

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

I acknowledge and thank the Coast Salish First Nations, the Honourable Minister Teresa Wat, Respected Elders, dignitaries, families and friends.

My name is Lily Lee and I am a proud fourth generation Canadian, born and raised in Vancouver. My great-grandfather Woo Mow Gun and grandfather Woo Chow Sha were head tax payers.

I don't know much about my great-grandfather other than when he was 22 years old he left Sun Woy, China for Canada in 1894 for a better life for his family. He died in 1922 in Vancouver and is buried at the Mountain View Cemetery.

My grandfather Woo Chow Sha arrived in Canada in 1913 to join his father, but also left behind a young wife and a daughter. He worked hard in the pulp and paper mills in Port Alice on the northern tip of Vancouver Island. When he was older, he returned to the Lower Mainland, working in the lettuce fields of Cloverdale. When he was not working, he lived in the lonely bachelor society of Vancouver's Chinatown which was created by the repulsive Chinese Exclusion Act. My grandfather passed away in 1966. He had worked and lived all 53 years of his life in British Columbia. He returned home to China to visit his wife and family only 3 times, each time expanding his family. Can anyone in the audience imagine only returning to your home country to visit your family 3 times in over 50 years? It was not a choice he willingly made.

My mother Woo Chai Ying who was born from my grandfather's final visit to China was finally reunited with her father in 1964. They were strangers when they first met because they were cruelly

separated by a law designed to keep the Chinese out of Canada. Sadly they had spent less than 2 years together before he passed away.

It is admirable for the BC government to finally address and to apology for historical wrongs against Chinese British Columbians. I commend you all for taking the time and making the effort.

I also want to applaud the tireless effort of the Head Tax Families Society of Canada who I believe is the only Chinese-Canadian community organization that is speaking on my family and my behalf. They have the courage to ask for financial considerations in order for an apology to mean something. Otherwise, it is an empty apology.

My family did suffer, and no amount of money can change the past. A symbolic and meaningful return of the 9 million dollars collected by the federal government and transferred to the provincial government would allow my family and families like mine to move forward knowing this government believe in an inclusive just and honourable redress.

Let the families of the head tax payers determine what legacy initiatives should be. Education was something the federal government had addressed in the 2006 redress. Let's start with educating our own family at the dinner table and start talking about our own personal family history. Ask "How did our family come to Canada?"

Apologizing and refunding an unfair tax may not appear to be a popular thing to do, but it is the right thing to do.

Thank you.

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How Chow Ah

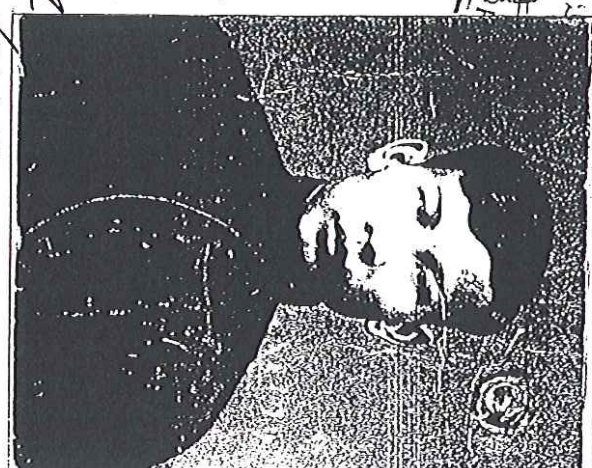
*whose photograph is attached
herein on the date and at the place hereunder mentioned; the same
of three hundred dollars being the specified sum under the
provisions of the Chinese Immigration Act.
The above mentioned party who claims to be
a native of*

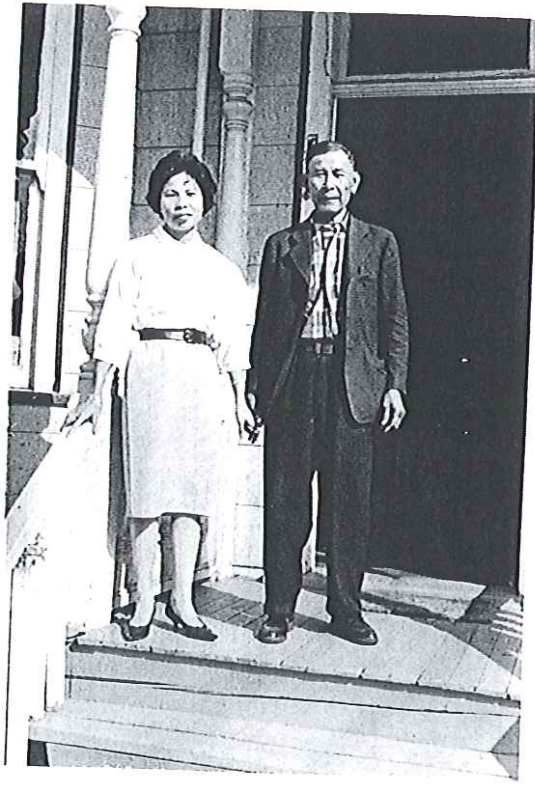


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J. J. Smith

CONTROLLER OF CHINESE IMMIGRATION





- first time meeting between
father and daughter. (Sept. 1964)



- a family portrait. The baby was me.
My grandfather passed away less than a year later.
(Sept. 1965)