, which was increased ten fold to $500 in 1904, failed to stem the influx. As a last resort, the Canadian government, after coming to the conclusion that it was futile to negotiate an enforceable immigration treaty with China's northern government which it recognised, implemented the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923, despite protests from the Chinese community as a whole and its many mainstream society supporters.

Almost all of the first waves of Chinese gold miners and laborers who came in the second half of the 19th century were uneducated and timorous young peasants from the rural areas who found themselves, upon arrival, in an alien land full of physically bigger "foreign devils", speaking a language that they did not understand. Linguistic barriers, racial discrimination, occupational exclusion, social isolation and general apprehension combined to force the intimidated young workers to band together for security and support. Voluntary association quickly became the foundation of many mutual-assistance organisations in Canada's growing Chinese immigrant population, all featuring an identical Confucian paternalistic top-down power structure.

A few early comers who worked hard enough to become well-off and, in some cases, well-connected as well, often took it upon themselves to look after the welfare and well being of the less fortunate, the unemployed, the sick and the destitute, as well as the new arrivals, in exchange for their respect, subservience and loyalty. This elite class of leaders hailed from a small group of import-export traders, wholesalers, property owners, retail shopkeepers and commercial dealers. They were usually also the blessed ones who could afford to bring their families over to live together in Canada.

For close to 100 years from the 1860s to 1960s, these mutual-assistance organisations collectively played an important role in maintaining the internal peace and cohesion of the Chinese population. They were first introduced into the Chinese communities in Victoria and Vancouver from the U.S. west coast because of geographic proximity. The organisational structures, based principally on time-honored rules and rituals brought over from China, with improvisations and modifications to suit local conditions, could be roughly divided into four traditional categories: clan-based, district-based, fraternal and political.

All clan and district based associations were expected to play multiple essential roles, such as catering to the social, financial and physical needs of the low-income bachelor laborers as well as the unemployed transients, from the same clan or village. These associations' wide ranging functions included providing lodging (Fangkou) for the poor single working men; employment referral (but almost exclusively for fellow kinsmen or villagers); recreational activities (festival celebrations and small-wager traditional Chinese betting games like fantan and mahjong); providing financial aid for the sick and the elderly; raising funds for the burials of single bachelors who died penniless; and organising the periodic bone-collection and shipment of remains of the dead back to their native villages in China.

Because of its small population base (83 persons in 1901), no branch of such clan or district associations was established in Ottawa until the 1940s. The welfare and well being of their kinsmen or fellow villagers were traditionally taken care by the regional branches in Montreal, Quebec, which had a larger Chinese population (1,037 in 1901).

The fraternal associations transcended the narrow affiliation of kinship and county, pulling together resources of a larger membership from a wider cross section of the community. The political associations were mainly overseas branches of major political organisations in China. They drew their membership from different clan and district and fraternal associations. The popularity and legitimacy of these political groups in Canada rose and fell in tandem with the fortunes of their parent parties in China. All three major Chinese political parties -- the Chee Kung Tong (CKT), Kuomintang (KMT) and the Constitutional Party (Bao Wang Tang) -- had established small branches in Ottawa at different times during the first half of the 20th century.

The Chinese community in Ottawa, because of its location, has seen relatively more political and diplomatic action than other major Chinatowns in Canada. For most of the time until the mid-20th century, the Chinese associations would traditionally and expediently support the governing party in China that was recognised by Britain and Canada. The street-wise leaders had no desire to incur the wrath and displeasure of the resident official representatives from Beijing, fearing that they might complain to the Canadian authorities and demand official actions against the presence of the "illegal" political parties and their supporters and sympathisers. China's domestic politics often created trans-Pacific impacts on the Chinese community in Canada, Ottawa included.

The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), the first community-wide umbrella association in Canada, was founded in Victoria in 1884. It had for more than 20 years been generally considered a de facto Chinese government representative office, performing most of the functions of a consulate general. The CCBA often communicated with the federal government in Ottawa, on behalf of the Chinese diaspora in Canada, through either the Chinese consulate general in San Francisco, California, United States, or the Chinese legation in London, England.

Following Chinese monarchist reformer Liang Qichao's visit to the Canadian Parliament in 1903, a branch of his Chinese Empire Reform Association, later renamed the Constitutional Party (Bao Wang Tang) was set up in Ottawa. Ten years after the official visit of the Manchu government's special envoy Li Hongzhang, funds were made available in 1906 to strengthen China's diplomatic representation in Canada by setting up its first consulate in Ottawa, which was upgraded two years later to a consulate general. One of the major tasks of China's consulate general in Ottawa was to monitor and to complain, if and when deemed necessary, to the Canadian authorities about the "unlawful" activities of anti-Manchu government political organisations and their local sympathisers, as these groups were outlawed in China, they should not be allowed to operate openly in Canada.

The Chinese consulate general, on the other hand, also had to compete with the local branches of various Chinese political parties for the hearts and minds, and donations of the Chinese diaspora. Chinese Republican revolutionary leader Dr Sun Yat-Sen and another Monarchist reformer Kang You-Wei had made repeated visits to Canada, rallying financial and political support for their causes. Both being native sons of Guangdong, they apparently enjoyed a linguistic advantage over the Chinese diplomats who were mainly Mandarin-speakers from other Chinese provinces and would most likely encounter difficulties communicating verbally with the Hoyshan dialect-speaking leaders of Ottawa's tiny Chinese population of 162. After the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, successive generations of Chinese diplomats in Ottawa were known to have only periodic contact with the Chinese community, mostly at fund raising events for China's anti-Japanese war efforts and natural disaster relief as well as some other major political functions.

Chee Kung Tong (CKT), Canada's first Chinese fraternal/political association, was set up in 1862 in Barkersville, northern British Columbia. Its headquarters were in San Francisco. It was commonly known that CKT had, for quite a long while, monopolised jobs only for its members in certain trades. The Canadian CKT, headquartered in Victoria, had for a period of time in the early 20th century, raised funds for Dr Sun's Republican revolutionary campaigns. It changed its name to Chinese Freemasons in 1920, and for over half a century, it had been popular with the working men who constituted the backbone of the Chinese diaspora in Canada. In the late 1920s, the Constitutional Party (Bao Wang Tang) joined forces with the local lodge of the Chinese Freemasons (CKT) in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal in a futile attempt to thwart the fast growing KMT expansion in eastern Ontario and western Quebec cities. CKT's influence reached its peak in the 1940s with dozens of branches and boasting a national membership of 20,000 covering most provinces in Canada. The Chinese Freemasons Ottawa branch was formally established in 1941 under the leadership of the bigger Toronto regional branch.

After the founding of the Republic of China in 1911, the Kuomintang (KMT) was formed in the following year, attracting most of the leaders of the Chinese community. The better organised KMT was active in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal fighting against the CKT (and the small Constitutional Party) for control of the traditional Chinese associations. The KMT branch frequently engaged in making joint representations, in conjunction with other associations, on behalf of the Chinese community in its disputes with local authorities. However, the KMT , for a short while in the late 1910s, was keeping a low profile in Ottawa for political reasons. Chinese diplomats representing the northern government in Beijing protested to the Canadian government about its political activities here. As a result, in 1917 the federal government officially declared KMT "illegal" in Canada. The KMT was banned from conducting political activities in Canada from November 1918 until June of 1919 when it was allowed to function as a political party again.

Ottawa was represented in a major KMT eastern Canada regional meeting in February 1919. Under the leadership of a few prominent businessmen, the KMT succeeded in winning overwhelming support of the Chinese population in the nation's capital and neighboring towns. Being the government party in China which was recognised by Britain and Canada since the late 1920s, KMT managed in the 1930s to establish for itself a position of importance in the Chinese communities across Canada, enjoying widespread support of the business class and association leaders. The KMT opened its Ottawa branch on O'Connor Street in 1941.

Despite their continuous infighting and political differences, the two major Chinese political organisations in Canada agreed to a reluctant alliance during the Chinese anti-Japanese war (beginning in 1937) and later World War II (1941-45) to raise funds in support of China's (and the Allies') war efforts. The KMT was the governing party in China from 1927 to 1949 when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded. The post World War II Cold War and the Korean War (1950-1953) allowed the KMT to maintain the support of the prevalent anti-Communist sentiment in Canada as well as the majority of the Chinese population across the country who came mainly from the Guangdong's Siyi region. Most of them suffered significant loss of land and fortunes during the nation-wide purges launched by the new regime in China in the early 1950s.

Interviewees recalled that shortly after the founding of the PRC, youth associations made up mostly of Canadian-born Chinese sympathetic to the new government began to appear in major Chinese communities across the country, amongst them were the Chinese Youth Association in both Vancouver and Toronto and the East Wind Club in Montreal. The Club had briefly established a foothold in Ottawa in the mid-1950s. However, it was soon closed down following police enquiries into its reportedly pro-Beijing activities. The KMT's influence reached its zenith in the late 1950s while it retained control of most of the traditional clan and district associations as well as the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) until the late 1960s.

The Exclusion years from the mid-1920s to the late 1940s did a great deal of damage to the authority and legitimacy of the traditional clan and district associations. It was during these two critical decades that cracks in the established power structure began to appear as the result of several concurrent phenomena: the shut off of new arrivals from China; the departure for China of a sizable number of the old-timers; and an increasing number of locally born and educated Chinese Canadians. The first two factors led to a sharp depletion of the membership and revenue. The last one marked the arrival of a new generation of young challengers to the existing power structure. Many amongst them were reluctant to accept obediently the dictates of the older generation of wealthy merchants, successful entrepreneurs and artful political brokers and began to openly question their traditional wisdom and ways of conducting business.

The clan and district associations were the first to suffer a decline in manpower, income, usefulness and relevance. This downward spiral continued unabated in the post 1947 years as an increasing number of local born, the only segment of the Chinese population that was growing, albeit slowly, started to integrate themselves into mainstream society through a host of different channels. This situation was partly due to the traditional associations' reluctance and inability to transform themselves to meet the needs of their younger and better educated members. The leadership's lack of forward planning, its parochial concerns of the associations' own self-interests, and its failure to mobilise mainstream society's support to advance the collective political, economic and social status of the Chinese community were all major factors contributing to the gradual degradation of the once-influential organisations and their aging leadership.

With the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1947 and the founding of the PRC, the traditional clan and district associations received a much-needed shot in the arm and a temporary reversal of fortune. The 10 years or so beginning in the late 1940s saw an influx of young people, mostly male, from Guangdong's Siyi region, as the older immigrants sent for their families and children. A majority of those new arrivals, mostly in their late teens and early 20s, would enroll in local schools. However, because of their inability to understand the English language, they were often assigned to join younger children in junior grades. Many felt uncomfortable, if not embarrassed, then became disheartened and finally quit after a few months or a couple of years. Most of them then went to work in family-owned laundry shops or cafes in Chinatown and often had a hard time mingling with their local born cousins and or acquaintances in the same age groups because of the significant differences in social, educational and behavioral backgrounds. Interviewees were frank to point out that the Canadian-born Chinese youths were more inclined to socialise amongst themselves or with their peers from mainstream society than either with the "country bumpkins" from the old hometowns or the "stuck-up snobs" from Hong Kong. As a result, these lonely unilingual young people frequently sought comfort and companionship in the traditional associations during their free time and on their days off, hanging on to them like a security blanket, giving a boost to their depleted membership lists. A few determined and gifted ones succeeded in sweating it out at school, working hard on the English language and going all the way through university and post graduate studies to senior positions in their chosen careers.

... and the few lonesome families in small towns

Some young Chinese job-seekers who were either already in Canada during the Exclusion years or arrived after the Act's abolition did not have the good fortune of finding work in a large Chinese community. They had to travel to small towns and villages where their families or relatives operated a laundry-shop or cafe. Since they did not have access to the readily available support services provided by the traditional associations, they had to promptly adjust and adapt to the new environment in order to survive. The harsh reality pushed them onto a sharp learning curve, simultaneously learning to master the skills of running the family business and befriending the local civic, social, business and religious

leaderships. The reasons for their comparatively smoother and easier integration into mainstream society included the fact that their presence posed no tangible threat to the townsfolk in terms of employment, business and social order. Au contraire, they were often positively looked upon for their work ethics, courteousness, generosity and hospitality.

Long lasting friendship across ethnic, social-economic and religious lines between the non-Christian, uneducated and unilingual Chinese immigrants and members of the white, protestant and relatively better off majority in Canadian society did happen, but not too often. Yet, members of the host society were ready to accept and embrace the Chinese settlers in smaller towns and villages especially when the Chinese were there to offer a service that was previously unavailable or in short supply, such as vegetable gardening, domestic help, hand laundry shops and cafes with long business hours on weekends and holidays. Since the turn of the 20th century, friendly relationship across the color line in small towns was socially acceptable as long as there was no business and employment conflicts with the white majority.

Interviewees from small towns in eastern Ontario and western Quebec recalled that, the few Chinese families living there were mostly laundry shop or "greasy-spoon" operators. Lacking the support of a larger Chinese community and its traditional associations, they quickly developed a different set of coping mechanisms. They felt the urgent need to break out from self-imposed isolation and were strongly committed to make extra efforts to learn the English language so as to ensure quick integration into the host society, not only to promote their business but also to secure proper protection from the rowdy and unruly elements in town. As the only alien residents in town, they were more likely to join church congregations and local service clubs in order to develop common bonds with the townsfolk and to make themselves "at home" in the mainstream society. The Chinese cafe operators were often known as generous donors of food and beverage to local events and community celebrations. The Chinese residents in small towns reported that they had all experienced hooliganism and vandalism as well as racial slurs and taunts by the young people. They were naturally annoyed but did not find the incidents serious or frequent enough for them to move out. In eastern Ontario and western Quebec towns and villages, there was a general absence of organised or institutionalised racial discrimination of any sort against the Chinese small businessmen and their children.

The "cultural immersion" of these Chinese families was largely limited to the occasional trips to the bigger centres and/or receiving relatives and friends from nearby or faraway cities. They would customarily get together amongst themselves for a self-prepared meal and chit-chat during the Chinese and local festivals. The Chinese residents, employers and workers alike, communicated with their out of town business and social contacts in Canada and family members back in China through regular mail since telephone and telegraph were not easily available or affordable in those small towns and villages. It was quite common for the Chinese to use the local postal station as their drop off and pick up point for both incoming and outgoing mail; and to use the local branches of Canadian banks to remit money home to their families.

It was a frequent phenomenon that the only Chinese restaurant, or the bigger and better-appointed one, in the small town was always the unofficially designated meeting place of various local church and service groups. It was also usually the favorite "watering hole" for the local politicians, off-duty policemen and firemen. The Chinese restaurant was often the "place to go" for the towns people's weekly eat-out because of its low price, generous servings and warm service. During the early years of the 20th century and, particularly, the Exclusion period of 1923-1947, Chinese cafe owners, for a host of financial and legal reasons, were not able to bring their siblings or children from China to help out in their businesses. This situation created regular full-time and part-time job opportunities for the local housewives and youngsters. Many white parents were pleased to send their children to work for the Chinese and to befriend their children at school because of their widely recognised work ethics and other positive attributes. However, it was not all clear sailing in several provinces in

the years leading up to the Exclusion Act, as provincial and municipal legislatures in Saskatchewan (1912), Manitoba (1914) British Columbia (1924) all passed blatantly racist laws, for short periods of time, prohibiting Chinese restaurant operators from hiring white females as waitresses. The same restrictions were also put into effect in Ottawa and other towns in Ontario (1923).

Several interviewees remembered vividly the "significant change of attitude" from their local Caucasian fellow restauranteurs once they succeeded in securing a liquor licence for their "upgraded" restaurants, often through the assistance of their "buddies" in official circles. "All of a sudden, we became business rivals to our Caucasian friends," many said. This phenomenon serves to underline the cold hard reality that economic interests remain, to this day, some of the major roadblocks to total integration between the Chinese minority and the white majority in Canadian society at large. Quite a few of the successful Chinese entrepreneurs in small towns also dabbled in real estate investment with their local acquaintances, first acquiring the buildings that housed their business and home, then buying up well-chosen sites in busy business districts as revenue-generating properties. There were happy stories of the adventurous risk-takers becoming longtime partners of prominent local business people and well-off landlords themselves, while there were also others who claimed to have been short-changed by unscrupulous politicians and greedy lawyers who conspired to take advantage of their ignorance of existing laws and regulations, their linguistic deficiency and their isolated and helpless situation in the small town.

As the years went by and they grew older, many of the first generation small town entrepreneurs sold their business and real estate holdings to the local interests and moved to settle in a bigger city like Ottawa because of the availability of more comprehensive health care and financial services, as well as easy access to their children and a larger Chinese community with all its amenities.

The Chinese Freemasons Ottawa branch building on Somerset Street West.

A gift with Chinese inscription congratulating the opening of the Chinese Freemasons Ottawa branch in 1941

Chinese Laundry Shops and Cafes

It is ironic but true that hand laundry, traditionally part of a Chinese woman's household chores, had become a popular means for many a young Chinese man to earn a living in North America from the mid-19th century until the 1950s. As in the U. S., to set up a hand laundry shop in Canada required only a small capital investment and a minimum knowledge of the English language. However, one had to put in long and tedious hours of hard work in a humid and hot laundryroom with slippery floors and inadequate ventilation. For many Canadian middle-class city-dwellers, low cost hand laundry had been generally accepted as the "preferred occupation" of the majority of Chinese immigrants across the country from coast to coast.

The original Hintonburgh Laundry.
The best-known Chinese hand laundry shop in Ottawa and the national capital region for more than 50 years.

This phenomenon was mainly the result of the racially discriminatory policies and practices which prevented the Chinese immigrants from taking part in many other lines of productive activity in the economy. In order to eke out a meager livelihood in a basically segregated socio-economic environment, those desperate and destitute job-seekers were impelled to engage themselves in a service which required a low start-up investment and would not create resentment from the white working class in the host society. An average Chinese laundryman usually worked over 10 hours a day, seven days a week, according to Dr Ban Seng Hoe. The Chinese laundryman often charged lower prices, sometimes two thirds of what a larger and better-equipped white laundry shop would charge for the pick-up, cleaning, ironing and delivery of clothes and bedding.

If his business was expanding and extra help was needed to catch up with the increasing demand, a Chinese laundryman would look first amongst his own family, relatives, and fellow kinsmen who were already in Canada before sponsoring a brother or a close relative from the home village. If the new employee could not afford the fare, the employer would usually provide him with a loan for the one-way passage (by train if he was already in North America, and by boat, if from China). This tradition of clan and district based recruitment resulted in a unique pattern of chain migration and a quasi-monopoly of certain trades and occupations within the Chinese community in North America. For instance, most of the hand laundry operators were from the Hoyshan district while cafe and restaurant operators were from neighboring Hoiping district.

The employee was expected to start work right after arrival with little time to get orientated. He would be paid a low wage and given a bed in the back of the shop crowded with soiled clothes and all sorts of equipment. He often ate and worked with other employees and the employer in order to share expenses. Most of the laundrymen suffered from social isolation. They seldom ventured outside because of their inability to speak the English language and their sense of insecurity, opting to stay inside the over-crowded and poorly ventilated laundryroom-cum-home to the detriment of their physical and mental health. Some would become despondent and suffer from chronic depression. Almost all laundrymen came to Canada with the objectives to work hard, live frugally and, hopefully, save up enough money to return home later to live a well-off life in comfort. However, many of them never succeeded in getting rich in the "gold mountain" and died as lonely men with a broken dream, most before they were 50.

Between 1907 and 1945, more than 50 Chinese laundrymen were buried in Ottawa's Beechwood Cemetery. The first one was Lee John who died on June 12, 1907 at the age of 44.

Some younger and more enterprising employees would work for a few years then leave to start up their own laundry shops, usually in other parts of town or neighboring cities where there was a demand for the service. It was estimated that in the early 20th century, the capital needed to set up a laundry shop was about $600. There were several ways to raise the needed cash. One was to form a business partnership with several friends and fellow kinsmen, collectively sharing the capital, operating costs, the laundry work and whatever profit remained at the end of the year. Another way was to join a credit club organised by the mutual-assistance associations and bid by offering the highest monthly interest for a lump sum of money pooled together by members of the club. This kind of credit club was very popular amongst the early immigrants because it would be very difficult, if not outright impossible for the poor workers with their subsistence wages to borrow from a bank. After a few years of successful operation, these laundrymen would either leave their partners or a trusted employee (who could be a cousin, a relative or a close friend) in charge of the operation so that they could return to China to get married or visit family.

Beginning in the last quarter of the 19th century, Chinese laundry shops could be found from one end of the country to the other. As early as 1879, it was estimated there were already 300 Chinese laundrymen (17% of the total number of 1,700 gold miners) in British Columbia, with a majority of 126 concentrated in Victoria. After 1885, Chinese laundry shops began to dot the landscape in the prairie provinces, Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. In the late 19th century, the Chinese laundrymen often had to go into the white neighborhoods to collect soiled clothes for cleaning; their long queues, strange-looking clothes and alien features often stirred well-intentioned curiosity amongst the townsfolk as well as jeers and taunts from the local bullies. Old-timers claimed that for a few hand laundry shops that were not fully connected to the city's water supply network, the owners often had to go to nearby public mains or wells to collect water and bring it back to the shops. Mainstream journalists and cartoonists also regularly poked fun at the "pig tail, slant eyes and cone hats of the sons from the Celestial Kingdom".

Ottawa's "Laundryman Extraordinaire" Ho Lin Chong (second from right) and his father (seated) and siblings.

In 1891, early Chinese immigrants on Prince Edward Island were all men engaged in laundry business. Their arrival times coincided with those of the other Chinese laundrymen who landed in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Saint John, New Brunswick. In 1894, the first Chinese hand laundry shop was set up in St John's, Newfoundland. As in other cities across the country, a majority of hand laundry shops in the Maritime provinces were Chinese owned and operated. In the 1920s, there were reportedly 450 Chinese laundry shops in Montreal and 300 in Toronto. There was a time in Montreal when many Chinese laundrymen were affectionately known to their regular white patrons as "Charlie Chinaman" because a large number of them all used "Charlie" as their English name, an old-timer recalled.

The situation in Ottawa was no exception. Head of one of the early families, Joe Shung came to Ottawa in 1911, opened his own laundry and worked hard for more than 10 years before sending for his wife, Kai Voon in 1923. Son William Joe said his mother was one of the last Chinese Head Tax payers to enter Canada because she was lucky enough to be on the boat when the Chinese Exclusion Act came into effect on July 1, 1923.

When Ottawa's "Laundryman Extraordinaire" Ho Lin Chong came to Ottawa in 1920 at the age of 10, he went to school for two years, then started working in his father's laundry shop, getting paid about $18 a week. In the early 20th century, a Chinese laundryman could gross an average of $150 a month. Dr Hoe reported that in the 1950s, Ho charged five cents for a pair of underwear, 10 cents for a shirt, 15 cents for a pair of pants, and 25 cents for a collar or a bed-sheet. When Ho closed his shops in 1976, an Ottawa English language daily lamented that that Ho's departure "would take some starch out of Ottawa". Son-in-law Peter Wong said that Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's household sent its tablecloths to Ho's Hintonburgh Hand Laundry for starching. Ho's prominent customers could easily make the who's who list of Ottawa's high society. They notably included governors general, prime ministers (Mackenzie King, John Diefenbaker and Lester B. Pearson), Supreme Court justices, members of Parliament, senators, and prominent businessmen in the capital region. In 1949, when Ho's wife and their four daughters came from their home town of Hoiping to join him in Ottawa, the local English daily gave them a big "welcome to Canada" photo-story. Ho's three sons were born in Canada after the family reunion.

The dozens of Chinese laundry shops were scattered all over Ottawa in order to conveniently serve their white clientele in different neighborhoods. The Chinese dominated this service sector from the turn of the century to the 1950s. They reportedly owned 56 of the 58 local laundry shops in 1901, and 43 of 56 in 1931. During World War II, the Chinese monopolised 49 out of 50 hand laundry shops in the national capital region.

In the meantime, starting in the late 1930s, a critical shift took place in the occupational pattern of Ottawa's 300 Chinese residents. Enterprising businessmen raised funds through partnerships, credit clubs and/or personal loans from family and friends, to invest in the restaurant business, becoming owners, managers and chefs of their establishments. The first generation of Chinese-owned cafes and local "greasy spoons" served entirely Canadian cuisine. Interviewees claimed that most owners would rather hire Caucasian waitresses (to increase customers' comfort level by eliminating communication barriers) than allowing female family members to work either in the kitchen or in the dining room. They feared that their womenfolk might be harassed or teased by the white customers or Chinese bachelor workers.

The interviewees explained that the situation was quite different from that in the family-operated laundry shops because the wives and daughters did not have to venture outside of the laundryroom to work at the front or go around different neighborhoods to collect dirty clothes from regular white patrons. That was usually the job reserved for the youngest male employee. Moreover, the Chinese cafes on the whole served mostly customers from the lower socio-economic strata of the mainstream society, while the laundry shops' well-off clientele came mostly from the political, legal and business circles who preferred to have their white shirts and collars starched and hand-ironed by their favorite Chinese laundrymen who were more meticulous and attentive to detail.

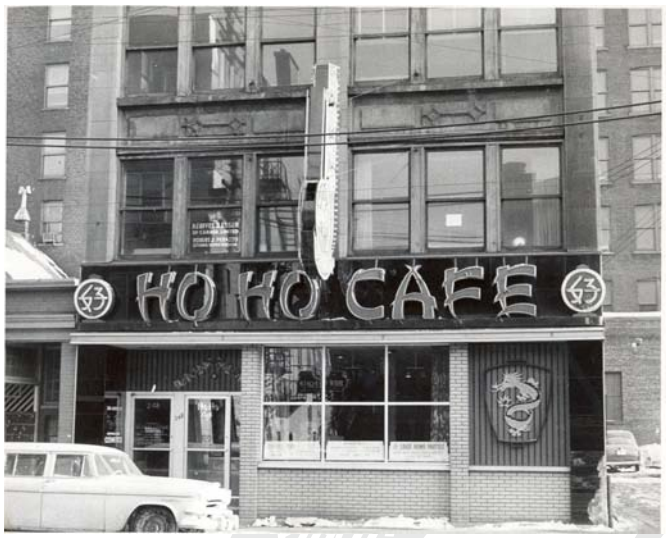
Interviewees said that in the 1930s and 1940s, Chinese-owned cafes often operated under Anglicised names such as Boston Cafe, Deluxe Restaurant, Leopold Boyle, Cavendish Cafe, and Arcadia Grill to name a few. The early generation of eateries in Ottawa and surrounding small towns served mostly simple North American food such as hamburgers, pork chops, steak and fries. North Americanised Cantonese dishes (chop suey) featuring beef chow-mein, chicken balls, sweet and sour pork, honey garlic ribs and chicken fried rice were added to the menu in the late 1940s. William Joe was one of the founders of the well-known Cathay Restaurant in 1946 on Albert Street at the foot of Parliament Hill. It was after two generations of Chinese cooking Canadian food for their Caucasian customers that a few risk-taking entrepreneurs would dare to offer Cantonese-style menus to their local patrons.

In the 1950s, a growing list of licensed Chinese restaurants with Chinese names began serving both Chinese and Canadian food on their bilingual menus. The better known ones amongst them were the Ho Ho, Ding Ho, Canton Inn, Cathay, Carleton,

Champagne and Astor in Ottawa; and Ho Wah, Uncle Ho, Lux Cafe, and Paris in Hull, Quebec. Beginning in the1960s, with waves of new Chinese immigrants arriving from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia, Ottawa's Chinese restaurants were given a timely robust boost. The growing population with greater discretionary spending power triggered a surge in demand for authentic southern and northern Chinese dishes in an increasing number of upscale Chinese restaurants.

Family photos of Ho Lin Cheong and wife and daughters and sons.

The Ho Ho cafe on Albert Street, about 10 minutes walk from Parliament Hill in Ottawa, was jointly owned by Hum Chong Sam, Thomas Hum and William Poy, father of Adrienne Clarkson, Canada's first Governor General of Chinese ancestry.



The outside and inside of the Ho Ho Cafe

An Overseas Chinese ID card issued by the Chinese Consulate to Hum Chong Sam in 1944.

An evening gathering of members of an Ottawa Chinese social group, Len Yee Sai, at the Ding Ho Cafe in the 1950s.

Christian Church and the Chinese Community

The relationship between the Chinese and the Christian church goes back a long, long way. The Catholic and Protestant missionaries had a deep understanding of the Chinese society and culture because of hundreds of years of missionary work in China and Asia. The Protestant missionaries have been in contact with the early Chinese communities of gold miners and railway workers on Canada's west coast since the mid-19th century with a view to convert the young heathens to the Christian faith. The Presbyterian and the Methodist Churches were both well known for being the vocal defenders of the well being of the segregated and marginalised Chinese laborers.

By the turn of the 20th century, the Methodist missionaries concentrated their work on the Chinese population in the western provinces of British Columbia and Alberta while their Presbyterian counterparts were active in Ontario (Toronto) and Quebec (Montreal). In the meantime, Chinese missionaries began to show up in selected Chinese communities across Canada. They included both early Chinese converts in Canada who decided to take up missionary work and the bilingual graduates of the mission schools in Guangzhou (also known as Canton), capital city of Guangdong province in southern China.

The Protestant pastors consistently condemned gambling, a popular pastime amongst the young Chinese bachelors, as a major source of evil. They advocated church going as an alternative route for the lonely and despondent workers to break away from the depressing social isolation in the Chinese ghettos. The church had set up English classes for thousands of Chinese immigrants, mostly the younger ones, across the country to help them learn the language so that they could interact more easily in an Anglo-Saxon society. As well, the Protestant church provided a safe and convenient conduit for the Chinese immigrants, especially the first generation Canadian born Chinese (CBC) to integrate into the mainstream society which was predominantly white and Christian.

The Protestant church was widely rumored to be behind at least one of the police raids in the mid-1960s of the gambling dens in Ottawa's Chinatown. Interviewees presented different versions of the incident. Basically, it was recalled that a report was made to the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) by a Chinese preacher, or his wife, following repeated complaints from the angry and hungry wives of several Chinese workers who frequently gambled away their hard-earned wages at the "casinos", leaving their families in destitution. Several people were arrested. A few workers were fined $25 and set free. The raid marked the gradual disappearance of organised gambling in social clubs in Ottawa's Chinatown. Many old-timers privately credited the pastor for "doing a good deed" for the Chinese community. As to why the Ontario Provincial Police and not the Ottawa police were contacted, the commonly accepted explanation was that certain officers of the city police's vice squad were known to be "pretty friendly" with the operators of the gambling dens.

In Ontario, the Christian influence was particularly strong in Toronto since the late 19th century when Protestant missionaries began work in the city's Chinese community. In 1905 the first Chinese Presbyterian church was established there. The Protestant church played a relatively significant role in the Chinese community in Ottawa, many old-timers remembered fondly the Protestant church on Lisgar Street and several of its Chinese pastors sent in from western Canada. By 1920, the Presbyterian missionary work in Toronto and in other provinces east of Manitoba was administratively organised into the Eastern Canada Mission. Five years later, the Presbyterian church, Methodist church and two other churches joined together to become the United Church of Canada. Toronto was selected as the headquarters of the Canadian United Church Missions to China.

The Protestant church worked diligently for the betterment of the lot of the Chinese immigrants and their children marginalised in a prejudiced host society with widespread

anti-Chinese sentiments and preconceived biased notions. It believed that one effective way to ensure smooth assimilation of the Chinese heathens into the Christian faith and to minimise possible conflicts between Chinese tradition and Christian values was to keep the number of new Chinese immigrants at a controlled level. During the Chinese Exclusion Act debate, the Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican missionaries did not really oppose the Bill's exclusionist feature. They were in favor of limiting the number of newcomers so as to make the conversion of those who were already here easier. The missionaries later changed their position and joined the Chinese diaspora in opposing the Bill mainly because of two major concerns of their own. First and foremost was that Chinese ministers and pastors might not be able to enter Canada under the new legislation, thus hindering their missionary work in Chinese communities across Canada; and secondly, disallowing Chinese family reunion in Canada was "inhuman and harmful" because that would ultimately lead to "social immorality (prostitution)" and inter-racial marriage, which the white dominated church considered to be "undesirable".

By 1923, it was reported that about 10% of the Chinese in Canada were Christians. Ottawa was said to have a higher percentage of Christians than many other Chinese communities. In 1931, the Chinese Christian population went up to about 16% (or 7,600). In 1941, it continued to rise to nearly 30% (10,000 out of a total Chinese population of 35,000). Of all the provinces, Ontario's Chinese population always had the highest percentage of Christians in the country.

One of the early families in Ottawa, Joe Shung who arrived in 1911, became affiliated with the United Church in 1917. By 1920, the Chinese United Church, home to Ottawa's first Chinese congregation was established. Most of the locally born Chinese youth and many school-attending new immigrant teenagers were actively involved in church-sponsored educational, sporting and social events. The Chinese Mission formed in 1921 became a busy centre of activities throughout the 1930s. Apart from offering Chinese language (Hoyshan dialect) classes to the younger generation, it was also the hot-spot where Ottawa's Chinese Christian Young People Society organised many popular pastimes such as dances, fashion shows, dramas, fundraisers and hockey games featuring the "Chinese Aces", an all-Chinese team made up of teenagers from the Joe, Wong and Seto families. The team often toured cities in eastern Ontario to raise funds in support of China's anti-Japanese war efforts and natural disaster relief. The first generation CBC, in their attempt to integrate and gain acceptance in the mainstream society, often chose to cultivate close association with the Protestant church and, through its many activities, develop wider personal, professional and business contacts with various segments of the Canadian society.

During the World War II years, the Protestant and Catholic churches played an active role in participating in fund raising functions organised by the local Chinese community. After the war, its many leaders added their collective voice in support of the Chinese community's concerted lobbying for the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

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EOHSA welcomes any additional information and insight which our readers may provide to help enrich the contents of this webpage.

Interviewees

Individuals with English names

Chan Bing-Yin, Jimmy
Chan, Sam
Chin, Gladys
Chong, Norman
Chou, Tony
Gen, Jimmy
Hong, Dr Kim
Howe, Joan
Huang, Eddie
Hum, Marion (nee Ha)
Hum, Dr Robert
Joe, William
Kong, Jimmy
Kung Yee, Mrs
Lam, Raymond
Law, Park
Lim, June
Liu, Ann
Ng, Kai-Wah, Raymond (D)
Ng, Kam-Sui
Poy, Dr Neville
Seto, Edward
Seto, Peter
Tam,Chiu-Yin
Tang, Ka-Cheung, Albert
Van, Tsin (D)
Wong, Dr Douglas
Wong, Fred
Wong, Kwok-Keung, Peter
Woo, Poy

Individuals with Chinese names

王海
司東立
司徒漢章
伍智棠
伍　傑
何美愛
周秀娟
梁高倫
黃春活
鍾策威
鍾健威
鍾樹威
譚合貴
譚澤昂
譚迺佐
關玉蓮

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