

Dear Ms. Wat, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for holding this Consultation Forum to discuss a resolution and to make amends to the people who were directly and indirectly affected by the systematic racism perpetuated against the Chinese by all levels of government in Canada.

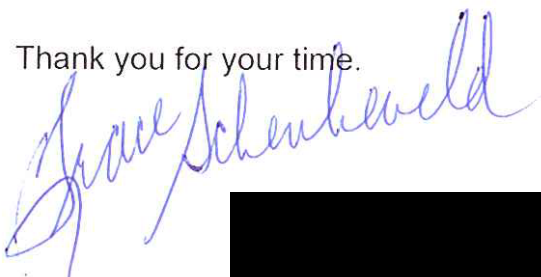
My name is Grace Wong-Schenkeveld and I am a teacher with a Master's degree in Education. My family has had a long history in Canada, starting with my great grandfather who came to build the railway, followed by my grandfather Wong Sair Hoy who came in 1919 and paid a \$500 Head Tax. Even though my family's history span over 125 years in Canada, it is ironic and unfortunate to say that I am also an immigrant, a fourth generation immigrant, arriving in 1971 as a 5 year old child. When we arrived in Vancouver, my grandfather was over 70 years old. My childhood mirrored most first generation immigrants, with my parents struggling, first with a language barrier and then working long hours in jobs they were over qualify to do. One of my most prominent memories of my childhood was remembering the many old Chinese bachelors who sat in front of the Bank of Montreal in Chinatown. They would recognize the newcomers and was especially joyous when they saw children. They would congratulate my grandfather for bringing over his family because most knew they wouldn't and would die alone in Canada.

Through this consultative process I hope Ms. Wat you have come to the conclusion that the legacy of past racist legislation has present day consequences and affects not one person, but generations.

In 2006, Stephen Harper's government in their pursuit for the ethnic vote lied and manipulated the Chinese community claiming it was through consultation that the issue of the Head Tax was resolved. Ms. Wat, the Head Tax issue has not been resolved. My family recognizes Mr. Harper's lies because only less than 1% of payees received any ex-gratia payments. We, the families and descendants who were also victims of the Head Tax and other racist legislation including the Exclusion Act, were left disappointed and frustrated and victimized and exploited once again by the Canadian government. I hope this time, the BC government who also profited from the Head Tax will do it right. Harper may have apologized but he has not made any restitution to make the families who were also victims of racism satisfied or whole.

My family and I are quiet hard working Canadians and are not political nor have any affiliated with any Chinese Community Associations. It was only when Harper deceived the Chinese community and cheated the families of Head Tax payers that I felt I needed to work with the Head Tax Families Society of Canada so the opinions of my family can be heard. I believe The Head Tax Society of Canada is the only society that understands the shared history of Head Tax payers and their families and can honestly represent their wishes. As one of its founding directors, I have heard from our members that they would like besides an apology from the BC government is to receive a symbolic return of their Head Tax dollar through a one certificate, one claim. This will give the Head Tax families closure, restitution and recognition of the hardships we all faced as pioneers of this great province.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Grace Schenckfeld". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Grace" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Schenckfeld".