

# Forum Summary Apology for Historical Wrongs Against Chinese British Columbians Consultation Forum Richmond, BC

**Monday, January 27, 2014**

**7:00 – 9:00pm**

**President's Ballroom, Radisson Hotel Vancouver Airport  
8181 Cambie Rd, Richmond, BC**



Lead: Honourable Teresa Wat, Minister of International Trade  
and Minister Responsible for the Asia Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism

MC's: Queenie Choo and Ricky Li

Moderator: Wei Shao

Attendance: Approximately 300 people

## Agenda

1. Queenie Choo and Ricky Li – Welcome and Opening Remarks
2. Minister Teresa Wat – Opening Remarks
3. Ricky Li and Queenie Choo - Forum procedures
4. Wei Shao – Facilitation Process
5. Comments from community members
6. Queenie Choo and Ricky Li – Closing Remarks

## Community Members

### Alex Wong

#### President, Richmond Chinese Cultural Society

Mr. Wong greeted the crowd, attending MLAs and Minister Wat. He introduced himself and shared that he immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong in 1988. He stated that he feels new immigrants have no idea what happened in the past. He expressed his personal ideas as to how the apology can be made, and stated that the past can't be undone, but we can move forward. He believes that people need to be educated about the past and that the government should include the stories in the elementary school curriculum and perhaps arrange compulsory visits to Chinese museums. He said that finding the right words to express remorse from misdeeds from a century ago is not easy – it must be done sincerely and respectfully.

### Bill Chu

#### Canadians for Reconciliation Society

Mr. Chu expressed his appreciation for being given extra time to speak at the forum, and acknowledged the courageous effort of the event organisers to hold 5 forums over the previous 15 days. He spoke to represent the voices of Chinese forefathers and shared stories of the hardworking Chinese men who had come to Canada and lost their lives in tragic ways.

Regarding the apology and community consultation, Mr. Chu believes that if we follow the framework suggested by the provincial government and their ways of doing things, it is hard to get racial settlement. Apart from the forums held in the interior of BC, other forums selectively invited the Chinese media only. Accordingly, the majority of the attendances of these forums are Chinese. He continued by asserting that the provincial government didn't provide any theoretical support from archeology, history, political and legal points of view and their understanding toward the history of BC. The government has presented a bird cage framework. It has already decided the outcome of the forum and made up its mind. The government seems to think that there is no need for massive education of British Columbians about past Chinese history and they didn't get support from non-Chinese or ask their opinions. During the consultation process, the provincial government has used the multiculturalism department, so this has separated Chinese and non-Chinese. Mr. Chu stated that historical background information was uploaded to the EmbraceBC website only three weeks ago. As this was done behind closed doors, it has caused separation in the society.

Mr. Chu, speaking for the CCIA, advised that the wrongs done to the Chinese were part of history, not just an occasional mistake, and can be categorized as a sin against human rights. The provincial government should learn from the German and South African governments about how to apologize for historical wrongs against human rights.

He proposed the following suggestions for Premier Clark and will submit the complete list directly to the Premier:

1. Apologize for not including non-Chinese media at forums.
2. Apologize for generalizations.
3. Apologize for treating the forums as a multi-cultural event.
4. Apologize for increasing misconceptions.

### **Thekla Lit**

#### **Canada ALPHA (Association of Learning and Preserving the History of WWII in Asia)**

Ms. Lit stated that the consultation was about discriminatory legislation. An apology alone cannot nurture acceptance and respect or mutual understanding. She believes the apology will cause further harm instead of creating reconciliation, and there has already been backlash from the non-Chinese community.

Through the preservation work of BC ALPHA, different forms of reconciliation can be seen from the Germans and the Japanese for the atrocities these countries committed during World War II. They had very different approaches and results. Germany faced it squarely and took action to reconcile the past. This has been met with worldwide respect, and reconciliation has largely been achieved. Japan has refused to acknowledge its aggression or offer reconciliation. If apologies are made by one person, they are contradicted by more prominent Japanese authorities. According to Ms. Lit, the Japanese apology lacks sincerity and many victims feel an apology has not been achieved. Education about the Asian holocaust is not on the agenda of the Japanese government and their youth are not learning about this part of their history.

In a redress for wrongs to Chinese Canadians, the BC government should adopt the approach taken by the German government.

The process must include:

1. Historical research to discover the full picture of historical wrongs to the Chinese people.
2. Educating both sides about historical facts -- so that there is a shared history and a collective memory -- for all British Columbians.
3. Taking redemptive action, the objective of which is to learn valuable lessons to prevent history from repeating itself. Redemptive actions include:
  - Ongoing school education.
  - Erecting monuments and museums.
  - Preserving significant historical sites, to show respect and for younger generations.
  - Compensation to stakeholders.

**Tung Chan  
Citizen**

Mr. Chan stated that we need to know more than just what happened. We also need to know why. What were the social and economic factors that compelled the political leaders to gang up on their fellow citizens? Surely with a clear understanding of why things happened, we can prevent repetition. Most speakers have talked about education for youth, but adults need to be educated too as they will interpret for their children. Adults also need to learn what their forefathers did. They need to know about the tremendous harm that was committed against the Chinese. Today many still have unfavourable opinions of Chinese people. Those in power can formulate programs, but it's the average people who need to be persuaded in order to put into practice affirmative action for positive change.

Mr. Chan believes that the way to bring about this change is to have a permanent display of our shared history. The government needs to facilitate the creation of books, songs, poems, plays and dramas about the past to link our population. We need to compare what happened in the past to what is happening now. The exclusion laws of the past are now gone from the BC government, but if you look, there are not many Chinese in positions of power. There are still barriers that prevent this from happening. The apology is only the beginning. Commitment for action is needed - diversity, employment equity and welcoming new leaders.

**James Ho  
Citizen**

Mr. Ho came to Canada in 1972 as a new immigrant, and he is currently an active member of the local Vancouver community. When they found out that Mr. Ho was going to speak at this forum, his friends asked why he would choose to give his opinion on this highly sensitive and enormously complex issue. Mr. Ho pondered his reasons and wondered why it was so important. If it was just about the money, how do you measure an apology with money? If a sincere apology is given, then he wondered how do you measure the sincerity of an apology?

He believes what is truly important is leaving a legacy for young Canadians. The lesson to be learned is about discrimination. Discrimination which included the Chinese, but not only for the Chinese community. The quality of life and freedom we enjoy as Canadian citizens comes after our forefathers suffered discrimination. As we gather to talk about the head tax, we must use the lesson of how in our history, the worst in human nature has evolved into true multiculturalism.

The government asked how to apologize -- Let the history of discrimination be part of school education. We need to understand that respect and inclusiveness should be core values of our society.

**Xiu Yun Ding**  
**White Rock Chinese Association**

Mr. Ding has only been in Canada for 8 years, and like many others didn't know much about BC history. He learned that over 100 years ago BC and Canada had many Chinese railway workers who made great contributions. This history is a heavy burden. The men worked hard and devoted their lives to the country but after railway construction was completed, they were discriminated against.

Mr. Ding wants the BC government to: take a sincere attitude; fairly summarize that piece of history; and let all our descents -- not just Chinese but all British Columbians and Canadians -- know the history and contribution of railway workers. He feels a monument should be built, perhaps even a small museum. The apology should be respectful and factual.

We should treat everyone with love which links all the ethnic groups. North America is a land of immigrants, regardless of when you come and where you come from. He feels we are lucky to live here now so we can all claim it as our homeland.

**Nicholas Kam**  
**Citizen**

In 1989, Mr. Nicholas emigrated from Hong Kong to Canada and he wondered how to be Canadian. He found a multiculturalism society that could not be found in other parts of the world. His family and friends are glad to be Canadian. He learned about the head tax and realized that since about 1880, \$15,000 had been paid. People come as labourers for the railway. Sir John A. Macdonald suggested that we form a country, Canada, to connect the fur trade business and to bring back to Europe the fur from Canada. He found that even though the bylaw was set up by the federal government, the Province had the authority. Ottawa and the BC provincial government were wrong but by 1967 this law was finished.

**Henry Beh**  
**Executive Director, Richmond Chinese Cultural Society**

Mr. Beh expressed his pleasure at seeing so many citizens showing concern about Chinese history. He explained that his society has been teaching Chinese history to their Richmond staff. We have to educate people that what was done in the past was wrong. The first immigrants from over 100 years ago contributed to the railway and the fishing industry.

He feels that an apology is a must, and has to be honest, sincere and respectful. There needs to be a legacy to educate the next generation in the school system. All must understand this should not happen again. By building a legacy in a museum, all people can see it and learn about it. Education is the main point.



**Norman Sung**

**Former president of Richmond Chinese Cultural Society**

Mr. Sung stated that he is offering his personal opinion only, and feels the apology is a very good thing to do. He considers the 7 sessions as only information sessions to open the topic. He is concerned that there are so many splits and different opinions. The reason no one hears about this in text books is because there are many different understandings of history. These sessions allow for opinions that will be the subject of attention. In this way we will get closer as to what to do and the best way to implement the suggestions. For a legacy project, a museum is needed. For example, the existing Royal BC Museum in Victoria could provide resources to fund legacy and education projects. In regard to financial compensation, Mr. Sung feels that it is too early to make that decision. First, educating all British Columbians about our history is needed.

**Wendy Yuan**

**Executive Director, Canadian Women Voter's Congress**

Ms. Yuan applauded Minister Wat for her work in and around BC. Ms. Yuan came from China and later became the spouse of a head tax payer descendent. The head tax represents a dark period in Canadian history affecting over 80,000 head tax payers and their families. Many people lost their lives building the railway, and then the head tax was imposed. It was a direct shameless attempt to stop the migration of Chinese to Canada.

Ms. Yuan showed a copy of a head tax certificate. Chin Sing Ching, a head tax payer landed in Salt Water City on April 12, 1921. Her husband's great grandfather helped to build the railway and his son fought in WW2. She stated that her story was a personal one that cries out for the BC government to make amends for their discriminatory practices. This history is a dark period in Canadian history and should be taught in the school system.

**Erika Simm**

**Citizen**

Ms. Simm thanked the Minister and explained that she will speak from a very different perspective when looking at this problem. She further explained that she had sent a letter to the Minister and Premier Clark and would read part of the letter.

The letter stated that she is very reluctant to open this can of worms. She questions why the government is singling out one group of people over others and why is it appropriate at this time. She asks about the native children, the Dukhobors,, and the Ukrainians. She pointed out that many from these groups lost their lives too. She wondered if an apology had been made to the many Jews who were refused entry to Canada after WW2 and about her husband's family members who had to sign a 2 year contract to live and work on a farm when they first arrived in Canada. She asks where

## Community Members (continued)

their monetary compensation is for the hardships they endured as labourers. She stated that there shouldn't be monetary compensation. The behaviour was terrible by today's standards, but at the time it was acceptable. It is a historic darkness that is to be accepted. She feels it should be remembered and that people should learn from it. However, to apologize to only one group is unfair. She said that if the Premier apologizes, it must be to everyone, not just one group.

### Yan Han

#### Vice President, Canada China Northeast Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Han came to Canada from Beijing and stated that as a new immigrant hearing of the historical wrongs, it felt at first as if she were listening to stories, but during the listening process, she felt humiliated.

It would be a positive thing for the Provincial government to apologize before Chinese New Year.

We should pay attention to history and its experience. The Chinese are hardworking people, and because of the weakness of their home country, they were discriminated against in foreign countries. She believes they need to face reality and hopes the provincial government will make the apology sincerely; for their ancestors; for their nation; and for all the suffering. There are many new immigrants and Ms. Han hopes the government will do more for them. Through the apology and the consultation forums, new immigrants can reflect on these thoughts. Newcomers should pay more attention to their own behaviors. As for the government, they should care for these new immigrants.

### David Lin

#### Citizen

David Lin moved from Taiwan to Canada in 1985. He never thought he would have a chance to use his own language, Mandarin, to express his opinions in a public forum. He believes this reflects on the fact that Canada is a multicultural country which respects all ethnic groups, and is happy that Canada is a country that is willing to admit its wrongs.

He said that he and his friends from Taiwan are happy to be in Canada and have never faced any discrimination. This is because of their ancestors who suffered from discrimination, and whose sacrifices created their current happy life as new immigrants who are able to enjoy everything.

Mr. Lin started his own business in tourism in 1989. During all his travels, he became aware of the history of discrimination toward Chinese. He did some research and gave it to the tourist guides for them to share the stories with tourists. When they take tourists to the Rocky Mountains, they are asked to look at both sides of the mountains and they show them the Last Spike of the CPR and tell tourists stories of the Chinese workers from the past.

He continued to express how proud he was to be a Canadian with a government that shows great courage in admitting historical wrongs. Regarding the history in question, he feels it has already passed. People have learned from it, so it shouldn't be mentioned any more. Nowadays

in Canada, there isn't any suffering. There are Chinese ministers and many Chinese are in public service. We should tell our children about the history and that's enough.

From the perspective of the tourism industry, Mr. Lin feels the government should build a memorial park, and have it become a sightseeing location. Or perhaps build a jade garden/park by working with the mining private sector and investors from China. Jade could be used to build a theme park reflecting the history of railway construction and to tell tourists about this history.

### **Guihua Li**

#### **Canadian Community Services Association Seniors Society**

GuiHua Li shared three points:

1. The Federal government has apologized and now the provincial government wants to as well. This is a step towards improved human civilization. It recognizes our ancestors' contributions. We should be happy and proud of it.
2. I agree with what David Lin just shared. History is history. We need to remember it, but not to repeat it. I hope we can move forward, using positive energy, which means we should inherit the hard working values of our ancestors and their sacrifices for Canada. All new immigrants should remember how our ancestors survived through their suffering.
3. If the word "apology" is used, I don't think it is positive energy. I think the government should award a certificate to the families whose ancestors made great contributions. And we should try our best to collect the ancestors' names and put them into a big album. Also, I suggest that we should have an exhibition room in a museum and put the big album on display. I also suggest schools do field trips to the museum to visit the album.

### **Pan Miaofei**

#### **Canadian Alliance of Chinese Associations**

Mr. Pan praised the BC government. He stated that mistakes are made in history and corrections must be made. He believes it's good to know the mistakes and learn from them. During WW2, Germany made mistakes, and like them, it's necessary to educate our descendants. Not like Japan, Minister Abe refused to apologize and wanted the Islands.

Today, Mr. Pan sees the BC government as doing this for the Chinese community and he expressed how happy he is to live here. He loves Canada and BC. He thinks the apology should be published in Chinese and English newspapers; put into a textbook; and the government should set up a memorial in a park so people will know about what happened in the past.



## Community Members (continued)

### Lan Zhang Citizen

Mr. Zhang expressed how happy he was to be able to speak freely and share his opinions. He came to Canada in 2003, and he thinks BC fits its advertising: it's the best place on earth. He noted that all ethnic groups are equal in Canada; we have multiculturalism and breathe fresh air. In terms of the apology wording, it should have an optimistic attitude. A hundred years ago, the country was growing and it was unavoidable to make mistakes. As long as the apology is publicly stated and in simple clear speech, it is ok.

Mr. Zhang also feels that the apology is too late, as we should apologize right away for things we do wrong. He explained that if he did something wrong to his son, Victor, his son would want him to apologize immediately. A hundred years later is too late. It should be clear where we went wrong and we should know how to prevent the wrongs again no matter what happens in the future.

In terms of delivery, Mr. Zhang feels it should be made by the Minister on behalf of the government. And as for the legacy, Mr. Zhang believes the mistake should not just be acknowledged for the mistake itself, but because it contributes toward the right decision for a good legacy. The past wrongdoings should be put into textbooks and the mistakes should be noted.

### Tommy Chen Citizen

Mr. Chen landed in Canada in 2001 and he met a Canadian who asked whether he was from China. The Canadian man then said that there were no human rights in China. He thinks the BC government should apologize for past wrongs. He thinks its common sense that if we do something wrong, we should apologize.

In terms of legacy, there should be a monument or museum and perhaps items from archives should be put into a display. The BC government should provide more service to the Chinese community, such as making many services available in their language.

### Vincent Guo Brighid Law Firm

Mr. Fu stated that the wrongdoings in question were legal in the past. The offending legislation was not completely repealed until 1947. In 1967, all the discriminatory laws were repealed. The apology by the BC government needs to address past wrongs. More importantly, the provincial government should make effort to be more inclusive and equitable -- not just for the Chinese community -- rather than redressing past wrongs.

### Cecilia Point Musqueam First Nation and Citizens for Reconciliation Society

Ms. Point welcomed the forum attendees to Musqueam nation traditional lands. The Musqueam people have always welcomed newcomers. They

have never told people to go home. Captain Vancouver wrote about how the Musqueam people came out to greet him in their boats. They fed him and his men.

Ms. Point expressed how an apology has to be heartfelt. She had no suggestions for what words to use. She doesn't hold the current government accountable. They can't speak for their ancestors. She shared how she didn't know that this country was littered with the bodies of Chinese ancestors.

She was invited to speak at the forum by Bill Chu. He didn't know about First Nations history until he met a First Nations person. Ms. Point believes that we need to learn more about each other. She stated that she was there in solidarity with the Chinese people. She believes this past wrong has to be recorded in the Canadian education system and that everyone needs to learn about it. Like at Remembrance Day ceremonies, her son and his friends only learn about white soldiers, they never see other soldiers who died protecting them.

Ms. Point implored the attendees to let their ancestors rest. There are bodies all over this country, desecrated, and it needs to be fixed.

**Jun Yang**  
**White Rock Chinese Association**

Jun Yang said he is from Yunan and has become a Canadian citizen. He feels "double pride" in attending the forum. First, because he is Chinese he is proud to be receiving a formal apology from the government which shows respect to the Chinese community. Secondly, his second pride is as a Canadian citizen to see the government doing the right thing.

He had the following suggestions in response to the three questions:

1. There should be a formal apology.
2. In terms of how, as the Prime Minister apologized for the Federal government, so should the Premier apologize for BC, and make a formal announcement including the media, newspapers, online, etcetera.
3. History needs to be remembered. In order not to make the same mistakes, every child should know about them and they should be entered into textbooks. Plaques should be put in railway stations. From those stations, the contributions of the Chinese railway workers can be seen and understood meaningfully.

## Community Members (continued)

### **Qingqing Liu** **UBC Student**

Ms. Liu stated that she is too young to be connected with the Head tax or Exclusion act. She is speaking as part of her generation on this issue. She said that Canada is a multicultural country. The Head Tax and Exclusion Act are part of a history that can't be ignored and an apology is necessary to address many current problems. She pointed out how local students make fun of new immigrant students' accents and grammatical mistakes.

She believes past experiences guide you to deal with problems that are faced in the future. This apology process gives hope that the government will not let these things happen again. Government reconciliation of wrongs in history shows determination not to repeat that. It is a sign that the mistakes made in the past will not be made again. This will help to create a better home in BC in the future for everyone

Ms. Liu insisted that no matter what form the apology takes, in written forms or monuments, it should be expressed with sincerity, not through politics. The younger generation needs to learn about this valuable lesson as they are the future.

### **Nikki Jiang** **Citizen**

Ms. Jiang stated that the community consultations are the result of years of effort by Chinese communities. The unfair treatment of Chinese people is still prevalent today and there is still much work to do. She cited the example of this year's UBC student union election. The only Chinese candidate, Jackson Chen, was unfairly treated due to violating a rule against putting up too many posters on campus. There were only four days of voting, so he was only allotted a quarter of the time for campaigning. Jackson wasn't the only one who had violated the rule and Ms. Jiang doesn't understand why only Jackson was punished. She believes this decision was racially based.

Ms. Jiang expressed her hopes that through effort people can become more equal both on campus and in Canada.

### **Xiaomin Zhang** **Canada Dream Film Institute**

Ms. Zhang has been in Canada for 10 years and is very happy to be living here. She thinks the Chinese community shouldn't think of themselves as victims. This is for all Canadians, not just Chinese, and together, we should write the history of current times. As for Head Tax compensation, she doesn't feel anyone but the affected families should have a say, and how much they should be entitled to is a decision to be made by them and the government, not the community at large.

She believes the past needs to be faced positively and education is the key.

History books need to be rewritten from the perspective of multiculturalism, including newcomers and others. This is for all future generations.

**Dexiu Zhu**

**Citizen's Association for the celebration of Canada-China  
Diplomatic Relations**

Dexiu Zhu hopes that the BC government will make a wise apology to the Chinese, and that it should be recorded into textbooks, or a monument should be built to ensure history will be remembered. Chinese people should pay attention to the history and respect it. Canada is a multicultural society with harmony and people should be proud to be here whether new citizens or permanent residents. New immigrants should work hard and consider this country to be their homeland now.

**Mike Harris**

**Gitxsan First Nation and Citizens for Reconciliation Society**

Mr. Harris gave thanks to the Coast Salish and acknowledged their traditional territory. He had several questions for the forum:

1. He has not heard about the government consulting with non-Chinese communities. Who did they consult with about apologizing?
2. He has not heard about government education for the non-Chinese public regarding specific reasons why the government is offering such an apology. How come the government waited until Dec 7 to publish information about the forums?
3. The First Nations who suffered worse are not aware of these negotiations. Why is the Ministry of Aboriginal Reconciliation not informing them? Why are they only hearing about this through Bill Chu?
4. Why wait to tell people, and why is the information on an obscure government website?

Mr. Harris also suggested the government do the following:

- a. Take people on tours.
- b. Speak to high school students.
- c. Be sincere, honest and proper from the beginning of first contact to now.
- d. Give an open invitation to all media.
- e. Prepare an honest, open, meaningful apology.

**Lianzhang Zhang**

**Canadian Community Services Association Senior Society**

Mr. Zhang asked “What is an apology?” then stated that an apology means acknowledging past wrongs. Those wrongs should be made clear to answer the questions: How many people were affected? How much damage had been done to them and how has it impacted their descendants? We should make this clear before an apology is made.

If there are no wrongs, then positive stories should be shared. Chinese have contributed greatly and that should be reflected. If it’s wrong, it should make it clear. If it’s right, it should guide our descendants. Someone has said to put this history into textbooks, but what shall be included in the textbook? There are negative news reports which said this process was meaningless but Mr. Zhang thinks it is very meaningful.

**David Black**

**Canadians for Reconciliation Society**

Mr. Black acknowledged the Coast Salish people for welcoming us to their territory. He stated that he had had the honour of working with Bill Chu and what he continues to learn is valuable. Mr Chu’s organization focuses on seeking reconciliation and several members took a bus tour to learn deep and meaningful knowledge of the shared history of the Chinese and First Nations. We are all interconnected.

Mr. Black feels the government has to understand the breadth of historical wrongs and that everyone has a part to play in this discussion. All must take ownership of a shared past and shared present.

In the past, Mr. Black was a delegate for a labour council where he put much effort into acknowledging the discriminatory head tax and race riots. Acknowledgment is important. Mr. Black welcomes this as a first step in the process. All British Columbians need to learn from this experience and be part of this experience.

**Joy Kogawa**

**Canadians For Reconciliation Society**

Joy Kogawa stated that she is a Canadian of Japanese descent and part of Bill Chu’s cheering squad. She acknowledged that reconciliation work is long and complex and lasts several generations and lifetimes. Harm has been done that goes on and on. She feels that if you do not bring forth that which is within you, it can cause further harm. Every form of reconciliation that we can invoke brings health, so she believes this is a wonderful thing to happen.

Ms. Kogawa shared how hard and painful it was in the 1980’s when working on reconciliations. She stated that reconciliation is required within communities and within countries. When we are not reconciled, we are stuck. And the place that she is stuck now is at the Raping of Nanking, China.

## Community Members (continued)

She said that she can't move beyond that unspeakable place. She believes the only way it can happen is for a lack of denial on the part of the people of Japan. She prays with all her heart for reconciliation between these countries.

### **Yaxin Guo**

#### **Vice President, Quanzhou Friendship Society**

Mr. Guo's praised the provincial government for their effort in holding these forums.

He stated that history can't be repeated. Chinese people came to Canada thinking about changing their lives and the world, but they found out after they had arrived that they were only allowed entry if they paid \$500. Back then \$500 was worth two houses.

He suggested to the victim families that they should refer to their forefather's tolerance and contributions. Maybe the government can't give them money but their ancestors' stories have been recorded into history today. He is sure without their contributions, Minister Wat and Jenny Kwan wouldn't be able to hold their positions today.

Mr. Guo concluded by saying that we are all Canadians and tolerance will make this country better.

### **Harjap Grewal**

#### **Council of Canadians**

Mr. Grewal acknowledged Coast Salish traditional territories. He stated that apologies are becoming commonplace from the government these days. One key issue regarding the process of consultation is that it could lead to an imposed apology where many would not be happy with the process or results. He believes an apology led by the families of those who lived through it is a more just apology. This consultation should not be listening to other people's opinions.

He suggested that an apology from someone who stole his phone while his phone was still in their pocket is not an apology. A check box apology is not enough and not appropriate.

He feels there is a need to educate the entire population more broadly and more seriously. This situation is not just in the past. There are workers like this today on temporary foreign worker programs. Workers in Alberta recently have died due to poor conditions as was the case with Chinese railway workers in the past.



**Ron Mah**  
**Head Tax Families Society**

Mr. Mah acknowledged Coast Salish territory.

He stated that his grandfather and father paid the head tax. His father came on the last ship. His mother spent a decade as a single mom, and she spoke openly about their experiences. To him this was not ancient history. He quoted Minister Wat regarding holding “a hundred years of history”. For 100 years, Mr. Mah feels there has been attempted genocide that has affected many people. The 1923 exclusion act could have been appealed at any time, but it took another 25 years to abolish.

He knows that many people now are searching their roots and history. Many documentaries and dramas are helping people to understand. Books and novels documenting their quest through twists and turns and one tries to understand why they had to go through this. For some, the education is good and many educational initiatives have already been funded. The funds trickle in. UBC has many courses on the subject and has so for many years. Mr. Mah concluded by asking that the government please make this a just and meaningful apology, with redress.

**Grace Wong – Schenkeveld**  
**Head Tax Families Society**

Ms. Wong - Schenkeveld thanked Minister Wat and stated that we need open discussion to find meaningful resolution.

Ms. Wong-Schenkeveld is a Head Tax descendent. Her family has over 100 years of history in Canada. Her grandfather came in 1919, and she finds it ironic that she is an immigrant too. Her grandfather was separated from his father for over 30 years. She remembers the large number of old Chinese bachelors who sat in front of the Bank of Montreal. Many would congratulate her grandfather because he had his family finally join him in Canada. They knew they would be dying alone in Canada. She reminded Minister Wat that present day consequences affect future generations.

Her family has had no political association and it was not until 2006 when she became an activist for families of the Head Tax because she was so upset with how Harper had deceived head tax families for his own political gains. For the past 7 years, she has consulted with families and sought an apology. Ms. Wong-Schenkeveld stated, “One certificate, one claim.”

Ms. Wong - Schenkeveld asked Minister Wat and the BC government to take a bold step; to give the head tax families the justice they are seeking and the restitution which they deserve. It is not about popularity, it is about doing the right thing.

**Zhou Nan Shuo**  
**Citizen**

Ms. Shuo expressed gratitude for the current government wanting to apologize for what the past government and legislature had done wrong. Ms. Shuo also thanked the government, all the helpers for the event, and the NDP who publicly said they support an apology. Not all governments would apologize for wrongs done by others. The wrongs were made by past governments and legislatures, and were not done by any modern individual.

Ms Shuo stated that the apology comes from a few generations' efforts and those who fought for justice should be recognized and applauded. Ms. Shuo hoped that the apology is not just a written sentence but also a process to educate people to fight for justice. It should be put into textbooks. In terms of delivery, the Premier should do this for the BC Government because Prime Minister Harper did the apology for the federal government.

**Charles Long-Cho Mow**  
**Canadian Chinese Historical Society**

Mr. Mow stated that he would be approaching the questions from a completely different angle from what anybody else has been. He wanted to explain how he went from opposing the redress to agreeing with it.

Twenty years ago, he was talking about Head Tax redress with some friends. They saw that redress was provided for the Japanese and people were getting compensation for leaky condos. Their view was that the Japanese deserved to be compensated because their housing, boats, and personal belongings were taken away. A lot of those who took the Japanese possessions were the First Nations people. The Ukrainians and Head Tax families weren't supportive of this. It was a long time ago and it was a personal choice to come to Canada for the head tax payers and the tax was legal, so it did not seem to be like the Japanese example where the Japanese Canadians did not consent and had no choice.

Mr. Mow didn't want to question it too much at the time. He didn't want to sound like he disagreed to all the things that were legal, even if unfair. He and his friends agreed that it was a sizeable amount of money that went into general revenue.

**Wayne Lo**  
**Executive Director, Christian Social Concern Fellowship**

Mr. Lo considers it righteous and helpful to set the record straight for future generations not to repeat similar acts. He believes the formal apology should be statements consistent with forgiveness and inclusiveness for all residents of BC. Such statements will be useful in bringing about peace and human virtue that has been fading away. While contemplating the social situation in BC, and metro Vancouver in particular, many social conflicts could have been avoided if opposing parties could have embraced forgiveness. True humanity is about embracing forgiveness as a noble act for a good society.

## Community Members (continued)

Mr. Lo thinks the government should post information regarding past discrimination on their website so that all British Columbians can know about it. As well, textbooks should cover the facts in detail, not just briefly. Part of BC history should be taught in the context of racial discrimination. He also feels that a scholar should be employed to update, report and provide a detailed experience. In conclusion, Mr. Lo hopes this will bring about social harmony for the land of Canada.

### **Jim Jiang** Citizen

Mr. Jiang stated that the last thing Canadian people want is to be pushed around. He is grateful for any that agreed with him. Mr. Jiang said that in terms of whether we should make the apology, it is being discussed and great effort has been made. He hopes for racial harmony. Mr. Jiang then shared an experience of his when he met 3 ladies in a park and they told him how they didn't like Chinese people. They didn't like that all the signs were in Chinese and that people celebrated Mao Zedong who was a dictator like Hitler.

### **Lily Lee** Head Tax Families Society

Ms. Lee acknowledged the Coast Salish First Nation traditional lands and Minister Wat.

Ms. Lee is a proud 4th generation born and raised in Vancouver, but her grandfathers were head tax payers. In 1894, one grandfather left China at 22 years old. He died in Vancouver in 1922. In 1913, the other grandfather left behind a wife and a daughter. He worked in the lettuce fields of Cloverdale and lived in a bachelor area of Vancouver. He had worked all 53 years of his life in BC and only visited China three times to visit his family. Ms. Lee's mother was finally reunited with her father in 1964 and they were strangers at this time because of the law. He did not make this choice willingly.

Ms. Lee applauded the efforts of the Head Tax Society, and stated that it is the only organization which has the courage to ask for financial compensation in order for the apology to mean something. She states that her family did suffer and a symbolic and meaningful return of the millions of dollars would allow them to move forward. This is part of an inclusive, just and honourable redress. She concluded by asking that the head tax families be allowed to decide the legacy, and understood that although it was not the popular choice, it was the right one.

### **Ziaming Zhu** Citizen

Mr. Zhu stated that he had been waiting for this moment for a long time. He shared a saying in Chinese: "If we drink this water, we must think of the origin of the water".

## Community Members (continued)

Mr. Zhu stated that he was speaking today as a Canadian, not just Chinese. Mr. Zhu explained that after the Cultural Revolution in China people suffered for many years, and that the railway workers worked really hard to build the railway.

Mr. Zhu said that Canada always encourages multiculturalism and he feels that all ethnic groups should pay attention to this event. The wrongs in the past were a shame to this country and only if it is acknowledged can forgiveness from ancestors be received. The government should have a just attitude to recognize ancestors.

### **Judy Dou** **Citizen**

The Speaker is a farm owner who has been in Canada for 10 years. She stated that there is a CPR railway next to her farm which is used to ship products around the world. She learned that the railway was built with her family's contribution, though there was no Chinese person present for the last spike ceremony. She acknowledged that now the BC government and Federal government want to make an apology and she welcomes it. She believes more people should learn more about the apology because they don't know about it. Her next-door neighbours are Caucasian and they don't know anything about it.

The apology should be sincere, and there should be a museum or monument erected so people know about this part of history. She hopes the BC government makes more opportunities for employment, business or small businesses to get people started on their new lives here.

### **Zhiyong Zhang** **Citizen**

Ms. Zhang stated that the Head Tax issue is not just an issue about families. From 1923 to 1947 there was also the Chinese Exclusion Act. She asked why the Chinese had to pay the Head Tax, and responded by stating it was because the Chinese were poor, and as a nation, they were weak in the past. She then asked why we have opportunities today, and responded by stating it was because social status for Chinese has improved. She believes that equality requires us to fight for it.

Ms. Zhang stated that an apology is a must, and it must be sincere. If the apology is forced by someone, it's done without any meaning. She thinks that it is better to find out reasons and find someone to be responsible.

The Head Tax is a dark shadow in Chinese Canadian history. Canada is a multicultural society now and equality needs to be fought for.

**Junxing Ren**  
**UBC Chinese Students and Scholars Association**

Mr. Ren is a student at UBC and commented on discrimination that exists at that institution, such as noise complaints that are targeted at Chinese students. He asked why people have such negative thoughts about Chinese students. He shared another example from UBC of the Student Union Chairman election. In order to be selected, the person needs about 4000-5000 votes. Usually the Western people don't think Chinese students will participate. He believes this kind of thinking is cold discrimination.

In terms of the apology, he doesn't support it, nor is he against it. He feels that we should first have respect for each other and accumulate experience of each other. He stated that even amongst Chinese people, they are not that united on any position. There are many social groups and organizations. He wonders why a distinction needs to be made, especially if it's all for friendship.

Mr. Ren is grateful for the opportunity to be able to say whatever he wants. He thinks we should live by the saying "be content with what you have" and don't fuss about the past.

**Joan Elangovan**  
**Vancouver Economic Commission**

Ms. Elangovan commented that some people may know her for her work with the Vancouver economic commission. However, today she is speaking as a resident of Richmond and a private citizen. She thanked Minister Wat for leading this important initiative which is not only about the past but also about the future; and not only important locally but also has global impact. As a newer immigrant of 25 years, she and others are forever indebted to those who came before them for their sacrifice; their hard work and perseverance; and never-ending hope that has made today possible.

Ms. Elangovan offered the following suggestions regarding the apology:

1. The province could commission a documentary film of systemic discrimination and the impact it had on the Chinese people. This would share stories of sacrifice and determination in the face of hardship. It should include the success stories of today and the government's efforts to right wrongs
2. The province could proclaim a day to commemorate Chinese British Columbian's history.

Together we can learn from and move forward together as a more tolerant and inclusive society where we value and recognize that we can harness creativity from the diversity of talent we have together in this land that we all call home.

**Richard Lee**  
**Member of the Legislative Assembly**

Mr. Lee recognized the Coast Salish People's traditional territory and expressed his pleasure to attend the consultation forum, both as a member of the Legislative assembly and as the grandson of an early Chinese settler who had paid the head tax.

Mr. Lee has consulted with Head Tax families over the years with support from colleagues and government. Mr. Lee suggested his proposed Draft Resolutions as follows:

"Be it resolved that this House apologises for the racist and discriminatory Resolutions and Acts passed in this House or existing in the Province of British Columbia, Canada during the period from 1872 to 1947. These initiatives include [an extensive list of resolutions and Act].The House also apologizes for pressuring the federal government to restrict Chinese immigration, which resulted in Chinese immigrants subjected to the Chinese Head Tax from 1885 to 1923 by the Government of Canada and effectively banning individuals from immigrating from 1923 to 1947 by the Chinese Immigration Act. The House recognises that the Chinese community and many separated families suffered inequality and discrimination during this period. The House further recognises the social and economic contributions of Chinese immigrants to the Province. The House supports further inclusion in the learning objectives of our school curriculum of the history of Chinese Canadians and other ethnic minorities who contributed in building our province. The House supports the creation of a Community Roundtable with the aim to establish a Multicultural Foundation with the mandate to document the significant contributions made by all ethnic communities, protect and preserve heritage artifacts and to give advice on how Government can develop and implement policies and programs that embrace and enhance multiculturalism. The House further supports the reconciliation with descendants of the Head Tax payers as our province should not be seen as benefited from racial discriminations. The above will reflect the values and beliefs that all British Columbians, regardless of origin, should be treated equally and with respect."

Mr. Lee hopes the wording of this draft motion would generate more comments as we work towards a formal apology supported by all parties in the Legislature.



**Community  
Members  
(continued)**