

Remembering
The 100th Anniversary
of the
Chinese Exclusion Act



SENATE | SÉNAT
CANADA

Foreword

The Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 was one of the most repugnant laws ever passed by the Parliament of Canada. Better known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, it was the culmination of governmental efforts to curb the entry of Chinese people to Canada. Despite the role of Chinese labourers building the most difficult stretches of the trans-Canada railway and their contribution to the settlement of the west coast, European migrants, who were themselves settlers in a land long inhabited by indigenous peoples, saw the Chinese as an inferior race that was not suitable for long-term residency in the new Dominion. For 24 years, Chinese immigration to Canada was essentially halted, and any Chinese person already in Canada was forced to register with the authorities, on threat of jail, fines or deportation.

The 100th anniversary remembrance of the Chinese Exclusion Act was marked by numerous groups across Canada, through exhibitions, performances, lectures, books, and – not least – testimony from elderly Chinese Canadians who experienced the period of exclusion. To support and augment these activities, I was honoured to work with Senator Victor Oh and Action Chinese Canadians Together (ACCT) in hosting a National Remembrance Ceremony in the Senate of Canada. It was, after all, the Upper House that made possible a deplorable law, and it was in the Senate that some of the most odious speeches were delivered. The ceremony, held on 23 June 2023 in the Senate Chamber was, in a way, a cleansing ceremony for the institution.

Today's Senate, and the Canada that it represents, is a far cry from the country of 1923. It is unthinkable that a Chinese exclusion act could be contemplated by contemporary parliamentarians. Even so, the Canadian public and its representatives of 100 years ago found ways to not only justify a racist law, but to take pride in it. That is why the remembrance events in Ottawa and across the country are not only about marking a blot on Canada's history, but also a call for vigilance against modern forms of exclusion. Even as we celebrate a Canada that is more open to the world, more accepting of different cultures and backgrounds, more aware of its colonial past and subjugation of indigenous peoples, and more determined

to not repeat the mistakes of the past, we must resist the evergreen impulses that seek new ways to divide, to stigmatize, and to exclude Canadians because of who they are, where they come from, and what they believe.

This volume is a compilation of the speeches delivered by my honourable colleagues in the Senate of Canada on the occasion the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, as well as a memento of the Remembrance Ceremony on 23 June 2023, the accompanying exhibition in the Senate of Canada building, and a rally on Parliament Hill attended by some 4,000 Chinese Canadians from across the country. I am deeply grateful to the many people from coast to coast who contributed to the marking of 100 years since the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act. This volume is dedicated to them.

The Honourable Yuen Pau Woo
Independent Senator for British Columbia

Table of Contents

Inquiry No. 11: Calling the Attention of the Senate	5
THE SPEECHES	7
The Honourable Senator Yuen Pau Woo	9
The Honourable Senator Paula Simons	17
The Honourable Senator Mary Jane McCallum	23
The Honourable Senator Mobina Jaffer	29
The Honourable Senator Victor Oh	35
The Honourable Senator Stan Kutcher	39
The Honourable Senator Ratna Omidvar	45
L'honorable sénatrice Marie-Françoise Mégie	49
The Honourable Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia	53
THE EXHIBITION	57
THE CEREMONY	73
THE RALLY	111
The Right of Final Reply	135
Acknowledgements	140



SENATE | SÉNAT
CANADA

Inquiry No. 11

Calling the attention of the Senate to the one hundredth anniversary of the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, the contributions that Chinese Canadians have made to our country, and the need to combat contemporary forms of exclusion and discrimination faced by Canadians of Asian descent

*Tabled in the Senate of Canada on February 7th 2023 during the 1st Session
of the 44th Parliament by the Honourable Senator Yuen Pau Woo*

THE SPEECHES



The Honourable Senator **Yuen Pau Woo**

— February 14th 2023 —

Honourable senators, 100 years ago, in this chamber, senators voted to adopt the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923. This piece of legislation is better known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, because it effectively prohibited the entry of ethnic Chinese to Canada for 24 years.

I am launching an inquiry to call attention to this stain on our institution and to the profound hurt that it caused the Chinese Canadian community. I invite all senators to contribute to the inquiry, which has two other parts to it — the celebration of contributions that Chinese Canadians have made to the country, and a reflection on contemporary forms of prejudice and exclusion faced by Canadians of Asian descent.

On June 23, Senator Oh and I will be hosting an event in the Senate of Canada with Action Chinese Canadians Together to remember the Chinese Exclusion Act and to pledge an end to all forms of exclusion of Chinese and other Asian Canadians. We have invited the Government of Canada to announce on that day the commissioning of a centenary plaque that we hope will find a permanent home in the Parliament of Canada. The ignominy of Chinese exclusion began here in Parliament, and it is here in Parliament that the ignominy should be undone.

I feel a special responsibility for remembering the hundredth anniversary, because I'm a senator from the province that was most ardently in favour of Chinese exclusion. Odious speeches in favour of the act were made in this chamber, and they were made by my predecessors — senators representing British Columbia.

As the first Chinese Canadian senator from B.C., I have a special duty to disavow their legacy and to remind my fellow British Columbians of a dark past. Here is a sample of the ignorance and prejudice that was uttered in our chamber. On the question of whether wives of Chinese already in Canada should be exempted from the act, one B.C. senator said:

If you are going to open the door and allow wives to come in, you might as well give British Columbia to the Chinese. We have enough Orientals in our Province now. When I say that there are 2,000 business licenses taken out in the city of Vancouver alone by Orientals, you will realize that. The Chinese have gone into every business that you can name, and I think there are even one or two lawyers.

And this is from another of my B.C. predecessors:

. . . out of a population of less than half a million we have 30,000 Chinese. . . . They are of no use to us; we will never assimilate them, we will never make Canadians out of them. You might far better introduce men more nearly akin to the race to which we belong. The mind of the Chinaman is absolutely different from the mind of the ordinary white mind. You cannot in any possible way find out just how the Chinese mind works. It is very true that in a way the Chinese are good citizens. They make good domestic servants and faithful workers, but they will never help us to build up a Canada of which we will be proud.

Some of you may be thinking that the Canadian government has already come to terms with the Chinese Exclusion Act with the issuance of an apology by former prime minister Stephen Harper in 2006. In fact, that apology was for the head tax, and it glossed over the Chinese Exclusion Act, which the former Prime Minister simply expressed sorrow over. The lesser emphasis placed on the Exclusion Act is, I think, due to a misunderstanding about the significance of that legislation.

The Exclusion Act is often thought of as a kind of victimless crime in the sense that we will never know the names of the Chinese excluded from Canada because they did not even have the chance to try to enter the country. It is unlike the head tax, which affected real people who had certificates to prove they had paid this unjust levy, and for which a small number received compensation following the 2006 apology.

The idea of a victimless crime, however, is a misreading of history, because there were, in fact, many victims. They were the Chinese Canadians already in the country who were

subjected to humiliation because of a law that essentially said that people of their sort were not welcome in a place that they had already inhabited for decades. The fact that the act came into effect on Dominion Day added insult to injury. For that reason, many Chinese Canadians at the time took to calling July 1 “Humiliation Day.”

The humiliation went beyond the fact that their kith and kin were not allowed in the country. The act also required that every Chinese person already in Canada had to register within 12 months of its coming into force. Failure to do so could result in a fine, jail, or both. Even after registration, Chinese Canadians faced ongoing harassment from enforcement officers who questioned the veracity of the information provided by registrants.

The practical effect of the Exclusion Act in Canada, therefore, is that it was a “registry of unwanted foreigners.” Do you wonder why so many Chinese Canadians today are wary of efforts to again register those who are already in the country but who are deemed to have the wrong connections or backgrounds? Look no further than the dark history of the Chinese Exclusion Act. In fact, the Chinese community at the time had a different name for this bill. It was called the “Cruelty Act.”

On July 1, 2023, the Chinese Canadian Museum in Vancouver will officially open its doors with an exhibition entitled, “The Paper Trail,” which will be about the impact of the “Cruelty Act” on Chinese Canadians. One of the exhibits will be the lyrics of a song written 100 years ago lamenting the “Cruelty Act.” It was, in fact, the winning entry in a contest organized by the community to raise awareness and mobilize action. Here are the opening lines, loosely translated from the original Taishan dialect.

*The First of July is just ahead,
Our hearts are filled with mortal dread.
Because of a law that ignites a fire,
That will sever compatriots caught in its ire.*

I would sing this song for you, but the music is lost — and you don’t want to hear me sing anyway. We have therefore commissioned a young Chinese Canadian composer to write a fresh score for the lyrics, and our goal is for the song to be sung in this chamber on June 23.

Apart from the fact that this institution made the act possible, I hardly need remind honourable senators that our building is a former railway station and part of the railway line

that Chinese labourers were brought into this country to build, under the most difficult of circumstances. A solemn ceremony here in this very building would provide a measure of, well, cleansing.

There's much more to be said about the "Cruelty Act" and its long-term impact on Chinese Canadians and Canadian society, but I must move on to the rest of my inquiry, the second part of which is to celebrate the accomplishments of Chinese Canadians since the repeal of the act in 1947. That was also the year when Chinese and South Asians were given the right to vote in a federal election, made possible in part by the hundreds of Chinese who volunteered to fight for Canada in the Second World War, even though they were not recognized as citizens.

This aspect of the inquiry is, in some ways, the easy part because it's so obvious that Chinese and other Asian Canadians have achieved great success in many fields and have contributed richly to Canada. But it is also the most difficult part because I cannot possibly do justice to the multitudes of Chinese Canadians who deserve to be recognized. Perhaps I can leave the job of naming some of these individuals to those of you who will speak to this inquiry and who might want to single out some members of your community for recognition.

What I will do instead is to point out that, in spite of all their accomplishments, Chinese Canadians are severely under-represented in positions of leadership across Canada's mainstream institutions, including the federal civil service, the courts, public and corporate boards, arts, university and hospital administration and, not least, Parliament and the ranks of cabinet ministers.

For example, a 2019 study of the largest organizations in eight major sectors in the GTA — the Greater Toronto Area — found that Chinese Canadians who represent 11% of the population in the region account for only 2% of leadership positions. The representation of Chinese Canadian women in these positions is even lower — at just 1%.

This is a bit of a puzzle because Chinese Canadians are not generally lumped in with other equity-seeking groups, and there's a general assumption that the community is doing just fine on most economic and social indicators. I think the answer to this puzzle lies in the community itself, as well as outside of it.

Many Chinese immigrant families prioritize diligence and keeping their heads down, rather than seeking to challenge the establishment and assuming leadership roles. A common

saying among Chinese immigrant families is, “We are guests in this country,” which is, in a sense, a sentiment of humility and respect but also one that was cultivated by a history of discrimination and exclusion.

Chinese Canadians are no longer guests in this country, regardless of when they arrived. They should neither think of themselves as guests nor be treated as such. No one has the right to tell us to go back to the country we came from — not even the former chief of staff to the Prime Minister who said that to me because he did not like my views.

That brings me to the third part of the inquiry: Seventy-five years after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, there are still forms of exclusion in Canadian society. We know that to be true for Indigenous people and racialized groups across the country. In matters of systemic discrimination, allyship among Indigenous and visible minority groups is vital, even if the histories and needs of different communities are not the same.

Chinese Canadians face at least three kinds of modern exclusion. The first is old-fashioned racism, not unlike the sort that led to the Chinese Exclusion Act 100 years ago. This is the impulse behind many of the unprovoked attacks on Asian Canadians in recent years. The number of unreconstructed racists is probably small, but they are aided and abetted by seemingly respectable folks who nevertheless feed racial animus by insinuating generalizations about Chinese people in Canada and the ills that they are alleged to have brought to society — for example, money laundering, unaffordable housing and the epidemic of opioid deaths.

The second form of exclusion is a function of long-held stereotypes about Chinese Canadians and what they are good for or good at. Yes, the Chinese are super at math and engineering. They make great doctors and lawyers. They are amazing musicians and generally good citizens. But are they suitable for leadership positions? I have already said that this is a problem that Chinese Canadians must confront in terms of their self-perception and personal aspirations, but it is also an issue for our establishment institutions to reflect on.

The third exclusion is the most insidious because it is an exclusion that seeks to divide the Chinese community into those who are acceptable and those who are not. An acceptable Chinese Canadian is one who conforms to a certain view of the world, disavows affiliations with individuals and groups that are blackballed for political reasons, and publicly voices opposition to what has been deemed as the all-encompassing menace that is the People’s Republic of China. Not conforming to these canons is seen as suspicious at best or, more ominously, as a litmus test of disloyalty and malfeasance against Canada.

This is the kind of exclusion that celebrates Chinese Canadians if they vote the right way in an election but who are deemed to have been swayed by sinister forces if they didn't.

It is the kind of exclusion that questions the motives of Chinese community groups who bought PPE — personal protective equipment — in large quantities to send to China during the early days of COVID, and then questions them again when they brought large quantities of PPE from China to distribute in Canada when we were experiencing a spike in infections.

It is the kind of exclusion that assumes every workplace infraction in the technology sector is an instance of espionage, that frames collaborations between Canadian and Chinese scientists as intrinsically suspect and that calls on Chinese Canadian researchers to turn their backs on long-standing partnerships in the mainland.

Each of these exclusions has a justification that one can be sympathetic to, but the sum of these attitudes and actions is stigmatization, demoralization and alienation — just like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 100 years ago.

I know the Chinese community is not homogeneous and that Chinese Canadians occupy views on all parts of the political spectrum, as well as on a variety of geopolitical issues. That is a strength of the community that should be celebrated. We must not, however — and here I am speaking to Chinese Canadians — allow this diversity to be used as a form of internal segregation, not least by members of the community itself. I hope the one hundredth anniversary is an opportunity for Chinese Canadians of all stripes to reflect on the collective experience of their forebears during the period of the Chinese Exclusion Act and to work together to prevent modern forms of exclusion from dividing the community.

As for this chamber, I hope the inquiry is a reminder of how wrong the Parliament of Canada was 100 years ago and how easy it was to get it so wrong. There were no recorded votes against the bill and, by all accounts, public opinion was massively in favour of it. Once it became accepted wisdom that Chinese people were a threat to Canada, passing this and other laws to counter the threat became only too easy. Let's make sure history does not repeat itself.

Honourable colleagues, I hope you will consider speaking to this inquiry, and I look forward to your interventions.

Thank you.



The Honourable Senator **Paula Simons**

— March 28th 2023 —

I'm honoured to rise today to speak to Senator Woo's inquiry which calls our attention to the enduring legacy of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which passed into law on July 1, 1923, one hundred years ago.

The act was designed by the government of William Lyon Mackenzie King. It put an end to the old head tax system, and instead, slammed the door on Chinese immigration entirely.

The rules were strict. Only four classes of Chinese people were allowed entry: diplomats and government representatives; children who had been born in Canada but left the country for educational purposes, but only if they returned in less than two years; students who were attending university or college; and, in rare circumstances, merchants who had received special status from the Minister of Immigration and Colonization.

Ships that brought Chinese immigrants to Canada were only allowed to carry one Chinese person for every 250 tonnes of total ship weight. Those who'd been born here all had to register and carry photo identification.

The language of the 1923 act empowered the police to detain and arrest, without a warrant, any person of Chinese origin or descent whom they suspected of having entered the country illegally. Those who were arrested were detained until they could provide legal proof that they were allowed to be in Canada. Those who could not faced deportation.

The result, by some calculations: Fewer than 50 people, and according to some sources as few as 15, were able to emigrate from China to Canada between 1923 and 1947.

To put things in perspective, in 1921, Canada had admitted 2,707 immigrants from China. In 1924, we admitted just three, and by 1925, just one.

In his original speech last month, Senator Woo suggested that one of the reasons that the Exclusion Act has not received as much attention as the head tax may be because most of its victims were hypothetical, the immigrants who might have come here if only they had been allowed.

But if I may be allowed to disagree with my respected friend and colleague, that's not quite true. The primary and very real victims of the Exclusion Act of 1923 were the wives and children still in China, who were not allowed to travel here to be reunited with their husbands and fathers. And since an estimated 80 per cent of Chinese Canadian men had spouses and families in China, there were plenty of stranded families.

Because of the difficulty and expense of travel — made all the more expensive by the head tax — it had been common practice for Chinese men to come to places such as Alberta and British Columbia to establish themselves, leaving their wives and families behind, hoping to bring them to Canada later. Now that door was slammed shut.

By 1931, the ratio of Chinese men to women in Toronto was 15 to 1. In Calgary, there were 12 Chinese men for every one woman. In Vancouver, there were 11 times as many Chinese men as Chinese women.

Families were, in many cases, permanently separated, and family ties forever sundered.

Wives left behind in China often suffered from social stigma and cultural isolation. Meanwhile, the lonely bachelors in Canada often turned to gambling houses and brothels to pass the time, to the distress of Chinese community leaders. The Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver protested that the lack of women and family ties in their communities led to “an undisciplined indulgence in bad habits and entertainment.”

The result, of course, was to fuel racist beliefs that the Chinese themselves were culturally immoral, even though such “bad habits” were the logical result of creating a segregated bachelor society.

Eventually, the draconian law's natural consequences became evident. The Chinese population of Canada started to fall dramatically. In 1931, there were 11,592 Chinese people living in Vancouver. By 1941, the population had plummeted to 5,973.

That's all the more shocking and disturbing when you think that anyone who went back to China in that 10-year period was entering an active war zone, a country subject to Japanese occupation.

Between 1921 and 1951, Canada's overall Chinese population dropped by 25 per cent. That was most assuredly a feature — and not a bug — of the Exclusion Act. It was designed by the racist Mackenzie King government not just to keep Chinese immigrants from coming in, but to drive those who were already here back out again.

It was not only Chinese Canadians, and would-be Chinese Canadians, who suffered as a result of the Exclusion Act. Canada, too, paid for its xenophobia and its bigotry by losing out on the talent and drive of those who were denied entry.

In this context, I think it's illustrative to look at some of the extraordinary accomplishments of Chinese Canadians who came of age during the very time the Exclusion Act was in place.

Dr. Victoria Chung was born in 1897 in Victoria, the city which gave her her name. She was the first person of Chinese Canadian descent to become a doctor — not just the first female Chinese Canadian doctor, but the first Chinese Canadian doctor, period.

In 1923, the year the Exclusion Act was passed, the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Society sponsored Chung to go to China to work at a hospital there. But when she tried to come back to Canada, she was told she had been in China too long and was ineligible to live in the country of her own birth. Her parents made the choice to leave Canada to come be with her, forfeiting their right to return to the country where they had lived for decades. Dr. Chung could have fled China when the Japanese invaded. Instead, she continued to work as a physician and missionary through the war and the Chinese Revolution.

Peter Wing was born in Kamloops, British Columbia, in 1914. A successful businessman, he became the youngest member of the Kamloops Board of Trade in 1934. He went on to serve as the Mayor of Kamloops for three terms, making him the first Chinese Canadian to serve as mayor in Canada and, indeed, the first person of Chinese descent to be elected mayor anywhere in North America.

George Ho Lem was born in Calgary in 1918. His mother, Mary, was the first recorded Chinese-Canadian woman to live in that city. He was a dry cleaner, a restaurateur and a successful horse breeder who won two Alberta Derbies. He was a director of the Calgary Stampede board for 18 years. He was elected a Calgary alderman in 1959 and then went on to become the first Chinese Canadian elected to the Alberta legislature.

Gretta Wong Grant was born in London, Ontario, in 1921. In 1946, the year before the Chinese Exclusion Act ended, she was called to the bar in Toronto as Canada's first Chinese-Canadian female lawyer. A graduate of Osgoode Hall, she went on to serve as London's Assistant City Solicitor, the Director of Legal Aid, London, and as the first woman to head her local bar association. But then Gretta's whole family was extraordinary. She may have been the duffer. Her two older sisters were doctors who had attended medical school at the University of Western Ontario, and her younger sister earned a PhD in biochemistry.

Douglas Jung was born in Victoria in 1924. He was 20 when he volunteered to serve in the Canadian Army among a group of 13 Chinese Canadians who volunteered for Operation Oblivion, a British Special Operations Executive mission to send secret agents into Japanese-occupied China to serve as spies and saboteurs.

After the war, Jung attended law school and become a successful lawyer. In 1957, 10 years after the Chinese Exclusion Act ended, he was elected as Canada's first Chinese-Canadian member of Parliament.

Norman Kwong was born in Calgary in 1929 and grew up during the ugliest years of the Chinese Exclusion Act, but in 1948, at the age of 18, he began an extraordinary career in football. He played for the Calgary Stampeders for three years, becoming the first Chinese Canadian player in the Canadian Football League, the CFL, and the youngest to win a Grey Cup. He spent 10 more glorious years playing for Edmonton, winning three more Grey Cups and earning the nickname "the China Clipper." He twice won the Schenley Award for the most outstanding Canadian player in the league, and in 1955, he was named Canada's male athlete of the year. He then went on to a successful career in business and became a co-owner of the Calgary Flames, making him the first — and perhaps the only — person to win both the Stanley Cup and the Grey Cup. After years of dedicated public service, he was named Lieutenant Governor of Alberta in 2005, filling the role with distinction and huge public popularity.

I could go on telling such stories, but I think these few examples illustrate my point. Just think of the extraordinary obstacles all those people had to overcome. Now imagine what we as Canadians lost out on with our self-sabotaging racism, all the talent and drive we turned away or drove away.

Now, we need to be extremely careful that we don't repeat the mistakes of our past and let prejudice and paranoia cloud our judgment or lead us to question the patriotism and loyalty of Canadians based on ethnic origin. Let it be said: Serious, well-founded allegations of interference by the Chinese government into provincial or federal Canadian politics should be properly, thoroughly and swiftly investigated. If and when they are substantiated, we must take firm action to safeguard the integrity of our elections and we should not be naive about the possibility of other nations' agendas.

Let us be extraordinarily careful not to make lazy, dangerous assumptions about the loyalties of tens of thousands of Chinese Canadians. Asian Canadians have already suffered through ugly racism prompted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. While those racist attacks are abating, it would be tragic indeed if ethnic Chinese Canadians — including politicians — were smeared as a result of anonymous allegations.

We cannot and should not allow foreign governments or foreign actors to influence our elections, whether that influence comes from Russia, China, the United States, India or elsewhere. We must take credible reports of such foreign influence seriously. In our haste to protect our democracy, we must not sacrifice our own core democratic values. I fear that some of the increasingly heated rhetoric around this issue, even if it's well intended, is already having the result not just of defaming specific Chinese Canadians in public life but also of fuelling a corrosive suspicion of Chinese Canadians more broadly. There is nothing our various adversaries and agent provocateurs would like more than to sow suspicion and discord amongst Canadians, to see us turn on one another, to foster disunity when we most need to be united. Let us not make it easy for them.

As we approach the one hundredth anniversary of a dark and destructive chapter in our history, let us be sure to learn from our past, and let's be sure that we remember and celebrate the extraordinary legacy of the historical Chinese Canadians who have enriched our nation and the accomplishments and leadership of the Chinese Canadians today who have given so much back to this country that we all cherish.

Thank you. Merci. Hiy hiy.



The Honourable Senator **Mary Jane McCallum**

— April 27th 2023 —

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Inquiry No. 11 concerning the historical treatment of our Chinese brothers and sisters. It is critical that we, as senators and citizens of Canada, understand how immigration policies have long helped to shape racism within our country.

I want to thank Senator Woo for bringing forward this inquiry, and for highlighting the need to combat contemporary forms of exclusion and discrimination still faced by Canadians of Asian descent today.

Colleagues, in the 1983 book entitled *Racial Minorities in Multicultural Canada* by editors Peter S. Li and B. Singh Bolaria, author Gurcharn Basran from the University of Saskatchewan states:

Racism in Canada is not the product of the seventies and eighties. It has been practised systematically by the Canadian government and people in general from the very beginning of Canadian history. . . . It has been institutionalized throughout our history. It has been directed mainly against non-white populations in Canada. The chronology of the development of Canada immigration and ethnic policies is the chronology of the discriminatory policies followed by the Canadian government in relation to non-white populations.

The author continues:

Chinese were brought in to work on the construction of the Canadian Pacific line. It was difficult to secure white labour for this purpose. Woodsworth, in his book, *Strangers Within Our Gates*, points out:

“The Chinese, in any number, were first brought in when the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built, in order to work on the construction on that line when it was next to impossible to secure white labour.”

While discussing the contributions of Chinese labour to the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, or CPR, John Porter emphasizes:

Without Chinese labour the construction and completion of the CPR would have been indefinitely postponed. Not until 1962 were coloured people from Commonwealth countries looked upon as possible immigrants, except for small numbers who were allowed in to work as domestic servants, an entrance status previously held by lower class British and eastern European females.

The author continues:

There are various examples of institutionalized racism in Canada. Students of Canadian history in general, and those responsible for Canadian immigration policy in particular, are well aware of various pieces of legislation, laws, and practices that discriminate against the non-white and immigrant population. As soon as CPR construction was completed in 1885, and Chinese labour started entering into other occupations, institutional racism began in various forms. . . . A head tax of \$50.00 was imposed on Chinese in 1885. It was increased to \$100.00 in 1900 and \$500.00 in 1903. Other Orientals were also subjected to a head tax, while passage assistance was available to the British immigrants. Chinese and East Indians had to pay a head tax in Canada and their immigration was virtually stopped after 1907. Orientals had no voting rights until World War II and were not allowed to practise certain professions in British Columbia. According to the 1906 Immigration Act, important discretionary powers were given to immigration officers, who used them against non-white immigrants in a ruthless and discriminatory manner. . . . There were race riots in British Columbia in 1907, in which Orientals were attacked and their properties, businesses, and houses destroyed.

In 1907 immigrants from Asia were required to have a minimum of \$200.00 in landing money. In 1919 this amount was increased to \$250.00. In 1930, section 38 of the Immigration Act prohibited the landing in Canada of immigrants of any Asiatic race.

Honourable senators, the following information that I'm going to share with you is based on research done by the Library of Parliament. The first major wave of Chinese immigration began with the Fraser River Gold Rush in 1858. From 1881 to 1885, more than 15,000 Chinese labourers came to work on the construction of the CPR. Over the course of construction and by the end of 1882, 6,500 of the 9,000 railway workers were Chinese Canadians. They were

employed to build the B.C. segment of the railway through the most challenging and dangerous terrain.

Chinese workers were paid a dollar a day, and, from this dollar, they had to pay for their food and gear. White workers were paid \$1.50 to \$2.50 per day and did not have to pay for provisions. In addition to being paid less while also incurring higher expenses, Chinese workers were given the most dangerous tasks, such as handling the explosive nitroglycerine used to break up solid rock. Due to the harsh conditions they faced, hundreds of Chinese Canadians working on the railroad died from accidents, winter cold, illness and malnutrition. Between 600 and 4,000 Chinese men died working on the CPR.

Although Chinese Canadian workers faced and overcame great obstacles to help build the CPR, they were left out of the national celebration surrounding its completion. In the iconic and historic photograph of CPR director Donald Alexander Smith driving the ceremonial Last Spike — when the western and eastern segments of the CPR finally met in Craigellachie, British Columbia — all of the Chinese Canadian workers were cleared from view.

Many people have pointed out the lingering injustice captured in that image. There is not a single Chinese Canadian worker in the photograph, even though Chinese Canadian labourers suffered, toiled and died building the railway that has come to symbolize the unity of Canada from coast to coast.

Prime Minister John A. Macdonald acknowledged the necessity of Chinese labour. When the Government of British Columbia tried to ban Chinese immigration in 1882, Macdonald rose in the House of Commons. He said “. . . either you must have this labour, or you can't have the railway.”

As construction of the railway neared completion, MacDonald willingly yielded to prejudiced and discriminatory politicians, trade unionists and public opinion. In 1884, he appointed the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration to investigate the restriction of Chinese immigrants.

Honourable senators, institutional racism was perpetuated by the Chinese Immigration Act and more than 100 other policies. They denied Chinese people the right to vote, to practise law or medicine, to hold public office, to seek employment on public works or to own Crown land, among other restrictions. The 1885 Chinese Immigration Act levied the head tax on Chinese immigrants who entered Canada between 1885 and 1923. It was the first legislation in Canadian history to exclude immigration on the basis of ethnic background.

During the 38-year period the tax was in effect, approximately 82,000 Chinese immigrants paid nearly \$23 million in tax. Then, in 1923, the Chinese Exclusion Act banned all Chinese immigrants until its repeal in 1947. In 2006, the federal government apologized for the head tax and its other racist immigration policies explicitly targeting Chinese people.

Honourable senators, despite the racist, discriminatory and limiting policies and treatment that Chinese people have faced in Canada, there are many individuals who dedicate their life's work to upholding and promoting Chinese culture and history in Canada today. These individuals share a common story of perseverance, determination and success, whereby they have overcome discriminatory barriers and left an indelible mark on Canadian society. I will happily highlight a small number of individuals who have accomplished this advocacy through their work in the arts.

Arlene Chan, born in Toronto, is a Chinese Canadian historian, activist, athlete and author. Through her work, she highlights the lived experiences and histories of Toronto's Chinese community as well as important traditions for the Chinese Canadian diaspora. Ms. Chan serves as an adviser for the Chinese Canadian Museum, as well as Toronto Public Library's Chinese Canadian Archive.

Lan Florence Yee, based out of Toronto and Montreal, is a visual artist and cofounder of the Chinatown Biennial. Lan's work has been featured at countless museums and exhibits, including the Fonderie Darling, Toronto's Museum of Contemporary Art and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Alice Ming Wai Jim is an art historian, curator and professor at Montreal's Concordia University, where she has held the research chair in ethnocultural art history. Ms. Jim focuses her research on diasporic art in Canada, particularly on the relationships between remix culture and place identity. A founding co-editor of the *Journal of Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures*

and the Americas, Ms. Jim has also held the position of research fellow at the Centre of Asian Studies and the Center for the Study of Globalization and Cultures at the University of Hong Kong.

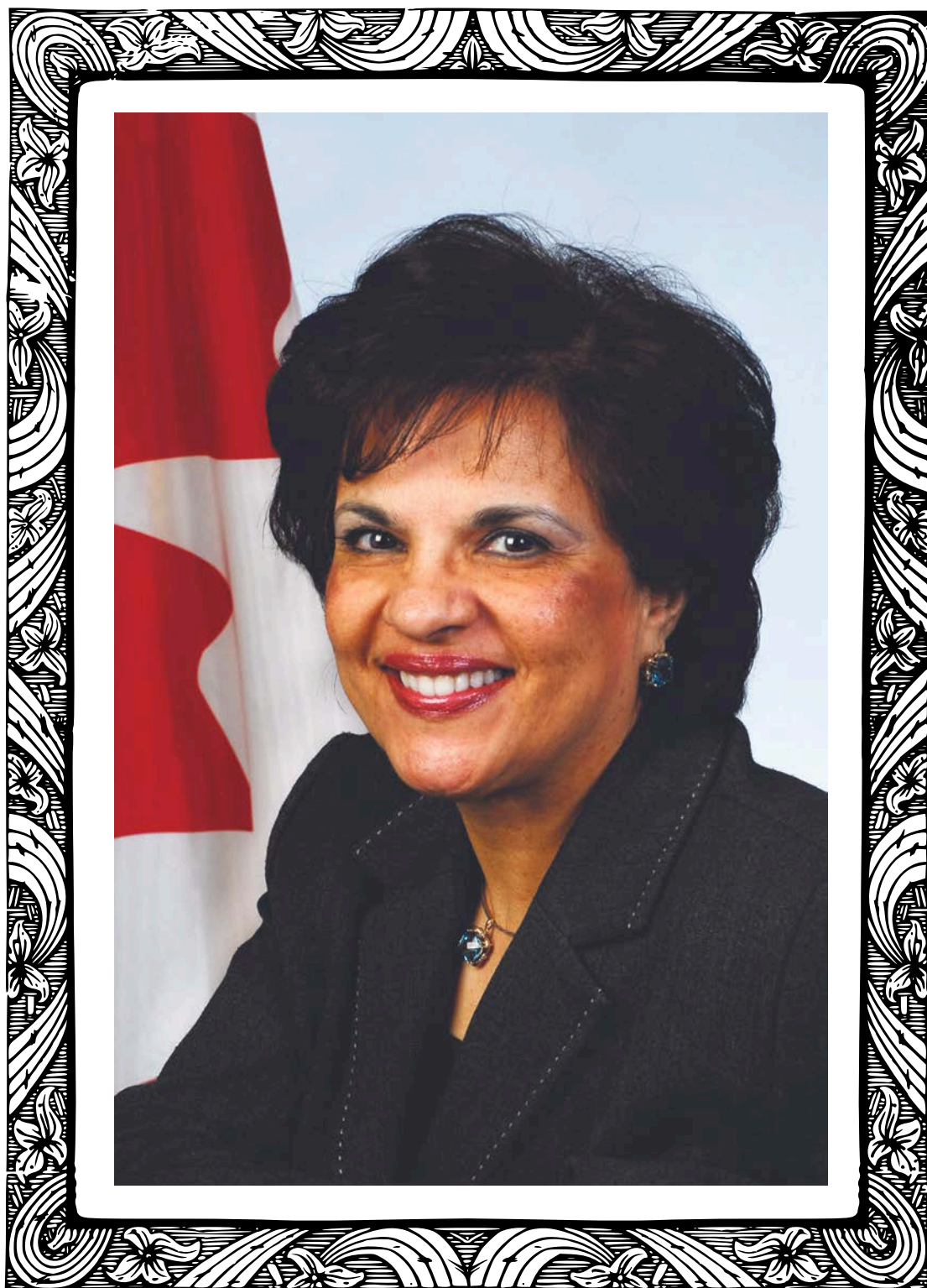
Karen Cho, born in Montreal, is a Chinese Canadian documentary filmmaker whose credits include the award-winning 2004 National Film Board of Canada documentary entitled *In the Shadow of Gold Mountain*, which highlights the effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act in Canada. Her second documentary, *Seeking Refuge*, tells the stories of five asylum seekers who have sought refuge in Canada. This film is being used as an education and advocacy tool by the Canadian Council for Refugees, as well as other organizations and universities across the country.

Honourable senators, this is just a small sampling of Chinese Canadians who are working to elevate their own culture in the face of growing racism. As a society, we are all aware of the misguided and the unfounded aggression being inflicted on our Chinese neighbours today. Issues surrounding COVID-19, Huawei and the allegations of political interference have all ramped up racist sentiments. These issues have had the effect of “othering” our Chinese brothers and sisters in Canada, forcing them to face escalating levels of racism, discrimination and violence — things that no individual living in Canada should have to endure.

Colleagues, racism and bias are learned behaviours. They are as unnatural as they are unacceptable. People, oftentimes children, learn these damaging behaviours around the kitchen table or within their friend groups, spending time around these narratives and coming to accept them as truth. However, this story of perpetuating racism does not need to continue. Rather, change can be brought through awareness and education, best done through our academic institutions.

For our youth, this education should be ongoing and continuous, from elementary school right to post-secondary. However, as we know, unlearning racist behaviour is of great value and necessity for individuals of all ages, including in our society and our chamber. Just as racist attitudes and behaviours can be learned through ignorance, they can be unlearned through education, awareness and a commitment to compassion for all our brothers and sisters, regardless of the colour of their skin or their country of origin.

Kinanâskomitin. Thank you.



The Honourable Senator **Mobina Jaffer**

— May 9th 2023 —

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Inquiry No. 11 on the one hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

I would like to thank our colleague Senator Woo for introducing this inquiry and for encouraging us to speak about the experiences of the Chinese community.

The Chinese community has been instrumental in the development and character of Canada. Shamefully, Chinese racism is on the rise in Canada. I hear so many upsetting stories from individuals in British Columbia.

Honourable senators, Canada has a dark history of discrimination and mistreatment towards the Chinese community, as demonstrated by numerous federal policies and their impact, including the Chinese head tax of 1885, the Chinese Exclusion Act from 1923 to 1947, the historical denial of voting rights and the targeted attacks against Chinese and Japanese communities during the Vancouver anti-Asian riots in 1907. In February, Senator Woo eloquently described the impact of these policies and experiences on Chinese Canadians, the hurt, the humiliation and the fear they caused, along with the legacies of those policies and their continued impact on the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought forward some of the thinly veiled resentments that have continued to simmer in society. It saddens me to know that targeted racism towards Chinese Canadians was clearly seen in my home province of British Columbia.

Evidence of this shameful reality can be found in a comprehensive 500-page report by B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner released earlier this year. The report confirmed:

Targeted anti-Asian racism and discriminatory acts have increased in frequency and severity throughout communities in BC and across Canada during COVID-19.

Honourable senators, the following facts should alarm and upset us all. The Vancouver Police Department reported that between 2019 and 2020, there was a 717% increase in hate incidents targeting Asian residents. These incidents included racial slurs, racist graffiti, verbal threats, stalking and physical assaults. Accordingly, a poll of Asian British Columbians conducted in April 2021 found that 87% of respondents believed that anti-Asian racism has gotten worse since the start of the pandemic, and 64% of respondents felt it had gotten a lot worse. It is also important to note that many of these attacks go unreported.

As for the victims who bravely share their experiences, it is heartbreaking to hear their stories of verbal and physical attacks. This includes seniors like Judy Cheung, who was punched in the face by a stranger as she left a Vancouver grocery store in 2021. In her seventies, she now feels that she must carry around an umbrella to protect herself whenever she goes out.

Senators, this is not acceptable. No community or individual should experience such fear in Canada. However, I do have hope. I know from my personal experiences how compassionate and how accepting this country of Canada is.

I would now like to take this opportunity to speak about the invaluable contributions Chinese Canadians have made to my province of BC. Historically, Chinese workers have been integral to building the Canadian Pacific Railway and have played a vital role in industrializing the economy as skilled and semi-skilled individuals who laboured in British Columbian sawmills and canneries and also became small business owners.

In more recent times, Chinese Canadians have made significant contributions to science, medicine, public service, art, literature and filmmaking in Canada. I, for one, know, based on my personal experiences — as I have spent a lot of time in hospitals — that hospitals in Vancouver and surrounding areas would not be resourced as well without Chinese Canadians' contributions, especially during the pandemic.

By highlighting the incredible achievements of notable Chinese Canadians from British Columbia, I hope to broaden our understanding of their generous contributions. I'll start with our former colleague Vivienne Poy, an Ontario senator.

Senator Poy was appointed to the Senate of Canada in 1998 by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. She was the first Canadian of Chinese descent to be appointed to the Senate and spent much of her 14-year tenure devoted to gender issues, multiculturalism, immigration and human rights and was the sponsor of the bill that recognized May as Asian Heritage Month across Canada.

Outside the Senate, Vivienne is an accomplished businesswoman, author and philanthropist. With a PhD in History from the University of Toronto, she has authored numerous books and enlightened us about topics such as Sino-Canadian relations and Chinese immigration to Canada, bravely writing about the personal struggles of her own family as well. Since retirement, Vivienne has continued her work with organizations that aim to improve the lives of women and girls in developing countries.

Vivienne, when I came to the Senate, you were a great help to me, and I always valued our warm friendship.

In British Columbia, a man who has provided great service is David Lam, who also understood both the struggles of working against deep-seated prejudice and the hope and promise of opportunity in this country. David Lam was the twenty-fifth Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, from 1988 to 1995, and was the first Chinese Canadian to be appointed as a viceregal in Canada. He once described his responsibility as lieutenant governor as being a “healer of wounds, a matchmaker of sorts between people of different views, and one who offers encouragement and inspiration.”

Lieutenant Governor Lam emigrated to Canada with his family in 1967 and became one of Vancouver's leading land developers, eventually starting his own company. He was instrumental in bringing Hong Kong investors to Vancouver. He was a firm believer in giving back to his country, along with the power of education and cultural awareness. In 1983, he established the David and Dorothy Lam Foundation and the Floribunda Philanthropic Society. The two charities donated millions of dollars a year to British Columbian community projects, such as the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden.

He also provided funding for numerous initiatives in collaboration with universities in British Columbia, including the Institute of Dispute Resolution and the David Lam Auditorium at the University of Victoria and the David Lam Centre for International Communication at Simon Fraser University.

Like Lieutenant Governor Lam, Milton Wong balanced a successful business career with a strong sense of social responsibility. He made tremendous contributions to his community in Vancouver across various fields such as finance, arts and culture, sustainability, multiculturalism and academia. Specifically, he founded The Laurier Institution, a non-profit organization dedicated to the study of diversity in Canada.

Mr. Wong always went out of his way to encourage younger people or budding politicians to become active in politics and community. He was with me when I had tough times in politics and rejoiced with me when I was appointed to the Senate. He was a true mentor to many people, and I will always remember what he did for me.

Lastly, I would like to mention my friend Edith Nee, a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal. Among her many roles, she was a member of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada and director of the B.C. Press Council. Edith has dedicated her career to adjudicating issues related to immigration, refugees, residential schools, press ethics and freedom.

She is very much involved in B.C. communities, pushing for the empowerment of women and visible minorities, even attending the 1985 United Nations conference on the status of women held in Nairobi as a Canadian delegate. Edith Nee and Patsy George were empowering women, ethnic women and women of colour, by founding the Vancouver Society of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women in British Columbia and the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women in Canada. They have worked hard to make sure that all women were included.

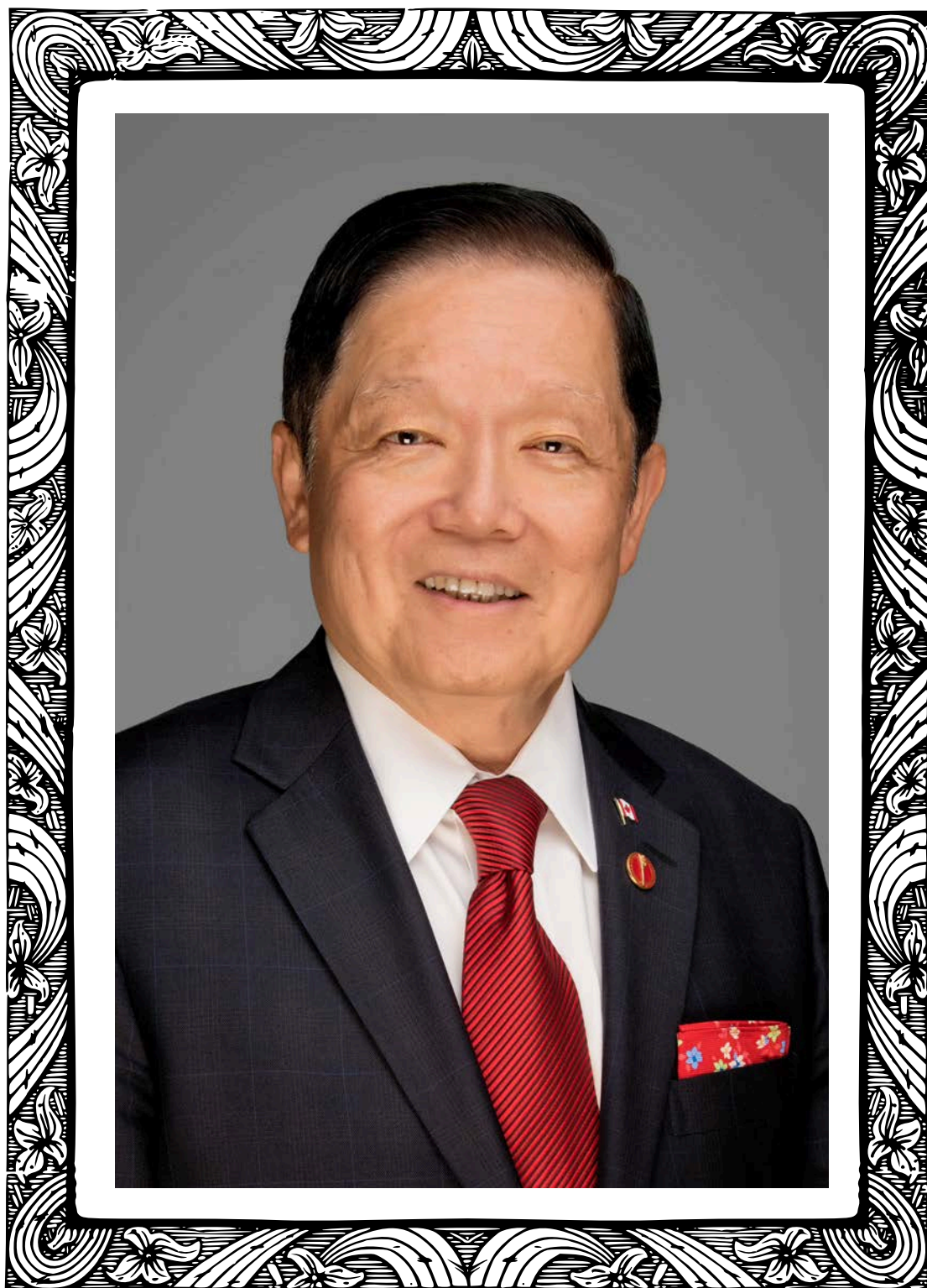
By highlighting these few individuals, I wanted to remind everyone of the generosity of spirit demonstrated by the Chinese people towards British Columbia and their love for Canada as a whole, while celebrating their achievements and their public service.

Honourable senators, we are all aware of the debate that is going on around our country and especially on the Hill. I urge each and every one of you — in fact, I beg of you — to see that

what happens between China and Canada is not the fault of Chinese Canadians. We have to be the leaders in making sure that what happens between governments does not affect our citizens. I urge you all to be aware of it and put a stop to it.

Let us also take this opportunity to remember that diversity makes this country stronger. It is the key to our shared prosperity. There is no room in Canada for intolerance or hate. Never again should we pass an act such as the Chinese Exclusion Act. Never again should we treat Chinese Canadians any differently from any other Canadian. They belong to Canada.

Thank you.



The Honourable Senator **Victor Oh**

— June 13th 2023 —

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Inquiry No. 11 on the one hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act — this inquiry was initiated by my colleague Senator Yuen Pau Woo.

First, I would like to share my appreciation for Senator Woo's initiative in leading this important and timely conversation in the Red Chamber which, as you all know, had a pivotal role in highlighting the profoundly damaging legislation, the Chinese Immigration Act, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. Some of our honourable colleagues have already spoken about the Chinese Exclusion Act's detrimental effects on the Chinese-Canadian community. I was profoundly touched by the allyship expressed in their speeches regarding this inquiry, such as from Senator Jaffer and Senator McCallum.

Unfortunately, this act's cruelty is unimaginable to many in this chamber. We know too well that our country's history is marred with periods of exclusionary and reprehensible actions. Nevertheless, allow me to remind you of the act's discriminative measures.

In practice, the Chinese Immigration Act prohibited Chinese immigration. As a result, families were torn apart, opportunities were lost and autonomous life was destroyed. Canadians of Chinese descent were also deprived of full citizenship in their home and native land. However, this community never succumbed despite the systemic challenges. Chinese Canadians steadily dismantled and overcame hurdles through incredible resilience and determination.

In 1947, freedom of movement was reclaimed and the right to citizenship was re-established. In 1948, we slowly started to gain the right to vote. In further years, we reconnected with our parents and rebuilt our families. Most importantly, we thrived and contributed to Canada's economic and social development.

I have no doubt, honourable colleagues, that Canada would not be the great country it is today if not for the resilience of the Chinese-Canadian community and countless other minority communities. Unfortunately, even with all of the time that has passed, lessons can be forgotten and society can regress. Seventy-five years ago, systemic inequality brought about a rise of anti-Chinese racism. Today, following the pandemic and geopolitical issues, the Asian community in Canada finds itself as the target once again.

Over the course of the last three years, an unfortunate sentiment has been shared with me repeatedly. In not so many terms, parallels are felt between our modern day and what took place 100 years ago. Uninvolved individuals of the Asian community feel cornered by politics. They find themselves stranded between their love for their millenary cultural heritage and pointed political language.

I would be remiss if I didn't caution my parliamentary colleagues, yet again, to take special care to differentiate between our Chinese-Canadian community and those they criticize. Even more distressing is when such critiques are misunderstood by some in the public and taken to an extreme, ultimately being manifested in the form of violence and hate. During the pandemic, for example, we witnessed repeated cases of rhetoric turning into violence in the streets of our great country.

As I have mentioned in the past, I experienced an episode of anti-Asian hate just a few steps outside of Parliament Hill, and I constantly endure hateful comments directed at me in social media channels. That, however, is a sad price that we — parliamentarians — pay for being public figures. Nevertheless, private citizens have not signed up for such harsh criticism and hate. Political critiques are being misinterpreted as judgment toward individuals, and it pains me to hear that many feel personally attacked by the language used by our politicians.

Colleagues, I do believe that we are conscientious by nature here in Canada. Let us remember this great quality and speak accordingly when voicing our political opinion. Just like how our words can be a force for good, they can also be a force for wrong.

The success of Chinese Canadians comes despite the never-ending — and seemingly worsening — anti-Asian racism. Our stories of resilience are many: Take, for example, Lieutenant-Commander William King Lowd Lore who, despite being denied enlistment in the Royal Canadian Navy multiple times, went on to make history as the first officer of Chinese descent in any of the Commonwealth navies.

On another positive note, it is evident that there has been some evolution. I stand here today as an ethnic Chinese senator from Ontario, speaking on an inquiry started by an ethnic Chinese senator from British Columbia, which speaks volumes about how far we have come since 1923.

Indeed, there is still work to be done, and striving for equality and cultural appreciation should be our ceaseless goal. Nevertheless, I am proud to know that despite our past faults, Canada remains a beacon of hope and a haven of multiculturalism and inclusion in today's world.

Thank you, merci beaucoup, xie xie and meegwetch.



The Honourable Senator **Stan Kutcher**

— September 19th 2023 —

Honourable senators, today I rise to address the inquiry initiated by Senator Woo, which holds a dual purpose: First, it calls for the celebration of the invaluable contributions that Chinese Canadians have made to our country. Second, it prompts us to reflect upon the prejudice, exclusion and discrimination that Canadians of Asian descent have faced and continue to face. While we celebrate the remarkable contributions of Chinese Canadians, we cannot ignore the historical reality nor the narratives that continue today.

Although there has been substantial progress, there is much left to do. We must use this time not only to celebrate but also to reflect and to act. Chinese Canadians have left an indelible mark on the tapestry of our nation's history. They have been instrumental in the growth and development of Canada, with their contributions reaching every sector of our society from labour to entrepreneurship, culture to academia, sports to politics.

It may be new information to some that Chinese peoples were part of the 1788 Captain John Meares' expedition that landed in Nuu-chah-nulth territory to establish the first year-round non-Indigenous settlement in what is now British Columbia, a full 79 years before Canada was established and 83 years before British Columbia joined Canada.

Deplorably, anti-Chinese rhetoric became part of a racist political ideology that in 1871 helped to deprive non-Whites of the right to vote, including Chinese and "Native Indians." This was accompanied by many other forms of racial discrimination against Chinese Canadians that included forced segregation — in life as well as in death. For example, burial records of the Ross Bay Cemetery in Victoria indicate that Chinese persons were buried in a special block, set apart for the burials of "Aborigines and Mongolians." The first Chinese person interred there was listed as "Chinaman No. 1," the second as "Chinaman No. 2" and so on.

Driven by this racist political ideology, the federal government implemented the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885. This legislation imposed a \$50 fee, called the "head tax," on each

Chinese person entering Canada. Only six classes of people were exempt: diplomats, clergymen, merchants, students, tourists and men of science. The intention of the head tax was to discourage Chinese persons from coming to Canada.

In 1901, the tax was increased to \$100, and in 1903 it was increased again to \$500, the equivalent of two years of wages for a labourer. Despite the heavy tax, Chinese migrants continued to come. According to the Government of British Columbia website, no other immigrant group in British Columbian history has suffered such formally sanctioned mistreatment of its members on entering Canada over such an extended period. During the period of the head tax between 1885 and 1923, over 97,000 Chinese immigrants still came to Canada seeking a better life, helping to build British Columbian and Canadian society.

Perhaps well known to many Canadians was the exploitation of Chinese labourers in the building of the western sections of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s. Two thirds of these railway workers were Chinese Canadians brought in by ship from China and California, working mostly in the most dangerous terrain. They were paid \$1 a day and had to pay for their own food and gear. White workers were paid \$1.50 to \$2.50 per day and did not pay for provisions. It was the Chinese workers who were given the most dangerous construction tasks. Hundreds died from accidents, illness and malnutrition.

Their contribution is immortalized in Canadian folk music. Our balladeer Gordon Lightfoot, in his classic “Canadian Railroad Trilogy,” sang:

*We are the navvies who work upon the railway
Swinging our hammers in the bright blazing sun
Living on stew and drinking bad whiskey
Bending our back til the long days are done*

While the railroad could not have been built without them, all the Chinese Canadian workers were cleared out of the final celebration scene so that iconic photograph — we’ve all seen it — of the ceremonial last spike could be taken. It was as if they had never existed.

It was within this historical racist perspective that the Government of Canada, on July 1, 1923, introduced a new Chinese Immigration Act, commonly known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, to stop Chinese immigration to Canada. This persisted for almost a quarter of a century.

It was finally repealed in 1947 after Chinese Canadians distinguished themselves by fighting and dying for Canada in World War II. Dying, by the way, to protect the way of life in a country that had denied them a life based on human rights.

Senator Woo has clearly and eloquently reminded us about some of the speeches made by our predecessors supporting this legislation in this chamber.

These sentiments, voiced by our historic colleagues, mark a dark moment in our history, and should make all of us vow, “never again.”

We must acknowledge this painful legacy and learn from it, ensuring that such injustice is never repeated, not to anyone.

Regrettably, despite progress, contemporary forms of prejudice and exclusion still persist. Canadians of Asian descent continue to encounter discrimination, bias and systemic barriers that hinder their full integration and equitable participation in our society. It is our responsibility as parliamentarians to confront these challenges head-on and to work toward a more inclusive and just Canada.

To do so, Canadians must prioritize education and a broadening of our common historical awareness. By teaching the contributions and histories of diverse communities — including Chinese Canadians — we can help foster empathy, understanding and respect for all Canadians, among all Canadians. Our schools must be places where the richness of our entire heritage is celebrated, where stereotypes are dismantled and where future generations can learn about the many important things that we all have in common.

As legislators, we have an opportunity to strengthen our laws, policies and institutions to move toward eradication of discrimination in all its forms.

In our own chamber, it is by recognizing and dealing with our unconscious biases, promoting diversity in our leadership positions and creating respectful and inclusive spaces that we can help build a Canada where who you love, where you came from, what colour your skin is or any other factor that can be used to deny full and unfettered participation in our society is deemed to be irrelevant.

Let us make sure that we, in this chamber, demonstrate the welcome, compassion and respect for each other that all those living in every corner of this country deserve.

Honourable senators, the inquiry put forth by Senator Woo serves as a poignant reminder of the invaluable contributions made by Chinese Canadians throughout our history. It also calls on us to confront the persistent prejudices faced by Canadians of Asian descent, mindful of the historical context marked by the adoption of the Chinese Exclusion Act a century ago. Let us unite in celebration, remembrance and a shared commitment to building a Canada where diversity is cherished, equality is upheld and every individual can thrive.

Colleagues, Canada was built by hands of many colours, and our anthem is sung by voices of many tongues. We are the richer for all of these.

Thank you, honourable senators, for your attention. May we pledge to work together to create a more inclusive and equitable Canada free from prejudice and exclusion as we honour the contributions of all Canadians, past and present, and may we pledge to do that here in this chamber.

Thank you.



The Honourable Senator **Ratna Omidvar**

— October 3rd 2023 —

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Inquiry No. 11, which calls our attention to the one hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act. I would like to thank Senator Woo for bringing forward this timely inquiry. I believe that one of Canada's great strengths is our capacity to self-reflect on the mistakes that we have made in the past. Senator Woo's inquiry gives us an opportunity to ensure, upon reflection, that we never go down this path again.

Many of my colleagues have weighed in and continue to weigh in, but I'd like to focus my comments on the gendered impact of discriminatory immigration policies on the Chinese community.

During the 24 years that the Chinese Exclusion Act was in place, Canada admitted fewer than 50 Chinese people. This was indeed a very cruel way to repay the contributions of the 17,000 Chinese labourers who played an essential role in building the Canadian Pacific Railway, which was the first great infrastructure nation-building project of Canada.

When the railway was completed in 1885, instead of rewarding the Chinese labourers, Parliament enacted the Chinese Immigration Act, which placed a head tax of \$50 on Chinese people coming to Canada. In 1903, \$50 was increased to \$500, equal to about two years' salary of an ordinary person. This exorbitant amount meant many Chinese labourers could not afford to bring their wives. In 1921, it is no surprise that the ratio of Chinese men to women in Canada was 15 to 1.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 ensured that this ratio remained disparate. Over 90% of the wives of Chinese men were left behind in China. During their husbands' prolonged absences, wives had the responsibility of raising children and looking after parents. Visits by husbands were short and infrequent because their right to return to Canada would be revoked if they

were away for more than two years. Remember, colleagues, there were no airplanes, there were no jets; there was only the long way with the ship. Many children grew up barely knowing their fathers.

Canada did not repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act until 1947. When it did, it was replaced by a restrictive race-based immigration policy under which only those Chinese who already had a Canadian citizenship were allowed to sponsor their families. In other words, it was a restrictive measure of a different kind. The same rules, of course, did not apply to European immigrants. Twenty years later, after the points system was adopted, Chinese people finally began to be admitted under the same criteria as other ethnic groups.

Wives who succeeded in entering Canada in the 1950s and 1960s found their lives fundamentally transformed. Having lived without a spouse for years, they had to deal with readjusting to husbands they barely knew. Many put in long working hours labouring in their husband's small businesses or took on multiple manual jobs.

In the early years of their arrival in Canada, Chinese women found themselves socially isolated and excluded. But it was their daughters and their granddaughters who took up their cause for justice. Chinese Canadian women like Avvy Go, Chow Quen Lee and Susan Eng were instrumental in campaigning for an apology and a redress.

As the President of the Toronto Chapter of the Chinese Canadian National Council, Avvy Go became involved in the campaign in 1989. She was co-counsel in the class-action lawsuit seeking redress for the head taxpayers and their families. One of the three litigants who led the lawsuit was Chow Quen Lee. Separated from her husband for 14 years because of the act, she was an outspoken activist. Although the lawsuit was ultimately dismissed, it set into motion talks with the government that ended with an official parliamentary apology in 2006.

As co-chair of the Ontario Coalition of Head Tax Payers and Families, Susan Eng convinced VIA Rail to sponsor the Redress Express, during which about 100 people boarded a train from Vancouver to travel to Ottawa to hear the apology.

I want to also note the contributions of Dora Nipp, Chief Executive Officer of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario. She comes from a family who helped build the railway and paid the head tax. As a historian, Dora Nipp has conducted extensive oral history

interviews documenting the experiences of immigrants to Canada. She has also produced various works, including directing *Under the Willow Tree*, a documentary on pioneer Chinese women in Canada.

These women fought for justice and they were ultimately successful, with the government handing out symbolic payments to roughly 400 survivors and widows in 2006.

The Chinese Exclusion Act and other discriminatory measures had profound and lasting impacts on Chinese women and families. It took until 1981 for the sex ratio in the Chinese Canadian community to equalize.

On the one hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, it's important to recognize not just the prejudice that the community faced but also the tremendous perseverance it took to have these injustices reversed. Canadian Chinese women played a significant role in seeking and achieving this redress.

In their honour, I thank you, colleagues.



L'honorable sénatrice

Marie-Françoise Mégie

— 3 Octobre 2023 —

Chers collègues, je prends la parole aujourd'hui sur l'interpellation du sénateur Woo. Le but de cette interpellation est d'attirer l'attention du Sénat sur le 100^e anniversaire de la Loi d'exclusion des Chinois, sur les contributions que les Canadiens d'origine chinoise ont apportées à notre pays et sur la nécessité de combattre les formes contemporaines d'exclusion et de discrimination auxquelles sont confrontés les Canadiens d'origine asiatique.

Comme l'a souligné le sénateur Woo, le 14 février dernier :

[...] il y a 100 ans, dans cette enceinte, les sénateurs ont voté pour la mise en place de la Loi de l'immigration chinoise de 1923, mieux connue sous le nom de Loi d'exclusion des Chinois [...]

Les sénateurs Kutcher, Simons, McCallum, Jaffer et Oh ont pris également la parole sur cette interpellation.

Ils ont tous bien souligné, au moyen de nombreux exemples, les discriminations systémiques subies par les Canadiens d'origine chinoise. Ils ont aussi mis en valeur les contributions importantes faites à notre pays par la communauté sino-asiatique malgré tout.

Au fur et à mesure que j'écoutais les discours de mes collègues, je me suis sentie interpellée à mon tour. Loin de moi l'idée de faire un amalgame, mais les communautés noires ont, elles aussi, été visées par des mesures législatives semblables au Canada.

L'Encyclopédie canadienne mentionne ce qui suit, et je cite :

Le décret du Conseil C.P. 1324 a été adopté le 12 août 1911 par le Cabinet du premier ministre sir Wilfrid Laurier. Il visait à interdire à toute personne noire d'entrer au Canada

pour une période d'un an parce que « la race noire [...] est considérée comme inadaptée au climat et aux exigences du Canada ».

Bien que les périodes visées soient différentes, la Loi d'exclusion des Chinois ayant été adoptée 12 ans plus tard, les parallèles sont nombreux pour ce qui est de la discrimination subie par les communautés chinoises et noires au Canada. Cela prouve, malheureusement, que l'histoire se répète.

Il est donc essentiel de combattre les formes contemporaines d'exclusion et de discrimination auxquelles sont confrontés certains Canadiens encore aujourd'hui.

Je remercie le sénateur Woo de son engagement en vue de nous sensibiliser à la discrimination systémique vécue par les Sino-Canadiens. L'exposition qu'il a orchestrée, dans le foyer du Sénat, nous relate des pages sombres de l'histoire du Canada qui ne figurent pas dans nos manuels scolaires. Cette exposition représente, selon le sénateur, un lien tangible avec ce passé et est un appel à la vigilance contre toute forme moderne d'exclusion.

Cette interpellation a trouvé écho chez le premier ministre Trudeau. Un extrait de sa déclaration du 14 mai 2023 soulignait ceci, et je cite :

[...] la *Loi d'exclusion des Chinois* témoigne d'une période sombre de l'histoire du Canada dont les conséquences se font sentir encore aujourd'hui. Au même titre que la *Loi de l'immigration chinoise* de 1885, qui imposait une taxe d'entrée aux nouveaux arrivants chinois au Canada, la loi raciste de 1923 a presque totalement empêché les Chinois d'entrer au Canada pendant 24 ans. Elle est restée en vigueur jusqu'à son abrogation à cette date, en 1947. Cette discrimination systémique et cette politique raciste ont séparé des êtres chers, appauvri des familles et renforcé les préjugés à l'encontre des personnes d'origine chinoise au Canada, leur causant des blessures qui allaient perdurer durant des générations.

Chers collègues, il faut absolument profiter de l'occasion qui nous est offerte par cette interpellation pour parfaire nos connaissances de l'Histoire du Canada — avec un grand « H ».

Les historiens ne cessent de nous dire ceci : si nous n'apprenons pas de l'histoire, nous serons condamnés à la répéter.

Comme vous le constaterez en examinant le fil des événements, cela s'est produit en 1911, puis en 1923; nous ne devons jamais adopter à nouveau de telles lois discriminatoires à l'égard d'autrui.

Notre rôle est de transmettre nos valeurs d'inclusion et d'égalité aux générations futures pour qu'elles puissent vivre dans un pays plus juste.

Enfin, pour enrayer le racisme sous toutes ses formes, qu'il soit implicite ou explicite, nous devons, dans cette Chambre, demeurer vigilants.

Merci.



The Honourable Senator
Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia

— October 3rd 2023 —

Honourable senators, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the inquiry initiated by Senator Woo. The purpose is twofold: to celebrate the invaluable contributions that Chinese Canadians have made but also to reflect on the prejudice, exclusion and discrimination that Canadians of Chinese descent have faced and continue to face.

I would like to thank Senators Jaffer, McCallum, Simons, Oh and Kutcher for speaking to this important matter — and, of course, to our speakers today as well.

The contributions of the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador are a significant but often overlooked aspect of our province's history. The Chinese community has played — and continues to play — a vital role in shaping our cultural, economic and social fabric.

The first Chinese immigrants arrived in Newfoundland in the 1890s, and word spread throughout St. John's that two Chinese immigrants would be opening a laundry business. Over the next few decades, the city and the province would continue to attract Chinese immigrants.

Colleagues, this was at a time when Newfoundland's population was almost entirely White, Christian and English-speaking. In 1906, the province had legislation — the Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons — that imposed a \$300 head tax on each Chinese immigrant entering the colony. This equalled between one and three years' earnings and was a significant barrier to entry for Chinese immigrants. Despite the challenges and prejudice faced by Chinese Newfoundlanders, their perseverance and strength as a community remained remarkable, and their contributions to our society and growth continued to be exceptional.

In the 1920s, the Chinese community turned towards opening restaurants and is now credited with helping build the dining-out culture in our province. Early Chinese restaurants served foods Newfoundlanders knew about and loved, like fish and chips and roast chicken. Despite this, Chinese immigrants maintained their traditional cuisine at home and faced the challenges of sourcing traditional ingredients. In downtown St. John's in 1968, Mary Jane's was the first health food store to carry some Chinese groceries. Today, there are multiple grocery stores in St. John's as the community continues to grow and thrive.

When Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, the Chinese head tax came to an end. With changes to immigration policy in 1967, Chinese immigrants to Newfoundland and Labrador became more diversified in their professions, backgrounds and practices, including health, science, engineering, mining and the fishing industry.

In 1976, The Chinese Association of Newfoundland & Labrador was established to promote Chinese culture and tradition throughout our province and nurture communities in preserving and celebrating Chinese heritage. The association is operated by volunteers who organize and promote events, including Chinese New Year celebrations, performances and memorial services. In 1981, the association, along with their community partners, erected a memorial in Mount Pleasant Cemetery in St. John's to honour the Chinese immigrant community in Newfoundland from the time of their first arrival in the 1890s.

Elsewhere in St. John's, a different memorial stands to honour the 300 Chinese men that had to pay the head tax in Newfoundland. This monument was created in 2010 by the Newfoundland and Labrador Head Tax Redress Organization, a group working to educate on and preserve the awareness of this dark chapter in our history. The monument is placed on the site of Saint John's' first Chinese hand laundry, which was opened in 1895.

In 2006, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador made a formal apology for the Chinese head tax, delivered by then-premier Danny Williams.

Today, our Chinese community is the largest visible minority, representing 1.3% of St. John's' population, or approximately 1,500 people. In broader Newfoundland, there are approximately 2,300 people of Chinese ethnicity, making up 0.5% of the population of our province. Despite these seemingly small numbers, the Chinese community in Newfoundland is strong, active and heavily influential.

I'm also proud to say that the growth of Memorial University has been a source for an increase in Chinese immigration to Newfoundland, with students and academics being drawn to the province for their education and for educating us.

Members of the community have continuously brought their traditions to Newfoundland and Labrador and generously shared their culture with the non-Chinese community. Recently, members of the community have brought traditional music to St. John's audiences with performances featuring the traditional instrument, the guzheng. The YY Guzheng Ensemble has been performing for the St. John's community and spreading the love for Chinese music throughout the community. The group has 15 members with ages ranging from their early teens to their 70s with a common love for music and tradition.

Honourable senators, despite a dark chapter and the incredible difficulties that the community faced, today they are an integral part of our province's history. Chinese immigrants and their descendants continue to play a crucial role in our economic, cultural and social development. Their legacy of resilience and determination serves as a testament to the importance of recognizing and addressing historical injustices, like the head tax, while celebrating the rich diversity that makes my beloved province a unique and inclusive place to call home.

Thank you, merci, meegwetch.

THE EXHIBITION

*Reflections on Exclusion:
An Exhibition on the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923*

June 6th - June 23rd 2023

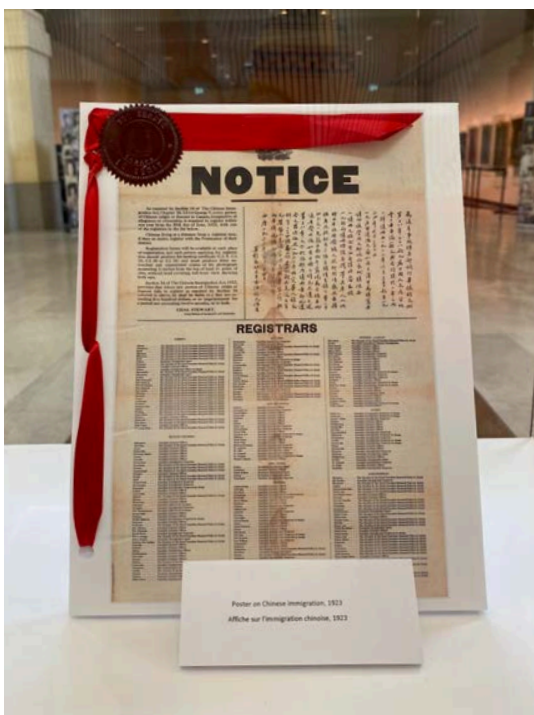
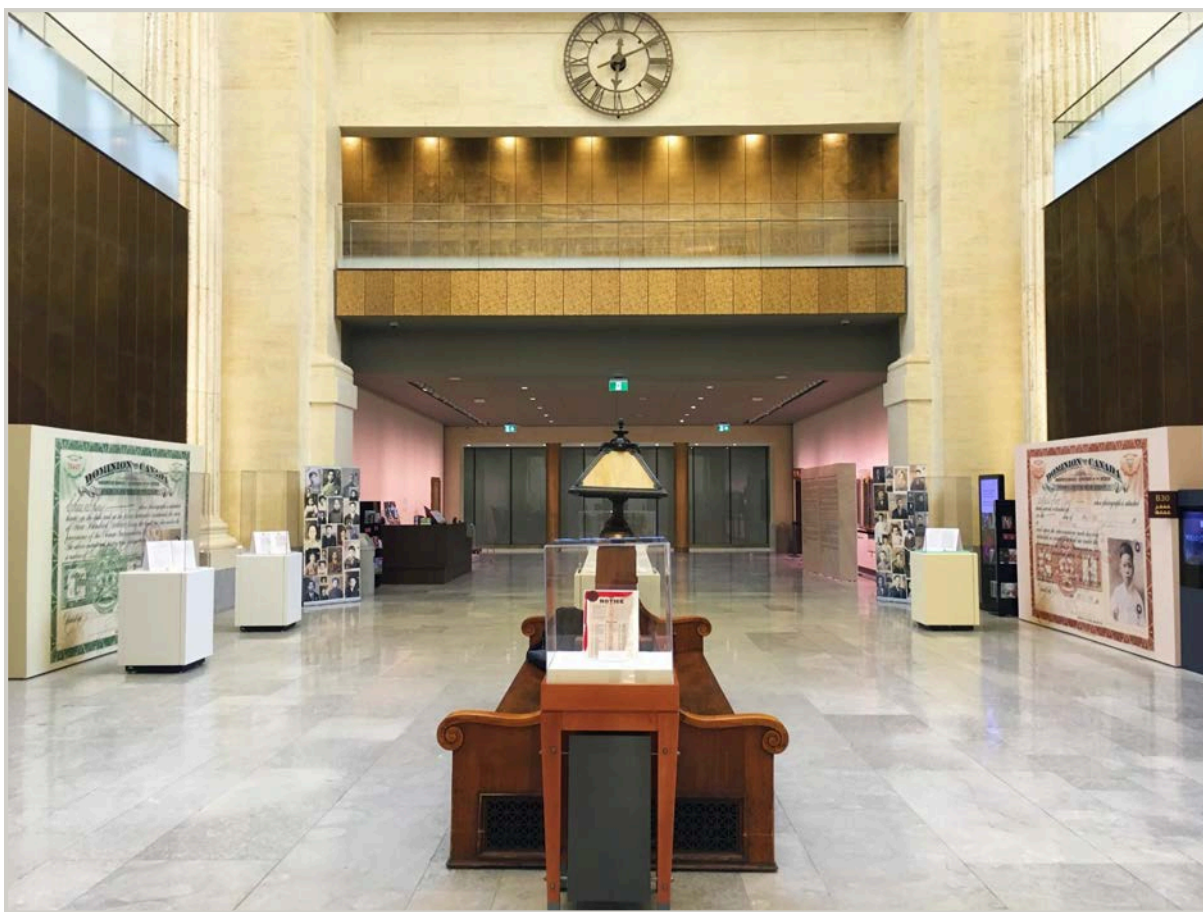
Curated by Jiaqi Wu

*The Senate of Canada Building
2 Rideau Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A4*



The *Reflections on Exclusion* exhibition was created to mark the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. It features Chinese Immigration Certificates issued before and during the period of Chinese exclusion, as well as official documents that trace the passage of the Act through the House of Commons and the Senate, to Royal Assent. The purpose of the exhibition, which was

mounted in the concourse of the Senate of Canada Building, is to remember the individuals and families who suffered because of government-sanctioned exclusion, and to acknowledge the role of the Parliament of Canada in passing this racist law. It is a reminder of the need to be vigilant about modern forms of exclusion in our society and the role of parliamentarians in never again permitting such laws.



On display in the Senate foyer, four enlarged reproduction certificates bring us into direct confrontation with our past; our gaze is called upon to reflect on that tragic period. Notice the variations in detail like the locations of issue, colours of the borders, and the edition numbers found in the upper corners. The Chinese Immigration Certificate (CI) document went through various updates and transformations during the course of its usage. All of them shared the requirement that a head and shoulders photo be attached to the document.

Poster on Chinese Immigration, 1923

This poster, written in English and Chinese, notifies those of Chinese origin or descent that they have to register. It includes the registration locations and requirements.



C.I.5 Certificate

New legislation enacted to control Chinese immigration also spawned the first-ever entry document for Chinese, called a C.I.5 certificate. The C.I.5 document was issued to every Chinese immigrant, whether they were required to pay the head tax or not, and was used from 1885-1911.

Name: CHOW Shung, Ottawa, Ontario

C.I.28 Certificate

If a Chinese person who had a C.I.5 claimed the certificate had been lost, destroyed or stolen, they were issued a "replacement certificate" called a C.I.28.

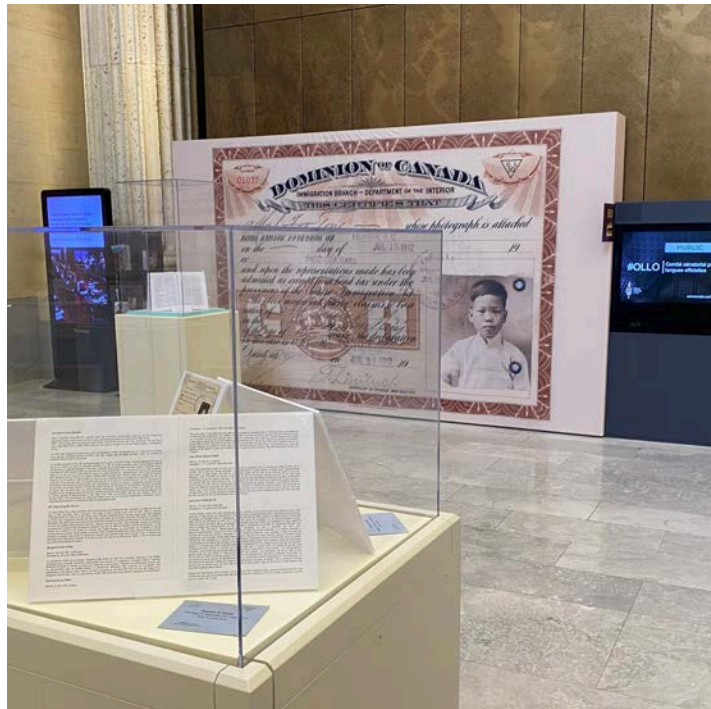
Name: LEE Toy Lin, Victoria, British Columbia



C.I.30 Certificate

After 1912, Chinese immigrants who were exempt from paying the head tax, were issued a C.I.30 when they arrived. This certificate had a brown border with the photograph of the bearer.

Name: MAH Foo Tong, Bashaw, Alberta



C.I.45 Certificate

Created in 1923, this document was issued mainly to the first generation of Chinese born on Canadian soil.

Name: CHONG Ham Way, Nanaimo, British Columbia

DOMINION OF CANADA
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND COLONIZATION
CHINESE IMMIGRATION SERVICE

No. **22185**

C. I.
45

This is to certify that Chong Ham Way

whose photograph is attached hereto, has registered as required by Section 18 of the Chinese Immigration Act, Chapter 38, 13-14 George V.

Dated at Vancouver, B.C.

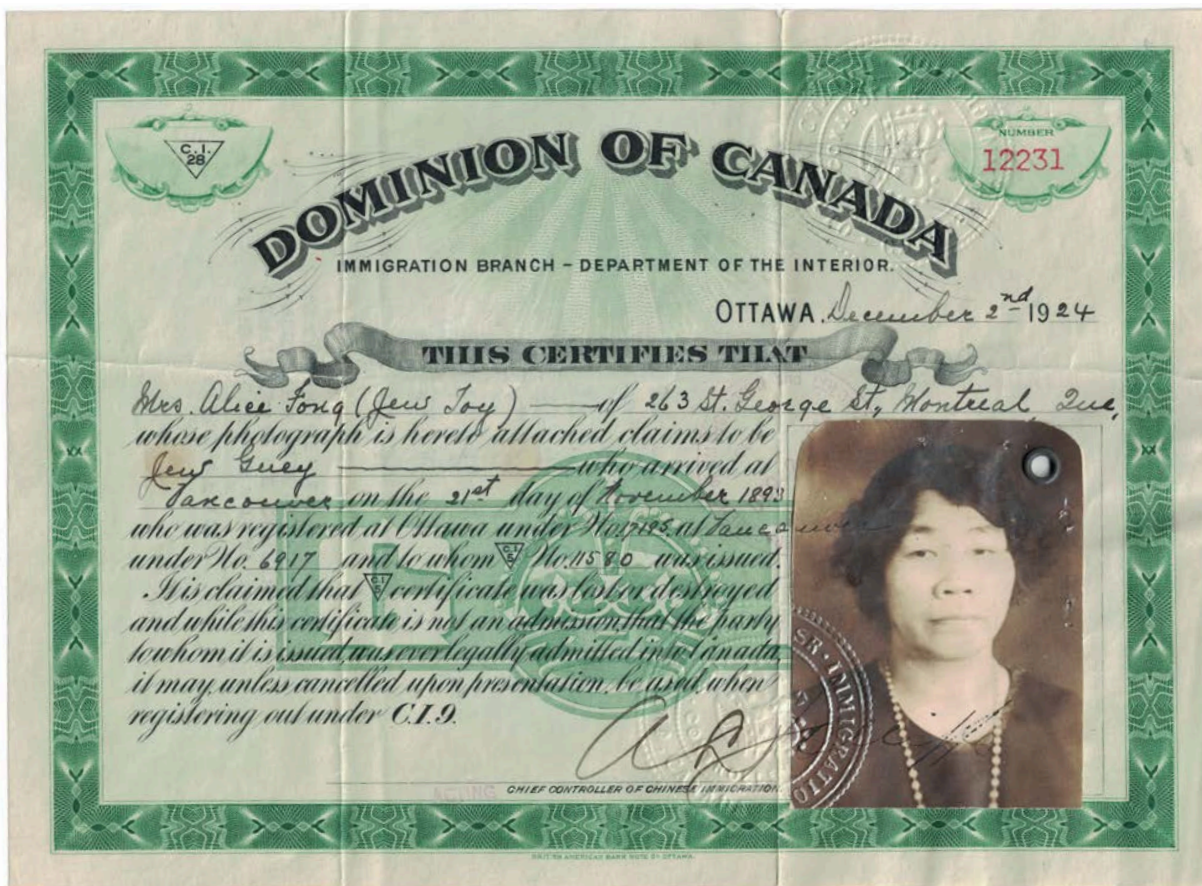
this 26th day of February 192 4

[Signature]
Controller of Chinese Immigration.

This certificate does not establish legal status in Canada.



The original Chinese Immigration Certificates of the Fong Sisters and their mother, along with their short biographies, were provided by Robert D. and Timothy J. Stanley. They give us a more complete picture of the lives behind the identification numbers and photographs.



Alice Fong 鄭文周氏女

1883-1964

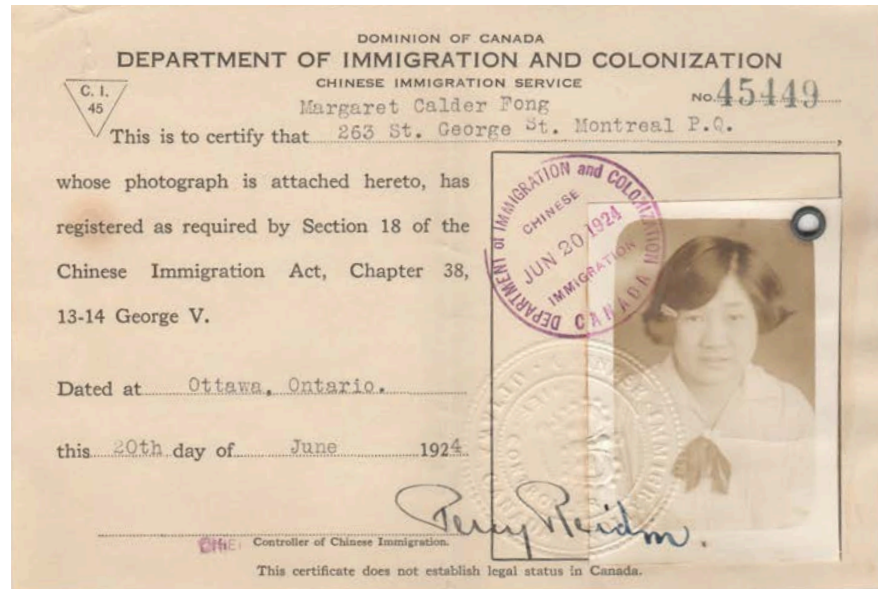
Born in Lai Yue Gong Village, Kaiping, Guangdong, China, Alice Fong was an orphan who was brought to Canada by her "cousins" as a servant girl at the age of nine. They paid the head tax for her in 1893. Alice married Fong Mun King in 1903 and was active in the Chinese Presbyterian Church. She had five children—one son and four daughters. After the death of her husband, Alice's son-in-law would take her down to

Montréal's Chinatown to buy groceries and get caught up on the local gossip. The proprietor of the shop would invite her into the back of the store for a cup of tea. During these visits, she spoke Cantonese. When her oldest grandson was about 3 years old, he observed this exchange with interest. He turned to his father and with great delight said: "I didn't know that Granny spoke French!"

Margaret Calder Fong

1907-1952

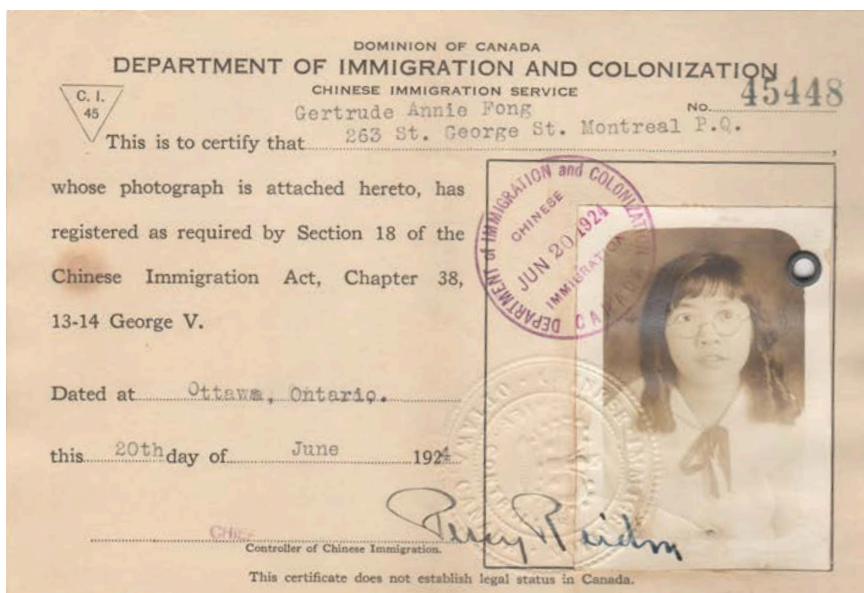
The second oldest child of the family, Margaret was active in the Chinese Mission and the Chinese Presbyterian Church. For many years, she was the housekeeper for the Tarleton family in Westmount. Margaret was also a poet and short story writer whose publications appeared in various Montréal English-language newspapers under the name of Peggy King. She died of an allergic reaction to penicillin.

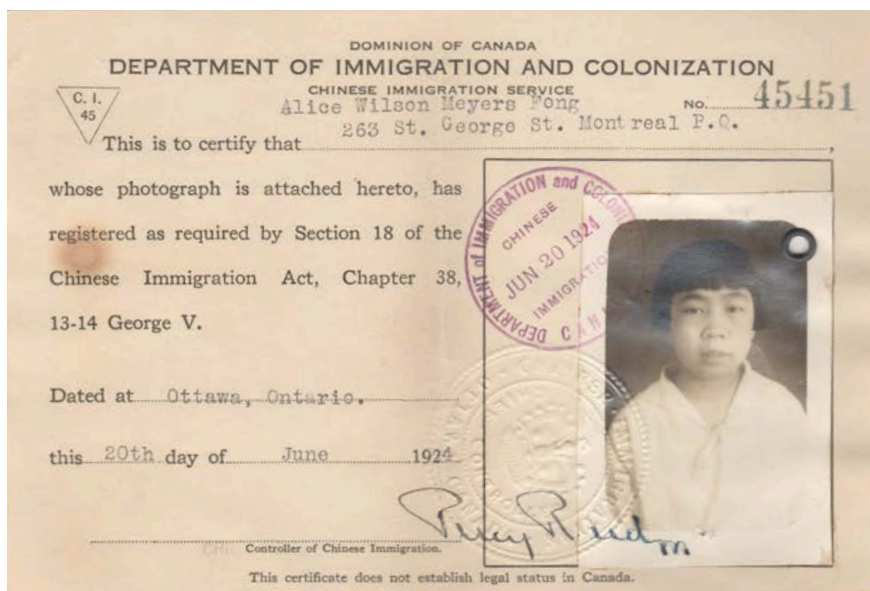


Gertrude Annie Fong

1909-1985

Gertrude (Trudy) was an athlete and won school swimming competitions. She also became the de facto home maker, taking care of her two younger sisters. Gertrude developed severe eye cataracts when she was a young woman and was an invalid for the rest of the life, remaining in the care of the family. During family meals, she would spoil the dog by slipping him treats. She was also skilled at origami.



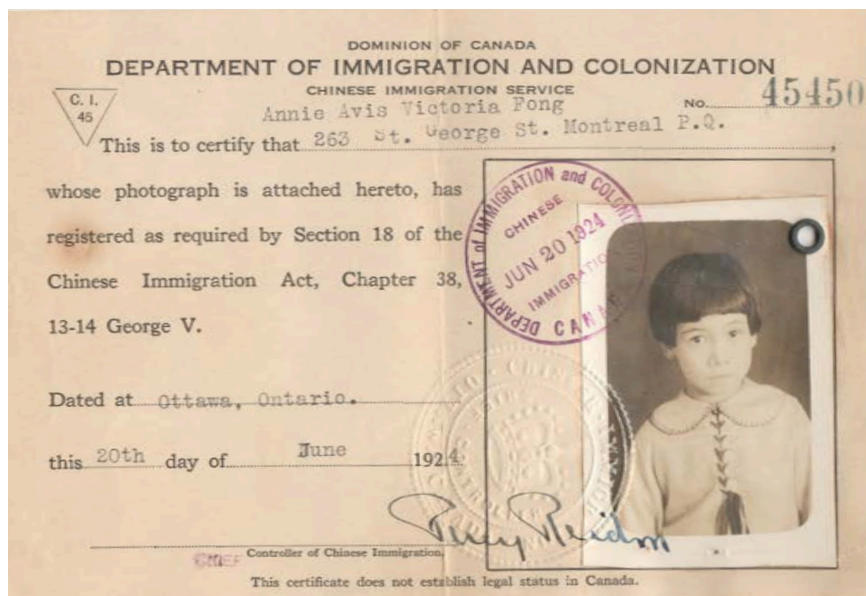


Alice Wilson Meyers Fong

1911-1995

Annie preferred to use her other middle name, Victoria, and never liked being called Annie. In her adult life, she went by Ann Victoria Fong. A talented amateur painter, she went to work in the printing trades. In 1938, while employed at Ronalds Printing, she met her husband-to-be, Norman Greig Stanley. When they married in 1943, they encountered significant racism, including from some of her husband's relatives. Their wedding attracted quite a crowd of onlookers, as mixed marriages were so rare. Norman, as a pilot in training in the Canadian Air Force, had to get the permission of his commanding officer to get married. He was originally denied; according to the commander, "these mixed marriages never work." The couple were together for fifty-nine years until Norman's death in 2003. The racism

Alice was the scholar of the family. She graduated elementary school and won the sole entrance scholarship for the high school. In her adult life, she was the main support of her mother and Gertrude following the death of Margaret. She worked in the finance department for Sun Life Insurance for over 40 years. Alice was an avid bowler and sports fan. She closely followed the Montréal Alouettes and the Montréal Canadiens, always read the sports pages, and loved historical romances. A truly selfless person, when in 1969 her brother-in-law (Annie's husband) lost his business and the family was effectively bankrupt, she unhesitatingly cashed in her life savings to support them.



Annie Avis Victoria Fong

1916-2016

they experienced was so intense that they initially agreed not to have any children. It was not until after World War II that they felt comfortable doing so. Their son Robert was born in 1950 and their son Timothy in 1953.

Ann continued to paint until shortly before her death and played golf until the age of 95.



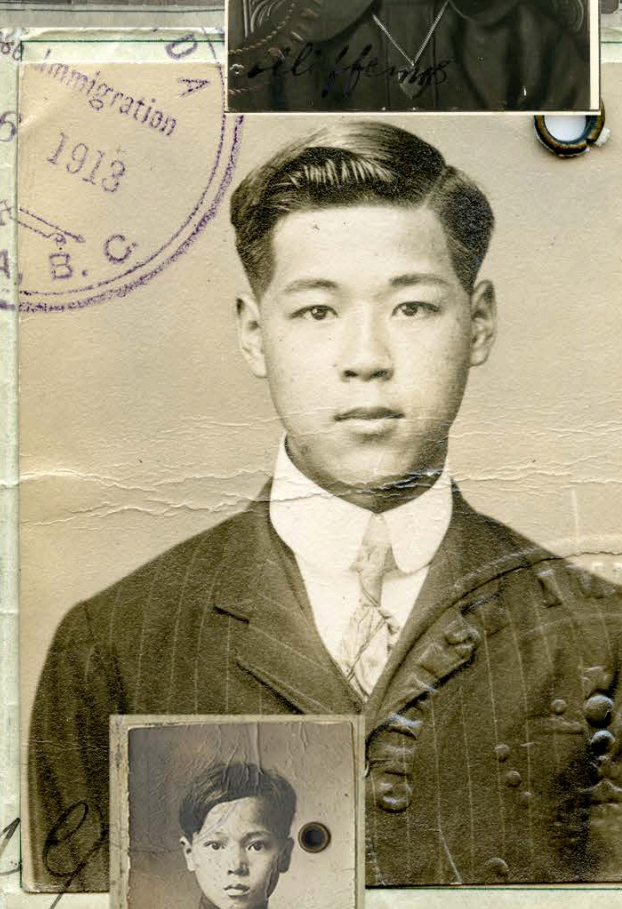
Commemorative Banner

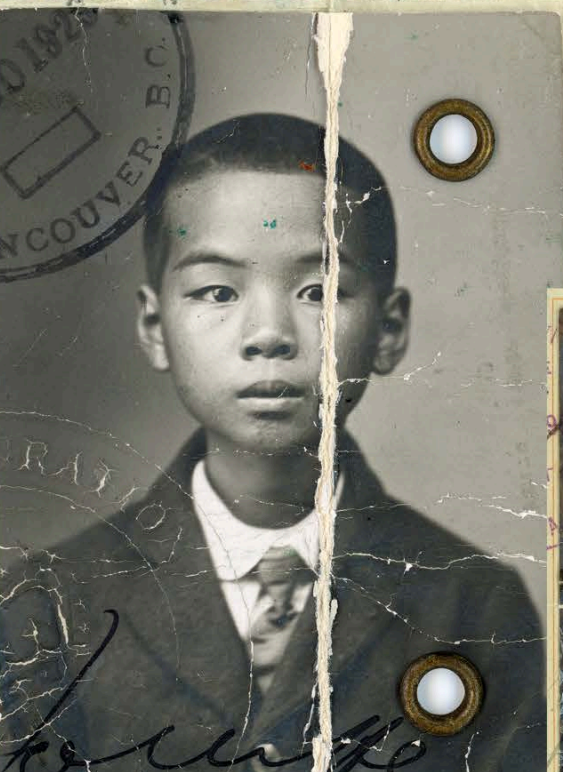
The collage of portraits of those required to register under the Act was created by Dave Gagnon and represents a small portion of those registered, beyond the bureaucratic cataloging system. The collage seeks to honour them and allows us to see their faces in a new, reflective light.

“Uncovered Acts” by Don Kwan

The artist uses mixed media to give a contemporary reflection and response to the Act. The images in the sculpture are from various sources, including the *Chinese Immigration Act, 1885* and *1923: The Heathen Chinese in British Columbia*, by artist James L. Weston 1879 (Illustration), images of Canada’s Founding Fathers and portraits of the artist’s mother and grandmother.













Reflections on Exclusion: An Exhibition on the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923 aims to illuminate a dark chapter of our past through the curation and presentation of official documents, a contemporary artistic response to the injustice of the Act, and a collage of photographs which gives recognition, respect, and space to those once diminished to a serial number and CI paper. Presented in the Senate of Canada,

where the Chinese Exclusion Act received Royal Assent, the faces in the collage are finally visible, and presented as dignified Canadians who are no longer excluded.

We hope the exhibition is an opportunity to reflect on this and other examples of exclusion in Canadian history, and to reject all modern forms of exclusion.

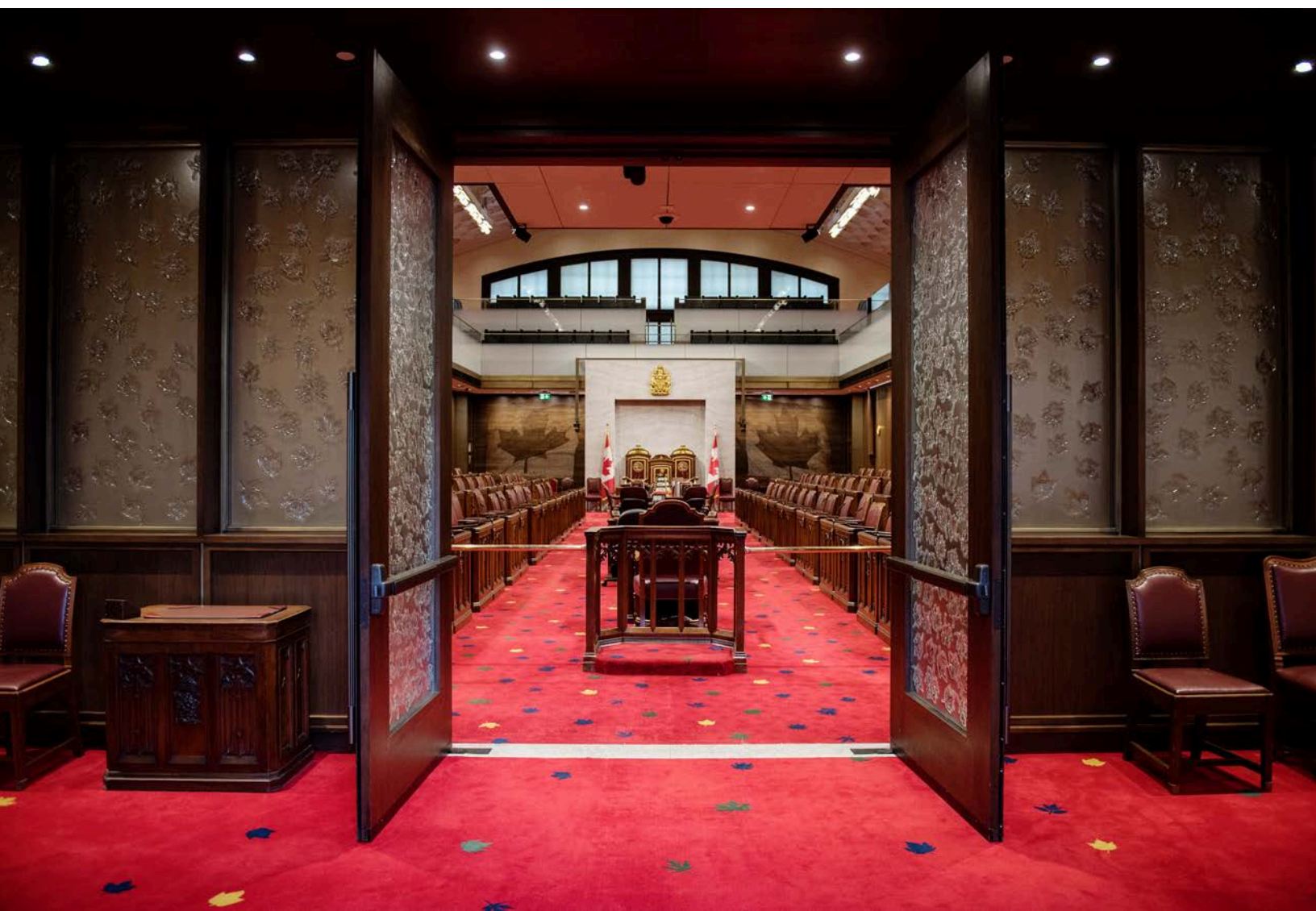
THE CEREMONY

*The National Remembrance Ceremony of
the 100th Anniversary of the Introduction of
the Chinese Exclusion Act*

June 23rd 2023

On June 23, 2023, The Honourable Senator Yuen Pau Woo, The Honourable Senator Victor Oh and the Action Chinese Canadians Together (ACCT) Foundation hosted a National Remembrance event in the Senate of Canada Chamber to mark the 100th anniversary of the

enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act in Canada. The event was an opportunity to recognize the longstanding relationship between Chinese Canadians and Indigenous Peoples in Canada, to enhance a sense of pride and belonging, and to take action against racism.









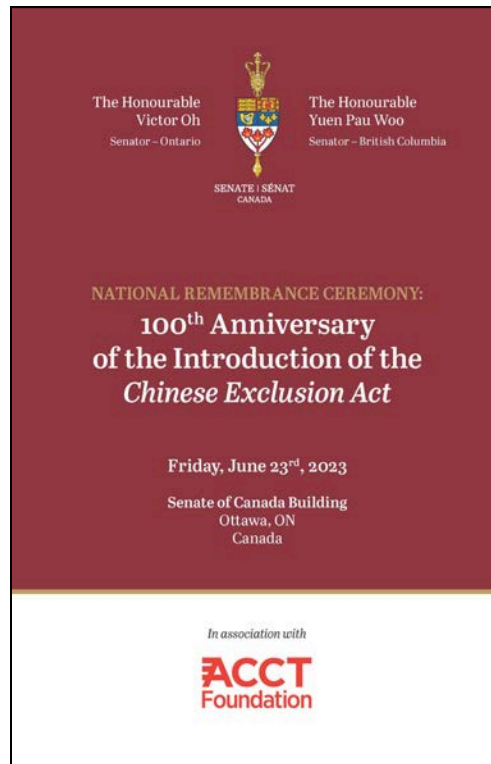












<p>Programme</p> <p>Introductory Remarks and Land Acknowledgement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master of Ceremony, Dr. Marianne Situ <p>Indigenous Blessing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Hon. Mary Jane McCallum, Senator—Manitoba <p>Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Her Excellency, the Rt. Hon. Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada• The Hon. Raymonde Gagné, Speaker of the Senate of Canada• The Hon. Mary Ng, M.P., P.C., Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion, and International Trade <p>Unveiling of the Commemorative Plaque, The Exclusion of Chinese Immigrants, 1923—1947</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Her Excellency, the Rt. Hon. Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada• The Hon. Mary Ng, M.P., P.C., Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development• The Hon. Teresa Woo Paw, Chair, ACCT Foundation• Ms. Nadine Spence, Vice President, Indigenous Affairs & Cultural Heritage, Parks Canada• Dr. Richard Alway, Chair, National Sites and Monuments Board of Canada• Dr. Lloyd Wong, Associate Professor Emeritus, University of Calgary <p>Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Richard Alway, Chair, National Sites and Monuments Board of Canada	<p>Pathways to the Future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goh Ballet <p>Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Hon. Yuen Pau Woo, Senator—British Columbia• Dr. Brandt C. Louie• The Honourable Vivienne Poy, Former Senator—Ontario• The Hon. Victor Oh, Senator—Ontario <p>Never Forget July 1 (毋忘七一)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ashley Au, Composer• National Remembrance Ceremony Choir, conducted by Chin Ki Yeung <p>Stories of Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Citizenship Judge Albert Wong, Chair of the National Remembrance Organizing Committee <p>Spoken Word Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Christopher Tse <p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Hon. Teresa Woo Paw, Chair, ACCT Foundation <p>Unspoken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goh Ballet <p>O Canada</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Remembrance Ceremony Choir and all guests.
---	---





Introductory Remarks and Land Acknowledgement

Master of Ceremony, Dr. Marianne Situ



Indigenous Blessing
The Honourable Mary Jane McCallum,
Senator—Manitoba



Her Excellency, The Right Honourable

Mary Simon

Governor General of Canada



Good afternoon,

Before we begin, I would also like to acknowledge that we are gathered here on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people who have lived on and cared for this land for thousands of years.

One hundred years ago a law anchored in discrimination and intolerance came into effect. This was the Chinese Exclusion Act. We are gathered today to acknowledge the harm it caused to families, communities and our country. Today, we add another chapter to Canada's true history. In telling the stories of those who suffered as a result of racism, we are not rewriting the past, but giving a fuller picture of our history and our national narrative. It's about being inclusive.

I understand the trauma caused by this act. It left a legacy of hurt and harm that takes time to repair. But I am here today to help in that process. And part of that is to acknowledge all that Chinese Canadians have done—and still do—for Canada.

In short, they helped build this country.

They contribute locally, nationally and globally.

They are innovative and passionate.

And they are dedicated to public service, as exemplified by my predecessor, Adrienne Clarkson, who served as governor general from 1999 to 2005.

I know some watching this broadcast remember first-hand the impact the Chinese Exclusion Act had on their communities. I thank you for continuing to fight and to raise your voices against injustice and discrimination.

What we do today is a part of reconciliation. What we do is improving relationships between all Canadians.

In learning the truth of what happened and acknowledging the harm that was done, we make room for healing and for renewed relationships between Chinese Canadians and other Canadians. It is an ongoing process to deepen understanding between peoples.

Many may not realize that the relationship between Indigenous peoples and those of Chinese descent is historically strong and long-standing. Chinese labourers built the railways and mines. Piece by piece, they helped build the infrastructure of this country. And Indigenous peoples supported them during this time, providing medicine and food.

They helped each other.

When the law prevented Chinese businesses or restaurants from serving white Canadians, Indigenous peoples frequented these places. And it was Chinese people who gave Indigenous peoples jobs when no one else would.

These acts of kindness and support between communities of different backgrounds and beliefs are, I believe, the foundation of our modern Canada. A more inclusive Canada. A Canada focused on reconciliation.

We must remember this as Chinese Canadians face renewed discrimination and racism. History is there to teach us lessons, and we should reject sentiments and acts of racism and discrimination that we see today. Last week, the Canadian population hit 40 million. That is 40 million stories of hope, determination, pride, strength, struggle, renewal, challenge and resilience. The story of Chinese Canadians is part of our overarching narrative, and it's a story more than a century in the making. They are an integral part of our country, and a part of who we are.

To everyone here in the Senate, to everyone watching across the country, let us all remember the mistakes of the past—learn from them—and let us all build a more inclusive future. Together.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwetch. Nakurmiik.



“In telling the stories of those who suffered as a result of racism, we are not rewriting the past, but giving a fuller picture of our history and our national narrative.”



The Honourable

Raymonde Gagné

Speaker of the Senate of Canada



Honorables sénateurs,

Distingués invités,

Aujourd'hui, nous nous réunissons au Sénat pour réfléchir solennellement au 100^e anniversaire de la Loi d'exclusion des Chinois. Nous savons que nous sommes collectivement responsables de la définition des moyens à prendre pour que le Canada aille de l'avant, et, pour ce faire, il nous faut réfléchir à notre histoire. Il y a près d'un siècle, le 1^{er} juillet 1923, le gouvernement fédéral a adopté une loi qui avait pour effet pratique de bloquer l'installation au Canada des citoyens chinois pour une période de 24 ans. Ce moment de notre histoire nous rappelle brutalement notre devoir de respecter et de protéger les principes d'égalité et d'inclusion, des valeurs qui définissent l'essence même de notre nation.

The Chinese Immigration Act, 1923, otherwise known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, was introduced with the goal of curbing Chinese immigration to Canada. Prior to this Act, discriminatory Chinese Head Taxes, where Chinese citizens had to pay \$50, \$100, and then \$500 to enter Canada, had failed to slow Chinese immigration to Canada.

During the legislative debates of that time, the federal government candidly acknowledged its goal of excluding Chinese citizens, in particular labourers, from entering Canada. Despite Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's claim that the legislation would permit the entry of select groups of Chinese citizens, the enforcement of the Act presented a very different reality. While official numbers are unknown, from 1923 to 1947, Canada admitted a mere 12 to a maximum of 50 Chinese immigrants.

Les mesures restrictives ne sont pas arrêtées à l'exclusion des citoyens chinois du Canada. Les Chinois se trouvant déjà au Canada et désirant se rendre en Chine étaient limités à un séjour d'une durée maximale de deux ans, et ceux qui prolongeaient indûment leur séjour se voyaient refuser de rentrer au pays à leur retour. La Loi visait aussi à exiger l'inscription des personnes d'origine chinoise qui vivaient au Canada, même celles qui étaient nées en sol canadien. De plus, ces personnes devaient être munies d'un certificat d'identité avec photo; celles qui n'obtempéraient pas s'exposaient à des amendes, à la détention, ou même à la déportation.

La dévalorisation des immigrants chinois s'est également manifestée dans l'une des dispositions de la Loi qui était liée au transport. En vertu de cette disposition, les navires qui envoyaient des immigrants chinois vers le Canada ne devaient transporter qu'une seule personne par tranche de 250 tonnes de jauge, ce qui consistait essentiellement à réduire les citoyens chinois à une simple cargaison.

The lasting impact on the Chinese community in Canada was devastating. This Act, and the accompanying discrimination, caused heart-wrenching consequences for families. The Act led to prolonged and often permanent separation between loved ones. It left men who had immigrated to Canada for work unable to bring their wives and children to join them; this ultimately resulted in the emergence of a "bachelor society." Chinese communities faced marginalization and an increasing sense of isolation and alienation.

Lorsque nous réfléchissons aux effets de la Loi, il est également important de reconnaître les initiatives que nous déployons pour reconnaître nos erreurs. En 2006, le gouvernement du Canada a présenté des excuses officielles pour la taxe d'entrée, le premier ministre Stephen Harper ayant exprimé ses plus profonds regrets pour l'exclusion subséquente des immigrants chinois[1]. Récemment, le 30 mai de cette année, les responsables de Parcs Canada ont désigné l'exclusion des immigrants chinois entre 1923 et 1947 événement historique national, reconnaissant en outre qu'il s'agit d'un chapitre difficile de notre histoire.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed colleagues, Senator Woo and Senator Oh, whose relentless efforts continue to bring attention to the anniversary of the Act's implementation. I applaud their commitment to shining a light on this chapter of our history. Their dedication serves as a reminder of the ongoing work needed to understand and address the lasting impact of discriminatory policies.

As both senators have noted in speeches to this Chamber, this very building was constructed in 1912 by the Grand Trunk Railway. In a time prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act and before the implementation of head taxes, when Canada was in dire need of their labour, thousands of Chinese men were recruited to assist in the construction of the western section of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Their work played a crucial role in unifying our country from east to west.

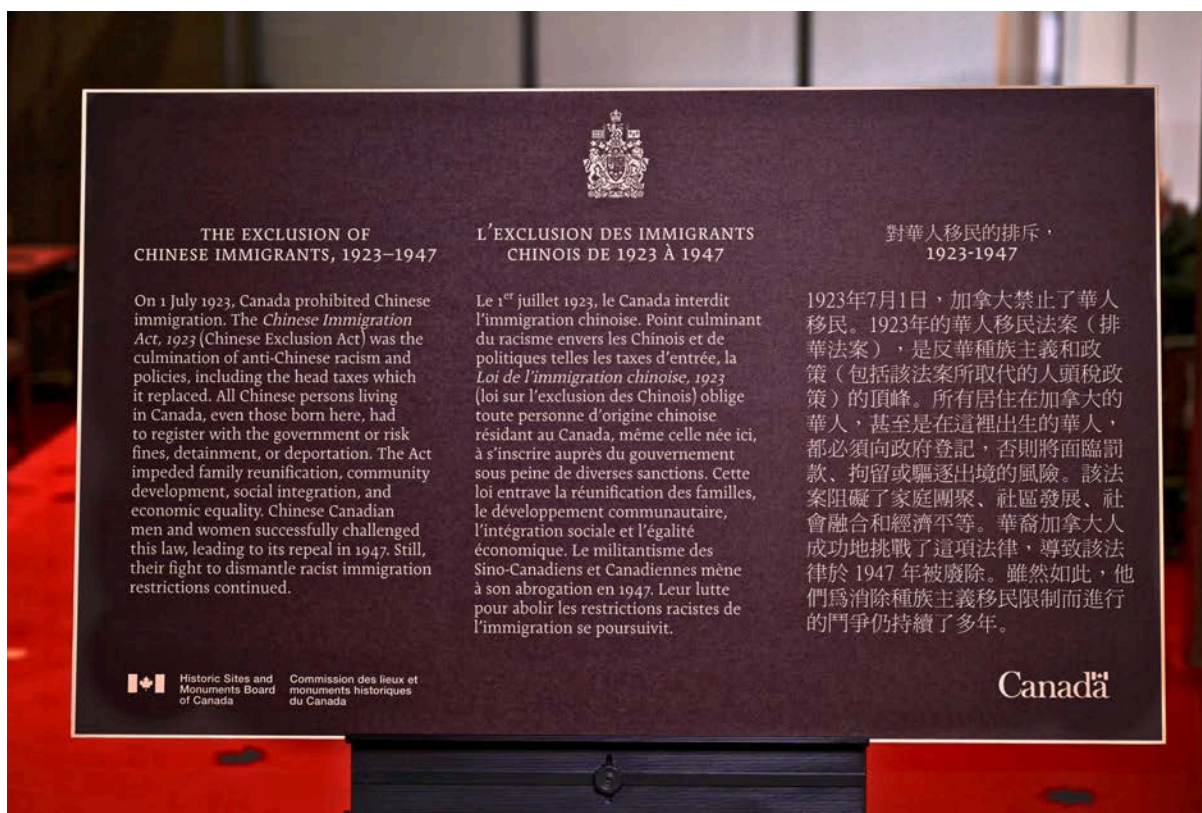
It seems fitting, then, that we commemorate this moment here, in what used to be Union Station. I commend my Honourable colleagues for the poignant exhibition that has been set up in what used to be the main concourse of the station.

En conclusion, c'est en reconnaissant et en comprenant notre histoire, même les chapitres que nous regrettons, que nous pourrons bâtir un avenir plus inclusif et plus équitable. Je vous remercie de votre attention.



Mary Ng, M.P., P.C., Minister of Small
Business, Export Promotion, and
International Trade





THE EXCLUSION OF
CHINESE IMMIGRANTS, 1923-1947

On 1 July 1923, Canada prohibited Chinese immigration. The *Chinese Immigration Act, 1923* (Chinese Exclusion Act) was the culmination of anti-Chinese racism and policies, including the head taxes which it replaced. All Chinese persons living in Canada, even those born here, had to register with the government or risk fines, detainment, or deportation. The Act impeded family reunification, community development, social integration, and economic equality. Chinese Canadian men and women successfully challenged this law, leading to its repeal in 1947. Still, their fight to dismantle racist immigration restrictions continued.

L'EXCLUSION DES IMMIGRANTS
CHINOIS DE 1923 À 1947

Le 1^{er} juillet 1923, le Canada interdit l'immigration chinoise. Point culminant du racisme envers les Chinois et de politiques telles les taxes d'entrée, la *Loi de l'immigration chinoise, 1923* (loi sur l'exclusion des Chinois) oblige toute personne d'origine chinoise résidant au Canada, même celle née ici, à s'inscrire auprès du gouvernement sous peine de diverses sanctions. Cette loi entrave la réunification des familles, le développement communautaire, l'intégration sociale et l'égalité économique. Le militantisme des Sino-Canadiens et Canadiennes mène à son abrogation en 1947. Leur lutte pour abolir les restrictions racistes de l'immigration se poursuit.

對華人移民的排斥，
1923-1947

1923年7月1日，加拿大禁止了華人移民。1923年的華人移民法案（排華法案），是反華種族主義和政政策（包括該法案所取代的人頭稅政策）的頂峰。所有居住在加拿大的華人，甚至是在這裡出生的華人，都必須向政府登記，否則將面臨罰款、拘留或驅逐出境的風險。該法案阻礙了家庭團聚、社區發展、社會融合和經濟平等。華裔加拿大人成功地挑戰了這項法律，導致該法律於1947年被廢除。雖然如此，他們為消除種族主義移民限制而進行的鬥爭仍持續了多年。



Historic Sites and
Monuments Board
of Canada

Commission des lieux et
monuments historiques
du Canada

Canada



Dr. Richard Alway,
Chair, National Sites and
Monuments Board of Canada



“Pathways to the Future”
Performed by Goh Ballet





“Never Forget July 1 (毋忘七一)”

Performed by the National Remembrance Ceremony Choir

Conducted by Chin Ki Yeung

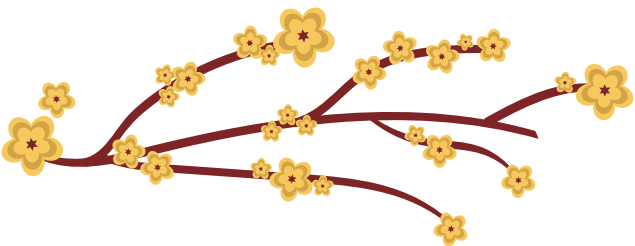
毋忘七一

Never Forget July 1

Written for a competition organized by the Chinese community in Vancouver to protest the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, the name of the composer and original music have been lost. We are proud to offer a fresh musical score by Ashley Au, so that this song can be heard 100 years after it was written in the Senate of Canada—where the Act became law.

七一到
心悶遭
怕佢把例來加火
捉我同胞作開刀
虐受四三條苦楚
實難報
記念在胸牢
發奮為雄除白禍
伸仇雪恥望吾曹

**The First of July is just ahead,
Our hearts are filled with mortal dread.
Because of a law which lights a fire
That will sever compatriots caught in its ire.
How can we begin to express the pain
Of 43 clauses that leave us slain.
We will remember, and with all we can muster,
Rid ourselves of this white-led disaster.
We will strive to remove the yoke,
To right the wrongs against our folk.**



雲埠：白羊樓書莊製, mid-1920s.
Translated by the Honourable Senator Yuen Pau Woo



Stories of Resilience
Citizenship Judge Albert Wong



“The Chinese Exclusion Act was crafted and passed by the Parliament of Canada a hundred years ago, and its repeal 24 years later was caused in large measure by the resilience of those who were the very target of this act. Their resilience and their determination to build a life on these native lands ensured our future. By not giving up, by not going away, their determination, their perseverance, and indeed their loyalty secured our citizenship today. And our citizenship, our belonging, benefits all peoples on this land.”

- Albert Wong





“A Song for the Paper Children”
Spoken Word Performance by Christopher Tse



“Unspoken”
Performed by Goh Ballet





THE RALLY

Parliament Hill

June 24th 2023

Parliament Hill
111 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6



As word of the National Remembrance Ceremony spread across the country, requests to attend the event in person flooded in. The Senate Chamber unfortunately could only accommodate 200 people. Thousands more, however, attended the ceremony virtually through one of the 400 plus viewing parties across the country. The next day,

Chinese community leaders from Ottawa, Montréal and Toronto held a rally on Parliament Hill to mark the 100th anniversary and to call for an end to anti-Asian racism and the stigmatization of Chinese Canadians. It was attended by about 4,000 people from across Canada and marks the single largest gathering of Chinese Canadians on the Hill.





















*“On June 23, we met in the Senate of Canada to **remember** the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Today, we gather on Parliament Hill to **voice** our concerns about discrimination and stigmatization. Tomorrow, and everyday hence, we will **act** against those who would bring about the modern exclusion of Chinese Canadians and all visible minorities.”*

- The Honourable Yuen Pau Woo



















The Right of Final Reply

The Honourable Senator Yuen Pau Woo

— 11 April 2024 —

Honourable senators, I rise to offer concluding remarks on my inquiry calling attention to the hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act. I would like to thank Senators Jaffer, Simons, Omidvar, Oh, Kutcher, McCallum, Ravalia and Mégie for their contributions to the inquiry. Each of them offered fresh perspectives on the Chinese immigrant experience in this country as well as the broader story of immigration to Canada and the unfinished task of fighting prejudice, discrimination and exclusion of newcomers.

On June 23, 2023, Senator Oh and I, together with Action Chinese Canadians Together, organized a national remembrance ceremony in this very chamber to mark the hundredth anniversary. The meeting was graced by Her Excellency the Governor General and Speaker Gagné. Nearly 200 Chinese Canadians and friends of the community filled this chamber. Thousands more watched a livestream at some 400 registered viewing parties across the country.

The ceremony included the designation of the Chinese Exclusion Act by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada as a national historic event and the commissioning of a bronze plaque. Here is the inscription on the plaque:

On 1 July 1923, Canada prohibited Chinese immigration. The Chinese Immigration Act, 1923 (Chinese Exclusion Act) was the culmination of anti-Chinese racism and policies, including the head taxes which it replaced. All Chinese persons living in Canada, even those born here, had to register with the government or risk fines, detainment, or deportation. The Act impeded family reunification, community development, social integration, and economic equality. Chinese Canadian men and women successfully challenged this law, leading to its repeal in 1947. Still, their fight to dismantle racist immigration restrictions continued.

The repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act ended the prohibition on Chinese immigrants, but Canadian immigration policy continued to be racially biased with the intake of newcomers almost exclusively focused on European settlers. This bias meant that Chinese who were already in Canada were largely unable to sponsor their family members in China to enter the country.

Worse, Chinese Canadians were subject to investigations by the government, which continued to harbour suspicions about their bona fides and loyalties. The recent release of previously restricted C.I.44 records by Library and Archives Canada has shone a light on the pervasive anti-Chinese sentiment that lingered well past 1947.

Archival researchers have so far been able to access only a small fraction of the Chinese immigration records from the exclusion period and its aftermath. Many of these documents remain restricted and are very difficult to navigate because of the complicated filing system used by government departments at the time. I am calling on Library and Archives Canada to make more records available and to invest in the development of finding aids so that historians and researchers can paint a more complete story of Chinese immigration both during and after the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The remembrance ceremony in the Senate of Canada was followed the next day by a rally on Parliament Hill attended by more than 3,000 Chinese Canadians who came from across the country. They were here to mark the Chinese Exclusion Act and to pledge opposition to ongoing discrimination, stigmatization and prejudice against Chinese people and other minorities.

The hundredth anniversary has also been remembered by community groups and educational institutions at dozens of events across Canada. It has mobilized the Chinese community in ways that I have not seen before and has forced the community to have some difficult conversations about the place of Chinese people in Canadian society and the ongoing challenges faced by the community.

It has also forced me to reflect more deeply on some contemporary public policy issues that impinge on Chinese Canadians, several of which have already found their way to this chamber. As these issues surface, I will be asking questions about justice, fairness and the rule of law that I wish my predecessors of 100 years ago had asked of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The fact that the Chinese Exclusion Act passed the House and the Senate with little opposition suggests that there was popular support for the bill and that MPs and senators were able to come up with rationalizations that fit with the dominant ethos of the time. Back then, it was about racial purity, economic security, cultural superiority and a protection of a way of life.

It is unlikely that anyone today would argue for a law based on racial purity and cultural superiority.

We can take some solace in the fact that we are more enlightened than our forebears when it comes to foreigners, but we would be deluding ourselves if we thought that nativist and xenophobic attitudes have been expunged from the collective Canadian consciousness.

One of the controversies aroused by the centenary of the Chinese Exclusion Act is the question of whether a form of modern exclusion of Chinese Canadians is happening in our country now. Those who deny it often suggest that claims of modern exclusion are a sign of disloyalty and subversion.

A particular source of friction is the proposed foreign influence transparency registry that the government plans to introduce. A discussion paper on the proposed registry, as well as private members' versions of the bill introduced in the House of Commons and the Senate, suggest that anyone with links to legally constituted entities in the People's Republic of China, or PRC — universities, business associations, cultural groups, sporting bodies, et cetera — could be required to register. Further, anyone who espouses views that are in line with a foreign government and who has had contact with a foreign official could be required to register because that person is deemed to be a source of malign foreign influence.

Colleagues, I support an expanded registry of lobbyists that fully captures agents of foreign states, but what we could be getting instead is a registry of foreign influence. Think about it — a registry of Canadians who are deemed to be subject to influence from foreign governments, even if they are not in the employ or under the direction of that government. For Chinese Canadians, it would mean having to disavow professional, cultural and — in

some cases — familial ties in China or run the risk of having their names on a registry. Is there any wonder that I and many others worry about modern Chinese exclusion?

It is not only in the proposed foreign influence registry that we see such signs. We also see warning lights in the heightened immigration screening of students from China, the oversecritization of research collaboration at our universities, claims of foreign interference and disloyalty that focus on politicians of Chinese ethnicity, forcing Chinese Canadians to dispose of their assets using extraordinary powers of the state, police investigations of Chinese cultural organizations that are threatening their very survival — and the stigmatization of anyone who questions these troubling trends as a foreign agent.

This is not to minimize the importance of national security or the suffering of Canadians who are subject to transnational repression. It is also not about defending human rights abuses or militarism in the People's Republic of China. But we only harm ourselves by embracing a sweeping definition of a “China threat,” and we harm our reputation as a country that sees itself as progressive, fair-minded and open to the world. The rhetoric of an all-encompassing China threat propagated by politicians who are trying to out-hawk each other sets a tone for how we see and treat Canadians who have ties to the PRC. Let's be very clear: We are talking about protecting the rights of Canadians, not foreigners. Canadians who deserve all the rights and privileges of fellow citizens, including the right to not be stigmatized because of their links to China.

I think about the senior Chinese Canadian official who was advised by bosses to not attend the remembrance ceremony in the Senate because it might “send the wrong message”; the Chinese Canadian academics who are treated with suspicion because they work with colleagues in China; users of Canada-based Chinese-language social media platforms, who are assumed to be unable to think for themselves and accused of being dupes and vectors of foreign interference; and Chinese scientists in Canada who are punished for their past work with Chinese research institutions. How many more Chinese Canadians will be subject to this kind of modern exclusion? How long before we wake up to the injustice of such actions? Not, I hope, as long as the 24 years it took to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act.

I will end on a more positive note. I have already lamented the complicity of Canadian parliamentarians in making possible the Chinese Exclusion Act of 100 years ago. The Senate of Canada was part of that shameful past, and it was senators from British Columbia who delivered some of the most repugnant speeches. But the Senate also played a role in making

the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 less harmful than it could have been. By amending the bill that came from the House of Commons, the Senate removed the requirement for a language test to apply to Chinese already in Canada. The original provision would have led to mass deportation of Chinese who were deemed to not be sufficiently fluent in English. Perhaps the thought of having to transport tens of thousands of Chinese across the Pacific prompted this outburst of sober second thought, but it was, in any event, a slim lining of silver in an otherwise very dark cloud that hung over the Chinese community for more than two decades.

That is why, honourable colleagues, my inquiry on the one hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act is as much an inquiry about our institution as it is about Chinese Canadians. For us, the remembrance of the act must be about being alert to modern exclusion and preventing it from spreading — because when modern exclusion rears its ugly head, it will not come in the exact same form of the exclusion act. Rather, modern exclusion will be constructed around a set of contemporary fears and phobias fed by political and populist pressures from within and without. It will not be the same as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 100 years ago, but it will be just as seductive, just as popular, just as “politically necessary” — and just as wrong.

Thank you.

Acknowledgements

The *Reflections on Exclusion* Exhibition was curated by Jiaqi Wu with help from Senate of Canada Archives and the Library of Parliament. The Fong Family Certificates were courtesy of Robert D. and Timothy J. Stanley.

The National Remembrance Ceremony of the 100th Anniversary of the Introduction of the Chinese Exclusion Act would not have been possible without the support of the Action Chinese Canadians Together Foundation led by Teresa Woo-Paw and Albert Wong, the Office of the Speaker of the Senate, the Office of the Usher of the Black Rod, the Office of the Honourable Senator Victor Oh, the Office of the Honourable Senator Yuen Pau Woo, and the many Senate Administration staff who provided logistical support.

The Chinese Canadian Museum in Vancouver, led by Board Chair Grace Wong and CEO Melissa Lee, provided support and encouragement from the inception of the project. I am especially grateful to curator Catherine Clement and archivist June Chow for their advice and assistance.

Photography: David Lai, Maggie Wei, the Office of the Speaker of the Senate, the Senate of Canada, and the the 100th Anniversary Rally Committee

Project Manager: Louise Haddock

Book Design: Lindsay Keenan

Front & Back Cover Collage: Dave Gagnon

