



Chinese Canadian Historic Places

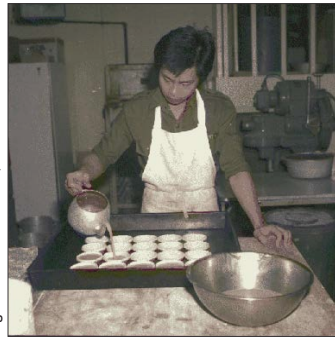
Historical Context

Thematic Framework

Chinatown, Keithley Creek, Cariboo (189)
B.C.Archives I-63360



Top: Chinese Freemasons procession, Kamloops, 1910 B.C.Archives B-03381
Right: Victoria, Chinatown, Dim Sum Restaurant B.C.Archives I-03388



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Chinese Canadian Historic Places **Historical Context Thematic Framework**

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Charlie Chong, a merchant and farmer in the North Okanagan (1930)
(BC Archives B-05526)



Historical contexts:

- *Identify and explain the major themes, factors and processes that have influenced the history of an area*
- *Their objective is to provide a framework to investigate and identify historic places*



Chinese Historic Places
Historical Context Thematic Framework

Introduction

Chinese Canadians have established their lives and homes across all of British Columbia, arriving in traditional First Nations territories at the same time in history as European and other immigrants to this province.¹ Chinese historic places in B.C. reveal that the presence and story of Chinese Canadians here is as old and as widespread as other settler histories, is connected to the British Imperial story, and is intimately linked with the formation of the province.

This document provides an historical context that may be used to guide the evaluation of nominated Chinese historic places. Six major themes are identified, each including a brief context statement and a series of subthemes.

The themes identify the major aspects of the historical Chinese Canadian experience in B.C., and the impact their presence has had on the province: the paths taken to reach B.C., the ways in which the Chinese Canadian community grew throughout the province, the challenges caused by racism directed against people of Chinese descent, and the ways in which the Chinese community contributed to the developing culture of post-contact society in B.C.

¹ Ross, Douglas, Henry Yu, Michael Kennedy, Sarah Ling and Denise Fong. *Fraser Corridor Heritage Landscape Project*. 2014-15.

Theme I Arriving in B.C.

This theme provides context to the arrival of Chinese workers and immigrants to B.C., and outlines the influence of Canadian laws that regulated their eligibility for residence.

Ia Working overseas

- The early Chinese Canadian presence in B.C. is a good example of the practice of labouring overseas to support families in China, with Chinese entrepreneurial activity in B.C. part of a larger overseas mercantile culture around the Pacific.
- Fortune-seeking: overseas work included the mining of gold fields in North America - termed “Gold Mountain,” - and other areas around the Pacific, as well as railway work and other types of entrepreneurial activity across the province.
- In addition to the Chinese, gold seekers of all nationalities, including miners moving north from the California Gold Rush, were arriving to make their claims in B.C.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Dominion Immigration Building, Victoria
- On Lee Property, Yale
- Granite Creek, near Coalmont
- Barkerville
- Lillooet Rock Piles
- Rock Creek and Boundary District
- Gold Rush Landscapes in Nlaka’pamux Territory: Browning’s Flat and Rip Van Winkle Flats, Fraser River corridor
- Brickyard Beach, Gabriola Island
- Nam Sing Ranch, Quesnel
- Ahbau Creek, Ahbau Lake, Ahbau Creek Bridge, north of Quesnel
- Town of Lytton
- Barlow Avenue, Quesnel
- Sing Chong Laundry, Nelson
- Wildhorse Creek, Fisherville, near Cranbrook
- Chinese Businesses, Alert Bay
- Yuen On Lung, Merritt
- Yick Lung, Victoria
- Chinese Market Gardens at Musqueam Reserve #2, Vancouver
- Tong Yen, Victoria

Ib Chinese and imperial British migrations

- Migration to B.C. was generally along British imperial transportation routes. Both Chinese and British migrants arrived at the same time in what would become B.C. in 1788. The Chinese arrived across the Pacific Ocean. Before 1886, the British arrived via the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans; after 1886,

Arrival of Mourners, Funeral at Chinatown, Barkerville (189). B.C. Archives C-09552



Fan Tan Alley, Chinatown, Victoria (1959). B.C. Archives F-30551



most came across the Atlantic and then by train across Canada.

- The earliest migrations and settlements were tied to economic opportunities. People of Chinese descent arrived in B.C. from San Francisco as economic migrants, as well as arriving directly from China to B.C. which, along with California, was known as “Gold Mountain.”
- Although the areas of origin in Guangdong province from which migrants came to Canada were marked by civil war and unrest in the 19th century, there had also been a long history of overseas out migration from the coasts of southern China for centuries. The acquisition by the British Empire of the port of Hong Kong after the Opium War in the 1840s created the main through port for Cantonese migration across the Pacific in the late 19th and early 20th century.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Dominion Immigration Building, Victoria

Ic Canadian regulation of Chinese immigration

- 1885-1923: Chinese Immigration Act (1885) and Head Tax.
 - The Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 was the first piece of Canadian legislation to single out immigrants on the basis of their ethnic origin, imposing a duty of \$50 on every Chinese person seeking entry into Canada. In addition to immigrants directly from China, restrictions were also put on naturalized and Canadian-born Chinese residents.
 - Cantonese speaking migrants to British Columbia came primarily from just eight counties of Guangdong Province in southern China.
 - After a Royal Commission in 1900-1902 to investigate Chinese and Japanese immigration, the duty increased to \$100 per person, followed by an increase to \$500 in 1904, nearly two years’ wages for a labourer at the time. This put a tremendous economic burden on Chinese migrants to repay the loans that paid for their passage, with many unable to pay off their debt.
- 1923-1946: Chinese Immigration Act (also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act) (1923).
 - This legislation virtually restricted all Chinese immigration to Canada by narrowly defining the acceptable categories of Chinese immigrants. While the entrance duty requirement was repealed, admissible Chinese immigrants were limited to diplomats and government representatives, merchants, children born in Canada who had left for educational or other purposes, and students attending university or college. Between 1923 and 1946, it is estimated that only 15 Chinese immigrants gained entry into Canada.²
 - There was a disproportionately large number of males to females in

² Van Dyk, Lindsay. Canadian Immigration Acts and Legislation, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. <http://www.pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-immigration-acts-and-legislation>

the Chinese population of immigrants prior to 1946, in part due to these restrictions on Chinese immigration and early patterns of male-only Chinese migration. Cultural reasons were also a factor in the male to female ratio, including traditional women's roles as homemakers, but they were few as only well-to-do Chinese Canadians, generally merchants, could afford to have wives and families in B.C.

- While there was generally little control or restriction on immigration from most countries to Canada, recruitment tended to focus on European countries, and in particular on the British Isles. Besides the Chinese, restrictions were placed on migration from India through the Continuous Journey provisions of 1908, while the Hayashi-Lemieux Agreement of 1908 restricted Japanese migration.
- 1946 – 1967: Post-war changes.
 - While the norm for the first century of Canadian history, 1867-1967, was the restriction of Asian immigration, their participation as fighting men in the Canadian armed forces resulted in a post-war endeavour to end racism.
 - The Chinese Immigration Act was amended in 1947 to remove its exclusionary provisions and Chinese Canadian men were able to bring wives and families to Canada.
 - Military service by the Chinese helped in their struggle, but the end of exclusion was also inspired by increasing concern for human rights at that time.
- 1967 – present: Growth and recognition of Chinese Canadian community.
 - In 1967, the Federal government amended Canada's immigration system with the Immigration Regulations Order-In-Council PC 1967-1616, which dramatically changed the composition of Canada's Chinese Canadian population.
 - These immigration regulations established new objective standards for evaluating potential immigrants. They included a system in which independent immigrants were assessed points in specific categories relating to their education, occupational skills, employment prospects, age, proficiency in English and French and personal character. Individuals receiving 50 points or more out of a possible 100 were granted entry, regardless of their race, ethnicity or national origin.
 - New ethnic Chinese immigrants came from the West Indies, South Africa, India, Peru, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, as well as Mainland China.
 - Between 1923 and 1967 there was some illegal immigration, but eventually such illegal immigrants were allowed to rectify their "paper son" status and remain in Canada.
 - There was an important period of Hong Kong Chinese immigration in the 1970s to 2000, especially in the years between the Tiananmen

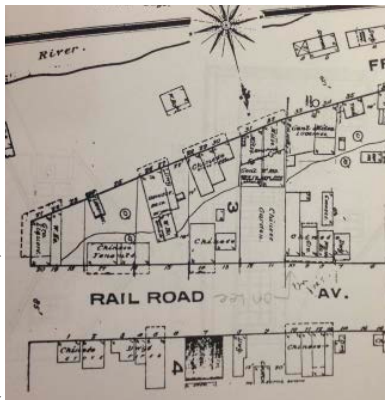
Massacre in Beijing and the reversion of political control of Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997. The social impact and economic influence of these more recent migrations have helped transform Canadian cities, in particular Toronto and Vancouver.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Dominion Immigration Building, Victoria

Id Settlement patterns and land ownership

- Chinatowns.
 - Recognized in English by the name “Chinatowns” and known in Cantonese by the term “Tongyun gai” (Street of the People of the Tang Dynasty), clusters of Chinese businesses and community associations were a feature of almost every large city in B.C. and Canada. Often physically delineated as segregated spaces and targeted with racially discriminatory policies by municipal governments, these Chinatowns became recognized as iconic spaces, often marked by myths about their exotic mystery and stereotypes about hygiene and disease.
 - Merchants catered to the curiosity of non-Chinese by decorating restaurants and businesses in ways that appealed to customers’ desire for the exotic.
 - A fixture in the larger cities and towns in B.C. such as Vancouver, Victoria and New Westminster, these Chinatowns became synonymous with the presence of Chinese in Canada, despite the fact that over time, the majority of Chinese lived outside of these Chinatowns.
 - These Chinatowns were sometimes segregated from the ethnic European (mostly British) settlement, often sharing margins that featured other populations faced with discriminatory practices – for example, First Nations and urban Aboriginal, Japanese Canadian, South Asian Canadian, and African Canadian communities.
- Chinese Canadian residents and businesses were a feature of almost all B.C. cities and small towns. In many towns, communities and settlements, Chinese Canadian residences, businesses and places of work were grouped into enclaves or neighbourhoods; clustered around places of work, such as mills or farms; in other places, Chinese Canadians were spatially dispersed throughout the community.
- Chinese Canadian work settlements and bunkhouses were a common fixture of remote workplaces like canneries, mining camps, and construction sites. Temporary tent communities were a feature of moving camps, for example for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway or for agricultural workers.
- Short term housing and accommodation in Chinatowns were suited to the highly mobile working men who made up most of the Chinese Canadian population during the period of immigration restrictions. They often



Map of Yale's Chinatown
(Historic Yale Museum)

consisted of very modest rooms or shared rooms in tenement housing or bunkhouses where men could live between jobs, or on their way in and out of town.

- Parcels of land in Vancouver had covenants in their land titles barring their sale to people of Asian extraction. Some neighbourhoods such as Shaughnessey allowed Chinese as servants but not as owners of property.
- In many smaller frontier towns, land ownership and tenure by Chinese Canadians was possible, although sometimes in segregated areas on often less favourable land.
- Chinese cemeteries were usually an extension of early settlements. Chinese burials were often not welcomed in other cemeteries or were located in segregated sections. Many early cemeteries show evidence of remains being removed and repatriated to China, a common practice at the time.
- Because of its size, diversity, and entrepreneurial and historical significance, Vancouver's Chinatown is of particular importance in representing the theme of settlement patterns and land ownership.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Vancouver Chinatown
- Chinatown, New Westminster
- Armstrong Chinatown
- Kelowna Chinatown
- Chilliwack Chinatowns / Chilliwack Five Corners
- Chinatown, Nelson
- Chinatown, Barkerville
- Coal Creek Historic Park (Chinatown), Cumberland
- Chinatown, Victoria
- Nanaimo Chinatown
- Wild Horse Creek/Fisherville, near Cranbrook
- C.D. Hoy House, Quesnel
- Fan Tan Alley, Victoria
- Barlow Avenue, Quesnel
- Ladner's Chinatown
- Granite Creek, near Coalmont
- Yale Chinese Cemetery
- Kamloops Chinese Heritage Cemetery
- Kelowna Cemetery
- Quesnel Pioneer Cemetery – Chinese section
- Cumberland Chinese Cemetery
- Old Hillcrest Chinese Cemetery, near Duncan
- Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Harling Point Chinese Cemetery, Victoria
- Garden Memorial to Chinese Pioneers, Nanaimo Chinese Cemetery, Nanaimo

Lillooet Chinatown c. 1900
(B.C. Archives E-06947)



- Ashcroft Chinese Cemetery
- Mt. Ida Cemetery, Salmon Arm
- Stanley Cemetery
- Historic Chinese Cemetery, Lillooet
- New West Historic Chinese Cemetery

Chinese immigration into B.C. can be understood as part of a larger movement of Chinese people out of China to find work and/or a new life. Long before North America's gold rushes in the 1850s, men from China, particularly from Guangdong province, were involved in overseas work. Chinese immigration and settlement in B.C. is just one part of a larger story of the Chinese working diaspora, and is bound up in Chinese-British relations in the 19th Century as well as in Canadian policies that regulated Chinese immigration and settlement. Chinese Canadian participation in the early B.C. economy helped shape Chinese and European settlement patterns in the province.

Theme 2 Establishing Community

This theme describes the cultural and physical ties within the Chinese Canadian community, and the ties without – to the non-Chinese living beside and around them.

2a Chinese communities, a way to create home

- Mining camps and towns were developed with enclaves along ethnic lines including Chinese enclaves (Britannia Beach mine, for example).
- Cemeteries and traditional burial practices were part of early Chinese communities.
- A Chinese Canadian presence contributed to the development and well-being of communities and played a role in local government or community institutions.
- Other cultural features of Chinese Canadian enclaves or communities included:
 - Gambling houses, places of entertainment, legally available opium (later prohibited in 1908)
 - Chinese restaurants, for example, dim sum and North American Chinese cuisine, for example Chinese buffet or smorgasbord
 - Chinese groceries and laundries
 - Joss houses – a Chinese hall or place of ceremony and ritual
 - Freemason organizations and tongs
 - Lion dances and fireworks
 - Ceramics, other non-Western goods and medicines

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- On Lee Property, Yale
- Chinese Benevolent Association Site, New Westminster

Remnants of Chinese Cabin, Wild Horse Creek
(Fort Steele Heritage Town Archives F5 5.0444)



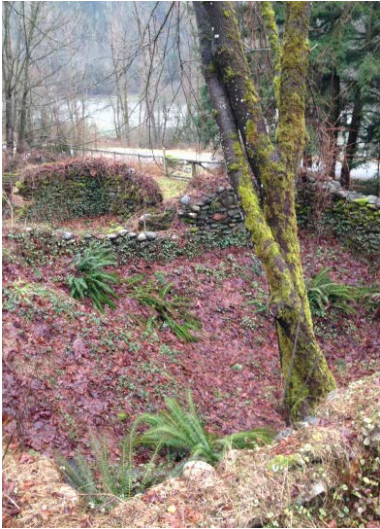
Chinatown, South Wellington, (1913)
B.C. Archives D-03323



Chinese labourers camp, Kamloops (1886)
B.C. Archives B-09760



Chinatown buildings stone foundations, Front Street, Yale (2015)
Authors' photo



- Chinatown, New Westminster
- Armstrong Chinatown
- Kelowna Chinatown
- Vancouver Chinatown
- Chinatown, Nelson
- Chinatown, Barkerville
- Coal Creek Historic Park (Chinatown), Cumberland
- Chinatown, Victoria
- Wild Horse Creek/Fisherville, near Cranbrook
- Chilliwack Chinatowns / Chilliwack Five Corners
- C.D. Hoy House, Quesnel
- Fan Tan Alley, Victoria
- Lytton Joss House
- Chinese Freemason Building, Vancouver
- Chinese Gardens and Chinese Masonic Hall, Rosland
- Gateway Shelter, Vernon
- Lung Kong Kung Shaw and First Chinese Empire Reform Association, Victoria
- Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Harling Point Chinese Cemetery, Victoria
- Tam Kung Temple in the Yen Wo Building, Victoria
- Yuen On Lung, Merritt
- Ladner's Chinatown
- Yick Lung, Victoria

Formal policies and informal social norms largely excluded Chinese Canadian residents from mainstream European society and power until relatively recently. It wasn't until 1967 that the federal government changed Canada's immigration system so Canada's Chinese population was not so negatively affected. For a very long time, societal exclusion as well as attachment to Chinese cultural traditions led Chinese settlers to develop supportive communities-within-communities throughout the province, founded on their distinctive Chinese heritage.

Centres for community activity ranged from the back room in a small-town Chinese grocery store to the imposing purpose-built tongs of the larger cities and towns in the province. Benevolent societies and associations formed an important foundation of early Chinese Canadian society. They provided social welfare to immigrants in need and to the thousands of Chinese labourers who became unemployed after the completion of the railway. They also helped protect Chinese Canadians against racism. Ultimately, these associations became a political force and symbolized the consolidation of Chinese Canadian society.

2b Chinese and First Nations relationships

- Both Chinese and Indigenous people were discriminated against by white colonist society. Shared experiences of discrimination led to a particular

cultural relationship between Chinese and First Nation peoples, which in part allowed Chinese Canadians to survive and succeed.

- First Nations were welcoming to Chinese settlers and workers. There was a different understanding between Chinese people and First Nations than that which existed between whites and First Nations, and was related to the power structure of British colonial society.
- There was Chinese Canadian involvement in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2013 and there continues to be an ongoing awareness and celebration of shared Chinese and Indigenous history in B.C.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- On Lee Property, Yale
- Gold Rush Landscapes in Nlaka'pamux Territory: Browning's Flat and Rip van Winkle Flats, Fraser River corridor
- C.D. Hoy House, Quesnel
- 1926 Alexandra Bridge, Fraser Canyon
- Chinese Market Gardens at Musqueam Reserve #2, Vancouver,

The relationship between Chinese Canadians and First Nations people of British Columbia is an important and often unrecognized component of the province's history. While much Chinese Canadian history in B.C. has focused on the gold rush, the building of the railroad, fishing, agriculture, and the development of Chinatowns in Victoria and Vancouver, the Chinese community was often in contact with First Nations peoples, sharing an interesting and complex history. These were relationships of reciprocity, respect and utility, with Chinese restaurants, enterprises and gathering places welcoming First Nations in small communities, and with First Nations women often working in Chinese restaurants and shops.

Theme 3 Working in a New World

A central theme in the history of B.C. is the role and contribution of Chinese Canadian labourers, farmers, business owners and entrepreneurs to the development of the province.

3a Fur trading

- There is evidence of Chinese involvement in very early European fur trade economies and settlements.

3b Gold rushes and mining

- Arriving with Captain John Meares in 1788, Chinese carpenters were key to building the fort at Nootka Sound (and the gardens that fed the inhabitants) for the first year-round, non-indigenous settlement in what was to become the province of B.C.
- Chinese migrants were involved in the 1858 Fraser River gold rush, the

Cariboo gold rush and others. The gold rushes provided significant opportunities for Chinese miners and entrepreneurs, through staking their own gold claims, taking over stakes not thoroughly mined by others, and as providers of goods and services for the frontier mining communities. The many gold rushes, all over the province, ushered in the settlement by non-indigenous people including Chinese Canadians and the creation of local cultures that included a Chinese presence.

- While very proficient at the task, Chinese miners did not just re-work non-Chinese diggings. They discovered new fields as well as working established ones, sought gold individually or worked together in collaborative associations.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Granite Creek, near Coalmont
- Quesnelle Forks
- Barkerville
- Rock Creek and Boundary District
- Ahbau Creek, Ahbau Lake, Ahbau Creek Bridge, north of Quesnel
- Town of Lytton
- Quesnel
- Lillooet Rock Piles
- Gold Rush Landscapes in Nlaka'pamux Territory: Browning's Flat and Rip van Winkle Flats, Fraser River corridor
- Coal Creek Historic Park (Chinatown), Cumberland
- Clinton

3c Developing transportation networks

- During the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Chinese workers provided a substantial hardworking labour pool for this large infrastructure project in an unregulated labour environment. The work was difficult and dangerous, with many Chinese labourers killed in construction accidents.
- The supply of labour was efficiently conducted via cargo ships between B.C. and China. The holds were filled with goods on the sailings to China, and labourers on the sailings back. Chinese sailors crewed the ships under the direction of British officers.
- Chinese Canadians were also involved in the construction of other transportation infrastructure such as roads, utilities and canals, and transportation networks including the Cariboo Wagon Road and cross-province trail systems.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Town of Lytton
- Alexandra Bridge, Fraser Canyon
- Craigellachie, location of the Last Spike between Salmon Arm and

Revelstoke

- Abandoned CPR Tunnel, near Hope

3d Fishing and canning

- B.C.'s early commercial fishery was created by Chinese immigrant fishermen in the 19th century and Chinese Canadian contract labour was a key component to the success of the resulting fish canning industry.
- The Smith butchering machine, invented in 1902, was marketed as a replacement for Chinese workers and intentionally used the racist 'Iron Chink' name for the machine.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Arrandale, Mill Bay and Nass Harbour Canneries
- Britannia Heritage Shipyards, Richmond
- Chinese Bunkhouse Building, Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site, Richmond

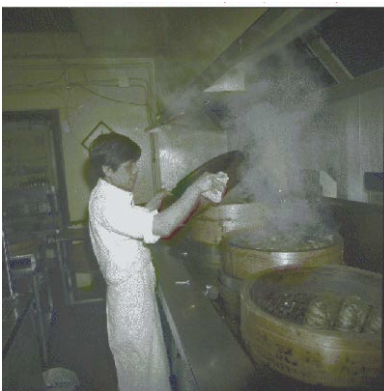
3e Food production, distribution, preparation and sale

- The supply of food – from crop production to sale to cooking – was one of the most important contributions of Chinese Canadians in B.C. from the earliest days. It was an enterprise that simply required know-how without much requirement for access to capital, and had a large and expanding market for products. Chinese Canadian proficiency in market gardening ensured a supply of fresh vegetables for most frontier communities, and Chinese businesses developed food distribution networks and retail outlets for all residents in many small towns.
- The Chinese United Growers Association provided coordination and support for the Chinese Canadian agriculture industry.
- The development of the green grocery store was an important aspect of all B.C. communities, very often owned and operated by Chinese Canadian families and integrated with Chinese Canadian market garden suppliers. Successful grocery supply and delivery businesses often began with a hand-carried delivery service.
- The Chinese cook was a widespread cultural phenomenon in B.C., both in restaurants and domestic homes.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Nam Sing Ranch, Quesnel
- Marco Polo Restaurant, Vancouver
- Tong Yen Grocery, Victoria
- Chinese Market Gardens at Musqueam Reserve #2, Vancouver
- Coal Creek Historic Park (Chinatown), Cumberland
- Rock Creek and Boundary District
- Armstrong Chinatown

Dim Sum Restaurant, Chinatown, Victoria (1981)
B.C. Archives I-03389



3f Other work

- Chinese Canadians were involved in many other types of work across B.C. Some of these sectors included:
 - Site labouring
 - Quarrying and brick making
 - Hotel employees
 - Tailoring
 - Servants in private homes

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Brickyard Beach, Gabriola Island
- Ardmore Golf Course
- Limestone Quarry and Kiln at Texada Island
- Tod Inlet Limestone Quarry and Cement Plant
- Chinese Businesses and Residences, Alert Bay

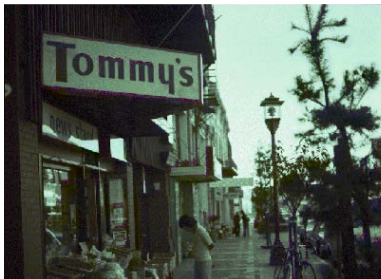
3g Entrepreneurial commercial life

- Despite the difficulties faced by Chinese Canadians in Canada in the early part of the 20th century, many became vendors and business people, establishing family-run laundries, tailor shops, restaurants, and grocery stores, businesses that were passed down through the generations.
- Racist discrimination and laws in B.C. drove Chinese Canadians out of many industries and professions. Small businesses such as laundries, restaurants, and stores served as ways for Chinese Canadians to make a living in society that excluded them from many jobs.
- Laundries were a necessary service with a low-cost start up (although mechanical washing processes later reduced the number of traditional laundries).
- From the start of the 20th century, Chinese Canadians opened cafés or restaurants in cities, towns and villages, often near railway stations, horse stables, or other places of community gathering.
- In some cases food distribution networks and grocery stores became large successful food businesses (for example, the Louie family's IGA). Retail businesses sometimes became successful large regional businesses (for example, London Drugs).
- Gambling houses, places of entertainment, brothels and places with legally available opium were not exclusive to Chinese Canadians but were frequented by a wide range of society.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Block 17 & Allan Yap Circle, Vancouver
- Yuen On Lung, Merritt
- Chinese Businesses and Residences, Alert Bay
- 544 Columbia and 105 Keefer Street, Vancouver

Victoria, Tommy's Store in Chinatown (1981)
B.C. Archives F03387



- Yick Lung, Victoria
- Templeton Building
- Sing Chong Laundry, Nelson

From the first initiatives by non-indigenous people in what was to become B.C., Chinese labour and expertise was key. In keeping with the tradition of men working overseas, Chinese pioneers provided a ready, experienced and economical labour pool for large infrastructure developments across the province. They were actively recruited by the colonial government for projects such as road building and railway construction work.

The early provincial economy was based on the extraction of resources, including fur, minerals, timber, fish and canned fish. Chinese workers with a reputation for being hard-working were from the start a key component of these resource-extraction industries. The major infrastructure projects of the early province were built using Chinese Canadian labour. From this key early labouring role in the development of the B.C. economy, people in the Chinese community went on to overcome professional and economic restrictions in order to fully participate in the provincial economy.

The expansion of the labour movement along the west coast of North America in the late 19th century was predicated upon the use of anti-Chinese rhetoric to organize workers around white supremacy both in California and B.C. Chinese workers were not invited to join unions and were targeted as “unfair competition” who needed to be excluded from industries that became unionized, and for immigration exclusion. The use of anti-Chinese politics to organize B.C. society as a “White Man’s Province” helped build the foundations of political alliances and reserved the privileges and rights of citizenry to white men, excluding non-whites such as Chinese and other Asians as well as First Nations. It was only in the mid-20th century that labour unions began to explicitly organize Chinese Canadian and other Asian Canadian workers as the labour movement began to eschew racism. Recent Chinese contributions to the economy include important advancements in education, real estate and business in the province.

Theme 4 Facing Racism; Establishing Rights

The long struggle to counter racist law and customs in British Columbia is central to understanding the Chinese Canadian experience in the province. This theme explores the challenges for Chinese Canadians, and their efforts and perseverance to achieve full rights and recognition as citizens of B.C. and Canada.

4a Segregation

- Marginal areas of settlements and towns were given over to become Chinatowns, Chinese neighbourhoods or enclaves. Common services such



Chinatown Display, Barkerville (1975)
B.C. Archives 1-03306

Loan Promotion, Fisgard Street, Victoria (1944)
B.C. Archives I-01012



Wild Horse Creek Chinese Cemetery (2015)
Authors' photo



as restaurants outside of Chinatown were often not accepting of non-Caucasian patrons.

- Segregated schooling for Chinese children was a feature of early Chinese Canadian life in B.C.
- Cemeteries - Chinese burials were often not welcomed in other cemeteries (eg. those of European immigrants) or were segregated sections within cemeteries. Sometimes this necessitated the use or purchase of land for Chinese cemeteries.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- D'Arcy Island Chinese Canadian Leprosy Quarantine Station
- Chinese Public School, Victoria
- Lord Strathcona School, Vancouver
- Granite Creek, near Coalmont
- Yale Chinese Cemetery
- Quesnelle Forks
- Kamloops Chinese Heritage Cemetery
- Kelowna Cemetery
- Quesnel Pioneer Cemetery – Chinese section
- Cumberland Chinese Cemetery
- Old Hillcrest Chinese Cemetery, near Duncan
- Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Harling Point Chinese Cemetery, Victoria
- Garden Memorial to Chinese Pioneers, Nanaimo Chinese Cemetery, Nanaimo
- Ashcroft Chinese Cemetery
- Mt. Ida Cemetery, Salmon Arm
- Stanley Cemetery
- Historic Chinese Cemetery at Lillooet
- New West Historic Chinese Cemetery
- Dominion Immigration Building, Victoria

4b Facing economic and social discrimination

- Discriminatory practices meant that there were fewer options for employment for Chinese Canadians. In an era of racial intolerance and fear of competition from Chinese labour for jobs, some politicians and trade union groups pressured the Dominion Government to severely restrict the numbers of incoming citizens of China, Japan and India.
- Unions rejected the possibility of workers uniting regardless of race, instead opting for racially-based policies of exclusion. These policies began to be reversed in the early 1950s, when Chinese cannery workers finally became unionized.
- There were limitations on Chinese Canadians' participation in the military in World War I and World War II. Until October 1942, the Canadian

government did not allow Chinese Canadians to join the Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Navy.

- It was not until in 1944 when the British War Office requested that Ottawa allow for Chinese Canadians to work for its Special Operations Executive in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific that Chinese were allowed to join in the war. At Commando Bay on Okanagan Lake Chinese Canadian men were trained in hand to hand combat to infiltrate Japanese lines in Southeast Asia during WWII.
- Due to recognition of the contribution of Chinese Canadians to Canada during World War II, the Canadian Parliament repealed the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act in 1947.
- After fighting in World War II, Chinese Canadian men were allowed to bring their families to B.C., and pursue their claim for full rights under Canadian law. Military service by Chinese Canadians assisted in this regard, but the end of exclusion was also inspired by increasing concern for human rights at that time.
- During World War II, the International Woodworkers of America hired Roy Mah, a university student at the time, to recruit and organize Chinese Canadian workers. Chinese Canadian cannery workers were organized in 1950.
- The easy ability of dependents of Chinese Canadians to join family members in Canada came only after the liberalization of Canadian immigration policy in 1967. In Vancouver in the 1970s the recognition of Chinese Canadian rights and changes to immigration policy led to the Strathcona neighbourhood, up until then predominantly Italian, Portuguese, Croatian, Ukrainian, Jewish and Russian, being transformed into a largely Chinese Canadian neighbourhood next to Chinatown, suited to newly reunited or newly-formed families.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Commando Bay, Okanagan Lake
- Lord Strathcona School, Vancouver

4c Exclusion from mainstream business, professions, industry

- Professional status was not available to early Chinese Canadian generations in B.C.
- Education in the professions was not easy and/or available for early Chinese Canadian generations in B.C. The main professions to deny membership to Chinese were law, pharmacy, medicine and accounting.
- Vegetable marketing legislation in B.C. was very complicated. Chinese Canadian growers had to register their produce under the British Columbia Marketing Act of 1935. For example, Chinese Canadians were not able to sell produce directly to B.C. Copper in Greenwood, but a way around the regulations was found by an Italian supplier to B.C. Copper. The leading Chinese figure in protesting the legislation was Chung Chuck, a Delta, B.C.

potato grower.

- Chinese Canadians were often given, or kept in, dangerous, low level jobs or tasks in a particular industry, such as railway construction or mining.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Rock Creek and Boundary District
- Tod Inlet Limestone Quarry and Cement Plant, Saanich
- Ardmore Golf Course, North Saanich
- Abandoned CPR Tunnel, near Hope
- Chinese Public School, Victoria
- Lord Strathcona School, Vancouver

4d Initiating economic opportunities

- Faced with systematic discrimination in Canada, early Chinese Canadian immigrants had little choice but to create their own economic opportunities.
- Often, working choices and businesses were those that required relatively little capital outlay, and for which there was a dependable market. Other businesses were started through loans from relatives, developing into a sophisticated shareholding system that could assemble large amounts of capital from family and clan members from across diverse locations and long distances. Financing practices among ethnic Chinese around the Pacific were sophisticated, with the ability to facilitate small business development, leading to dominance within small and medium business networks in the Pacific region during the 19th and early 20th centuries
- There are contemporary contributions to the provincial economy including technological advances made by Chinese Canadian scientists and engineers.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Yuen On Lung, Merritt
- Yick Lung, Victoria
- Chinese Market Gardens at Musqueam Reserve #2, Vancouver
- Sing Chong Laundry, Nelson
- Tong Yen, Victoria

4e Disappearance of Chinese Canadian places and history

- Many of the early settlements in the province, associated with gold rushes and short-lived industries, are now ghost towns or completely gone. Along with them a great deal of early Chinese Canadian presence in B.C. has disappeared. Areas of towns or cities not considered important to those with political power or cultural dominance tended to suffer from neglect, and for this reason many sites related to B.C.'s Chinese history, once vital contributors to civic life and economy, were left to disappear.

The pattern of disappearance was halted in the Strathcona neighbourhood of Vancouver. Chinese Canadian (and other) residents of Strathcona banded together to fight the City's plan to raze the neighbourhood and to build a



freeway into the downtown. By stopping the freeway, their protests helped shape Vancouver's urban history in terms of neighbourhood planning and housing policy.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Chinatown, New Westminster
- Chinese Cemetery, New Westminster
- Lytton Joss House
- Granite Creek, near Coalmont
- Coal Creek Historic Park (Chinatown), Cumberland
- Garden Memorial to Chinese Pioneers, Nanaimo Chinese Cemetery, Nanaimo

4f Finding a political voice

- Chinese Canadians in B.C. are now engaged in politics and government at all levels, with involvement at neighbourhood, community, city and provincial levels.
- The father of modern China, the revolutionary Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, came from the same area of Guangdong province as migrants to Canada, and his own family had many relatives overseas. The anti-Qing revolutionary movement and Chinese nationalism had its origins among Chinese migrants overseas, and was organized and strongly supported financially in cities and towns across Canada, the United States, and wherever around the globe Chinese migrants went.
- Chinese Canadians are fully involved in the political life of the province, at the provincial level, and in communities, neighbourhoods and city councils.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Dr Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden and Park, Vancouver
- Landing Site of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Kelowna
- Kelowna Chinatown (association with premier W.A.C. Bennett)

Even after the obstacles to entry into B.C. were overcome, such as paying or avoiding the head tax and other entry restrictions, full participation in the life of the province was restricted for Chinese Canadian immigrants.

Racism and discrimination was demonstrated in ways such as the segregation of Chinese Canadians in settlements and towns, in the partitioning of cemeteries, and in restrictions in social establishments such as schools and restaurants. It was also manifest in Chinese Canadian exclusion from mainstream business, professions and industry, often from the unsubstantiated fear of competition from cheap Chinese labour, and through barring their participation in educational institutions. Early Chinese Canadian immigrants became entrepreneurs, creating their own economic opportunities.

Discrimination extended to the participation of Chinese Canadians in the

military in both World Wars, but military service achieved by Chinese Canadians in World II assisted in their claim for full rights under Canadian law and the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1947. While Chinese Canadian cultural institutions have often been appreciated by B.C.'s citizens, their history and associated historical places have suffered from neglect and erasure due to the domination of the white pioneer story.

Chinese Canadian confrontation of racism and work to gain full rights as equal citizens has resulted in engagement in politics and government at all levels and a move towards cultural diversity in B.C. society. Increasingly additional aspects of Chinese Canadian culture are being embraced, gradually resulting in a move towards cultural diversity in B.C. society.

Theme 5 Developing and Expressing Cultural Life

From New Years celebrations, festivals and food to music, ideas and the visual arts, the integration of Chinese arts and culture is valued for the richness it brings to B.C. society.

5a Embracing Chinese Canadian culture

- There has in the last few generations been a move towards cultural diversity in B.C. society.
- Many Chinese Canadian institutions have long been appreciated by all British Columbians, such as Chinese foods and restaurants, and specialty importers of Chinese and other international goods.
- Chinese Canadian establishments have long held a certain appeal for non-Chinese in Canada, including Chinese restaurants, Chinatown parades with fireworks, and what was often categorized as being exotic aspects of Chinese culture.
- Dragon Boat racing is a recent example of British Columbians of many backgrounds embracing and transforming a popular activity associated with ethnic Chinese in many other parts of the world.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Marco Polo Restaurant, Vancouver

5b Religious and spiritual life

- Joss houses were Chinese places of ceremony, ritual or worship of Shenism, a Chinese folk religion with reverence for ancestors and Chinese gods. Joss houses were known to have been located in Victoria, Yale and Lytton.
- Cemeteries and burial sites around the province represent Chinese Canadian religious and spiritual life. The practice of returning the bones of the dead to rest in the soil of their ancestors was practiced in many cemeteries (for example, the Chinese burial ground at Wild Horse Creek).

Interior of Joss House, Chinatown, Victoria (189-)
B.C. Archives I-01128



The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Lytton Joss House
- Tam Kung Temple in the Yen Wo Building, Victoria
- Granite Creek, near Coalmont
- Yale Chinese Cemetery
- Quesnelle Forks
- Kamloops Chinese Heritage Cemetery
- Kelowna Cemetery
- Quesnel Pioneer Cemetery – Chinese section
- Cumberland Chinese Cemetery
- Old Hillcrest Chinese Cemetery, near Duncan
- Town of Lytton
- Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Harling Point Chinese Cemetery, Victoria
- Garden Memorial to Chinese Pioneers, Nanaimo Chinese Cemetery, Nanaimo
- Ashcroft Chinese Cemetery
- Mt. Ida Cemetery, Salmon Arm
- Stanley Cemetery
- Historic Chinese Cemetery at Lillooet
- New West Historic Chinese Cemetery

5c Media

- Chinese language newspapers helped share news from the Chinese perspective. Historically, the Chinese Times was an important Chinese language newspaper publication of the Chinese Freemasons in Vancouver in the early 20th century, and the English language Chinatown News reported on Chinese Canadian news in the latter half of the 20th century.
- Since the 1990s, Vancouver has had major daily Chinese language newspapers such as Ming Pao, Sing Tao and World Journal.
- Chinese language television stations such as Fairchild TV and radio and Omni TV are other contemporary examples of Chinese language mass media.

5d Chinese arts and sciences

- Chinese opera houses are important cultural sites and Chinese opera costume is part of the collection at the Museum of Anthropology.
- Chinese cultural programs take place in civic community centres.
- Feng shui principles are often incorporated into contemporary design.
- Cedar and Bamboo was a significant documentary about Chinese Canadian and First Nations relationships prepared in 2009.
- Traditional and contemporary medicine, herbalism and health practices are an important part of Chinese culture (though some aspects may not be palatable in contemporary society – for example, the use of endangered species).



Victoria Chinatown. Store with Vases (1981)
B.C. Archives I-03403

5e Civic culture

- New Year parades take place in Vancouver's Chinatown and other communities.
- Cafes, restaurants and tea shops exist in BC communities.
- Traditional and contemporary arts are part of civic culture.
- Schooling and educational facilities reflect Chinese culture.
- Chinese heritage places, cultural artifacts and museum collections are found everywhere in the province.

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Chinese Public School, Victoria
- Marco Polo Restaurant, Vancouver
- Chinese Benevolent Association Site, New Westminster
- Chinatown, New Westminster
- Armstrong Chinatown
- Kelowna Chinatown
- Vancouver Chinatown
- Chinatown, Nelson
- Chinatown, Barkerville
- Coal Creek Historic Park (Chinatown), Cumberland
- Chinatown, Victoria
- Chilliwack Chinatowns / Chilliwack Five Corners
- Fan Tan Alley, Victoria
- Chinese Freemason Building, Vancouver
- Chinese Gardens & Chinese Masonic Hall, Rossland
- Lung Kong Kung Shaw and First Chinese Empire Reform Association, Victoria
- Tam Kung Temple in the Yen Wo Building, Victoria
- Yuen On Lung, Merritt
- Ladner's Chinatown
- Yick Lung, Victoria

Generally excluded from early mainstream cultural life in B.C., and wanting to maintain their own cultural roots, Chinese immigrants developed a parallel cultural life in their settlements. This cultural life was organized around musical societies, tongs, benevolent associations, Chinese language schools and associations, Freemason groups, sporting, kung-fu and lion dancing clubs, and other community groups intent on providing support and cultural richness to the Chinese community. Local Chinese newspapers in larger communities promoted awareness of Chinese affairs in the province and beyond.

Where a settlement was too small to support any purpose built cultural facility, these cultural activities would often occur in the back or above the Chinese groceries or restaurants in town.



Chinese culture sometimes went mainstream when it was accessible to those without the language. Restaurant life is the best example of this sharing of Chinese culture with general B.C. society, but also includes events such as New Year's parades and displays of Chinese crafts such as ceramics and calligraphy.

Theme 6 Honouring Achievements

Telling the stories of individuals and families, and the contribution of people to the Chinese community and particularly the province as a whole, is an important aspect of the history of the Chinese in British Columbia.

6a Honouring individuals

- Many individuals are important in Chinese Canadian history and culture in B.C.:
 - Facilitators of early labour contracts
 - Pioneering politicians
 - Pioneering officials
 - Pioneering labour spokesmen
 - Official or unofficial mayors of Chinatowns
 - Eminent teachers, writers, and historians
 - Prominent businessmen
 - Prominent citizens promoting inter-racial understanding

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Landing Site of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Kelowna

6b Honouring organizations

- Organizations of particular importance to Chinese Canadians include:
 - Activities of, and associations with, identifiable individuals, families and communal groups
 - Scientific and technical organizations
 - Benevolent Associations
 - Cemeteries

6c Celebrating places

- Significant places include sites such as:
 - Sites of remembrance
 - Memorial gardens
 - Cultural spaces of renown
 - Architecturally distinct Chinese buildings and sites

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Garden Memorial to Chinese Pioneers, Nanaimo Chinese Cemetery, Nanaimo
- Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden and Park

6d Commemorating events

- Some important events include:
 - Arrival of the Chinese in British Columbia through all time periods
 - Anti-Chinese riot in Vancouver in 1885
 - Anti-Asian riot in Vancouver Chinatown and Powell Street (Japantown) in 1907
 - Lion Dance processions

The values of this theme are evident in sites such as:

- Garden Memorial to Chinese Pioneers, Nanaimo Chinese Cemetery, Nanaimo
- Landing Site of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Kelowna

Honouring those that have come before, and commemorating places of symbolic importance and great events is an important aspect of Chinese experience in B.C. Not only those that achieved great things in the province have importance, but also the many early pioneers who lived as fully as was possible under exclusionary policies.



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