Beyond the Railway Narrative: Exclusion and Agency in Chinese Canadian History before 1947

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of Chinese in Canadian history by looking beyond the popular railway narrative that reinforces a stereotype of docile cheap labour and a reductive lens of racism. The research will look at what brought Chinese sojourners to Canada and the economic and legislation restraints and discriminatory labour practices by the government and employers. It will look at how Chinese people began to resist the prohibitive social, economic, and political policies through protests, Chinese unions, and collaborative efforts of Chinese and white Canadians. The railway narrative rendered Chinese women invisible within Canadian history as it focuses on the racial discrimination of Chinese men. The research will show Chinese women were impacted economically and socially by their lack of visibility within society due to gender and cultural discrimination by both white and Chinese communities. Finally, without acknowledgement and education the perpetuation of racial stereotypes will continue.

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Introduction

Chinese played an integral part in Canadian history. However, the variety of their contributions are often obscured by Chinese sojourners' role in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. For many Canadians their first experience with the history of Chinese in Canada came with the Heritage Minute "Nitro" released in 1992. The sixty-second short film is of a young Chinese man who risks his life to set a nitroglycerine charge inside a tunnel of rocks while helping to build the railway in the 1880s. The intent of the Heritage Minutes series was to illustrate an important moment in Canadian history and to highlight the discrimination faced by Chinese railway workers. The final scene in the film shows the young man now as a grandfather speaking to his grandchildren about his experiences working on the railroad. He says "I lost many friends. They say there is one dead Chinese man for every mile of that track."[1]

"Nitro" highlights the death, danger, and discrimination experienced by Chinese railway workers a significant moment in Canadian nation-building. The video shows a poor Chinese man who has come to Canada to work the railway. He is offered more money by his foreman to set the nitroglycerine charge, which is an obvious danger, but he is seen smiling when he exits the tunnel after an explosion unharmed. The work on the railway was indeed very dangerous work, but it is just one of the hardships endured by these Chinese workers. Their biggest hardship would be the discrimination that was perpetuated against them because of their race forcing them into a lower social and economic status than white workers that would continue to plague them for generations to come.

[1] "Heritage Minutes-Part of Our Heritage," Nitro | Historica Canada, 1992, https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/nitro.
*It does not, however, describe other causes of death for railway workers, which included starvation, exposure, and disease.

The railway could not be completed without Chinese labourers. When protests by politicians, railway workers and society at large were lodged against the hiring of Chinese workers protests motivated by the belief that Chinese migrants were taking jobs away from white Canadians, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald defended the practice of recruiting migrant Chinese labourers because white Canadians or European migrants were not willing to take the risks the western part of the railway demanded. Due to the mountain ranges throughout British Columbia, there was a greater need for the use of explosives to excavate railway tunnels. Chinese workers were willing to take these risks to support their families in China and to repay money that had been borrowed to bring them to Canada.

While the experience of Chinese railway workers on the CPR is significant and tragic, it has obscured the other roles and contributions of Chinese migrants to Canada, the discriminatory treatment endured by the Chinese socially, economically, and politically beyond the railway, and Chinese migrants' agency in confronting this discrimination and building lives as settlers in Canada. Racial tensions and discrimination towards the Chinese were evident in Canada prior to the construction of the CPR, as early as the 1850s, but it intensified and worsened after the railway construction began with the increase in the Chinese population in British Columbia. Some could argue that the arrival of the first Chinese to the shores of Canada in 1788 was the beginning of the stereotypes still used today when Captain John Meares wrote in his journal that their craftsmanship, obedience, and diligence were indispensable and that to continue the building of trading posts, a colony of Chinese men would be "a very important acquisition."[2] Meares goes on to note that their labour was cheap: this characterization of Chinese labourers as

[2] "Introduction." *A Brief Chronology of Chinese Canadian History*. https://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/chart_en.html.

cheap, obedient and exploitable would follow them throughout the early part of Canadian history and beyond.

Chinese workers were vastly underpaid in comparison to white workers because employers took advantage of their situation. Chinese migrants accepted the cheap wages out of necessity. Being underpaid forced them to live in cramped housing in segregated, underdeveloped parts of major cities such as Victoria and Vancouver. This then reinforced the prejudices of white society which saw Chinese migrants as dirty, diseased, and immoral. These perceptions then reinforced calls for tougher legislation to be put in place to halt the arrival of more Chinese migrants in Canada. Such racial tropes would continue to be applied to Chinese workers especially during the construction of the railroad. They would become weaponized in labour negotiations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Opposition against Chinese workers also intensified with the arrival of Japanese immigrants in the 1870s and South Asians in the early 1900s.[3] These migrants were likewise seen as racial and economic threats, leading labour unions and politicians to lobby for legal and social restrictions on Asian employment, housing, education, and civic participation in the province.[4] These restrictions included stringent and racially charged immigration policies such as the head tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Racial tensions did not evaporate after the completion of the railroad even though most Chinese labourers returned home to China. Roughly 5000 Chinese sojourners stayed behind to continue working, becoming settlers.[5] Most of the men who stayed behind were forced to do so

[3] "Racial Segregation of Asian Canadians." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Accessed June 5, 2021. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/segregation-of-asian-canadians.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ted Ferguson, *A White Man's Country: An Exercise in Canadian Prejudice* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.), 1975.

to repay their debts or because they could not afford the passage back to China. The men who stayed behind played significant roles in Canadian society, but their influence and contributions tend to be overshadowed by the "railway narrative."[6] According to Lisa Rose Mar, before the late twentieth century, most historians saw Canada as a European settler nation and therefore did not delve into the Chinese Canadian settlers.[7] Chinese settlers made numerous contributions to farming and industry, to rural and urban development, and later to the Canadian war effort in two World Wars. Furthermore, Chinese workers organized, sometimes alongside or in support of white workers, to confront unfair labour practices and challenge discrimination. This agency is an aspect of Chinese Canadian history that has been overlooked.

Another part of Chinese Canadian history that has been overlooked is the role of Chinese Canadian women. The railway narrative not only takes the focus off other aspects of the history Chinese migrants in Canada, but it obscures the roles and experiences of women, which were distinct from those of Chinese men in certain key ways. Chinese women suffered racial discrimination in Canada, but also cultural and gender discrimination from both Canadian and Chinese Canadian communities. Yuen-Fong Woon writes that mainstream histories and official documents in Canada and China are not helpful when it comes to depicting the lives of Chinese women, especially those in earlier periods.[8] The focus of early histories tended to be on community leaders, who were men. Any accounts of women's lives were usually unofficial or personalized ones.[9] Most men who came from China were sojourners, and women were not brought to Canada except for a few merchant wives, concubines, servants, or prostitutes. Indeed,

[6] Lisa Rose Mar, "Beyond Being Others: Chinese Canadians as National History." *The British Columbia Quarterly: Refracting Pacific Canada* 156, no. 7 (2007).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Yuen-Fong Woon, "Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women." *British Columbia Quarterly: Refracting Pacific Canada* 156, no. 7 (2007).
[9] Ibid.

the Canadian government fought to keep Chinese women out of Canada fearing the spread of a "Mongolian race" that would threaten Canada's future as a white nation. [10] However, the descendants of these pioneer women their daughters-nieces-granddaughters have recently begun to reclaim this history.

Finding everyday women in history is a challenge. Finding the history of immigrant women in Canadian history is an even greater challenge. In a CBC interview "How Much Do We Know about the Roles Women Played in Canadian History?" professors Funke Aladejebi, Tarah Brookfield and Pamela Sugimen were asked the question "How much does the average Canadian know about women in Canadian history?" Brookfield responded that many would have learned the experiences of women in a different time period if they had spoken to women relatives in their family.[11] Aladejebi believes that the average Canadian has a sense of Canadian women and their experiences in history but needs to think about a more complex and diverse narrative adding that Canada has a long way to go in relation to this.[12] Sugimen said, that for the most part, Canadians know about some leading historical figures who are women but in comparison to the number of historical figures who are men, they probably have more limited knowledge.[13] Finding the histories of women who have been left out of the historical narrative is a daunting research task. Brookfield's comment about finding out about women in history from the oral histories of relatives is what is happening today with the stories of Chinese Canadian women. The Chinese pioneer women who came to Canada were very few in numbers. With the implementation of the head tax and exclusion act, the number of women remained small. Those

[10]Enakshi Dua, "Exclusion through Inclusion: Female Asian Migration in the Making of Canada as a White Settler Nation." *Gender, Place & Culture* 14, no. 4 (2007).
[11] "How Much Do We Know about the Roles Women Played in Canadian History?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08tV9I-_g7I.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

pioneer Chinese wives that did come were bound by Chinese culture to remain within their homes. It was only when they were forced out of their private spheres due to the death of a husband or need for work that these women entered the public sphere. Still as the decades passed and more women became part of the public sphere, their lives nevertheless focused on raising children and domestic duties. They did not often share their life stories.

This thesis explores important aspects of the history of Chinese migrants in Canada that go beyond the CPR. The CPR, however, plays a pivotal role in Chinese history and its importance cannot be overlooked. In many ways, the railway was the most notable point in Chinese Canadian history because in the prewar period the largest group of Chinese migrants came to Canada. When many sojourners started to become permanent residents in Canada, however, legislation was enacted that would deny Chinese Canadians political rights, and social and economic opportunities. It was also following the completion of the railway that Chinese people began to move beyond British Columbia searching for a place to live that was less discriminatory. They began to move across Canada forming communities and creating organizations that would give voice to their frustrations but also contribute to Canadian society. This thesis will explore Chinese communities as contributors in Canada beyond the railway narrative, their path to rights, and the experiences of Chinese women.

The marginalization of Chinese migrants to Canada and the fact that Chinese Canadian voices and experiences have been largely overlooked in Canadian history until recently makes finding sources a challenge, and especially those that contain the voices of Chinese migrants themselves. Primary and secondary sources that illustrate racial discrimination suffered by Chinese are the most prevalent. For example, the Canadian Museum of Immigration Pier 21 collection includes government documents such as the Royal Commission on Chinese

Immigration (1885), the Immigration Act (1910), as well as the Exclusion Act of 1923. These documents highlight the prejudicial legislation put into place against Chinese in Canada that were responsible for over a century of racial discrimination.

In the past two decades, several websites have been created by the Federal and provincial governments to highlight the roles and experiences of Chinese Canadians in various areas. The Veterans' Affairs website features "Heroes Remember-The Chinese Canadian Veterans" which includes video testimony from men and women who participated in the Second World War talking about their experiences as Chinese Canadians and why they felt the need to volunteer to fight for a country that did not want them. On the Library and Archives of Canada Early Chinese Canadians 1858-1947 website there are many direct links to collections and materials on published research and books, photographs, documents, and materials from individuals as well as community groups, oral histories as well as research and educational resources. The Parks Canada Directory of Federal Heritage Designations gives a brief history of one of Canada's oldest and largest Chinatowns that was first settled in Vancouver in the 1880s. Radio Canada International's website "Asian Heritage Month" shows a timeline of Chinese Canadian immigration history as well as links to other Asian histories, authors, as well as highlighting Asian heritage. One other website that should be mentioned is the "Chinese Canadian Women 1923-1967," This is an interactive website put together by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in conjunction with Multicultural History Society of Ontario. This website features many Chinese Canadian women with links to exhibits, collections, activities, community information and events as well as educational material. The links feature letters, photographs, recordings and historical information about women, families, social and political issues as they pertain to women.

Newspaper archives, such as those of British Columbia's *Victoria Gazette* or *The Daily Colonist* give a rich account of the atmosphere during the time that the earliest Chinese workers arrived. The newspapers from this period also highlight the discriminatory rhetoric being used by politicians in the House of Commons as to why tougher, more racially charged legislation was needed to stop Chinese coming into Canada.

An integral part of the research for this thesis came from websites, articles, books, memoirs, and documentaries created by or supported by Chinese Canadian. The National Film Board of Canada in conjunction with Dora Nipp created the documentary *Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Women in Canada* based on the lives of women of Chinese heritage growing up in Canada in the first part of the twentieth century. Nipp was the interviewer and narrator of this documentary. Each woman interviewed talked about family, reminisced about childhood and the challenges of sexism within their own communities. They also talked about what life was like for their mothers when they came to Canada and the loneliness many of their mothers felt being away from China and because of cultural expectations. This documentary gave some insight into the lives of pioneer Chinese women, though from the perspective of their descendants. Other such projects include the Multicultural History Society of Ontario's "The Ties that Bind" and "Chinese Canadian Women 1923-1967." The first website focuses on individuals talking about how their families first came to Canada and were affected by racism and the Immigration and Exclusion Acts. The second website discusses the roles of women in Canadian history with the use of photographs, letters, journals, events, and curriculum material. The personal information provided was all donated by family members wanting their history to be known, a place where the community can find their stories. These provide access to the voices of Chinese women, which have long been elusive.

Generations after the arrival of the first pioneer women, their histories are finally being told by their family members. The Women's Book Committee of the Chinese Canadian National Council compiled a book entitled *Jin Guo Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*. The book tells the stories of Chinese women from their own perspective focusing on their lives, families, and experiences coming to and living in Canada. These oral histories are imperative to Canadian history because they show a history that is multi-dimensional and allows Canadians to understand the impact racism had on people of Chinese heritage and what discrimination forced them to endure. Writers like Elizabeth Quan, Judy Fong Bates, Janice Wong, Vivienne Poy and Dora Nipp are opening the world of Chinese Canadian women to the rest of nation by telling the histories of Chinese women in Canada. Their stories are heartbreaking and frustrating with many struggles but also many successes. Both Fong and Quan struggled with identity issues, wanting to be Canadian but often embarrassed by their race and ethnicity. Quan was continually aware of the differences in her appearance and culture in comparison to other Canadians. She struggled with a memory of her childhood that was traumatic, but she never talked about it.

As Chinese Canadian history continues to unfold, it is important to look at how it has been written as well as what lens it has been written through. Graham E. Johnson in his article "The True North Strong: Contemporary Chinese Studies in Canada," writes that prior to World War II Chinese studies were available in a limited capacity. They were first introduced at the University of British Columbia whereas it would be after World War II at the University of Toronto.[14] Johnson talked about the growing development of Chinese Studies at different universities across Canada in the 1980s and 1990s. He wrote that "the study of contemporary

[14]Graham E. Johnson, "The True North Strong: Contemporary Chinese Studies in Canada," *The China Quarterly*, no. 143 (1995), 852.

China in Canada had moved beyond the traditional core of disciplines located within the humanities and social sciences to professional fields."[15] Kimberly Manning, however, writes that though strides have indeed been made, in such universities as the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia others have failed to fulfill their potential.[16] Manning believes that we need "to think creatively about how to develop opportunities to expand the reach of our scholarship and teaching."[17] One way of doing this, Manning suggests, is to "create local forums that are open and accessible to public participation."[18] She gives an example from Henry Yu, Principal of St. Johns College and Associate professor of History at UBC, who is "actively collaborating with community partners to reimagine the history of Vancouver and of British Columbia through the concept of 'Pacific Canada' by reinterpreting Canadian history through the lens of Chinese Canadians as well as examining the history of interactions between Asian and European migrants and First Nations peoples."[19]

Since the 1990s, many Canadian newspapers, websites and television stations have also begun to recognize the history of Chinese in Canada. They have begun creating content that is intended to show the sacrifices Chinese people were willing to make and the obstacles they were confronted with. The CBC digital Archives website features mini documentaries on the topic. The series "Chinese Immigration to Canada: A Tale of Perseverance" includes videos from the past right up to today that focus on varying aspects of culture, politics, social issues, and historical events. The government of British Columbia as well as many universities in B.C. also have informative websites, documentation, records, videos, and photographs that go into more

[15] Ibid., 862.
[16] Kimberley Ens Manning, "Pacific Imaginaries: Rebuilding Chinese Studies in Canada," *Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada Research Report*, 15 March 2012, 2.
[17] Ibid., 12.
[18] Ibid., 12.
[19] Ibid., 12-13.

depth in recounting the experiences of Chinese migrants in Canada and are perhaps more detailed in highlighting the racism they faced than in other provinces or on Federal government websites. The B.C. Ministry of Trade, responsible for immigration, has created a website "Bamboo Shoots Chinese Canadian Legacies in British Columbia." It is a curriculum-based website that provides lesson plans for grades five to ten for teachers to use. This website was created in response to the overwhelming call for B.C. to update their social studies curriculum showing the contributions of Chinese British Columbians and their part in the growth of the province culturally, economically, and socially. There are various activities including links to museums in the province, interactive games, photographs and even a section that deals with apologizing for the past discriminatory treatment of Chinese Canadians. A website created by Simon Fraser University is "A Brief Chronology of Chinese Canadian History from Segregation to Integration," focuses on historical events from 1788 until 2010. It also highlights June 16, 1980, when Parliament passed a motion to recognize "the contribution made to the Canadian mosaic and culture by the people of Chinese background."[20] This was the first official recognition of Chinese railway workers.

Secondary sources on the history of Chinese migrants in Canada have also focused on exclusion, though scholarship after the 1970s has begun to explore Chinese Canadian agency and identify areas of support and moments of solidarity from other sectors of Canadian society. Gillian Creese, for example, discusses the ongoing labour issues between Chinese and white workers in "Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver Union Workers Confront the 'Oriental

[20] "1872 Disenfranchisement." *A Brief Chronology of Chinese Canadian History from Segregation to Integration.* Simon Frasier University. Accessed May 2, 2021. https://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/chart_en.html.

Problem'."[21] This article looks at anti-Asian labour politics that were affected by economic factors as well as a combination of psychological or cultural differences and how Asian labour activism helped to breakdown ethnic divisions. Scholarly articles such as Creese's explore the political agency and relationship between white and Chinese workers that is missing from representation in public history. In his book *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians,* Timothy J. Stanley challenges the commonly held belief of Chinese docility. Within Stanley's book he focuses on the Chinese student strike against racial segregation in Victoria, British Columbia in 1922-23. His use of Chinese primary sources and perspectives helps to broaden the narrative as it pertains to the challenges faced by Chinese Canadians to be recognized as Canadians. Stanley writes that "state formation organized racialization into material and symbolic exclusions that fundamentally shaped people's life chances."[22] He notes that every government run school in the province was segregated and therefore, directly responsible for the racist formation of the school system, calling the curriculum and textbooks, artifacts of "white supremacist thinking."[23] Stanley points out that there were those in the white community that were supportive of the striking students such as Christian missionaries, teachers, school inspectors and principals. The supporters of the Chinese students added to the political pressure already put on the school board by the Chinese Canadian Club and the Chinese Canadian students and in 1923 the school board reversed its decision allowing students from grade 4 and up to return to their original schools. This is indicative, as shown in my research, of the struggles of the Chinese working class to gain the

[21] Gillian Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver Workers Confront the 'Oriental Problem.'" *BC Studies: The British Columbia Quarterly:* No.80 (winter 1988/89), https://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/bcstudies/article/view/1295/1337.
[22] Timothy James Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 96.
[23] Ibid., 112.

same rights, wages, and treatment as their white counterparts by coming together in Chinese communities to form unions, community organizations and raise their voices along with some members of white society to combat the systemic racism towards Chinese workers and students.

Much of the research found for this thesis deals with the negative unsubstantiated ideas society held towards Chinese Canadians. The Moose Jaw Evening Times described the Chinese as "a 'stagnant race', an untrustworthy, 'sterile and barren people' and warned readers against the 'moral and intellectual decadence' posed by 'the Yellow Peril'," according to Constance Backhouse.[24] These stereotypes along with the hostilities created by white labour unions and employers were used to force Chinese men out of the trade labour market, leading many to occupations that had little white competition such as domestic service, laundries and restaurants.[25] This did not suffice as a means to rid society of the 'Yellow Peril' and on February 26, 1912, provincial Attorney General William Ferdinand Alphonse Turgeon introduced the anti-Asian bill to the Saskatchewan Legislature.[26] The draft of the legislation stated:

> No person shall employ in any capacity any white woman or girl or permit any white woman or girl to reside or lodge in or to work in or, save as a bona fide customer in a public apartment thereof only, to frequent any restaurant, laundry or other place of business or amusement owned, kept, or managed by any Japan or other Oriental person.[27]

Backhouse's article "The White Women's Labor Laws: Anti-Chinese Racism in Early Twentieth-Century" is about racism and law.[28] She writes "Canada is a country that prides itself on being less racist than its neighbor to the south. Knowledge of the historical background of

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[24] Constance Backhouse, "The White Women's Labor Laws: Anti-Chinese Racism in Early Twentieth-Century Canada." *Law and History Review* 14, no. 2 (1996), 333.
[25] Ibid., 322.
[26] Ibid., 326.
[27] Ibid., 326-327.
[28] Ibid., 318.

Canadian racism is not widespread."[29] However, Backhouse believes it is important to "examine the role of Canadian law and legal institutions in the creation of racial stereotypes."[30] By using the court cases of two Chinese men on trial for violating the statute of "An Act to Prevent the Employment of Female Labour in Certain Capacities," Backhouse gives a glimpse into a part of Canadian history that was discriminatory towards Chinese migrants.[31]

The attitudes towards Chinese women did not fare any better in comparison to Chinese men. Historian Mae Ngai writes that "the anti-Chinese movement stereotyped all Chinese women as prostitutes, dubbing them "slave girls," female counterparts to male coolie laborers. According to Yuen-Fong Woon "Despite the negative image portrayed by the English media, which reveled in describing syphilitic women luring young white men to eternal damnation there were very few Chinese prostitutes."[32] Mae Ngai notes that while these attacks portrayed them as diseased and immoral, this rhetoric was also laced with exoticism and desire."[33] Most of what 'Canadians' actually knew about Chinese Canadians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came from missionaries who had lived in China. W. Peter Ward writes "Protestant missionaries commonly applied popular, negative stereotypes to Orientals, at least those who were non-Christians."[34] Ward further writes "While Orientals in general were damned for their overcrowded, unsanitary living conditions, the Chinese were singled out for special condemnation. Chinese gambling, opium smoking, and female slavery particularly offended the

[29] Ibid., 318.
[30] Ibid., 319.
[31] Ibid., 316.
[32]Yuen-Fong Woon, "Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women." *British Columbia Quarterly: Refracting Pacific Canada* 156, no. 7 (2007), 91.
[33] Mae Ngai, "Racism Has Always Been Part of the Asian American Experience." *The Atlantic* (April 22, 2021), https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/04/we-are-constantly-reproducing-anti-asian-racism/618647/.
[34] W. Peter Ward. *White Canada Forever.* 3rd ed. Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002, 46.

social values of middle-class missionaries and roused the full power of their rhetoric."[35] Missionaries, not unlike many in society believed Chinese migrants would not be able to assimilate to 'Canadian' ways.[36] Philip Q. Yang writes that "Historically, opportunistic politicians and members of the anti-Chinese movement often used the sojourning orientation or the so-called unassimilability of Chinese immigrants as an argument to justify anti-Chinese legislation and activities."[37] Yang believes that the hypothesis of the sojourner should be revisited as he questions to what extent the hypothesis is valid and feels "more quantitative empirical proof is required,"[38] due in part to "the early debate over the hypothesis key questions on the causes and exceptionalities have not be unraveled and revisiting can help bridge the linkage between the concept of 'transnationalism' and concepts of 'sojourner' and 'settler'." [39]

My research is vital to broadening the scope and spectrum of historical research as it pertains to Chinese Canadians. Emphasizing the roles of Chinese Canadians throughout Canada's history demonstrates, not only their significance, but also how frequently their contributions have been overshadowed by the railroad narrative, and how discrimination has impacted Chinese Canadians socially, economically, and politically. Researching the history of Chinese Canadians, particularly in times of struggle and change, provides a different viewpoint by which to analyze history.

The onus for the teaching of Chinese Canadian history does not belong just to the school boards across the country with the curricula they teach. It belongs to public history. Public

[35] Ibid., 46.
[36] Ibid., 49.
[37] Philip Q. Yang, "The "Sojourner Hypothesis" Revisited." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000), 235.
[38] Ibid., 236.
[39] Ibid., 236.

history in Canada can improve the education and acknowledgment of marginalized peoples through a diversification of the stories that are presented. There is a growing awareness of the lack of and need for Chinese Canadian history due in large part to Chinese communities seeking to find their own narrative and to educate others on their history. There are scholars who are continually researching and writing on this topic to educate and create an understanding of the ongoing global issue of racism. As a person of white privilege, who has never experienced racial or ethnic discrimination, my contribution is lending my voice along with other historians, academics, and Chinese Canadian families to educating the next generation on the significant role played by Chinese in Canadian history.

Chapter 1: Beyond the Railway Narrative

The history of Chinese men's involvement in the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway dominated the narrative of Chinese history in Canada and obscured the other opportunities that drew Chinese migrants to the country in the nineteenth century. Building the CPR is far from the only contribution Chinese immigrants made. Recently, however, other aspects of Chinese Canadian history are making their way into books, and classrooms. This chapter investigates the political, social, and economic push and pull factors, the family ties to China and white Canadian's efforts to exclude Chinese migrants, that led to their "sojourner" status. However, many Chinese sojourners became settlers, despite escalating racial discrimination. A utilitarian approach to Chinese labour further contributed to this escalation. This chapter then traces the emergence of the image of Chinese workers as cheap labour and hardworking, a stereotype that persists to this day. [1]

Push Factors

Migration comes about as the result of push/pull factors. Push factors are the reasons people leave their countries such as persecution, war, violence, poor wages, loss of jobs, crop failure and famine, pollution, natural disaster, limited opportunities, lack of services or family separation.[2] Pull factors are the reason people migrate to another country such as safety and

[1]Chandrima Chakraborty, "Analysis: Racist Labour Exploitation Continues in Multicultural Canada," Brighter World (McMaster University, October 12, 2021), https://brighterworld.mcmaster.ca/articles/analysis-racist-labour-exploitation-continues-in-multicultural-canada/.
[2] Paul Yee, "History of Canada's Early Chinese Immigrants." Library and Archives Canada, April 19, 2017. https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/early-chinese-canadians/Pages/history.aspx.

stability, freedom, higher wages, job prospects, food availability, better environment, family reunification, better quality of life or availability of services.[3] Though the employment opportunities overseas were an attractive pull for Chinese migrants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the push factors of a growing population, lack of farmland, unemployment, foreign interference, a series of natural catastrophes and government instability within China produced the most significant factors for migration overseas.[4] Some of the migration that took place happened from one rural area to another as peasants sought land away from their villages, while other migration was rural to urban as peasants searched for work in trade and as artisans in the cities.[5] Chinese migrants to Canada came predominantly from Guangdong and Fujian where the west had a strong presence.[6] Canton, capital of the province of Guangdong, was the point of contact with European commerce. The Chinese that migrated to Canada left from the treaty ports in Guangdong and Fujian as well as the British and Portuguese possessions of Hong Kong and Macau.[7] The majority were peasants.[8]

Though Chinese men had migrated to Canada as early as the eighteenth century, the largest migration came in the mid-nineteenth century. Pressures within the country as well as internationally had begun to weaken the Dynasty. By 1850, the population of China had grown to 430 million people.[9] Population growth can be beneficial to a country until it becomes a detriment when the population outgrows the structures put in place by the government to sustain it. China's government failed to evolve with its growing population. This decline in proper

[3] Ibid.
[4] Harry Con et al., *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 6.
[5] Ibid., 6.
[6] Ibid., 7.
[7] Ibid., 7.
[8] Ibid., 9.
[9] Peter Schran, "China's Demographic Evolution 1850-1953 Reconsidered." *The China Quarterly*, no. 75 (1978), 639.

governance along with the lack of employment opportunities were the push factors for the Chinese people to begin migrating to Canada and other countries.[10] The Chinese imperial regime "was far more concerned with political stability than economic growth and social justice."[11] Many responsibilities were neglected in favour of government officials taking advantage of a lack of accountability and profiting through means of corruption.[12] Internal upheaval resulted in rebellions and peasant uprisings throughout the nineteenth century in China. These grievances with the government were based on famine, official corruption, poverty, anger, frustration, new religious ideologies, ethnic identities as well as a strong general dislike of the Qing based on growing racial tensions between the Han and the Manchus and political ineptitude that was responsible from turning a once powerful nation into a crisis ridden country.[13] China's lack of stability would prove too much for its people, leading a sizeable number to look to other countries to meet their needs.

Foreign intrusion was also a push factor for many Chinese people to seek out migration. The aggressive efforts by foreign powers to infiltrate Chinese markets led to the Opium Wars that were destructive to China's economy and people's lives.[14] Foreign business interests pushed out Chinese businesses, and the control over Chinese ports by foreign countries led to an even more ineffectual Qing government.[15] The intrusion and control of foreign nations exacerbated the Qing government's unpreparedness, weakened bureaucracy and lack of

[10]Paul Yee, "History of Canada's Early Chinese Immigrants," Library and Archives Canada, April 19, 2017, https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/early-chinese-canadians/Pages/history.aspx.
[11] Chong-chor Lau and Rance P.L. Lee. "Bureaucratic Corruption in Nineteenth-Century China: Its Causes, Control, and Impact." Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science 7, no. 1/2 (1979), 128.
[12]Ibid., 128.
[13] Alexandre Schiele, "China's International Attitude of Withdrawal During the 19th Century." *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations* 7, no. 2 (2015), 135.
[14] Ibid.,135-136.
[15] Ibid.,135-136.

industrialization. This left China unable to repair and improve its own infrastructure and economy therefore leaving it open to more foreign trade acquisitions, interference, investment and potentially trade deals favouring the foreign power.[16] For many Chinese this would leave no alternative but to seek employment in countries such as Canada. Between 1840 and 1940, approximately twenty million Chinese emigrated overseas with ninety percent going to Southeast Asia.[17] Of that twenty million, 1.5 million migrated to the Americas.[18] Though many migrants to North America would return to China once their sojourning was finished, a large number remained finding employment in various fields. Very few of those migrants to Canada or the United States were women due to the strict racially inscribed immigration policies put into place by both governments and the cultural expectations of the Chinese people.

Pull Factors

The two inventions of the Industrial Revolution that "pulled" Chinese migrants to Canada were the steamship and the railroads. Railroads created jobs while the steamships made migration across the Pacific faster and safer. Both facilitated the migration of the Chinese seeking economic opportunities in Canada.[19] Many were recruited by representatives of western businesses and industries such as Western Union and the CPR within the foreign port areas of Guangdong. For example, the San Francisco company Hop Kee & Co. commissioned the voyage

[16] Dwight H. Perkins, "Government as an Obstacle to Industrialization: The Case of Nineteenth-Century China." *The Journal of Economic History* 27, no. 4 (1967), 489.
[17] Adam McKeown, "Chinese Emigration in Global Context, 1850–1940." *Journal of Global History* 5, no. 1 (2010).
[18] Ibid., 98.
[19]Jack Hang-Tat Leong, "The Hong Kong Connection for the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America." chineserailroadworkers.stanford.edu. University of Toronto. Accessed November 19, 2021. https://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/website/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Leong-Jack-Hong-Kong-Connection.pdf., 1.

of 300 Chinese gold miners and merchants on June 24, 1858.[20] Western Union hired 500 Chinese workers in 1866, to install a telegraph line between New Westminster and Quesnel.[21] The biggest recruiter of Chinese labour to Canada was the Canadian Pacific Railway, which is in part why the railway narrative has come to dominate understandings of the history of Chinese migration to Canada. In 1880, Andrew Onderdonk, an American who was one of the main construction contractors in British Columbia for Canadian Pacific Railway, signed several agreements with Chinese contractors in Guangdong, Taiwan and with Chinese companies in Victoria to provide labour for the construction of the CPR. Approximately 17,000 Chinese workers, many of whom became railroad employees, migrated to Canada between 1881 and 1885.[22]

The comparative advantage of jobs in Canada made them worth the risk of taking on hard physical labour across the ocean. Besides financial benefits there were also employment opportunities beyond the railroad. Chinese workers found jobs in the mines on Vancouver Island, for Western Union, in salmon canneries in B.C., in laundries, road construction, domestic service, sawmills, restaurants and other trades.[23] Chinese migrants also took up agriculture as many had been farmers in China. Chinese market gardeners would become a fixture throughout British Columbia, but especially in Vancouver and Victoria where by 1900 they dominated the business.[24] British Columbia was the centre of Chinese migration to Canada. It was the point of entry for new arrivals, and it was where the first Chinese community was established. However, Chinese workers also migrated in smaller numbers to Newfoundland and Labrador where many

[20] Tzu-I Chung, "Kwong Lee & Company and Early Trans-Pacific Trade: From Canton, Hong Kong, to Victoria and Barkerville." *BC Studies: The British Columbia Quarterly* 185 (Spring 2015),143.
[21] Paul Yee, Peter Cocking, and Naomi MacDougall, *Saltwater City an Illustrated History of the Chinese in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2006), 11.
[22] "Chinese Railroad Workers," The Ties that Bind, accessed November 19, 2021, https://www.mhso.ca/tiesthatbind/ChineseRailWorkers.php.
[23] W. Peter Ward, *White Canada forever: Popular attitudes and public policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* 3rd ed. (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), p. 47.
[24]Ibid., 47.

owned private businesses while others worked as gardeners, domestics, in the fishery or at the Bell Island ore mines.[25] To get to Newfoundland and Labrador Chinese workers disembarked at Vancouver and travelled by rail to Halifax and then took a steamer to Newfoundland.[26] The first Chinese workers arrived in Newfoundland in the mid-1890s and established hand laundries in St. John's.[27] One of the first known Chinese immigrants was Choy Fong who arrived in St. John's in 1894 to open a laundry business.[28] By 1904, there were three hand laundries in the city – the Sing Lee Laundry on New Gower Street, the Jim Lee Laundry on Duckworth Street, and the Kam Lung Laundry on Cochrane Street.[29] Most of the Chinese migrants in Newfoundland lived in St. John's, Harbour Grace and Carbonear.[30]

No matter how strong the push and pull factors were, these Chinese were sojourners. It was their intention to come to Canada, earn money and return home. This was also the expectation of the Canadian government which had no desire for the sojourners to remain in Canada and become settlers. As this was the expectation, neither the workers nor the government saw the need for wives and families to accompany Chinese men to Canada. For the men, it was cheaper for their families to stay in China since the cost of living was higher in Canada.[31] Prostitutes had been brought to Canada from China by Chinese brokers, further eliminating their need for wives. While the original intent of the sojourners was to earn money to send home to

[25] "Other Ethnic Groups." Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Memorial University. Accessed November 21, 2021. https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/society/other-ethnic-groups.php. "19th Century Migration,"
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Xingpei Li, "View of Transnational Identities of Early 20th-Century Chinese Immigrants: A Study of Chinese Graves in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's, Newfoundland: Material Culture Review" *Material Culture Review* 84 (March 2017) 1-17.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Sucheng Chan, *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America 1882-1943* (Philadelphia Temple University Press, 1994), 95.

China, many struggled to accomplish this due to low wages and incurred debts from the journey to Canada. Some had left China by their own means but others were forced to leave as indentured or contract labourers enlisted by foreign government agencies directly or by labour recruiters.[32] Some were involved in the "credit-ticket" system where their expenses were advanced to them by Chinese lenders in China or North America and they had to pay off their debt once they began working.[33] This debt often made them unable to return home or send money home to China. Those that did send money home used *Qiaopiju* also known as an overseas letter office.[34] These specialized in transporting labour overseas, shipping goods throughout the diasporic network, handling private and business correspondence and, translations and providing remittance and other banking services to overseas Chinese.[35] Despite the cultural pull to return to China and the racial pushing out by society, many sojourners did stay on and become settlers.

Chinese Workers Building a Nation

From the moment the first Chinese arrived in Canada in May 1788, in Nuu-chah-nulth territory, pre-conceived notions and racist stereotypes had already been formed.[36] They were seen by some like Captain John Meares seen as having a different work ethic from white settlers, and as being willing to work longer hours for very little money, easy to control and dispensable. Fifty skilled tradesmen were hired by Meares to build the first year-round, non-indigenous settlement trading

[32] Ronald Skeldon, "Migration from China," *Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 2 (1996),
[33] Ibid.
[34] Lane J. Harris, "Overseas Chinese Remittance Firms, the Limits of State Sovereignty, and Transnational Capitalism in East and Southeast Asia, 1850s-1930s." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 1 (2015), 129.
[35] Ibid.
[36]"Chinese Arrive in Canada, 1788," (Government of British Columbia, 24 November 2016), https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc/history/first-arrivals#:~:text=The%20launch%20of%20the%20North,round%2C%20non%2Dindigenous%20settlement.

post in Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island in what is now British Columbia.[37] Meares along with others formed a partnership called the Associated Merchants Trading to the Northwest Coast of America with the intent of trading sea otter pelts between Guangzhou and the B.C. coast.[38] The Chinese migrants arrived with the first British inhabitants in the traditional territories of the First Nations of British Columbia.[39] Meares would bring seventy more Chinese labourers to British Columbia the following year, who helped build a fortress and a forty-tonne schooner. Meares was so impressed with the craftsmanship, obedience, and diligence of the Chinese workers that he wrote in his journal "if hereafter trading posts should be established on the American coast, a colony of these men should be a very important acquisition."[40] Unfortunately for Meares, the Spanish sought to gain control on the west coast of Canada and forced him to give up the trading post in the summer of 1789. Many of the Chinese workers were imprisoned by Spanish forces. Some escaped, and some may have been killed. Other reports claim that a few remained and married Indigenous women.[41] There is no written evidence of further Chinese arrivals on the western coast of Canada for another sixty-nine years, though Meares had characterized Chinese labourers as "nearly indispensable in opening the virgin land of British Columbia."[42]

[37] Ibid.
[38] Mary Beacock Fryer (1 October 1986). *Battlefields of Canada*. Dundurn Press (1986),131–140.
[39] "Chinese Arrive in Canada, 1788," (Government of British Columbia, 24 November 2016), https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc/history/first-arrivals#:~:text=The%20launch%20of%20the%20North,round%2C%20non%2Dindigenous%20settlement.
[40] "Pre-Immigration," *A Brief Chronology of Chinese Canadian History from Segregation to Integration* (Simon Fraser University), accessed May 16, 2021, http://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/chart_en.html#.
[41] "Nootka Sound Incident," (Canadian Museum of History), accessed May 2, 2021, https://www.historymuseum.ca/blog/nootka-sound-incident/#:~:text=British%20explorer%20and%20fur%20trader,to%20the%20brink%20of%20war.
[42] "Pre-Immigration," *A Brief Chronology of Chinese Canadian History from Segregation to Integration* (Simon Fraser University), accessed May 16, 2021, http://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/chart_en.html#.

The next large group of Chinese migrants came decades later, in 1858. Many Chinese immigrants began arriving in Canada via San Francisco to pan for gold that had been discovered in the Fraser River valley. The gold rush would create the first large-scale trans-Pacific migration. The dream of striking it rich was a pull that many could not resist. On June 24, 1858, Hop Kee & Co. commissioned Allan Lowe & Co. of San Francisco to ship three hundred Chinese men and forty-nine tonnes of merchandise to Victoria. The trans-Pacific voyage was difficult. A stack of bilingual tickets issued in 1865 to Chinese men and boys for passage on the *Maria* from Hong Kong to Victoria reveals that each of the 316 passengers received only one meal per day and a sleeping space of only thirty-five centimetres which was in contravention of the Chinese Passengers Act, 1855.[43] This shows a lack of care and illustrates racial discrimination began the moment Chinese migrants started their journey.

The miners who came directly from China arrived in the port city of Victoria, B.C. They were known as "Gold Mountain Sojourners," they came to find gold and return to China rich. Since many of these men did not strike it rich, they were forced to remain in British Columbia and find employment wherever they could. The sojourners who were able to return to China often only stayed for a brief period to visit their families before returning to Canada and employment. Approximately two thousand Chinese miners came to Canada at the height of the gold rush.[44] They helped to create the first Chinese community in Barkerville, British Columbia about 700 kilometres from Vancouver.[45] In Barkerville, the Chinese migrants operated grocery

[43] Ibid.
[44] Betsy Trumpener, "Gold Rush Garbage Mined to Unearth History of Chinese Miners in B.C.," *CBC*, June 7, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/gold-rush-garbage-mined-to-unearth-history-of-chinese-miners-in-b-c-1.5595906.
[45] "Chinese Canadians," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed May 2, 2021, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-canadians.

stores, brothels, opium dens, and restaurants.[46] They also ran ranches, worked farms, served as packers and operated pace trains and mule teams.[47] In essence, they were indispensable in the day-to-day functioning of the mining town.

One of those individuals was Chew Nam Sing. It is believed he was the first Chinese person to arrive in the Cariboo. Around 1859, he came to the Quesnel area, which is about 85.6 kilometres from Barkerville and 661 kilometres from Vancouver, by canoe up the Fraser River from Yale.[48] Finding insufficient gold to make prospecting worthwhile, he cleared land and grew vegetables. In 1865, he began market gardening, ranching and operating freight teams to ship his produce to Barkerville and surrounding areas.[49] Today Chew Nam Sing's Ranch is registered as one of Canada's Historic Places because of its "historical, aesthetic, scientific, cultural, and social value through its association with the important story of a miner, pioneer settler, farmer, rancher, entrepreneur, and family patriarch."[50] Nam Sing was among the first and most successful Chinese settlers in the Cariboo. His ranch "represents an early and successful agricultural enterprise by one of the province's first Chinese Canadian families" and was officially recognized in 2016 as constituting a significant contribution to the development of British Columbia.[51] Though he began his journey as a sojourner, Nam Sing became a settler who was successful in not just one but multiple enterprises.

[46] Sean Kheraj and Tom Peace, "Interpretation 1: Chung, Kwong Lee & Company and the Early Trans-Pacific Trade," *Open History Seminar: Canadian History*, July 7, 2018, https://openhistoryseminar.com/canadianhistory/chapter/interpretation-1-chung-kwong-lee-company-and-the-early-trans-pacific-trade/.
[47] Ibid.
[48] "Nam Sing Ranch," *Canada's Historical Places* (Parks Canada), accessed May 16, 2021, https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=21295.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

While Chew Nam Sing was just one of many Chinese immigrants who became successful in British Columbia in the late nineteenth century, others arrived in Canada already successful. Several wealthy Chinese businessmen arrived in Victoria from San Francisco in June 1858. Upon arrival they began buying up land and building wooden houses on Moran Street in Victoria to provide temporary housing for the Chinese workers who were heading to Fraser River to pan for gold.[52] These men were responsible for creating Victoria's early Chinatown with companies such as Guangli, Taixun and Renhe Shenghao that dealt in imports and exports.[53] These companies recruited workers from China and equipped them with necessary tools and supplies. The companies were also responsible for importing and processing opium.[54] In the 1870s, opium was the third largest commodity exported by British Columbia to the United States.[55] Moran Street was also the location of most of the shops in Victoria's Chinatown with many selling items that had been imported directly from China. The creation of Victoria's Chinatown and the forming of Chinese communities in Victoria as well as Vancouver gave Chinese migrants the ability to combat ostracism as well as maintain a connection to traditional Chinese culture. However, the increased population of Chinese immigrants in both Vancouver and Victoria accompanied rising racial tensions, particularly in relation to the buying up of property by Chinese businessmen and trade in opium.[56] There were fears among the white settlers in British Columbia that perhaps the sojourning Chinese may be more permanent settlers. Chinese intending to remain in Canada did not fit with the image of the white nation that the government

[52] "Founding Period, 1858-1870," *Victoria Chinatown: The Oldest Surviving Chinatown in Canada 1858-2011*, (Simon Fraser University), accessed May 17, 2021, http://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/victoria_chinatown.html.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] "Chinese Canadians," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed May 2, 2021, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-canadians.

and white society were fostering. The racial tensions that developed in the nineteenth century were fundamental to the history of Chinese immigration and of Canada itself.

Racial Discrimination and Legislation

It was not only jobs that Chinese would find plentiful when they arrived in Canada, racism and discrimination were also in abundance. An 1860 newspaper article written by politician, journalist, and editor Amor De Cosmos illustrates such demeaning stereotypes. De Cosmos writes:

> They may be inferior to Europeans and Americans in energy and ability; hostile to us in race, language and habits and may remain among us a Pariah race; still, they are patient, easy governed and invariably industrious and their presence at this juncture would benefit trade everywhere in the two colonies…Hereafter, when the time arrives that we can dispose of them, we will heartily second a check to their immigration.[57]

This characterization by De Cosmos was reinforced over two decades later by John A. Macdonald in the House of Commons regarding the Chinese working on the CPR:

> I share very much the feeling of the people of the United States and the Australian Colonies against a Mongolian or Chinese population in our country as permanent settlers. I believe it is an alien race in every sense, that would not and could not be expected to assimilate with our Aryan population, and therefore, if the temporary necessity had been overcome and the railway constructed across the continent with the means of sending the European settlers and labourers into British Columbia, then it would be quite right to join to a reasonable extent in preventing the permanent settlement in this country of Mongolian, Chinese or Japanese immigrants.[58]

These are reoccurring sentiments that would be heard again decades later in testimony before a Royal Commission about the character of the Chinese people. When De Cosmos speaks of the Chinese workers as industrious and a benefit to trade, he is describing the Chinese in a manner

[57] James Morton, *In the Sea of Sterile Mountains: The Chinese in British Columbia* (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977), 10.
[58] R. A. Huttenback, "The British Empire as a 'White Man's Country': Racial Attitudes and Immigration Legislation in the Colonies of White Settlement." *Journal of British Studies* 13, no. 1 (1973).

very reminiscent of Meares in 1788. Jobs were given to Chinese labourers due to their willingness to work in challenging and dangerous conditions at a lower wage than white labourers.

These labour practices inflamed racist attitudes towards Chinese workers and labour leaders fanned the flames of racism with their willingness to undercut white workers with the use of Chinese workers. For example, by the mid 1880s Chinese workers made up almost half of Vancouver Islands' mining workforce.[59] Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company's operations manager, Samuel Robins, said that Chinese miners were employed by the company as "a weapon with which to settle" a dispute at Nanaimo between management and white miners.[60] Robins also claimed that it was easier to discipline Chinese workers than white or Indigenous labourers.[61] An added threat also used against white workers by employers was that Chinese labourers were willing to work more days of the year since they had fewer holidays.[62] What made Chinese workers attractive to mine operators, but threatening to white workers was summed up in the *Miners Advocate*:

> The typical Chinaman will bear any amount of oppression without dreaming of retaliation; an absolute despotism at home has thus modelled his mind for the purposes of capitalists abroad; and he will work many hours a day for wretchedly small remuneration.[63]

These examples make it clear that the tensions that existed towards Chinese workers were fostered by management and its desire to profit from cheaper Chinese labourers. Examples like this show a pattern in which frustrated white working-class men were pushed aside by industry

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[59] John Douglas Belshaw, "The British Collier in British Columbia: Another Archetype Reconsidered." **Labour / Le** *Travail* 34 (1994), 25.
[60] Ibid., 25.
[61] Ibid., 25.
[62] Ibid., 59.
[63] *Miner's Advocate*, March 7, 1874.
Cited in John Douglas Belshaw, "The British Collier in British Columbia: Another Archetype Reconsidered." *Labour / Le Travail* 34 (1994), 25.

owners in favour of Chinese workers for their superior work ethics. This frustration enflamed anti-Chinese sentiment and discrimination.

Discriminatory attitudes towards the Chinese in British Columbia and across Canada manifested in laws and policies throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. When British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871 the ethnic makeup of British Columbia was estimated to be approximately 25,660 Indigenous, 8,500 White, 1,500 Chinese, and 500 Black.[64] The whites of British Columbia were a minority in comparison to the other residents of the province. This perceived threat led to pressuring the government to disempower Indigenous, Chinese and other minority communities.[65] This anti-Chinese movement was also occurring in California and Australian where the population of Chinese migrants was also growing.[66] In response to increasing pressure the first B.C. Legislative Assembly passed the *Qualification and Registration of Voters Act* in 1872 to disenfranchise the Indigenous and Chinese communities: "Nothing in this Act shall be construed to extend to or include or apply to Chinese or Indians."[67] The Act was British Columbia's first move as a province to remove rights from Chinese and Indigenous residents.[68] The Act was to deliberately exclude Chinese who whites believed were monopolizing the job market because they were willing to work not only for lower wages but in jobs that were both challenging and dangerous.[69]

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[64] "Discover Your Legislature," 1872 - Indigenous and Chinese Peoples Excluded from the Vote (Legislative Assembly of British Columbia), accessed May 16, 2021, https://www.leg.bc.ca/dyl/Pages/1872-Indigenous-and-Chinese-Peoples-Excluded-from-the-Vote.aspx.
[65] Ministry of International Trade, "Anti-Chinese Politics," Province of British Columbia (Province of British Columbia, November 24, 2016), https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc/history/anti-chinese-politics.
[66] Ibid.
[67] "1872 Disenfranchisement," *A Brief Chronology of Chinese Canadian History from Segregation to Integration* (Simon Frasier University), accessed May 2, 2021, https://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/chart_en.html. **Act to amend the Qualification and Registration of Voters Act, 1871, 35 Vict. No. 39 (13). Reserved 11 Apr 1872.*
[68] "Discover Your Legislature," 1872 - Indigenous and Chinese Peoples Excluded from the Vote (Legislative Assembly of British Columbia).
[69] Ibid.

The whites of British Columbia were clearly defining who could and could not take part in the governance of their province. Nanaimo and Kamloops' civic governments segregated the Chinese population by attempting to confine them to the outskirts of town.[70]

Nevertheless, racial tensions continued to grow. In September 1878, Workingmen's Protective Association (WPA) was formed in Victoria, British Columbia. The stated goal of WPA:

> …The mutual protection of the working classes of British Columbia against the great influx of Chinese; to use all legitimate means for the suppression of their immigration; to assist each other in the obtaining of employment; and to devise means for the amelioration of the condition of the working classes of the province in general…[71]

The WPA boycotted firms hiring Chinese workers.[72] It established an employment agency and several laundry businesses and had ambitions to start vegetable-growing and a newspaper. Its membership included miners, labourers, clerks, policemen and skilled craftsmen.[73] Members were anxious about the use of Chinese labour in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway.[74] They drew up a petition to the House of Commons that contained 1500 signatures. The WPA was formed during a particular period in the development of class relations in British Columbia.[75] In addition to being the first labour union in the province, and a political pressure group, it was seen by its contemporaries, including politicians and other union members as being an anti-Chinese organization.[76] The creation of this organization shows the desperation of the

[70] Ministry of International Trade, "Anti-Chinese Politics," Province of British Columbia (Province of British Columbia, November 24, 2016).
[71] Rennie Warburton, "The Workingmen's Protective Association, Victoria, B.C., 1878: Racism, Intersectionality and Status Politics," *Labour / Le Travail* 43 (1999).
[72] Ibid., 105.
[73] Ibid., 105.
[74] Ibid., 106.
[75] Ibid., 106.
[76] Ibid., 106.

white population of British Columbia as well as a fear for the loss of employment and led to calls to push Chinese workers from various industries in favour of white working-class Canadians.

In this context, racial policies, and the discriminatory treatment of the Chinese population in Canada became more overt. It is important to put into perspective the ratio of the Chinese population in comparison to that of the rest of the population at the time. Many whites feared a growing Chinese population. In 1881, Canada had a population of 4,324,810 people which was almost 700,000 more people than a decade earlier.[77] The Canadian census showed there were 4,383 Chinese living in Canada.[78] Of that amount 4,350 lived in British Columbia, 22 lived in Ontario, 7 in Quebec and 4 in Manitoba.[79] In this period, the only provinces or territories that had not joined the Dominion were Yukon (1898), Alberta (1905), Saskatchewan (1905) and Newfoundland (1949).[80] The population of British Columbia in 1881 was 48,886[81] and had 99.24 percent of the Chinese population of Canada[82] living mainly in Victoria and Vancouver. Originally, Victoria was the main administrative and commercial settlement as well as the supply centre for interior and coastal resource development between 1860 to 1890.[83] Becoming the CPR's western terminal in 1886, Vancouver replaced Victoria as the commercial centre and a major port for the world market.[84] Both Victoria and Vancouver were where most of the white population resided in B.C. Of all the provinces in Canada, British Columbia, with two

[77] Statistics Canada, "Canada Yearbook (CYB) Historical Collection," Canadian statistics in 1886, March 31, 2008, https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb07/acyb07_0004-eng.htm.
[78] Morton, *In the Sea of Sterile Mountains*, 10.
[79] Ibid., 10.
[80] "Confederation," *Confederation | Our Country, Our Parliament*, accessed June 5, 2021, https://lop.parl.ca/About/Parliament/Education/OurCountryOurParliament/html_booklet/confederation-e.html.
[81] "Census of Canada, 1881," Library and Archives Canada, April 3, 2019, https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1881/Pages/about-census.aspx.
[82] Imogene L. Lim, "Here and there: Recollecting Chinese Canadian History." Canadian Issues (2006), 61-65.
[83] "British Columbia," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed August 11, 2021, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/british-columbia.
[84] Ibid.

significantly sized Chinese communities had the strongest anti-Chinese movement.[85] For a province that saw its future as a white society, this would begin to create a racial panic. Such attitudes towards Chinese immigrants would further increase with the arrival of approximately 15,000 Chinese labourers to help build the western section of the Canadian Pacific Railway in British Columbia.

This racial tension and disparity intensified with the treatment of the Chinese railway labourers. British Columbia had agreed to become part of Canada on the condition that the railway be built. Without the use of Chinese labourers, the railway would not have been successfully completed. European immigrants built the east coast portion of the railway while the Chinese were hired to build the west coast section starting in British Columbia, the most challenging and dangerous terrain.[86] The Chinese workers who had been hired by the CPR were treated poorly in comparison with the white workers. They were paid less for the same job and had to work harder and more efficiently.[87] They were paid one dollar a day, which was to be used to pay for food, clothing, accommodations, and other necessities. White workers were paid between a dollar fifty and two dollars a day. Their clothes, food and supplies were paid for by the railway company. This blatant discrimination would affect the health and lives of the Chinese workers. Of the 15,000 Chinese men who helped build the railway over 1,000 died due to the dangers of the job as well as scurvy, caused by their inability to buy fresh fruit and vegetables

[85] Morton, *In the Sea of Sterile Mountains*, 10.
[86] Trade, Ministry of International. "Building the Railway." Province of British Columbia. Province of British Columbia, January 19, 2017. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc/history/building-the-railway#:~:text= Over%20the %20course% 20of%20 construction, most%20challenging%20and%20dangerous%20terrain.
[87]"History of Canada's Early Chinese Immigrants," Library and Archives Canada (Government of Canada, April 19, 2017), https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/early-chinese-canadians/Pages/history.aspx#bc1.

because they were so poorly paid.[88] The most dangerous jobs, such as working with explosives were done by the Chinese workers because white workers refused to take the risks.[89] These dangers led to the death of hundreds of Chinese workers. By using migrant workers and paying them less than their white counterparts, the railway saved between three and five million dollars upon the completion of the railway.[90] In many areas that employed Chinese workers, whites saw Chinese as rivals for jobs, especially the higher paying jobs even if they were jobs white workers would not do. The government of British Columbia had requested from the federal government that the labourers working on the railway be from the British Isles.[91] The government had intended to allow the British workers to become naturalized citizens after the railroad was completed, but Macdonald decided to use Chinese workers to reduce costs.[92] However, the offer of becoming naturalized citizens was not extended to the Chinese workers by the government of British Columbia or the federal government. Instead, three years later the Chinese were disenfranchised. Macdonald had told the people of British Columbia that "If you wish to have the railway finished within any reasonable time, there must be no…step against Chinese labour. At present, it is simply a question of alternative-either you must have this labour, or you cannot have the railway."[93] This, however, did not stop the growing racial tension nor the rhetoric that the Chinese were taking jobs for less money. These sentiments continued to be deployed by

[88] Michael Babad, "A Quiz for Joe Oliver: How Many Died Building CPR?" *The Globe and Mail*. January 10, 2012. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/top-business-stories/a-quiz-for-joe-oliver-how-many-died-building-cpr/article1357931/.
[89] "TC2 Source Docs," TC2 Source Docs - Chinese Canadian life on the railway, accessed August 11, 2021, https://tc2.ca/sourcedocs/history-docs/topics/chinese-canadian-history/chinese-canadian-life-on-the-railway.html.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Winnie Ng, "Early Chinese Worker Militancy in BC: Excavating Narratives of Resistance." *Our Times Canada's Independent Labour Magazine*. December 21, 2020. https://ourtimes.ca/article/early-chinese-worker-militancy-in-bc.
[92] Ibid.
[93] "Introduction," *A Brief Chronology of Chinese Canadian History*, accessed August 11, 2021, https://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/chart_en.html.

white society, white unions, and white politicians. When the economy turned bad anti-Chinese organizations blamed the Chinese.[94]

Due to continual racial tensions, in 1884, a Royal Commission was appointed to deliberate on restrictions to Chinese immigration.[95] While the railway was being constructed, John A. Macdonald had hesitated to meet the growing demands to limit or ban Chinese workers, but once the railway was near completion he gave in to the pressure and appointed a Royal Commission to decide the matter.[96] The information and testimonials gathered by Commissioners J.A. Chapleau and J. H. Gray regarding Chinese immigration came from fifty-one witnesses: politicians, civil servants, lawyers, police officers, labourers, and businessmen.[97] In general employers supported Chinese labour as it was reliable and cheap. This position was not supported by many of the politicians, trade unionists or white residents of British Columbia.[98] During the Commission hearings, many of the witnesses who spoke out against Chinese migration attacked the character and hygiene of the Chinese people, painting them as health and safety hazards in white society. Attacking the character and hygiene of the Chinese is also an ongoing racist theme. At the hearings Mr. Thompson from a mining company was asked whether the Chinese workers at his company were trustworthy and a reliable class of people to which he responded, "If you watch them, they do very well."[99] When further probed about whether they had to be watched he said "Yes, they will steal anything they can lay their hands

[94] "History of Canada's Early Chinese Immigrants," Library and Archives Canada, April 19, 2017, https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/early-chinese-canadians/Pages/history.aspx.
[95] "Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 1885," *Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21*, accessed May 2, 2021, https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/royal-commission-on-chinese-immigration-1885#:~:text=Many%20witnesses%20reported%20that%20the,Stereotypes%20rather%20than%20personal%20experience.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Canadiana, "Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration," *Canadiana Online*, accessed June 5, 2021, https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.14563/168?r=0&s=1, xxii.

on...the China-man can never be trusted to work by himself in any place."[100] Other testimony regarding the hygiene and morality of Chinese people was given by Dr. McInnis, from New Westminster on the mainland of British Columbia. McInnis responded, "I consider them a low class…certainly much lower than any white class of people I have ever come in contact with." [101] To McInnis, they were not just low class in comparison to white people but the lowest class of people. He goes on to blame Chinese workers for the demoralizing effect they had on white people and testified that they were filthy and immoral.[102] The responses given by many white witnesses showed disdain for Chinese migrants, and continually reverted to the perceived detrimental effect their presence would have on a white society:

> ...they are all diseased. There is scarcely a Chinaman that come to British Columbia but brings with him the most virulent form of syphilis…Yes, principally from the Chinese. They appear to have a more virulent form of it than any people I know of.[103]

As negative as the assessment by witnesses such as Dr. McInnis were, there were those who were willing to give favourable testimony is support of Chinese people. The Right Hon. E.V. Bodwell testified that:

> They are industrious, sober, economical, and as law-biding as white people of the same class. They are neither lazy, drunken, extravagant, or turbulent.[104]

Michael J. Haney an Irish foreman for the CPR also testified before the committee. When asked about the hygiene and work habits of the Chinese railway workers, he responded, "If anything:

> No more so than among all labouring classes; if anything,
> the Chinamen, as a whole, are cleaner…While railways
> are being built the Chinaman is necessary, and as farmers

[100] Ibid., xxii.
[101] Ibid., xxvi.
[102] Ibid., xxvi.
[103] John Hamilton Gray and Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau, *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration Report and Evidence* (Ottawa: Printed by order of the Commission, 1885), xxvi.
[104] Ibid., 115.

and gardeners they equal the whites.[105]

It is interesting to note that as an Irishman, Haney may have understood to some extent the discrimination Chinese workers had to endure as there was a long history of discrimination against the Irish by the British as well. This discrimination continued even when the Irish came to Canada and the United States. Haney, like Bodwell does make a class distinction saying the Chinese were in the labouring class but stipulates for the most part they were overall cleaner than others, including whites in the labour class. Like Macdonald, Haney accepted the necessity of Chinese labour for building the railway. Also, like Macdonald, many of the witnesses testified that with the completion of the railway, Chinese workers would no longer be needed. An excerpt from the testimony given to the Commission by Sir Matthew Begbie, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, however, expands this idea: "I do not see how people would get on here at all without Chinamen. They do, and do well, what white women cannot do, and do what white men will not do…" [106] Begbie goes on to list all the work that had been done by the Chinese labourers without complaint, efficiently and with extremely good results. These jobs according to Begbie include:

1. All laborious parts of coal mines.
2. … three fourths of working hands about every salmon cannery.
3. Large majority of labourers employed in gold mines.
4. Exemplary market gardeners of the province and produce the greater part of the vegetables grown here.
5. Absolutely indispensable in construction of the railway.
6. Largely, sometimes exclusively employed in nearly every manufactory or undertaking of any description.[107]

[105] Ibid., 121.
[106] Ibid., 75.
[107] Ibid., 75.

Begbie's argument in favour of Chinese migration is utilitarian. Though Begbie goes on to defend and support Chinese labourers in this excerpt, in another, he attacks the character, appearance and even culture of Chinese people. He says that the "Chinaman" in every respect is the reverse of a European: "His religion, his notions of honour and rank, his mode of thought, his dress, his amusements, his sense of beauty, his vices are not to our taste at all or such as we can take to or even understand." Begbie goes on to say "…and his language…appears to us at once as incomprehensible and ridiculous…what is most annoying, they come here and beat us on our own ground in supplying our wants. They are inferior, too, in weight and size of muscle, and yet they work more steadily and with better success on the average than white men."[108] Begbie, like many of his contemporaries, could grudgingly see the Chinese as hard working, but the racial and cultural differences could not be overlooked.

Upon the completion of all interviews and investigations done by the Royal Commission, a final report from the Commission outlining its recommendations was submitted to the government in 1885. The report stated that there was little evidence to support the claims made against Chinese immigration and it was indicated that Chinese migrants were judged by "unfair standards and subjected to sweeping generalizations about their character and habits."[109] The Commission also found that the charges of crime, disease, prostitution, and gambling were no more rampant in Chinese communities then in any other community. The commission also found that the employment of Chinese labourers did not impede the job market for white labourers and it found that Chinese labourers had proven to be beneficial to the development of

[108] Ibid. 75.
[109] "Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 1885," *Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21*, accessed May 2, 2021, https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/royal-commission-on-chinese-immigration-1885#:~:text=Many%20witnesses%20reported%20that%20the,Stereotypes%20rather%20than%20personal%20experience.

British Columbia's industry.[110] In his summation of the evidence given in the Committee's report, Judge Gray suggested that within British Columbia, public opinion on the Chinese could be divided into three categories.[111] The first one was what Gray referred to as "a well-meaning, but strongly prejudiced minority, whom nothing but absolute exclusion will satisfy."[112] The second group, was an "intelligent minority, who conceive that no legislation whatever is necessary" because the problem would disappear eventually on its own.[113] Gray's third category was "a large majority, who think there should be a moderate restriction" and stricter sanitary regulations and enforcement.[114] Both Gray and Chapleau favoured the third category and their recommendations in their report reflected the desire of the "large majority" that favoured restrictive legislation.[115] Gray also recommended a ten-dollar duty tax to be levied against any Chinese person disembarking from a ship.[116] This recommendation was an appeasement due to the hostility and resentment against the Chinese community.[117] The Canadian government was not very responsive to the Commission's report as a whole, but the Commission's recommendation of a ten-dollar duty tax opened the door for ever-increasing restrictions on Chinese immigration.

On May 4, 1885, just six months before the last spike was driven in the completed railway, in a speech in the House of Commons, Macdonald went against the recommendations of

[110] Ted Ferguson, *A White Man's Country*, 2-3.
[111] Harry Con, Edgar Wickberg, Graham Johnson, Ronald J. Con, and William E. Willmott. *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart (1982), 55.
[112] Ibid., 55.
[113] Ibid., 55.
[114] Ibid., 55.
[115] Ibid., 55.
[116] Ibid., 55.
[117] John Hamilton Gray and Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau, *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration Report and Evidence* (Ottawa: Printed by order of the Commission, 1885), 75.

the Royal Commission and argued for the exclusion of the Chinese from Canada.[118] This was despite Macdonald's earlier support for their contributions to the CPR. Macdonald said:

> When the Chinaman comes here, he intends to return to his own country; he does not bring his family with him; he is a stranger, a sojourner in a strange land, for his own purposes for a while; he has no common interest with us," ... "A Chinamen gives us his labour and gets his money, but that money does not fructify in Canada; he does not invest it here but takes it with him and returns to China . . . he has no British instincts or British feelings or aspirations, and therefore ought not to have a vote.[119]

Macdonald's support of the Chinese was limited to the use of their physical labour for the building of the CPR, underpaid in comparison to white workers. He did nothing to halt the growing racial tensions within Canada and particularly in British Columbia. Furthermore, Macdonald's speech in the House of Commons signaled to white society, politicians, and unions that they had his support when it came to the national debate on the Chinese question. On July 4, 1885, Macdonald and the federal government passed the Electoral Franchise Act.

As a further step to disenfranchise and ban Chinese from Canada, on July 20, 1885, the federal government of Canada passed the *Chinese Immigration Act*. This act stipulated that every person of Chinese origin immigrating to Canada had to pay a fee of fifty dollars per person to enter the country. This head tax was the equivalent to $1376.57 today.[120] The exemptions to this head tax included diplomats, clergymen, merchants, students, tourists, and men of science.[121] These restrictions were not put on any other ethnic group in Canadian history. They failed to halt Chinese immigration and racial violence intensified. One example of the escalated violence

[118] "Perpetual Foreigners," Road to Justice " Royal Commission on Chinese, accessed August 11, 2021, http://www.roadtojustice.ca/introduction/royal-commission-on-chinese.
[119] Ibid.
[120] "Inflation Rate between 1878-2021: Inflation Calculator." $10 in 1878 → 2021 | Inflation Calculator. Accessed July 16, 2021. https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1878?amount=10.
[121] Ministry of International Trade, "Federal Head Tax," Province of British Columbia (Province of British Columbia, January 19, 2017), https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc/history/discrimination/federal-head-tax#:~:text=This%20legislation%20imposed%20a%20%2450,tourists%20and%20men%20of%20science.

occurred on January 11, 1887, when one thousand embittered, unemployed Vancouverites marched to a waterfront pier and refused to let one hundred Chinese migrants disembark from a Hong Kong schooner.[122] The government was not responding to demands for stronger anti-Chinese immigration policies, so the whites were going to stop the Chinese themselves from disembarking on Canadian soil. Forty-three days later another large mob invaded two Chinese settlements, burning tents and shacks, and forcing the occupants to run for their lives leaving all their belongings to burn.[123] Despite this violence, at the end of the nineteenth century there was a continuing rise in the immigration of not only Chinese but also other Asians to Canada. In 1897, South Asians began immigrating to British Columbia. As Canada was part of the British Empire, it was open to the immigration of all British subjects from colonies such as India, Hong Kong, and Malaysia and after 1902 also from Japan a British ally.[124] With the continued arrival of Chinese and other Asian immigrants there was an escalation of aggression forcing the Canadian government in 1900 to raise the head tax to one hundred dollars ($3,179.21 today). Three years later, the head tax was raised to five hundred dollars ($15,173.52 today).[125] Though Newfoundland and Labrador did not become part of the Dominion until 1949, they followed suit and imposed a head tax of three hundred dollars on all Chinese people entering Newfoundland and Labrador in 1906.[126] In Newfoundland and Labrador, clergymen, tourists, and members of

[122] Ted Ferguson, *A White Man's Country*, 2-3.
[123] Ibid., 2-3.
[124] Ibid., 2-3.
[125] Ian Webster, "Inflation Rate between 1885-2021: Inflation Calculator," CPI Inflation Calculator (Official Data Foundation), accessed May 17, 2021, https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1903?amount=500#:~:text=%24500%20in%201903%20is%20worth%20%2415%2C173.52%20today.
[126] "View of Transnational Identities of Early 20th-Century Chinese Immigrants: A Study of Chinese Graves in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's, Newfoundland: Material Culture Review,", accessed May 14, 2021, https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/MCR/article/view/26042/30247.

the diplomatic corps were excluded from this tax. Students were reimbursed their fee if they studied in the country for three years immediately after arrival.[127]

Further immigration of Chinese and South Asians would continue between 1902 and 1908. By 1908, five thousand South Asians settled in British Columbia, ninety percent being Sikhs. Though the five-hundred-dollar head tax in 1903 had slowed down the immigration of Chinese to Canada, it did not stop it. Between 1906 and 1907 Asian immigrants from Japan, China and India arrived in British Columbia. At the end of October 1907, a total of 11,440 Asian immigrants had arrived.[128] The majority of the new arrivals were from Japan. Many of the Japanese immigrants, however, entered Canada en route to the United States.[129] These new Asian arrivals were seen as direct labour competition by white workers and their arrival led to further unrest amongst workers. Canada's mines were suffering from multiple strikes by miners creating further unrest. Between the period of April 15 and May 6, 1907, British Columbia and Alberta had a combined total of 3,450 miners on strike.[130] The people of Vancouver, however, were more directly concerned with the rise in Japanese immigrants as they were seen as an economic threat due to the "enterprise and the competition they posed in the economic life of the country. Competition was particularly resented during the depression year of 1907.[131] Agitators took advantage of workers fears and during the election held in the spring of 1907, "the pro-government Vancouver *Province* asserted that the Liberal opposition had promised to bring 50,000 Japanese to British Columbia to work on the projected Great Trunk Pacific Railway.[132]

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[127] Ibid.
[128] Howard H. Sugimoto, "The Vancouver Riot and Its International Significance." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (1973), 163.
[129] Robert E. Wynne, "American Labor Leaders and the Vancouver Anti-Oriental Riot." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (1966), 173.
[130] Ibid., 174.
[131] Sugimoto, "The Vancouver Riot and Its International Significance,"163.
[132]Wynne, "American Labor Leaders and the Vancouver Anti-Oriental Riot," 174.

The rising fears and tensions would cultivate riotous action being taken by whites against not only the Chinese but other Asian immigrants. One such occurrence was the Vancouver Riot on September 7, 1907. Anti-Asian sentiment was on the rise. Labour unions were pushing for the government in Ottawa to stop Asian immigration seen as a social and economic threat to white Canadians with the rising numbers of Chinese, Japanese and South Asians arriving in British Columbia.[133] On the day of the riot, trade unions supported by the Asiatic Exclusion League (AEL) organized a march to protest Asian immigration. Once they reached their destination, a rally was held with speakers from both the American and Canadian branches of the AEL.[134] The rally quickly got out of control with the crowd turning into a rioting mob. People began throwing bottles and rocks at the windows of homes and businesses in Chinatown and in Japantown breaking windows and destroying property. Japanese residents began to fight back against the rioters.[135] The riot lasted until the early hours of September 8. Many people were injured but no one was killed. "Twenty-four people were arrested and charged with crimes related to the violence."[136] For both Canada and Britain this was an embarrassment: on the international stage Canada was still a Dominion and Britain was officially overseeing the foreign policy of the Dominion. Desperate to save trade agreements, especially those between Britain and Japan, compensation was paid out for damages to Japanese and the Chinese properties.

It is estimated that over eighty-one thousand Chinese immigrants paid the head tax, bringing millions of dollars to the federal government's coffers.[137] In 1923, Yeung Sing Yew

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[133] Julie Gilmour, "Interpreting Social Disorder: The Case of the 1907 Vancouver Riots." *International Journal* 67, no. 2 (2012), 486.
[134] Wynne, "American Labor Leaders and the Vancouver Anti-Oriental Riot," 176.
[135] Ibid., 177.
[136] Gilmour, "Interpreting Social Disorder: The Case of the 1907 Vancouver Riots," 484.
[137] "The Chinese Head Tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act," *Canadian Museum of Human Rights*, accessed May 2, 2021, https://humanrights.ca/story/the-chinese-head-tax-and-the-chinese-exclusion-act#:~:text=In%201885%2C%20immediately%20after%20construction,%2450%2C%20called%20a%20head%20tax.

immigrated to Canada and was the last Chinese immigrant to pay the head tax.[138] He was the last person to pay not because the head tax was lifted but because of the Chinese Exclusion Act passed on July 1, 1923, that banned Chinese immigrants from entering Canada. The only exception to this rule were diplomats and merchants since the Canadian government did not want to deter trade deals between Canada and China. For Chinese communities this news had a devastating effect. On July 1, 1923, while most Canadians were celebrating Canada Day, the Chinese communities throughout Canada were acknowledging what they called "'Humiliation Day'." A Vancouver newspaper reported that a group of Chinese protestors had begun to lobby the Senate asking them to amend the *Chinese Exclusion Act.* It suggested that the Exclusion Act would be found offensive by the Chinese government.[139] Two months after the Exclusion Act was passed, the *Victoria Times* reported that the Chinese government had no plans to break off diplomatic relations with Canada. The Honourable James A. Robb, Minister of Immigration did emphasize the desire for the Canadian government to maintain friendly relations with China and the rumours that Chinese residents who were already living in Canada would be deported were not true.[140] Though disappointing, it is unsurprising that the Chinese government mired in warlord conflicts failed to support the Chinese in Canada, in order to maintain trade relations with Canada and the U.S. even though the workers' money was supporting the Chinese economy. *The Chinese Exclusion Act* would not be repealed until 1947, with some restrictions to Chinese immigration remaining in place until 1967.

The history of Chinese people in Canada is rich but also deeply tainted with racial discrimination. British Columbia's school curriculum and government websites have begun the

[138] Ibid.
[139] T.M. Fraser, "Chinese Lobby in the Senate," *The Vancouver Province,* May 16, 1923.
[140] "China Not Breaking Relations," *The Vancouver Herald,* August 30, 1923.

process of expanding their approach to public history and education in their province to deal with this difficult history as the history of their province is so intrinsically tied to the Chinese settlers. The next chapter explores the immigration process, labour issues, political and union interference, the migration of Chinese communities across Canada, and how the Chinese began to take a stance against a Canadian system built on racism, to become Chinese Canadians.

Chapter 2: Fighting Racism

The previous chapter described the push/pull factors that brought Chinese migrants to Canada, the range of employments they found, perceptions of this employment by white workers, unions, and provincial and federal governments, and the exclusionary policies that were put in place to curtail and prevent further Chinese migration. Perceptions of Chinese workers as cheap, docile, and expendable, fed the railway narrative that reinforced stereotypes of the Chinese community as passive and hardworking, and accepting of systematic injustice. Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, the Chinese community fought such stereotypes through unionization, organized protests, and personal struggles. This chapter highlights the "visible" experience of Chinese men. The "invisible" experience of women is the subject of Chapter 3. Through the investigation into Chinese men's experiences, this chapter reveals the struggles and strategies in dealing with labour issues and racist institutions.

Experiencing Racism

The Canadian government was determined to prevent the further migration of Chinese to Canada by not only implementing racist policies but through the immigration process itself. For those migrating from China to Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their point of entry would have been either in Victoria or Vancouver. What, if anything, they knew about Canada as a place to live and work would have been learned second hand through letters sent home by family members, from those that had returned to China and spoke of their time in Canada or from recruiters. The extent of their knowledge of Canada's growing anti-Chinese attitudes is unclear, but their first contact with Canadian immigration authorities would soon

clarify any doubts about the racial discrimination that awaited them in Canada. Upon arrival in Canada, newcomers were processed through immigration. On the east coast of Canada, most newcomers arrived from Britain and European countries. On the west coast, most newcomers were from Asian countries such as China. The intent of the immigration services was to assess the physical, mental, and moral health of immigrants being allowed into Canada. With the expansion of immigration services due to the population growth of immigrants between 1820 and 1930, the policies and changes that took place were the result of a focus on nation-building.[1] The government wanted to ensure that immigrants were willing to adopt cultural attitudes and behaviours that reflected the white Anglo-Saxon vision it had for Canada.[2] In a press interview regarding the opening of the new Federal Immigration Detention Hospital in 1909, W.D. Scott, the then Superintendent of Immigration in Ottawa, assured white immigrants that "care is taken that they shall not commingle with the Orientals at any state of their stay" in the facility.[3] The facility was a combination of racially segregated wards, medical inspection areas and administrative space where all newcomers were processed.[4] Scott's words were a reflection of the racial attitudes of the public as well as the government towards Chinese immigrants.

While most Chinese coming to Canada did not speak English, words were not necessary to understand that their presence was not welcomed. Between 1909 and 1923, many new arrivals from China where detained in cells within the Federal Immigration Detention Hospital while immigration officers processed their paperwork. Almost fifty years later, when the Detention hospital was torn down, Dr. David Chuenya Lai recovered pieces of cell walls that had been used

[1] Lisa Chilton, *Receiving Canada's Immigrants: The Work of the State before 1930*, (The Canadian Historical Association, 2016), 3.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Steve Schwinghamer, "Canadian Immigration Facilities at Victoria, BC" *Canadian Museum of Immigration Pier 21* (Government of Canada), accessed June 11, 2021, https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-immigration-facilities-at-victoria-bc.
[4] Ibid.

by the Chinese detainees to write poetry on.[5] Dated between 1911and 1919, these poems reflected feelings of sorrow, anger, thoughts of their homeland and families as well as their first experiences in Canada.[6] A poem titled *I Cannot Sleep*:

> I cannot sleep because my heart is filled with hate.
> Whenever I think of the foreign barbarians,
> My rage will soar sky high.
> They cast me into jail and subjected me to anguish.
> But who will console me here even if I moan until dawn?[7]

Chinese immigrants to Canada were singled out for special treatment by public health.[8] Due to many epidemics that had taken place throughout the nineteenth century in China, it is understandable that caution was appropriate. But the public health measures that were taken were due not only to the epidemics but to perceptions of uncleanliness and overcrowding of Chinese in Chinatown communities. As Ward points out, this was no different than many of the poverty stricken, highly populated minority or lower-class white areas of the city.[9] The obsessive hygiene, sanitation and health concerns regarding the Chinese grew out of the Sinophobia that was rampant in British Columbia at the time.[10] As shown in the previous chapter, a stereotype of Chinese as unclean, immoral, and diseased was prevalent. This racist stereotype painting Chinese as a danger to public health was invoked in anti-Chinese efforts to pressure the government for more exclusive immigration policies.

A milder approach to Chinese immigrants was cultural assimilation with physical segregation in Chinatowns. Alexander Sutherland, general secretary of the Methodist Missionary society in 1885, encapsulated this approach when he said:

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[5] "Bamboo Shoots: Chinese Canadian Legacies in BC" Province of British Columbia, 2015, https://www.openschool.bc.ca/bambooshoots/.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] William Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever*. 3rd ed. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, (2002), 36-52.
[9] Ibid., 52.
[10] Ibid., 52.

> The Chinese cannot be got rid of by repressive measures; they cannot be boycotted out of the country, much less driven out by mob violence. They have come to stay, and the only wise policy is to transform them into useful citizens...Let the Chinaman learn English... and let him accept the Christian religion...and he will make a safer and better citizen than some whose support is now eagerly courted by the politicians.[11]

But protesting the migration of Chinese individuals to Canada or requiring the assimilation of Chinese people to an Anglo-Saxon Christian way of life are both demands that come from the roots of white racism. Protestant church leaders believed their gesture was a magnanimous act of Christianity, when in fact it was an attempt at cultural erasure. The Chinese, however, took advantage of the gesture for their own purposes. Many used the missionaries to learn English to obtain higher paying jobs.[12] Women often would use the mission as a haven from domestic abuse or prostitution.[13] Some individuals found through the Christian faith that they could escape from the old Chinese ideas born from Confucianism but converting to Christianity did not take away their struggles with racism in the larger society.[14] Instead, they did not feel part of either Christianity or Chinese culture. They were Christians but not Canadian Christians.[15] Many, even a century later, would still struggle with the dichotomy of whether they were Chinese or Canadian.

Labour Tensions

The defence of Canadian racial homogeneity continued to escalate after the Chinese Immigration Act. As British Columbia was the most western province in Canada as well as the province furthest from the country's capital of Ottawa many felt disconnected from the rest of

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[11] (Sutherland, "Mission Work in British Columbia", xiv.)
Cited in Jiwu Wang, *"His Dominion" and the "Yellow Peril" Protestant Missions to the Chinese Immigrants in Canada, 1859-1967*. (Waterloo Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 47.
[12] Ibid., 122.
[13] Ibid., 123-124.
[14] Ibid., 138.
[15] Ibid., 138.

the population of the country.[16] This led many in the province to feel isolated from the rest of Canada and desperate to protect their province's identity.[17] British Columbia saw itself as the quintessential British province so much so that Premier Simon Fraser Tolmie was quoted as saying in 1928, "We are anxious to keep this a British country. We want British Columbia British and nothing else."[18] As British Columbia was the entry point of Asian immigrants, the majority initially remained there, whereas the British and European immigrants predominantly arrived on the east coast of Canada where they had a higher rate of settlement. The people of British Columbia did not believe the government was being sensitive to their concerns when it came to the "yellow peril" the supposed danger that Asians would overrun the country. [19] Their continued fears of domination from the Chinese community would exacerbate racial tensions in British Columbia, tensions that would carry east as the Chinese began migrating across the country.

Many of the labour problems between Chinese and whites occurred not just with jobs involving the railway, mines, and mills. They also were competitive with whites in the fishery, in the fields, and marketplaces, as well as in the classroom and on the battlefield.[20] What started for many whites as a fear of being overpopulated by non-white immigrants soon became a fear of being ranked in a lower socio-economic class than them. Throughout British Columbia Chinese labour bosses were providing local farmers and other businesses with workers. With the provincial and federal government trying to limit the number of Chinese gaining access to Canada, organizations such as the Kootenay Fruit Growers Association petitioned the federal

[16] Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians, 1900-1950." *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 13, no. 25 (May 1, 1980), 162.
[17] Ibid., 162.
[18] Ibid, 162.
[19] Ibid.,162-164.
[20] Ibid., 161.

government between 1906 and 1907 to allow the migration of more Chinese workers.[21] In 1914, the Cowichan Valley farmers asked that Chinese agriculture workers and domestics be allowed temporary entrance into Canada.[22] It may sound as if the farmers and employers were in favour of having Chinese live in Canada, but with the lack of Chinese available to work due to the unaffordable head tax, white workers had to be hired and the white workers cost the farmers and employers more money in wages. Though the B.C. Fruit Growers' Association was in favour of hiring indentured Chinese workers, organizations such as the Vernon Board of Trade and the Young Women's Christian Association were not in favour of this request. In fact, Dr. K.C. Macdonald, a member of the provincial parliament pledged to offer his support for hiring women at minimum wage and an eight-hour workday.[23] It seems hiring women was preferrable to hiring Chinese workers, something that would not have been considered if finding white men at a lower wage had been possible.

Hiring women workers over Chinese men were not the only lengths the government and anti-Chinese organizations were willing to go to. In the early twentieth century, the government of British Columbia, with the support of organized labour and trade unions introduced a number of policies that would see Chinese workers barred from certain occupations and types of work that would be viewed as desirable such as skilled jobs in coal mines, jobs on public works projects, hand logging, the law, pharmaceutical jobs and acquiring Crown lands.[24] Whenever Chinese were able to acquire farm land, organizations such as the B.C. Fruit Growers

[21] Lloyd L. Wong and Mario Lanthier, "Ethnic Agricultural Labour in the Okanagan Valley: 1880s to 1960s," *Labour Studies Index*, https://labourstudies.ca/en/citation/9308.
[22] Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians, 1900-1950." *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 13, no. 25 (May 1, 1980), 169.
[23] Cited in Lloyd L. Wong and Mario Lanthier, "Ethnic Agricultural Labour in the Okanagan Valley: 1880s to 1960s," *Labour Studies*, https://labourstudies.ca/en/citation/9308.
[24] Cited in Lloyd L. Wong and Mario Lanthier, "Ethnic Agricultural Labour in the Okanagan Valley: 1880s to 1960s," Labour Studies, https://labourstudies.ca/en/citation/9308

Association would lobby in protest and hold public meetings with the intent of gaining support from white voters. In 1921, the B.C. Fruit Growers held a convention in Nelson to demand tighter restrictions and provincial regulation for Chinese growers. A delegate at the convention named W.E. Chapple described Chinese workers as "a pest worse than the codling moth". [25] By using a farming reference Chapple's comparison shows the farming community that if allowed to own land, Chinese farmers would rot away the farming industry in British Columbia and in doing so would destroy the economy. What it shows is the fear of white farmers being out farmed by the Chinese community. For example, in 1906 to 1907, in Armstrong, British Columbia the Chinese farmers arrived and began growing high quality celery.[26] In 1909, a good portion of Chinese began specializing in celery. By 1914, an estimated four hundred Chinese farmers were growing celery, potatoes and lettuce and following World War I, the Chinese devoted approximately one hundred acres of land to celery production yielding 1,000 tons of celery.[27]

The Chinese farmers' ongoing success led many white farmers to continue protesting and fighting for stricter legislation. The white farmers were very clear that their protests had to do with these farmers being Chinese. Fruit farmers in South Okanagan fearing competition from the Chinese circulated the following pledge:

> Realizing that it would be detrimental to every interest of the Community to allow Orientals to become established in this District, we the undersigned, members of the White Race, being residents, property owners, or in control of property either by way of lease or rental, in the South Okanagan Valley, do hereby each and severally agree and pledge ourselves to use every legal endeavour in our power to exclude all Orientals from the South Okanagan District and in furtherance of this object undertake and agree neither

[25] Cited in Lloyd L. Wong and Mario Lanthier, "Ethnic Agricultural Labour in the Okanagan Valley: 1880s to 1960s," *Labour Studies*, https://labourstudies.ca/en/citation/9308
[26] Cited in Lloyd L. Wong and Mario Lanthier, "Ethnic Agricultural Labour in the Okanagan Valley: 1880s to 1960s," *Labour Studies*, https://labourstudies.ca/en/citation/9308
[27] Ibid.

> to sell, lease nor rent any lands or buildings, nor to employ in any capacity whatsoever, directly or indirectly, any member of the Oriental Race.[28]

In 1929, a farmer in the district hired a Chinese worker paying him $40 per month to work his farm. A secret meeting of hooded men was held late at night to discuss the situation. The next day representatives from the meeting went to the offending farmer's home to discuss the situation with him. After a heated discussion, the grower sent the Chinese worker away. While the police had been called by the farmer's wife, the officer refused to do anything because those who were pressuring the farmer were not breaking any laws.[29] These actions were an indication that the stakes had been raised. White society and the government were putting restrictions on the Chinese based on their racist fears, they were looking to legally banish all Chinese from South Okanagan because they feared the Chinese as economic competitors, and they were willing to resort to threats and intimidation to reinforce this.

Education was another area where whites in British Columbia began to fear how Chinese people fit into white society's pre-determined class structure. The province of British Columbia did not want white children attending school with Chinese children. They believed that the presence of non-English speaking Asians "retarded the progress of their white classmates". [30] Parents and politicians began to advocate for segregated schools. However, in the 1920s, a survey of the intelligence levels of all school children in British Columbia was done. These surveys found that Japanese children were brighter than Chinese children. They also found that both Japanese and Chinese children were "greatly superior to the average white population" of

[28] Hall, "Early days of fruit growing in the South Okanagan." *Okanagan Historical Society,* 25, 105-122. Cited in Lloyd L. Wong and Mario Lanthier, "Ethnic Agricultural Labour in the Okanagan Valley: 1880s to 1960s," *Labour Studies Index,* https://labourstudies.ca/en/citation/9308.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians, 1900-1950," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 13, no. 25 (May 1, 1980), 164.

children.[31] This survey confirmed to white society their worst fears that "whites are not able to compete with the Orientals in labor or study."[32]

Organize and Fight

On September 2, 1878, the government of British Columbia passed the Chinese Tax Act. This Act stated that any Chinese resident of British Columbia over the age of 12 was required to pay a poll tax of $10 every three months.[33] Every business that employed Chinese workers had to provide a list of their employees' names to the government or the employers could face a fine of $100 for failure to do so. In today's market $10 would be the equivalent of $271.70.[34] For one person to pay that amount every three months was difficult and for a family, the cost would be for many unpayable. The city of Victoria appointed a known racist named Noah Shakespeare to the position of poll tax collector. Shakespeare was the president of the Workingman's Protective Association, an anti-Chinese organization discussed in chapter one.[35] This infuriated the Chinese community in Victoria, B.C. They began to rally together in protest over this unfair tax. Shakespeare would go to Chinatown accompanied by a police officer to collect the poll tax. If a Chinese person refused to pay the tax, Shakespeare with the police officer's assistance would seize all their property and belongings and put the items up for auction.[36] In protest of the tax every Chinese business shutdown and one day later the entire Chinese community went on

[31] Ibid., 164.
[32] Ibid., 164.
[33] Winnie Ng, "Early Chinese Worker Militancy in BC," Our Times Canada's Independent Labour Magazine (December 2020), https://ourtimes.ca/article/early-chinese-worker-militancy-in-bc.
[34] "Inflation Rate between 1878-2021: Inflation Calculator," $10 in 1878 → 2021 | Inflation Calculator, accessed July 16, 2021, https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1878?amount=10.
[35] Winnie Ng, "Early Chinese Worker Militancy in BC," *Our Times Canada's Independent Labour Magazine*, (December 2020), https://ourtimes.ca/article/early-chinese-worker-militancy-in-bc.
[36] Ibid.

strike.[37] Due to the number of Chinese workers employed in Victoria, this strike had an impact on the city. The strike lasted for five days and ended when the city of Victoria backed down.[38] This forced Shakespeare's resignation. With the defeat of the poll tax, the properties and belongings confiscated by Shakespeare were returned to the Chinese community.[39] The Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled that the poll tax was illegal and unconstitutional. This was a major win for the Chinese community. It showed that their strength came from a growing dependence on their services and labour, as well as the power they had in unity.

This strength and power in unity would be tested often throughout the next decades, as Chinese communities fought against discrimination. One area in which Chinese workers' unity gave them power was in the laundry services. Many Chinese worked in steam laundries and hand washing laundries that were owned by white proprietors. The Chinese worked from six in the morning until midnight, seven days a week.[40] In May 1906, determined to change their working conditions, Chinese laundry workers formed the Sai Wah Tong which was the first Chinese Laundry Workers' Union. The men were fighting for higher wages, a shorter workday, a longer lunch break and a six-day work week.[41] It only took one day of striking for the workers to get a monthly raise from fifteen dollars to twenty-five dollars. This was a significant victory. Workers from different industries took notice of the laundry union's success and began to come together and advocate for changes to their working conditions.[42] Some of those workers included the Chinese cooks in New Westminster in 1907, demanding a pay increase of forty percent. Although they did not get a forty percent pay raise, they were successful in getting a standard

[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

wage scale increase.[43] More Chinese workers formed their own unions, such as the Chinese Railroad Workers between 1916 and 1920, the Chinese Canadian Labour Union, Chinese Restaurant Workers, and the Chinese Cook's Union.[44]

One of the largest employers of Chinese workers were the lumber mills in British Columbia. Approximately seventy percent of shingle mill workers were Chinese.[45] These workers were responsible for the formation of the Chinese Labour Association (CLA) in 1916. It would take only two years for their membership to reach five hundred members.[46] The first major strike for CLA would be in the sawmills of New Westminster and Vancouver. The Chinese workers were demanding workdays that were equal to white workers.[47] In a somewhat surprising twist, the International Shingle Weavers' Union of America which represented white woodworkers, soon realized that without the help of the CLA they would not be successful in any of their labour demands as most woodworkers were Chinese.[48] The white workers' union approached the CLA and requested their support for improved working conditions. Their first joint meeting took place on Sunday July 17, 1917.[49] A post put out by the *Chinese Times* on July 18, read (translated excerpt):

> Whether you are small business operators or workers, we have all experienced harassment and discrimination from white workers. This is the first time (the white workers' union) has contacted us to join their action. Given the fact that seven or eight of every 10 sawmill workers are Chinese, the union realizes that their actions will fail if they do not include us. So, although we know their invitation is sincere, we are also aware that the union is just being strategic and has its own motives for reaching out to Chinese workers.[50]

[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

What the white workers may not have realized when they turned to the Chinese workers for help with their labour grievances, was that they were empowering the Chinese workers. The Chinese knew they were being used by the white workers. By allowing the white workers to join their union, the Chinese workers had been the ones to provide the strength and power that comes with unity. The Chinese had been the dominating bargaining tool for themselves and the whites in the union's negotiations.

The creation of Chinese unions became a turning point. There would still be Chinese that would head back to China to live but as the twentieth century progressed and immigration restrictions were tightening, it would make it harder for those who were not ready to leave Canada permanently to return to China for visits with their families. The immigration restrictions would force many to make life-changing decisions. By coming together as racially marginalized workers, the Chinese were for the most part successful in their attempts to improve working conditions for themselves. This would give them a sense of control over their lives and some semblance of their value as labourers in white society. For many Chinese immigrants this would allow them to begin to expand their employment and living options across Canada. According to the 1901 Canadian census, the Chinese population of Canada was 17,312. The distribution of the Chinese population throughout Canada:

British Columbia	14,885
Quebec	1,037
Ontario	732
Alberta	235
Manitoba	206
Other Provinces/Territories	207

Montreal had the second largest Chinatown.[51] What this census shows is the migration of Chinese people moving across Canada away from British Columbia. However, racial discrimination was not left behind when the Chinese migrated to other parts of Canada, however it followed them into every province.

Many Chinese headed east to escape the systemic discrimination on the Pacific Coast. Like other Chinese workers, Jos Song Long headed east to Quebec where most Chinese settled in Montreal while a few others headed on to Quebec City. Long opened Montreal's first Chinese-owned laundry business in 1877.[52] Long's business would become the heart of Montreal's Chinatown.[53] Over the next decade Chinese people would settle in Montreal opening a variety of service industries. Between 1890 and the 1900s, over a thousand Chinese laundries opened in the working-class districts such as Saint Marie and Saint Louis.[54] Other stores were Jung Fook and Wong Wing which opened in the 1890s. A lot of these properties also had rooms to be rented out to the growing population of Chinese men.[55] The arrival of so many men in Montreal would create the demand for more laundry, food supplies, cafes, restaurants and other services owned by Chinese immigrants.[56] Unfortunately, there were a few Chinese businesses that could not afford to pay Montreal's prohibitive licensing fees.[57] The license required to run a laundry service in Montreal was $50 per year.[58] This was the equivalent of four months' income for a Chinese immigrant. The Chinese business owners accused the city of discrimination against

[51] Ibid.
[52] "Montréal City Council," *Montréal Chinatown* (Simon Fraser University), accessed June 11, 2021, http://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/montreal_chinatown_en.html.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] "Montréal's Chinatown," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed July 16, 2021, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/montreals-chinatown.

them. If they were unable to pay their licensing fee they were fined, sent to jail, or forced to close their businesses.[59] Between 1896 and 1899 approximately 356 Chinese laundries were fined.[60] In 1900, 71 laundry workers were sent to court for unpaid license fines. Ten of those workers were put in prison for not paying their fees.[61] The Chinese laundry workers came together and petitioned the city asking that laundry services be exempted from taxation.[62] The workers claimed this fee was instituted to drive the Chinese out of the city. Unfortunately, their petition was denied and in October 1900, 146 laundry businesses were fined.[63] Though the attempt made by the Chinese workers was unsuccessful, the Chinese knew it was imperative for them to come together, showing a united front that was unwilling to simply accept the racial discrimination targeted at them.

Geographical expansion created more economic opportunities and social mobility for the Chinese and presented opportunities to escape the head tax. A labourer could become a merchant and be exempted from the head taxes. Emma Quon, who grew up in Montreal, talks of how her father became a merchant while in Canada. This allowed him to send to China for a wife and bring her to live in Montreal in 1913. All he would have to pay for was the cost of his bride and travel expenses. With his status as a merchant, he would not be required to pay the five-hundred-dollar head tax.

During the Great Depression Chinese labourers were hit hard. Eighty percent of the residents of Vancouver's Chinatown were unemployed. British Columbia's provincial government along with the Anglican Chinese Mission provided shelter and two meals a day for

[59] "Montréal City Council," *Montréal Chinatown* (Simon Fraser University), accessed June 11, 2021, http://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/montreal_chinatown_en.html.
[60] Montréal's Chinatown," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed July 16, 2021, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/montreals-chinatown.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

those Chinese workers who were unemployed.[64] Chinese workers were treated worse than the white workers in relief programs.[65] White workers were allotted 15 to 25 cents per meals whereas Chinese workers were allotted eight cents per meal.[66] It is estimated that in Vancouver over a period of three years, at least 145 Chinese workers died of malnutrition.[67] Chinese workers formed the Chinese Unemployed Workers Protection Association to demand equal benefits and treatment for all unemployed workers regardless of their race.[68] The members marched alongside unemployed white workers demanding the government shut down the soup kitchen run by the Anglican Church.[69] An excerpt taken from *The Chinese Times* on May 2, 1935 explains:

> ... There were over 14,000 marchers including strikers and unemployed workers singing and shouting slogans and holding up traffic for over 40 minutes. There were 1,200 school children present along with members of different unions . . . Members of the Chinese Unemployed Workers Association were also there with their banner, which reads: "145 Chinese Workers Killed by Soup Kitchen, Starved by Anglican Church on Contract."[70]

Not only did this march call out the government and the Anglican Church for their treatment of Chinese workers as both white and Chinese workers came together, united in the commonality of their cause, a better understanding and respect developed for some. Chinese workers showed organizational skills and a militancy as union activists that was effective in creating allies between the two sides.[71] Although the march was only a moment, it did prove that racial tension could be eased when there was enough common interest to fight for.

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[64] Winnie Ng, "Early Chinese Worker Militancy in BC," Our Times Canada's Independent Labour Magazine (Our Times Magazine, December 2020), https://ourtimes.ca/article/early-chinese-worker-militancy-in-bc.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

Fighting for Canada to Become Canadian Citizens

The two World Wars are another illustration of exclusion of Chinese Canadians and their efforts to gain rights and recognition. During the First World War, the government was desperate for soldiers to take part in the war effort, and yet refused to accept Chinese men in the armed forces because of their race and lack of Canadian citizenship. It would not be "until manpower needs at the front surmounted obvious objections, killing Germans was the privilege of white troops."[72] Ethnic communities "encouraged, organized, and financed the enlistment of their young men to gain group recognition and to further the rights of the whole communities."[73] A Vancouver recruiter complained to his superior that coloured candidates were becoming insistent that they be allowed to enlist. His superior advised that "as white men will not serve in the same ranks with negros or coloured persons, the only solution was to create a separate unit."[74] In 1915, the Canadian Japanese Association of Vancouver financed an exclusive unit of Japanese men.[75] These men were trained by a British military veteran but were rejected by the Militia Headquarters in 1916.[76] As Walker writes:

> Equally interesting is what the World War I experience reveals about the minorities themselves. Their persistence in volunteering, their insistence upon the 'right' to serve, their urgent demand to know the reasons for their rejection, all suggest that 'visible' Canadians had not been defeated by the racism of white society, had not accepted its rationalizations, and were not prepared quietly to accept inferior status. They retained a confidence in themselves, most obviously that they could achieve a glorious war record if given the opportunity.[77]

[72] James W. St. Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force." *Canadian Historical Review* 70, no. 1, (1982), 2.
[73] Ibid., 3.
[74] Ibid., 6-7.
[75] Ibid., 7.
[76] Ibid., 7.
[77] Ibid., 26.

More than two hundred Chinese men volunteered for service overseas hoping this would prove their loyalty and earn them the right to be Canadian citizens regardless of their race.[78] Two of those men were the Louie Brothers, Wee Hong, and Wee Tan. Wee Hong was twenty years old when he enlisted in spring 1917.[79] He began his military career as a gunner before he transitioned to a wireless operator.[80] By the end of his career, he was a driver and because of his service, Wee Hong received both the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.[81] Wee Tan wished to follow in his brother's footsteps and attempted to enlist in British Columbia, however the province would not accept Chinese volunteers. Not deterred, Wee Tan bought a horse and spent the next three months travelling from Kamloops, B.C. to Calgary, Alberta where his enlistment was accepted.[82] He was assigned to the 10th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force in February 1918 and two months later Wee Tan was deployed to Europe where he served as a runner in Belgium and France.[83] Wee Tan suffered injuries during his service that resulted permanent hearing loss.[84] Wee Tan, like his brother, received the British War Medal and Victory Medal and he was honourably discharged in March 1919.[85] However, nothing had changed for Wee Tan and Wee Hong upon arriving back in Canada after the war. They were still discriminated against by a society and government that continued to refuse Canadian citizenship and voting rights to these soldiers. After the war Wee Hong attempted to open a radio repair shop

[78]"Chinese Canadians," *Veterans Affairs Canada*, March 24, 2020, https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/people-and-stories/chinese-canadians.
[79]"The Louie Brothers," Valour Canada, accessed August 17, 2021, https://valourcanada.ca/military-history-library/louie-brothers/.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] "The Louie Brothers," Valour Canada, accessed August 17, 2021, https://valourcanada.ca/military-history-library/louie-brothers/.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

but was denied a business license because of his race.[86] Not to be deterred, Wee Hong mailed his army uniform and medals to Prime Minister Mackenzie King with a letter arguing against this racial discrimination.[87] King sent an apology letter and made an exception by granting Wee Hong his business license. Though this would allow Wee Hong to be the proprietor of his own business, it had no impact on the racial discrimination that would continue to affect other Chinese socially and economically.

Very little is known about the involvement of Chinese Canadians soldiers in the First World War because of the racist attitudes white society and the government had towards them which affected their ability to serve and what was written about the conflict after the war. However, as milestone anniversaries of the war come and go more stories are being told of the experiences of these men. One of those soldiers is Frederick Lee. Lee was an infantry soldier in the Canadian forces who died in the Battle of Hill 70.[88] Lee was born in British Columbia and enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces during World War I. He was stationed overseas and served as a machine gunner.[89] Lee took part in the Battle of Vimy Ridge before being killed in action in August 1917.[90] He was just twenty-one years old when he died and was laid to rest in an unknown grave. Not even after sacrificing their lives for their country were these men acknowledged as Canadians and it would take decades for them to receive national recognition for their sacrifices. Unfortunately, many Chinese men died before this happened. Following the end of the war, 515 naturalized Chinese Canadians and 200 white British Columbians petitioned

[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] "Honouring a Chinese Canadian War Hero," University College University of Toronto, accessed August 17, 2021, https://www.uc.utoronto.ca/news/honouring-chinese-canadian-war-hero.
[89] "The Louie Brothers," Valour Canada, accessed August 17, 2021, https://valourcanada.ca/military-history-library/louie-brothers/.
[90] Ibid.

the government to give the Chinese the right to vote but it was to no avail.[91] It would not be until after the end of World War II that voting rights would be granted to Chinese Canadians. This is again an instance of whites and Chinese coming together for a common purpose, the attempt to rectify an egregious and racist disservice to Chinese soldiers and communities.

Between the wars little changed in the enlistment restrictions for Chinese soldiers in the Armed Forces. The Royal Canadian Navy (RNC) was the first to include within its regulations a racial enlistment restriction and it would be the last of the three branches of military to change them.[92] The racial restriction set in 1938 stated that candidates for commissions as officers had to be "of white race and must be a British subject who has resided, or whose parents have resided in Canada for two years immediately preceding the date of entry."[93] A junior enlisted man in the navy also had to be of "the white race" with the only other condition that he be a British subject.[94] The RNC's justification for these restrictions was "It is, in general, considered undesirable to mix Asiatic races with White under living conditions which prevail in small ships," and that confined spaces did not "lend themselves to satisfactory mixing" of races.[95] The regulations go on to say that the "enrolment of non-whites would cause immediate and continued dissatisfaction amongst white [sailors]."[96] Their objective was to maintain "all Royal Navies...of Pure European Descent and of the White Race."[97] In late 1938 and early 1939, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) also put in place regulations that paralleled the RNC's prohibiting

[91] "Victoria Chinese Canadian Veterans Association," accessed August 17, 2021, https://chinatown.library.uvic.ca/index.html%3Fq=victoria_chinese_canadian_veterans_association.html.
[92] Mathias Joost, "Racism and Enlistment the Second World War Policies of the Royal Canadian Air Force." *Canadian Military History,* 21, 1 (2015), 18.
[93] Ibid., 18.
[94] Ibid., 18.
[95] Ibid., 18.
[96] Ibid., 18.
[97] Ibid., 18.

the enlistment of visible minorities in most categories.[98] Both the RNC and RCAF took guidance from their British counterpart when establishing these regulations. Historian Allan English who served for twenty-five years in the RCAF and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) suggests that Darwinism may have been an important influence on the registration of RCAF candidates as it had with the British Air Forces recruitment of pilots during the First World War.[99] The British exclusion of non-whites was in part based on the belief that white people were the superior race, as it was white Europeans that colonized non-white nations.[100] As the superior race they would be better suited to being pilots in terms of intellect, hand-eye coordination as well as other physical attributes.[101] On the other hand, the Canadian Militia/Army had no regulations regarding race or ethnicity. The only restriction was if a candidate wanted to be an officer, they would have to be a British subject in both the Permanent Active Militia (regular force) and the Non-Permanent Active Militia (the reserves). However, within months of the war beginning, this restriction for officers was removed in the Non-Permanent Active Militia.[102] What these regulated requirements show is a clearly defined message from the Canadian military and government, who approved these restrictions, Canada was a white nation, and it would be defended by white "British" men.

The enlistment restrictions for recruitment in the Air Force and Navy were an affirmation of the racist ideology held by many whites in Canada. In 1939, with the outbreak of war Chinese communities across Canada struggled with wanting their young men to enlist, not only to prove their commitment to the country but in hopes that their willingness to serve would create change

[98] Ibid., 17.
[99] Ibid., 22.
[100] Ibid., 22.
[101] Ibid., 22.
[102] Ibid., 19.

within the country. Others argued that their men should not fight for a country that did not value them and perpetuated a racist environment deeply affecting their lives socially and economically for decades. In the end, six hundred Chinese Canadians served during the Second World War. On September 9, 1939, Tommy Wong travelled from Victoria B.C. to Vancouver heading to a recruitment office to enlist in the RCAF.[103] Tommy said "I wanted to join, but they said no, even though I had training as a teacher. It was the law, no Chinese allowed. They said I was more than qualified, but I was Chinese, so..."[104] Just months after the bombing of Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, with the fighting entering the Pacific, the Air Force began accepting Chinese volunteers in June 1942.[105] Wong received a letter from the recruiting office in Vancouver requesting his presence as soon as possible, "All of a sudden, [they] wanted me. I was in, and way before they were officially accepting Chinese. I was the first to be accepted into the RCAF."[106] The Canadian Navy would take almost a year longer than the Air Force to accept Chinese Canadians into their ranks. William K. Lore was a well-educated young man who had studied mining engineer at McGill University.[107] He became the first Chinese Canadian to enter the Canadian civil service as a Wireless Operator for the Department of Transport in 1939.[108] As the Second World War began Lore was eager to enlist. He attempted to enlist three times in the RCN but each time he was rejected. His rejections had nothing to do with lack of skills or qualifications, but because he was Chinese. It was not until March 1, 1943, that the Navy changed its enlistment policies.[109] At the request of Vice-Admiral Percy F. Nelles, Chief of

[103] Alan Campbell, "Remembering the Day When His Face Didn't Fit," *Richmond News,* (November 11, 2016), https://www.richmond-news.com/weekly-feature-archive/remembering-the-day-when-his-face-didnt-fit-3042075.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] "William K. L. Lore," *Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society*, accessed August 18, 2021, http://www.ccmms.ca/veteran-stories/navy/william-k-l-lore/.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.

Naval Staff, Lore applied again to the RCN and was accepted. Lore became the first Chinese Canadian in the RCN and in the same year, he became the first officer of Chinese descent in any of the navies in the British Commonwealth.[110] Though the Canadian Army did not have the same restrictions for enlistment as the Air Force and Navy, in the province of British Columbia it was a different matter. Dodson Mah remembers that all the boys in his class enlisted with only a few being rejected.[111] He said, "I volunteered for the army, but I was rejected because I wasn't a Canadian. There was a lot of prejudice and racism going on."[112] Even though Mah and his father were born in Canada, they were not officially recognized as Canadians. Mah recounts that there were many Chinese Canadian men who tried repeatedly to join up and they were determined to prove their patriotism and loyalty.[113] "There was so much discrimination at the time, I figured if we joined up, they might change something. Our group felt that there was a job that had to be done," Mah said.[114] Even though the older people told them they were "crazy" for volunteering, to risk their lives for a country that would not acknowledge them, the men were determined.[115] They believed, according to Mah that their situation would not change unless someone made a sacrifice, and they hoped their country would recognize them as citizens. As the war continued, the eastern provinces were allowing Chinese Canadians to enlist. However, the government in British Columbia was against having any Asians enlist. Finally, in 1944 the Pacific Command received orders to call up people of Chinese origin in British Columbia. Mah was then able to join the Canadian Forces and trained with the Royal Canadian Engineers. Mah would then be

[110] Ibid.
[111] "Dodson Mah," *Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society*, accessed August 18, 2021, http://www.ccmms.ca/veteran-stories/army/dodson-mah/.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.

recruited for the British Force 136, the general cover name for a Far East branch of the British WWII intelligence organization of the Special Operations Executive (SOE).[116]

Following the Second World War, things began to change for Chinese Canadians because of the sacrifices during the war. But those changes would be two years in the making. The first change took place on January 1, 1947, with the Canadian Citizenship Act. The act established Canadian citizenship as a distinct category and allowed residents of Canada to become citizens regardless of their country of origin.[117] The next significant change too place on May 14, 1947, when the federal government repealed the Exclusion Act of 1923 and began relaxing some of the immigration policies for the family members of Chinese Canadians.[118] On the subject of the right to vote, which came along with citizenship, historian Anthony B. Chan acknowledges the contributions of broader Canadian society in getting Chinese Canadians the right to vote. According to Chan, it was not just the war service but a prominent white lawyer, white church groups and organized labour that were involved together with Chinese communities to secure the right for them to vote.[119] Chan said, "This was 1947, and still fresh were memories of World War II in which Chinese Canadian troops proved themselves courageous battlefield compatriots."[120] Joining forces over the right to vote created a shift in the racial dynamics. In Canada whites were joining Chinese efforts in creating the potential for a more inclusive nation.

[116] Ibid.
[117] Canadian Citizenship Act, 1947 "Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21," accessed August 19, 2021, https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-citizenship-act-1947.
[118] Ministry of International Trade, "Soldiers & Veterans," Province of British Columbia (November 24, 2016), https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc/history/soldiers-veterans.
[119] "Chinese-Canadians Get the Vote in 1947 - CBC Archives, accessed August 19, 2021, https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/chinese-canadians-get-the-vote-in-1947.
[120] Ibid.

This continuation of cooperation between whites and Chinese along with a growing recognition of the role Chinese Canadians played in the war effort would provoke change toward labour and immigration policies as well as an easing of racial tensions in the country. These changes, by no means would eradicate racist discrimination against the Chinese, which is still evident today, but it gave knowledge and better understanding to enough whites to begin the conversation within the government. The next chapter will look at how Chinese women who were far less visible than Chinese workers and soldiers had to fight not only racial discrimination but also oppression within the Chinese community.

Chapter 3: Chinese Canadian Women

The "railroad narrative" not only obscures the complexity of the experience of Chinese communities, but also wipes women out of the picture. Most pioneer Chinese women did not play an active a role in the public sphere, but this should not negate the value of the role Chinese women played within their private spheres. This chapter will look at the cultural and social expectations for Chinese women as well as the battles within families and communities for Chinese women to find their place in Canadian society. Whether Chinese women were part of the public or private spheres in Canada, discrimination against them based on their race, gender, ethnicity, and class dramatically influenced their lives as much as it did the men.

At the time of Confederation, Chinese migrants made up roughly 40% of the non-Indigenous population on the mainland in British Columbia.[1] Among them were 52 Chinese women. Mrs. Kwong Lee, the first Chinese woman to migrate to Canada, arrived with her husband and two children in Victoria, British Columbia on February 29, 1860.[2] Chinese men and women migrants were seen as an important part of the frontier plan to develop the country. After Confederation, however, their presence was barely tolerated and was seen only as a necessity to complete the railway. As John A. Macdonald proclaimed during a speech in Parliament in 1867, Canada was a 'white man's country'.[3] Chinese women were what the Canadian government and society feared most. If Chinese women were allowed to accompany their husbands to Canada or Chinese women were brought over to marry the single Chinese men already in Canada the

[1] Enakshi Dua, "Exclusion through Inclusion: Female Asian Migration in the Making of Canada as a White Settler Nation," *Gender, Place & Culture* 14, no. 4 (2007), 446.
[2] Merna Forster, *100 Canadian Heroines: Famous and Forgotten Faces* (Toronto, ON: Dundurn Press, 2004), 129.
[3] Enakshi Dua, "Exclusion through Inclusion: Female Asian Migration in the Making of Canada as a White Settler Nation," *Gender, Place & Culture* 14, no. 4 (2007), 446.

birthrate of children would rise resulting in the formation of more Chinese families and communities. Once these families and communities existed the risk of them remaining in Canada grew significantly.[4] Therefore, Canada would not be a "'white man's country'" and the idea of the Chinese becoming a dominate group was unacceptable. The views of Canadians were reflected in a response given in the House of Commons in 1887 by Prime Minister Macdonald:

> On the whole, it is considered not advantageous to the country that the Chinese should come and settle in Canada, producing a mongrel race, and interfering very much with white labor in Canada. That may be right, or it may be wrong; it may be a prejudice or otherwise; but the prejudice is universal. Whether it be in the United States, in Australia or in Canada, white labor and Chinese labor will never work harmoniously together, and we shall have the same scenes in Canada, if that immigration is permitted, that we have seen so lamentably exhibited in the United States. I think my hon. friend the Secretary of State has hit exactly on the objection to the admission of the wives of Chinese immigrants. If that were allowed not a single immigrant would come over without a wife, and the immorality existing to a very great extent along the Pacific coast would be greatly aggravated in Canada. Under the system of Chinese labor as it now exists, the Chinese come over and make a little money and then go back. That is the least objectionable form of Chinese labor; but I do not think it would be to the advantage of Canada or any other country occupied by Aryans for members of the Mongolian race to become permanent inhabitants of the country. I believe it would introduce a conflict between the working classes which would only result in evil.[5]

This statement is deeply troubling. Here was Prime Minister vilifying Chinese women as being the conduits that would be responsible for polluting the race and morality of the nation. Macdonald's statement illustrates the growing fears that Chinese women were a danger to the white nation of Canada. Without Chinese women in Canada, the men would work, send money home to their families, and then return to China. If, for whatever reason Chinese men remained in Canada without a wife or family until their death, they would die without leaving behind a

[4] Ibid., 452.
[5] "Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons," *Canadiana Online*, accessed November 21, 2021, https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_07186_5_2/31?r=0&s=4.

physical legacy. There would then be no next generation of Chinese in Canada. The risk of letting Chinese women into Canada increased the potential of a next generation of Chinese in Canada. Therefore, Chinese women could not be allowed to come to Canada, hence the head taxes and Exclusion Act. Many Chinese men would die in Canada unmarried and without leaving a next generation, many more would spend decades in debt from the cost of the head tax to bring their Chinese wives to Canada.

Race and gender discrimination against Chinese women were not unique to Canada. In San Francisco in August of 1854, a municipal committee visited San Francisco's Chinatown. Upon completion of their visit, they reported to the Alderman that most of the women in Chinatown were prostitutes.[6] This was a stereotypical denigration of Chinese women in North America. The *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration* in 1885 described Chinese women as immoral.[7] Testimony was given to the Commission that Chinese women who were in Canada worked as prostitutes:

> There can be no doubt that one of the causes of the strong feelings against the Chinese is that their immigration consists mostly of unmarried men and prostitutes, and it's said that the Chinese prostitutes are more injurious to the community than white abandoned women...The Chinese are the only people coming to the continent the great bulk of whose women are prostitutes.[8]

It is not clear how many Chinese migrant women were prostitutes, or what constituted "prostitution" in this testimony. But the Royal Commission did concede that much of the testimony given by the witnesses appeared to be based more on opinion than fact. Some women were brought over from China to work as prostitutes, but there was also an assumption that any

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[6]Sucheng Chan, *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese community in America, 1882-1943*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press.), 97.
[7] Enakshi Dua. "Exclusion through Inclusion: Female Asian Migration in the Making of Canada as a White Settler Nation." *Gender, Place & Culture* 14, no. 4 (2007), 451.
[8] Ibid.

women working within the public sphere were prostitutes. Even though the commission stated there was not any real factual evidence to support the witnesses' testimony, such prejudice towards Chinese women was pervasive. Though Canadian society did not have as restrictive expectations for women as Chinese culture did, it was inequality still existed within the law, home, and the workplace. For the Chinese women there was an added layer of racist differentiation.

Gender Expectations for Chinese Women

The main migration of Chinese people to Canada began in the mid to late nineteenth century most notably in 1858. Most Chinese that migrated to Canada were men, however, there were a few women who followed their husbands to Canada, while the remainder of wives stayed in China to take care of their families and farms or businesses. As the men's migration to Canada was only to be temporary, just long enough to earn enough money to care for the family back home, it was seen as unnecessary to use extra funds to bring the wives and children to Canada. It was more important to maintain the family home in China and to care for the elderly family members. This part of Confucianism which emphasizes an obligation to patrilineal ancestors is known as filial piety. The principle of filial piety is that parents gave life to children as well as food, clothing, and education.[9] In return, it is the eternal obligation for the children to pay off this debt. It is a debt that can never fully be repaid.[10] The job of the children is to care for their parents in their old age, to make them proud, to obey and to serve them.[11] These expectations drove many men to migrate seeking greater means to support their families.

[9] Aris Teon, "Filial Piety (孝) in Chinese Culture," *The Greater China Journal*, May 3, 2021, https://china-journal.org/2016/03/14/filial-piety-in-chinese-culture/.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

Chinese men were not the only ones with an expectation of duty. For women there existed a set of traditional gender roles that were to be adhered to. Prior to the age of seven, young boys and girls were for the most part treated similarly when it came to their conduct within their daily lives.[12] Once girls reached the age of seven, their lives would change drastically in comparison to their male counterparts. The focus for them became the preparation for womanhood and marriage which included becoming confined to their homes.[13] There were constant reminders of the importance of modesty, the virtue of being submissive and women were trained in every aspect of domestic labour.[14] For Chinese women, marriage, and all it entailed was the prime purpose of their lives. Emma Quon, while discussing her own parent's marriage explains how marriages were understood in Chinese culture:

> The role of the Chinese women in those days was that you got married. You went into your future husband's home and you were expected to bear his children, to make a life with him, to cook for him, to look after him, to look after his children and this was expected whether you wanted to or not. You didn't know if you were going to marry a rich man or a poor man but whatever your lot was, that was your lot.[15]

Quon's description may sound to some bleak, but for Chinese women, it was accepted. Their alternative of not getting married would have been even bleaker.

The Chinese believed that marrying young was necessary due to the high rate of mortality. The earlier age of marriage allowed for a better chance of having male heirs to carry on the family name and responsibilities, especially if the women were young brides. There were very few options for marriage for Chinese men in Canada. So, it was for these reasons, many of the men, before leaving China would quickly marry young brides or would later return to China

[12] Wong Yin Lee, "Women's Education in Traditional and Modern China," *Women's History Review* 4, no. 3 (January 1995), 348-350.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] *Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Chinese Women in Canada* (NFB, 1997), https://www.nfb.ca/film/under-the-willow-tree-pioneer-chinese-women/.

to marry before returning to Canada. Toronto artist Judi Michelle Young's father Yong Hong Yan was in his seventies when he married Young's mother, his third wife who had been orphaned as a child and was in her twenties when she married.[16] Despite Yong Hong Yan being granted citizenship in 1899, he was forced to pay the head tax three times when he re-entered the country each time after getting married in China because he was still seen as Chinese, not Canadian.[17] Young believes her father's concubine encouraged him to re-marry as she was very ill and wanted him to have another wife to take care of him. Due to the desire to have families and to fulfill cultural expectations millions of dollars would be paid to the Canadian government in head taxes leaving many Chinese in debt for decades.

In China within the practice of Confucianism, one of the Confucian bonds is for women to obey husbands.[18] This created a hierarchy within marriages. The power and authority in this hierarchy belonged to the husband. An ideal wife was expected to be obedient to her husband and her place was exclusively within the confines of the family. Husbands were free to seek out other relationships and activities outside of the family.[19] Wives were expected to remain in the home caring for any children from their current marriage or any previous marriages of the husbands' as well as any in-laws. This was often a difficult and stressful burden for wives. The cultural expectations for Chinese women did not change when they migrated to Canada with their husbands. An example of this comes from the documentary *Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Chinese Women in Canada* directed by Dora Nipp. Mabel (Nipp) Yee was raised in British Columbia as a second generation Chinese Canadian. Yee was the daughter of a pioneer

[16] "Judi Michelle Young," *The Ties that Bind*, accessed June 11, 2021, https://www.mhso.ca/tiesthatbind/JudiMYoung.php#.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Yuhui Li, "Women 's Movement and Change of Women' s Status in China," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2000), 30.
[19] Yuen-Fong Woon. "Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women." *British Columbia Quarterly: Refracting Pacific Canada* 156, no. 7 (2007).

Chinese woman. Yee's mother Ng See arrived in Canada in 1890 to marry Yee's father Willy Nipp. When Chinese women married, they were no longer referred to by their name: their birth name disappeared. Yee emphasized this when talking about her mother: "No one used her real name." Instead, a wife in China was addressed by the role she played in the family. Yee's mother had married into the Nipp family, so she would have been called Nipp Jia Xifu (the daughter-in-law of the Nipp family).[20] She would be referred to by her husband to others as *Nei Ren*, a euphemism for wife, which literally means "inside person" or "person inside home".[21] In the documentary, Yee spoke about how her father bought the groceries, and her mother did the cooking. Yee said, "Women didn't do the shopping."[22] She spoke of how she never saw her mother go visit people, not even to the neighbours next door. Hazel Chong, who was also interviewed in the documentary, said it was not until the mid 1930s that her mother first saw the main street of Vernon, B.C. Chong's mother had been in Vernon for at least twenty years prior to this but as Chong says, she was busy parenting. While this is not surprising due to the cultural expectations for Chinese women to remain in their homes, for many it must have been lonely. Yee said that her mother once told her if there had been a bridge from Canada to China, she would walk across it and go back home.[23] She speaks of a longing for shared laughter, familiar food, and sounds.[24] Even for Chinese women in Chinese communities in Canada "there was a feeling of isolation."[25] Chinese women had moved into a world that was both foreign and

[20] Xiongya Gao. "Women Existing for Men: Confucianism and Social Injustice against Women in China." *Race, Gender & Class* 10, no. 3 (2003), 118.
[21] Ibid., 118.
[22] *Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Chinese Women in Canada* (NFB, 1997), https://www.nfb.ca/film/under-the-willow-tree-pioneer-chinese-women/.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

unaccepting, but their own cultural gender expectations would leave Chinese pioneer women feeling even more isolated.

Wives and daughters were not the only women to migrate to Canada. There were also, women and young girls who left China when they were sold by their families to brokers. These brokers would then in turn sell the women and girls to well-off Chinese families in Canada to be domestic slaves (*mooi-tsai).* For immigration purposes these girls were registered as "daughters or adopted daughters". The families that bought these girls were responsible for their care until they were married.[26] Girls that did not become domestic servants were sold to tea houses to work as serving girls (*kei-toi-nui)* while others were forced into prostitution.*[27]* For immigration purposes, they were referred to as "merchants' wives."[28] The trafficking of women in South China now extended to North America.[29] As early as the twentieth century, women and girls were being bought by wealthy merchants and brothel dealers in Vancouver and Victoria.[30] Merchants and dealers paid between five hundred to twenty-five hundred dollars for each woman on top of the head taxes, travel expenses, and passage fees.[31] It went against cultural norms for a young single female to leave her family, especially to live in another country without family members around her. However, these families were in dire financial need and sold their daughters in Canada to generate income for the family's survival. Some of these young women also believed they were marrying a Chinese man and would accompany him to Canada to live and work as his wife when in actual fact their "husband" would hire them out as prostitutes.[32]

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[26] Ibid.
[27] Yuen-Fong Woon. "Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women." *British Columbia Quarterly: Refracting Pacific Canada* 156, no. 7 (2007), 89-90.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Janell L. Carroll, *Sexuality Now* (Boston: Cengage Learning Canada Inc., 1997), 491.

The Chinese custom of wife selling has a long history throughout the Imperial period and up to early twentieth century.[33] Confucian philosophy condemned women's extramarital affairs, so these women were labelled pariahs by many in the Chinese communities even though the woman would not have any control over what was happening to her.[34] This would create a moral and ethical paradox for these women. By obeying their husbands' demands, the women were following the Confucian bond, but by having sex with other men outside of their marriage, these women were going against their cultural beliefs and would suffer stigmatization.

For the young women sold into labour, life in Canada was a gamble. They were often powerless to control their own fate because they were women. In Chinatowns, these women had to fight against cultural, class and gender biases from their own community. The women that worked in tea houses often fared better financially than the women who became domestics and they were often treated better. Women who worked in a tea house in Chinatown could earn anywhere between twenty to twenty-five dollars per week plus tips.[35] Though part of their wages had to go to the tea house and to the man who paid for her to come to Canada, it was still a higher wage than a railway worker earning one dollar per day.[36] Due to the high number of unmarried Chinese men and extremely low number of potential Chinese women to marry in Canada, it was not unusual for the men to seek out the company of Chinese women in teahouses or restaurants.[37] Often men would try and convince the serving women to spend time alone with them outside of the establishments. If this occurred, the men had to pay a portion of the fee for sexual favours to the owner of the establishment before giving the women their cut.[38] Chinese

[33] Wood, E. J., *The Marriage Day in all Ages and Countries* (London: Richard Bentley, 1869), vol. 1, p. 106.
[34] "The Naked Truth," *China Economic Review*, January 6, 2013, https://chinaeconomicreview.com/naked-truth/.
[35] Yuen-Fong Woon. "Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women." *British Columbia Quarterly: Refracting Pacific Canada* 156, no. 7 (2007), 90.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Carroll, *Sexuality Now*, 492.

women's lives depended greatly on who had bought them. Domestic workers aged between seven and twenty-five years old. Some of the domestics were treated well by the families they worked for. Mabel Nipp's family, had two servant girls.[39] Nipp said that because her father was a merchant, they were able to send to China for girls to work as maids:

> Because every family had a lot of children, the maids were like servants.
> They were not allowed to eat at the table with the family. I don't know if they had to eat leftovers or what. But our maids ate with us. And our parents told us to address them as Big Sisters. It was not like other people.

Nipp, goes on to discuss how the responsibility for the care of the domestics fell to those who had bought their services and that the owners/employers would be responsible for the girls until they married.[40] If the employers did not feel the domestics were working out, the girls were often traded or forced into arranged marriages and many of the girls were mistreated.[41] Some sought refuge in the Methodist institution mentioned in the previous chapter that had been set up in 1883. The Chinese Benevolent Association established in 1884, helped these women also by returning them to their families in China or sending them to Tung Wah Hospital Charity Society in Hong Kong to be married to local men.[42] It is hard to say if returning home would benefit them more than going to Hong Kong to marry or remaining in Canada.

For Chinese women that were unmarried, abandoned by their husbands, widowed or without family, gender discrimination and cultural expectations within the Chinese community left few options. To survive, some of these women had to leave behind domesticity and take on a more public role. Yee and her niece, Dora Nipp, spoke of how Nipp's aunt was born in Canada

[39] *Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Chinese Women in Canada* (NFB, 1997), https://www.nfb.ca/film/under-the-willow-tree-pioneer-chinese-women/.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Yuen-Fong Woon. "Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women." *British Columbia Quarterly: Refracting Pacific Canada* 156, no. 7 (2007), 92.

and because of that she was able to choose a career and support herself.[43] She became a teacher and was respected. Yee goes on to say, "If you didn't even have a job people would say she must be no good. No one wanted her. That's how people used to think."[44] These attitudes clearly show what the role of women in Chinese culture was to be married. If a woman was not married, she was considered unwanted and unacceptable to society. To uplift their image within the Chinese society unmarried women's options were forced marriage, marrying outside of their race which would lead to even more criticism and isolation or being successfully employed in a respectable position that earned the women the ability to care for themselves and any necessary family members. As many employment opportunities in Canada's white society were not available to the Chinese, it was very difficult for Chinese women to be independent of men.

Migrant men who had more than one wife while living in China, would often leave their first wives at home in their villages to take care of the existing families but bring the second younger wives or concubines with them to take care of their sexual needs and to produce additional male heirs.[45] The importance of male heirs has to do with more bodies to labour on the farms or to gain employment in other areas if needed. By having sons in China as well as Canada, the revenue would increase for the families. This would make the extra cost of bringing the concubines worthwhile. Concubines were often expected to earn money in Canada as well, by taking in laundry and sewing, or cooking for money. That money would be sent home to the first wives in the villages in China. An example of this is Margaret Wong, whose wages went to support her husband's first wife at home in China.[46] When Wong's husband died, she took their

[43] *Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Chinese Women in Canada* (NFB, 1997), https://www.nfb.ca/film/under-the-willow-tree-pioneer-chinese-women/.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Yuen-Fong Woon. "Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women." *British Columbia Quarterly: Refracting Pacific Canada* 156, no. 7 (2007), 92.
[46] Ibid.

children back to his home village, but her children were not given a fair share of the inheritance as they were the concubine's children. Wong eventually took her children back to Canada.[47] If Wong had remained in China following the death of her husband, she would have remained under the authority of the first wife as would her children. If Wong had family in China, and they had wanted her to remarry, they would have had to buy her back from the deceased husband's family. Her children would, however, remain with their paternal family unless granted permission to leave by the family. Returning to Canada may have been difficult for a single woman with children. Nevertheless, living as a single mother in Canada would have given Wong a degree of autonomy for herself and over her children. For Chinese women and children in such situations their options often came down to re-marriage or charities such as the Methodists.

As easy as it is to see these women, the *kei-toi-nui* and the *mooi-tsai*, as victims given the experiences endured by so many, there are those Chinese women that fought back against the discriminatory treatment they received because of their culture and gender. May Ying was a *kei-toi-nui* (serving girl) who was purchased as a concubine by Chan Sam.[48] May Ying was put to work to pay off the debt she owed Chan Sam who had brought her to Canada. Chan Sam took his portion of the money May Ying made to pay for his family back in the village he came from.[49] Due to May Ying's status as a *kei-toi-nui,* she had an earning power greater than Chan Sam's as a casual labourer.[50] Empowered by this May Ling began to act in a manner typical of Chinese male sojourners. She gambled, drank, and kept a lover.[51] May Ying had used not only her financial power but her new environment that removed her from the traditional values, customs

[47] Ibid.
[48] Yuen-Fong Woon. "Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women." *British Columbia Quarterly: Refracting Pacific Canada* 156, no. 7 (2007).
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

and family structure in China that would have otherwise prevented her from finding this autonomy in Canada.[52]

Living between Two Worlds

Chinese women growing up in Canada as second and third generation Chinese Canadians often found themselves straddling the fence between two different worlds. On one side were the expectations for Chinese women that had been handed down for generations from the philosophy of Confucianism which encapsulated Chinese culture and, on the other side, a different world as a Canadian woman. For many Chinese women the transition from the private sphere into a larger role in the public sphere of Canadian society would create insecurity, identity questions and distance between parents, children, and siblings. Grace Lee was a second generation Canadian and another young woman fighting for a different life for herself. She was born in 1902 in Victoria, B.C.[53] Her mother was the second of three wives. When Grace was nine years old her father retired and took her family back to China.[54] Though she says her father was loyal to all his wives and children Grace did not like his authoritarianism.[55] Grace said that girls then did not talk to their fathers.[56] In 1928, Grace returned to Canada as she wanted to be a teacher and the wages were higher in Canada than in China.[57] When she was twenty-nine years old, she returned to China to see her family. Grace describes her father as being very happy at her return, inviting everyone to dinner. It was during this visit Grace was able to tell her father that she did not need him to support her financially as she was now able to do that herself. Grace infers that it was this

[52] Ibid.
[53] Momoye Sugiman, *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*, (Toronto: Women's Press, 1992), 109.
[54] Ibid., 109.
[55] Ibid., 122,
[56] Ibid., 122.
[57] Ibid., 109.

visit and her declaration of financial independence that led to her and her father beginning to communicate with one another.[58] She said that as her father reached the end of his life, he told Grace that out of his seventeen children, he liked her the best. Grace felt that her father had finally come to know who she was.[59] For both Mabel Ping-Hua Lee and Grace Lee, their desire for change not only came from an inner drive but also from their families' social status. Mabel's father was a missionary pastor, and she was educated through private tutors.[60] Grace Lee's father owned a store. Grace speaks of having servants, wearing beautiful clothes and being really very comfortable.[61] Neither woman was from a poor or lower-class family, and this gave them the opportunity to be educated which for them created change.

Mabel Ping-Hua Lee and Grace Lee were for the most part an exception to the rule as the twentieth century began. Many factors played into their ability to overcome cultural expectations. However, not all women were able to receive an education. One of those women was Hazel Chong's mother who, because of her birth placement in her family, missed out on that opportunity. Hazel Chong's grandmother was born in China in 1864. She married her husband who was thirty-five years her senior in 1884.[62] They had six children. Chong's mother was the second eldest. When Chong's grandmother realized, she was going to spend the remainder of her life in Canada, she hired a tutor from Vancouver to teach her children to read, write and speak English.[63] As Chong's mother was the eldest daughter, she was by virtue, according to Chong, the helper for the family. Chong says that her mother was caretaker of her younger siblings and

[58] Ibid., 122.
[59] Ibid., 122,
[60] Kerri Lee Alexander, "Mabel Ping-Hua Lee (1897-1966)" (National Women's History Museum), accessed August 6, 2021, https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/mabel-ping-hua-lee.
[61] Sugiman, *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*, 122.
[62] *Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Chinese Women in Canada* (NFB, 1997), https://www.nfb.ca/film/under-the-willow-tree-pioneer-chinese-women/.
[63] Ibid.

so she was not allowed to participate in these lessons.[64] As Chong puts it, "She didn't have much of a childhood because she was put in this position of responsibility at an early age."[65] This was a very common practice in Chinese families even in Canada. Daughters would take on the role of responsibility of caregiver to the family while sons were sent off to school.

Future generations of Chinese women would fight against such restraints. Elizabeth Quan was one of these women. Quan is a widely exhibited Canadian watercolourist and a Canadian art authority, poet, and writer. In a poem entitled *Paper Dolls* Quan writes of the restrictions on her life and the life of her sister to keep them from becoming too Canadianized. Quan and her sister, however, were able to live vicariously through their paper dolls. Below are the first three verses of Quan's poem that depicted her desire to be like other girls that she saw in the neighbourhood, at school, and in broader Canadian society:

> Paper dolls rise like phantoms
> out of the landscape of yesterday,
> remind me of a past when childhood
> dressed in faded cotton
> yearns for cloth of silk and gold.
> Oh, magic make-believe that has the power to lift me
> over the borderline of dreams and make real what cannot be.
>
> I peek out the window. Anita and Nessie cycle by,
> sun-tanned legs, smooth shoulders bare,
> They call loudly back and forth laughing about their day.
> Not for us these daring clothes.
> Shorts and halter tops have no place within our antiquated world.
>
> "Unlady-like" says our mother,
> echoing from another century.
> "So very brazen." She does not approve.
> "You cannot behave like other children.
> You are different, set apart."
> But paper dolls dress as they please,
> do the things we'd like to do.
> Into pretend paper worlds

[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

Mamah cannot enter…[66]

There is such a yearning and desire to be like everyone else in Quan's poem. She seems almost tortured by being forced to be different. She recalls her brothers running around the streets of her neighbourhood "clucking" like the chicken their family had killed for Sunday dinner.[67] She was afraid they would draw attention to her family's differences in comparison to the white neighbours. Quan was embarrassed just thinking about facing the other children on Monday at school.[68] Within the walls of her home growing up Quan enjoyed being Chinese, but outside of those walls she struggled with it. As her family's restaurant business became successful, the family worked long hours, Quan and her siblings attended school and suddenly the family's habits became less Chinese and more Canadian. They did not sit down each night as a family eating and talking of their day. The family now ate in shifts at the restaurant, eating whatever was on the menu. This created a large disconnect for Quan between the old life she grew up loving inside the confines of her home and the world outside those walls. Quan started to not know who she was or where she fit into the world. For Quan, it seemed much of her identity struggles stemmed from cultural differences, not feeling fully accepted.[69] This confusion was not unique to Quan. Many Chinese Canadians also felt the clash between their two worlds.

Cultural differences also affected Judy Fong Bates' whose parents owned a laundry business in Acton, Ontario. Bates talks of how as a child she lived two lives, one with her parents and one outside the laundry.[70] Once she stepped out of her father's laundry she was on her own.[71] One day while at the park with her friend she noticed a woman leaning against a picnic

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[66] Elizabeth Quan, *Quan: My Life, My Art: A Collection of Autobiographical Essays and Poetry*, (Toronto: Sounds Canadian, 1999), 13.
[67] Ibid., 22.
[68] Ibid., 22.
[69] Ibid., 29.
[70] Judy Fong Bates, *The Year of Finding Memory: A Memoir* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2011), 80.
[71] Ibid., 81.

table watching them. She was dressed in a sleeveless blouse with long tanned legs stretching out from a pair of shorts. Bates remembers her astonishment when she realized this woman was her friend's mom. She said, "It felt so unfair that she should have this mother who was so young, so pretty and feminine, while my mother seemed, well, so plain and old."[72] Bates goes on to say she didn't want parents who washed other people's clothes. She wanted parents who spoke English, but her parents were outsiders. For Bates, her parents' noticeable differences were their language, poverty, their inability to be part of a white community and the fact they were not Canadian. Bates was ashamed to feel this way. Bates saw her parents working hard taking care of other people's dirty laundry. They were in a service business that dealt with a chore that people of means did not care to do for themselves. Bates acknowledges how hard her parents worked and how little they had but writes "I felt their helplessness in the marrow of my bones, and I hated it."[73] Like Quan, she was caught between two worlds and felt that she belonged in neither. Though Quan did not refer to experiencing discrimination living in Burlington, she saw the difference between how her family lived and acted in comparison with white families, though she does refer to being called racial slurs and feeling different. Her internal struggles were based on a real stigma that exists towards Chinese Canadians.

Bates and Quan's experiences reflected racial and class differences not just limited to laws and government policies but also institutional structures such as schools and hospitals or less formal structures like public pools and movie theatres.[74] These differences would reinforce the negative connotations associated with being Chinese.[75] Quan saw her culture as a detriment.

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[72] Ibid., 74.
[73] Ibid., 74.
[74] David M Frost, "Social Stigma and Its Consequences for the Socially Stigmatized," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, volume 5, issue 11 (November 2011), 825.
[75] Ibid., 825.

However, her yearning to not be different would come at the cost of what she held dear about her culture. For Bates, her shame lay in seeing herself and her parents the way she believed society saw them, causing her to internalize that shame into guilt and self-loathing. She wrote:

> As a child I had wanted so much to fit in. And to a degree I had succeeded. But I knew even then that no matter how hard I tried, complete acceptance was impossible. I was a Chinese girl living in a white world. We were poor, and my father washed other people's clothes for a living. It didn't matter that I was teacher's pet or that I went to Sunday school and memorized verses from the Bible. At some point I would find myself with my nose pressed up against a window watching others.[76]

Bates' pain and loneliness are palpable in this quote. She has struggled to do well and achieve, but in the end felt that it did not matter.

Becoming Canadian

Education would bring Chinese women into the public. Gretta Jean (Wong) Grant was born in London, Ontario in 1921.[77] Her mother came to Canada with bound feet. To become a good wife, she had learned to spin, weave, sew and cook, but not read or write. But her father believed strongly in education for girls. He knew life in Canada was highly competitive and he told his children they needed three things: health, education, and wisdom.[78] Grant's father encouraged his children to set high goals. Grant attended the University of Western Ontario, graduating in 1943, and graduated from Osgood Hall Law School, University of Toronto in 1946. She was the first Chinese Canadian woman to become a lawyer. Grant went on to practice law, work as a psychologist, raise a family and sit on numerous community boards.[79] Grant is a great example of what education can do for women if given the opportunity. To become the success that she

[76] Judy Fong Bates, *The Year of Finding Memory: A Memoir* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2011).
[77] Sugiman, *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*, 59.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

was, Grant had to overcome not only gender discrimination but racial discrimination as well it was not until the late 1940s and 1950s that Chinese people in Canada could enter law, pharmacy, teaching and politics.[80]

Growing up in London, Ontario Grant said there were at times incidents of racist name calling or not being invited to attend certain social events because of racist attitudes, but overall, as Grants says, "Because we were the only family...because there weren't the numbers, there wasn't the fear of us taking over. We were well accepted."[81] Grant was fortunate to come from a family that after a few struggles became successful in the restaurant business. This, however, did not mean they did not struggle financially putting all but one of their six children through university especially due to the depression in the 1930s.[82] Grant also benefitted from parents, particularly her father who was more progressive in his attitudes towards women and education.[83] Grant's father received criticism from some within the Chinese community for believing his daughters should be given the same equal opportunities as his sons.[84] It is interesting to note that while Grant and her family were readily accepted in a smaller community where the Chinese population was extremely low, Grant would find it challenging when she moved to Toronto for law school. Speaking little Chinese alienated her from the Chinese community in Toronto and gave her a sense of "backward discrimination" in addition to the racial discrimination from white society.[85]

The added voice of Chinese women in public life gave a strength to the Chinese community that did not exist before. Women of education and positions of authority were

[80] "Chinese-Canadians Enter the Professions - *CBC Archives*, accessed August 8, 2021, https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/chinese-canadians-entering-the-professions.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

creating a new image for Chinese in Canadian society. Jean (Wong Toy Jin) Lumb's family believed success could be achieved from hard work whether you were male or female. Jean Lumb was born in Nanaimo, British Columbia in 1919.[86] Growing up she was required by law to carry a registration card with her picture on it as part of the Exclusion Act of 1923 which mandated that all Chinese living in Canada be registered.[87] Lumb's father worked as a coal miner and her family (her parents and siblings) lived in a small apartment and operated a fruit store.[88] When Lumb turned twelve years old she had to quit school to help in her family's store. A few years after this, Lumb moved to Toronto to help her married sister run her fruit store. At the age of seventeen, Lumb opened her own fruit store. Not only did Lumb and her husband go on to operate a successful restaurant in Toronto's Chinatown, Lumb became a prominent political activist and community volunteer.[89] In 1957, Lumb was the only woman in a group of twenty Chinese Canadians selected by the Chinese community to meet with the federal government to discuss the immigration restrictions on Chinese people in Canada. By a twist of fate, when meeting with the Prime Minister of Canada, John Diefenbaker, the spokesperson for their group Fun Sing Wong happened to sit next to Diefenbaker's bad ear.[90] Lumb on the other hand was seated by Diefenbaker's good ear and because Lumb had been integral in preparing for the presentation, she was able to ensure that Diefenbaker received all the information presented to him by the committee in his good ear.[91] The pleas by the committee for the abolishment of the racially restrictive immigration policies were heard and from this came the establishment of immigration criteria that was based on skills and education.[92] Lumb acknowledged, "The change

[86] Merna Forster, 100 Canadian Heroines: Famous and Forgotten Faces (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2004), 138.
[87] Ibid., 139.
[88] Ibid., 139.
[89] Ibid., 139.
[90] Ibid., 138.
[91] Ibid., 138.
[92] Ibid., 138.

to the immigration laws was my greatest accomplishment."[93] Lumb always regretted leaving school at an early age, but with hard work and the support of her family, Lumb became a very successful Chinese Canadian woman. Jean Lumb became president of the Women's Association in the Chinese community in 1940 and started the Chinese Community Dancers of Ontario.[94] Lumb started a successful campaign in the late 1960s to save Toronto's Chinatown. She later became involved in the efforts to save Chinatowns in Vancouver and Calgary.[95] Lumb also worked as a Citizenship Court judge and in 1976, received the Order of Canada, becoming the first Chinese Canadian recipient.[96] With each accomplishment Lumb made in her career as a businesswoman and politician, she pushed back the cultural and gender boundaries within both the Chinese and white society. Even with all hard work and dedication to the Chinese communities across Canada Lumb had her moments of doubt as to where she fit in Canadian society. Lumb remembers as a young girl asking, "What do I have to do to be accepted? I'm always looking in from the outside."[97] Perhaps therefore Lumb fought so hard for the end the racist immigration policies towards Chinese people. She needed to eliminate that line between.

Although Grant's and Lumb's tremendous accomplishments were exceptional, many Chinese women began to be more politically active. From 1937 to 1945, this generation of Chinese women also came together to support the Canadian war effort in the Pacific.[98] Chinese Canadians' involvement began following the invasion of China by the Japanese in 1937. Chinese communities across Canada rallied together to raise money to support the military in China. When Canada entered the war in 1939, the Chinese communities in Canada continued their

[93] Ibid., 139.
[94] Ibid., 139.
[95] Ibid., 139.
[96] Ibid., 139.
[97] Ibid., 139.
[98] Sugiman, *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*, 21.

fundraising efforts for Canada as well as China. Many Chinese Canadian women who had never been out of their homes were involved in fund-raising activities such as charity teas, raffles, bake sales, patriotic concerts, dragon parades as well as taking part in door-to-door canvasing, appeals and selling war bonds.[99] They left Chinatown communities and stood on the street corners of major cities to hand out pins and labels on tag days. During World War II, many Chinese Canadian women volunteered in the St. John's Ambulance Corps and the Red Cross. One of these amazing women was Peggy Lee who joined the St. John's Ambulance Corps in a division that was composed of Chinese women. She was a stretcher bearer, did firefighting, labour and delivery, first aid and home nursing in the Corps.[100] Peggy had grown up in Prince Rupert, British Columbia and does not recall feeling discriminated against while living there.[101] That would change when she moved to Vancouver as a volunteer for the Corps, Peggy recalled that she and her friends felt less welcome living in Vancouver.[102] She said her services were often rejected because she was Chinese and that white volunteers were often preferred by the people needing assistance.[103]After the war Peggy went on to flourish in her career as a businesswoman, and a community activist. Years after her time in the St. John's Ambulance Corps Lee was interviewed for a project put together by Veterans Affair Canada called *Heroes Remember: Chinese Canadian Veterans.* Lee was asked whether she considered herself Canadian or Chinese Canadian. She responded, "I'm proud to be a Canadian and the Chinese part come with my

[99] "Volunteering in the First and Second World War," *Wartime Canada*, accessed July 22, 2021, https://wartimecanada.ca/essay/volunteering/volunteering-first-and-second-world-war.
[100] "Heroes Remember - Chinese-Canadian Veterans." *Veterans Affairs Canada*, July 30, 2019. https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/chinese-canadian-veterans.
[101] "Peggy Lee," *Valour Canada*, accessed August 9, 2021, https://valourcanada.ca/military-history-library/peggy-lee/.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.

heritage. I am a Canadian first and proud to be part of Canada and I'll do anything for Canadian. You know that?"[104]

The end of World War II would bring change for the Chinese in Canada. In 1947, the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, was finally repealed. Chinese Canadians obtained the right to vote. Due to her military service during World War II, Mary Laura (Wong) Mah was among the first Chinese Canadians to receive her Canadian citizenship. But change was slow. It took another decade or longer to reunite many of the families separated by the Exclusion Act.

The intersection of race and gender made Chinese women's struggle for economic and political success even harder than for Chinese men. Nevertheless, their collective efforts were indispensable in the long struggle for the Chinese community to be treated more equally and for Canada to become a more inclusive nation.

[104] "Heroes Remember - Chinese-Canadian Veterans." *Veterans Affairs Canada*, July 30, 2019. https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/chinese-canadian-veterans.

Conclusion

The “railway narrative” which focuses on the roles and experiences of Chinese sojourners in Canada and their contributions to the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway tends to be the prevalent story in public representations of the history of Chinese Canadians. It is a poignant and significant history, but it has obscured other contributions and experiences. The underlying characterizations of Chinese migrants in the narrative as hardworking, but docile, exploitable, and cheap labourers have obscured the diverse histories of Chinese Canadians as well as their historical agency.

Despite racial discrimination, restrictive policies, and often difficult working conditions, Chinese migrants continued to come to Canada to live and work. They became indispensable in mines, factories, canneries, fishing, farming and other jobs that included hard and often dangerous labour. The intent of these pioneers was not necessarily to become Canadians but due to the practice of paying them less than white workers and forcing them to repay the cost of passage, many would be forced to remain in Canada. Due to political, social, and economic push and pull factors, and the utilitarian approach to Chinese labour that was responsible for the intensification of racial discrimination, these men would remain sojourners for decades.

Chinese communities across the country asserted their political voices, however, with the creation of unions, organized protests, and their own social organizations. They used the weight of their collective strength to push back at their white employers with the demand for a pay scale and working hours that were more comparable to whites. This sometimes led to cooperation between Chinese and white unions and workers, since Chinese outnumbered whites in areas such as the mines and therefore were beneficial in labour disputes. This cooperation would continue

and would result in Chinese communities' support of the Canadian war efforts between 1914 and 1918, and again from 1939 to 1945. As a consequence, a greater variety of white Canadian organizations worked with Chinese political organizations for citizenship and voting rights for Chinese Canadian, rights which were finally acquired in 1947.

The railway narrative also obscures the history of Chinese women in Canada. While men were part of the "visible" history that included the railroad, women largely remained "invisible" as a result of gender and cultural discrimination and immigration policies that were intent on keeping Chinese women out of Canada. Race and gender made the struggle for economic and political equality and success harder for women than men. Fortunately, this tendency is beginning to change with Chinese Canadian women taking the lead in telling their own stories.

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