Chinese Historical Wrongs Consultation Final Report and Recommendations

Honourable Teresa Wat
Minister of International Trade
Minister Responsible for the Asia Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism
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I am honoured to submit the Chinese Historical Wrongs Consultation Final Report and Recommendations for consideration by the legislative assembly of British Columbia. This report summarizes the tremendous public response and submissions we received during the consultation process for a formal apology to the Chinese Canadians of British Columbia for historical wrongs.

In 2013, our government committed to working with the people of British Columbia to determine the appropriate wording, delivery, and legacy efforts for a formal apology to the Chinese community in B.C. for historical wrongs of past provincial governments.

We held seven forums across the province, attracting large numbers of British Columbians, and we received many more written submissions. We reached out to members of the opposition, and to community leaders and organizations, inviting them to participate. We heard powerful stories from those who had been directly affected and impacted, and used their input to guide our efforts.

After an intensive consultation process, we determined appropriate wording for the formal apology and ongoing legacy initiatives. This will include updating education curriculum to better reflect our rich multicultural heritage, and to acknowledge the contributions Chinese British Columbians have made to our cultural, economic, and social fabric.

Reaching out and confronting a painful time in our collective history is an opportunity to contribute to the healing process, and to educate ourselves and all British Columbians about a time we cannot and should not forget. It’s also a chance for forgiveness, with Chinese Canadians displaying the remarkable resilience and spirit that have made the Chinese community a pillar of our province.

Today, our diverse, multicultural society makes B.C. the envy of the world – and gives us a significant advantage in the global economy. Since 2002, the provincial government has invested $9.1 million to fund programs and initiatives promoting multiculturalism, addressing racism, and building inclusive, vibrant communities.

The roots of multiculturalism run deep in British Columbia. We need to ensure it continues to flourish.

Christy Clark
Honourable Christy Clark
Premier
Message from Minister Teresa Wat

I am honoured to submit the Chinese Historical Wrongs Consultation Final Report for consideration by the Government of British Columbia. This report summarizes the tremendous public response and submissions we received during the consultation process for a formal apology to Chinese-Canadians for historical wrongs.

Our government launched an intensive three-month consultation process between November 2013 and January 2014. Approximately 1,300 people attended the seven community consultation forums held across British Columbia and over 150 participants provided oral submissions. We received numerous emails and more than 100 written submissions from organizations and individuals.

My family chose to emigrate to Canada 25 years ago because Canada is known in Asia as a multicultural country that respects people of different cultures and ethnicities. That is why I was shocked to learn about the historical wrongs imposed on the Chinese Canadian community in British Columbia after I arrived in Vancouver. Unlike our two legislative colleagues, Richard Lee and Doug Bing, whose ancestors were victims of the discriminatory legislation, my family did not experience those dark days in British Columbia’s history. However, as a person of Chinese descent, I felt great empathy for those who shared their stories.

The consultation forums were enlightening, and gave us insight into the deep and lasting sorrow caused by the wrongful provincial government policies, regulations and legislation of the past. They brought into focus the need for a formal apology for historical wrongs and legacy initiatives to give British Columbians a better understanding of the contributions of the Chinese-Canadian community in the development of the province.

We also held discussions with Opposition members who attended many of the forums and participated in our non-partisan working group. We are grateful for the Opposition’s contributions and for sharing the results of their own consultation session with students, scholars and cultural leaders.

This report summarizes many hours of discussion and the input from 100-plus written submissions. We have tried to highlight issues on which there is consensus of opinion, as well as those where viewpoints vary, in recognition that the Chinese-Canadian community is diverse, and perspectives may differ.

All of us involved in organizing the consultations would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated for their considered and useful contributions. In the words of one forum participant, our efforts will not only “heal the past but generate new thinking about how to ensure we have a vibrant, inclusive community and continue to make a real difference in the lives of many thousands of Chinese British Columbians.”

Teresa Wat
Honourable Teresa Wat
Minister of International Trade
Minister Responsible for the Asia Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism
Executive Summary

In late 2013, the Ministry of International Trade and Ministry Responsible for the Asia Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism began a consultation process leading to a formal apology to Chinese Canadians for historical wrongs. Participants in the consultations were asked to consider what the apology should say and how it should be delivered. They were also invited to suggest legacy initiatives to help British Columbians understand the impact of these historical wrongs and the achievements of Chinese Canadians. Based on the information gathered, the historical context has been summarized and a series of recommendations have been prepared. These are broadly outlined below and described in more detail in the report.

Historical Context

Chinese workers first arrived in Nuu-chah-nulth territory in 1788 to build a year-round, non-indigenous fur-trading fort. As British colonial outposts continued to be built, and long before British Columbia became part of Canada, Chinese workers were common in fur trade settlements.

After gold was discovered in the Fraser Valley in 1857, Chinese migrants from San Francisco were among the tens of thousands of workers who came from all over the world to join the gold rush. These first Chinese workers were soon joined by others who came directly from China. After the prosperous gold rush period ended in the 1860s, Chinese workers continued to migrate to British Columbia, creating early industries and service businesses.

After British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871, anti-Chinese rhetoric and political coalitions grew. In 1871, the new B.C. legislature passed an act to deny the vote to Chinese, “Native Indians” and other non-whites. Thus began a long history of anti-Chinese racism that included legal, professional, labour and social discrimination and impediments to education, land ownership, and business operations. Discrimination was systemic, extending throughout economic, social and political life.

While arguably the strongest forms of this discrimination were federal laws (the head tax and exclusion laws), these were adopted in large part because of pressure from the B.C. government, which implemented its own discriminatory laws and practices. The government of British Columbia now strives to fight racism and these laws and practices have long been repealed or made illegal by human rights legislation. However, these past historical wrongs continue to cause anger and disappointment among Chinese Canadians.

In May 2014, the legislative assembly and the Province of British Columbia apologized to Chinese Canadians for past historical wrongs.
Report Recommendations

The following recommendations regarding the apology and related legacy initiatives were developed from the consultations and reflect broad participant consensus.

**Principles** – To be acceptable, the apology and legacy initiatives must reflect the principles of respect, sincerity and commitment to reconciliation.

**Apology wording and delivery** – Apology wording must address the wrongs endured by Chinese Canadians historically and reflect the government’s commitment to ensure that discrimination will never be repeated. The formal apology should be brought forward and supported by all members of the legislative assembly, and introduced by the Premier.

**Update of British Columbia’s education curriculum to include historical wrongs** – The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of International Trade have already committed to adding age-appropriate resources for the K-12 curriculum as part of an ongoing process. This commitment was made ahead of the announcement of this report’s recommendations based on the overwhelming consensus at every consultation forum and meeting. The government is advised to ensure that teachers have appropriate, easy-to-use resources and lesson plans to teach children new perspectives of B.C.’s history and are supported in their use of these materials.

**Public education and general awareness** – It is recommended that the Government prepare public education initiatives illustrating the contribution of Chinese British Columbians to B.C. society. This could include an exhibit on the B.C. Gold Rush, the railway or Clan Associations. It is also recommended that the Province publish a full-colour book similar to BC People: Portraits of Diversity in BC to celebrate Chinese Canadians in British Columbia. This book could be available to cultural centres, libraries and schools. Consultation submissions will also be made available to the public in an easy and accessible online format.

**Review legislation** – It is recommended that the government undertake a review of discriminatory legislation identified in the consultation to ensure it has been repealed and to review legislative procedures to demonstrate that British Columbia does not have, nor will it ever produce, racist legislation again.

**Historical sites, artifacts and commemorations** – It is recommended that historical sites be inventoried to identify important locations and artifacts and that a related plan be developed to help the community honour this cultural history in perpetuity. One project recommended is the recognition of the role of clan and society associations that were founded in communities across British Columbia. Other recommended projects include the creation of commemorative plaques or monuments at one or several locations. A design competition for a monument in Victoria at the Legislature is of special interest. These plaques or monuments will help honour the positive contributions of Chinese Canadians to B.C.’s history, culture and prosperity.

**Funding for Legacy Initiatives** – It is recommended that legacy funding of $1 million be provided to implement the recommendations. A key message voiced by many forum speakers and participants was that “words are not enough.” Participants were united in their desire to see
some financial support from government for legacy initiatives that celebrate the contributions of both Chinese Canadians and others who suffered discrimination.

**Integrating legacy initiatives** – It is recommended that the Ministry responsible for multiculturalism coordinate legacy initiatives and other web-based information related to the historical wrongs. The consultation identified a vast array of historical and contemporary information about the historical wrongs and the contribution of Chinese Canadians to B.C. The comprehensiveness of these resources is impressive, yet they are dispersed and at times difficult to find because there is no coordinated effort to consolidate them. This is seen as an appropriate initiative that government can undertake.

**No individual compensation for head tax redress** – It is recommended that there be no individual financial compensation for head tax descendants. The consensus of consultation participants was that financial resources should benefit the entire community, not individuals. Many stated that the federal government had addressed the redress issue in 2006 with its one-time payment to surviving head tax payers.

Note: Consultation materials, forum speaker summaries and written submissions, as well as discriminatory historical legislation and chronologies can be found in the *Apology for Historical Wrongs* section of the EmbraceBC website.
1 Introduction

British Columbia continues moving forward as a welcoming and inclusive society. The purpose of this report is to summarize the results and suggestions received through the consultation process to recommend a formal apology and legacy initiatives from the British Columbia Legislature for discrimination against Chinese Canadians by past provincial governments.

These laws and policies denied Chinese British Columbians basic human rights, including the right to vote, hold public office, or own property; imposed labour and employment restrictions; and prevented them from being full and equal participants in society. British Columbians were discriminated against simply because they were of Chinese descent. These racist practices are an historical fact. It is also a fact that today British Columbia strives to welcome and accept people of all cultures and to fight racism and intolerance.

Cultural diversity and increased participation and engagement by all cultures are vitally important to creating a strong and vibrant social and economic future for British Columbia. Chinese Canadians have made substantial contributions to the culture, history and economic prosperity of our province. Despite being subjected to discrimination, they persevered with grace and dignity.

The report makes the recommendation that the formal apology to Chinese Canadians be delivered by the Premier in the Legislature, supported by all Members of the legislative assembly, to demonstrate respect, sincerity and commitment to the apology and reconciliation.

The blending of cultures and traditions has made British Columbia what it is today – an inclusive society that is seen as modern, tolerant and multicultural.

2 Historical Context

First Arrivals

In 1788, while Captain James Cook and Captain George Vancouver led expeditions to survey, and claim, the coastline of modern-day British Columbia for the British crown, Chinese workers landed in Nuu-chah-nulth territory. They were part of Captain John Meares’ expedition to build the first year-round, non-indigenous settlement. Helping erect a fur trading fort in what the British named “Nootka Sound,” these first Chinese migrants arrived alongside the first British inhabitants in the traditional territories of the First Nations of British Columbia. As British colonial outposts continued to be built in the following decades, long before British Columbia was a part of Canada, Chinese workers were common in fur trade settlements.

Gold Mountain

When gold was discovered in the lower Fraser Valley in 1857, and in the years that followed, tens of thousands of miners from around the world joined the gold rush. Along with these miners came a large group of Chinese from San Francisco who arrived in Victoria by boat in June 1858.
Soon after, more Chinese came from California and directly from China, seeking riches both from digging gold and creating businesses that provided services to other miners.

Even when the prosperous period of the gold rush ended in the 1860s and British Columbia faced adverse economic conditions, Chinese continued to migrate to what they called “Gum San” – Gold Mountain – a name they used for California, British Columbia and the Australian colonies. Although the discovery of gold in these places sparked global gold rushes, the name “Gold Mountain” lasted long after the gold was gone, signifying for the Chinese the dream of wealth and a better life. The mostly male Chinese migrants often worked alongside and sometimes married into First Nations communities up the Fraser River and throughout British Columbia. They sought a better livelihood by building early industries such as market farming, logging, fishing and mining, and providing services through businesses such as general stores, cafés and laundries.

The Rise of Anti-Chinese Politics

When British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871, the creation of the first provincial legislature coincided with the growth of anti-Chinese political movements in places such as California and the Australian colonies. The use of anti-Chinese political rhetoric in the new province of British Columbia helped build early political coalitions around a racist ideology. A crucial political strategy was to deprive non-whites of the vote, and Chinese in British Columbia lost the vote in 1871 as the new legislature passed an act to disenfranchise “Native Indians,” Chinese and other non-whites.

Cities and municipalities in British Columbia adopted the same strategies, and Chinese Canadians, now unable to vote in elections, became the scapegoats and targets for political movements that used anti-Chinese discrimination and legislated racism to rally voters. From the 1870s onward, racial discrimination against Chinese Canadians became a mainstay of British Columbia politics, culture and society. In Nanaimo and Kamloops, for example, civic governments segregated Chinese Canadians, attempting to confine them to the outskirts of town.

As geographer David Chuenyan Lai writes, “Even after death, the Chinese were segregated from Westerners. Ross Bay Cemetery in Victoria, for example, was divided into 21 blocks of which Block L was set apart for the burials of ‘Aborigines and Mongolians.’ The Burial Records reveal that the first Chinese person interred there on 18 March 1873 was listed as ‘Chinaman No.1’ and subsequent Chinese burial plots designated as ‘Chinaman No.2,’ ‘Chinaman No.3’ and so on.”

The Building of the Railway

Before 1885, when the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) made movement across the country cheap and convenient, British Columbia was difficult to access from other parts of Canada. It was easier, cheaper and faster to get to British Columbia from Hong Kong than from Halifax. Creating a better transportation system was essential to connect the new Confederation. With the beginning of the construction of the CPR in the 1880s, Chinese workers were crucial for building the difficult western sections of the railway. Chinese railway workers
were brought by ship from both California and China to start building the CPR from the west coast at the same time that European labourers began building the eastern section from the east coast. Over the course of construction and by the end of 1882, of the 9,000 railway workers, 6,500 were Chinese Canadians. They were employed to build the B.C. segment of the railway through the most challenging and dangerous terrain.

Chinese workers were paid $1.00 a day, and from this $1.00, they had to pay for their food and gear. White workers were paid $1.50 to $2.50 per day and did not have to pay for provisions. As well as being paid less, Chinese workers were given the most dangerous tasks, such as handling the explosive nitroglycerin used to break up solid rock. Due to the harsh conditions they faced, hundreds of Chinese Canadians working on the railway died from accidents, winter cold, illness and malnutrition.

Although Chinese Canadian workers faced and overcame great obstacles to help build the CPR, they were left out of the national celebration surrounding its completion. In the iconic historic photograph of CPR Director Donald Alexander Smith driving the ceremonial “last spike,” when the western and eastern sections of the CPR finally met in Craigellachie, British Columbia, all of the Chinese Canadian workers were cleared from view. Several forum participants pointed out the lingering injustice captured in that image: there is not a single Chinese Canadian worker in the photograph, even though Chinese Canadian labourers suffered, toiled and died building the railway that has come to symbolize the unity of Canada from coast to coast.
The Head Tax

Almost immediately upon completion of the CPR, pressure from the B.C. provincial legislature to pass exclusionary legislation against the Chinese led to the enactment by the federal government of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885. This legislation imposed a $50 fee, called the “head tax,” on each Chinese person entering Canada. Only six classes of people were exempt: diplomats, clergymen, merchants, students, tourists and men of science. Modelled on the 1881 poll tax passed in New Zealand, the intention of the head tax was to discourage Chinese labourers from coming to Canada. In 1901, the tax was increased to $100 and in 1903 it was increased again, to $500 – the equivalent of two years wages for a labourer. Despite the heavy tax, Chinese migrants continued to come, as they could earn 10 to 20 times more in Canada. Many Chinese Canadians borrowed money to pay the tax. Then they laboured for years to pay off their debts.

No other ethnic group in British Columbian history has suffered such formally sanctioned mistreatment of its members on entering Canada over such an extended period. During the period of the head tax between 1885 and 1923, over 97,000 Chinese immigrants still came to Canada seeking a better life, with many helping to build B.C. and Canadian society. They lived and worked in every town and city across British Columbia. In many small towns, Chinese Canadian cafés served as community gathering places. Chinese Canadian farmers grew fresh produce and Chinese Canadian grocers supplied local neighbourhoods. The B.C. government received approximately 40 per cent of the $23 million total (nominal value) tax revenue collected through the head tax.

Racism and Discrimination in Social Life

Chinese Canadians were segregated socially, economically and politically. For example, consultation forum participants described how Chinese Canadians were not permitted to swim in Victoria’s Crystal Pool. By 1923, acts were passed in British Columbia forbidding Chinese Canadian merchants from employing white women. Eventually, this discriminatory regulation was replaced by an act requiring Chinese Canadian merchants to apply for a special permit – rarely granted – to employ white women. Beginning in the 1930s, Chinese restaurants in Vancouver were banned from hiring white waitresses, and movie theatres routinely segregated Chinese Canadians, requiring them to sit in the balcony.

Chinese Canadians experienced discrimination and segregation in education and the professions. In September 1922, the Victoria School Board separated Chinese Canadian students into a segregated school. Professional societies in British Columbia practised anti-Chinese discrimination by excluding anyone whose name was not on the voting lists. Because Chinese Canadians had been disenfranchised, they could not become professionals such as lawyers, pharmacists, engineers or doctors in British Columbia until after 1947, when Chinese Canadians finally reacquired the right to vote.
In 1923, pressured by the B.C. government, the federal government enacted the Chinese Immigration Act (commonly called the Chinese Exclusion Act). Passed on July 1, Dominion Day, the act was humiliating and debilitating in its damage to Chinese Canadian communities. Despite its name as an “immigration” act, in practical terms, persons of Chinese origin were no longer permitted to enter Canada.

During the 24-year period of exclusion between 1923 and 1947 (when the Exclusion Act was finally repealed), fewer than 100 Chinese were allowed to enter Canada. Many Chinese Canadians in British Columbia were separated from their family members in China, and some never saw their families again. For many Chinese Canadians, the Exclusion Act was the clearest signal from Canada that they did not belong. As described at the Kelowna forum, it was a lonely life for the men who lived away from their wives and families for so many years. Some letters from those early immigrants were found in the Kelowna museum’s basement decades later – letters that were never sent. They begged the writers’ families for forgiveness for their failure as husbands and fathers because they were not able to bring their families to Canada.

The legally sanctioned racial discrimination engendered by the Exclusion Act was systemic and sustained, and its toll in human suffering deserves pause for reflection.
Soldiers and Veterans

The outbreak of World War II was a pivotal point in the history of Chinese Canadians in British Columbia. The B.C. government strongly opposed enlisting any Asians in the armed forces, fearing that military veterans would ask for the right to vote afterward. Despite such obstacles and the injustice and discrimination they faced, some Chinese Canadians volunteered for military service to prove their loyalty to Canada, some of them travelling outside British Columbia to find a place that would allow them to enlist.

During the Victoria consultation forum, Chinese Canadian war veteran Gordon Quan said, when he was young, he wanted to fight for his country, and his country was Canada. “We didn’t know about the discrimination laws until well after the war was over. When we came home [after fighting Canada’s enemies], we fought for our rights.”

Due in large part to the honour and sacrifice of the Chinese Canadian veterans in World War II, the federal government repealed the *Exclusion Act* on May 14, 1947, relaxing immigration for the family members of Chinese Canadians. Subsequently, other discriminatory laws against the Chinese were also repealed. Having the right to vote and run for public office, Chinese Canadians began to participate in politics. Vancouverite Douglas Jung, a veteran of World War II, was the first Chinese Canadian elected as a member of parliament in 1957, and Kamloops Mayor
Peter Wing was elected as the first ethnic Chinese mayor in North America in 1966. Ben Lee served as a city councillor in Kelowna between 1973 and 1996, where he is still affectionately known as a community leader.

A New Era

The 1967 immigration reform created the “points system” and removed racial discrimination in immigration policy, opening the door again to Chinese immigration. As a result, new Chinese immigration rose steadily in the 1970s and 1980s.

According to the 1981 census, people of Chinese origin made up less than three per cent of the B.C. population. In contrast, in 1901, Chinese Canadians were roughly 10 per cent of the B.C. population (14,885 of 149,709). It was a full century before that proportion was reached again in 2001 (373,830 of 3,698,850). By 2011, Chinese Canadians made up nearly 15 per cent of British Columbians.

New immigrants have contributed to a thriving Chinese Canadian culture in Vancouver and the lower mainland, in particular Richmond, where 44 per cent of the population are ethnic Chinese.

On June 22, 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered an apology and compensation for the head tax once paid by Chinese immigrants. Survivors or their spouses were paid approximately $20,000 as compensation. There were only an estimated 20 Chinese Canadians who had paid the tax still alive in 2006.

British Columbia now has the largest Chinatown (Vancouver) and the oldest Chinatown (Victoria) outside San Francisco in North America. Chinese British Columbians have made contributions in every aspect of B.C. society including science, art, music, academia, sports, business and community services. Many Chinese Canadians have been appointed to the Order of Canada, the highest honour in this country.

Need for an Official Apology

The litany of historical wrongs still looms in British Columbia’s society. Chinese Canadians remain justly angered and disappointed by the historical wrongs imposed on them by their provincial government. While many of the offending acts, regulations and policies were federal, often they were encouraged or initiated by past B.C. provincial governments or federal members of parliament from British Columbia.

For these reasons, the government of British Columbia is now apologizing for the historical wrongs of past provincial governments that were once considered appropriate. While the governments that passed these laws and policies acted in a manner that were lawful at the time, British Columbians today consider this racist discrimination unacceptable and view it with extreme indignation.

A formal apology will assist in providing closure on this dark period in British Columbia’s history.
3 Consultation Process

3.1 Terms of Reference

The consultation process began in October 2013. The first task was to develop a terms of reference that would guide discussion throughout the consultation forums (Appendix 1 Consultation Terms of Reference and Forum Locations). The terms of reference briefly identified the issues surrounding discriminatory legislation and its impact on Chinese Canadians. They also described the context in which the consultation process was to take place regarding the forums to be held across the province, and the background, goals, purpose and reporting required for a formal apology to British Columbia’s Chinese Canadians for historical wrongs.

The terms of reference clarified the need for a report and how input received during the consultations would guide the wording of the formal apology. They outlined the government’s plan to introduce a motion regarding the apology in the spring session of the Legislature and indicated that all members of the legislative assembly would be engaged to provide input and work towards a formal apology that all parties could support.

3.2 Consultation Materials

In keeping with the spirit and intent of the terms of reference, consultation materials were developed. They were released in November 2013 before the first consultation forum in Victoria. Consultation materials, forum speaker summaries and written submissions can be found in the Apology for Historical Wrongs section of the EmbraceBC website.

To focus discussion during the Victoria forum, participants were asked three questions:

1. What should the apology say?
2. Would you like to see the apology made by the Minister on behalf of the entire Legislature of British Columbia?
3. Do you have any suggestions for legacy initiatives shaped by your historical understanding or personal experience?

These questions resonated with forum participants and generated good discussion. As a result, appropriate wording of the apology, the delivery of the apology, and feedback on legacy initiatives that help move towards reconciliation remained as the three key discussion topics for the rest of the consultation forums.

Each forum participant was also provided with a summary of legislation affecting British Columbians of Chinese descent. During the planning stages for the forums, it was determined that a high level chronology of discriminatory legislation would be more appropriate than an exhaustive binder of legislation. Once several participants expressed interest in seeing a complete inventory of this legislation, the larger, more comprehensive inventory of over 160 items of historical legislation was compiled and posted on the EmbraceBC website.
3.3 Consultation Forums

Between November 17, 2013, and January 27, 2014, seven public consultation forums were organized and managed in various communities throughout British Columbia. Four forums were held outside the lower mainland (Victoria, Kamloops, Kelowna and Prince George) and three in the lower mainland (Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond).

A community host was identified for each forum to help with invitations of community members, and the locations and meeting requirements were appropriate. (*Appendix 2 Profiles of Consultation Forum Hosts*). Local Chinese Benevolent Association presidents and cultural association leaders chaired the forums and, Mr. Wei Shao, a partner at Dentons Canada LLP, facilitated each of the larger lower mainland forums.

Approximately 1,300 people engaged in the consultation process. Participants at the forums included staff and volunteers from large community associations, family and clan associations, merchants’ associations, educators, veterans, academics, Freemasons, community service providers, students and youth, community elders, and a multitude of members of the general public. The total cost of the seven forums held throughout B.C. was $84,000.
Using the questions from the consultation materials, participants highlighted historical wrongs created by discriminatory legislation. They made significant contributions to the discussion of the wording for the formal apology, and they suggested areas where government could undertake legacy initiatives to help move towards reconciliation. The Apology for Historical Wrongs section of the EmbraceBC website captures the breadth and diversity of forum participants’ views and ideas.

During the forums, written responses, comments and submissions were also invited. Numerous written submissions and emails were received from individuals and organizations throughout the province in response to the consultation materials and the EmbraceBC website.

In February 2014, members of the official opposition also held a consultation event with 114 students from lower mainland high schools, scholars and leaders from various cultural groups to discuss the need for an apology and how an apology will contribute to reconciliation with the Chinese Canadian and other Asian communities. The results of the Opposition’s event reflected those of the province-wide forums, confirming the value and importance of the apology and the need for public education and legacy initiatives.
4 Recommendations

During the consultation forums to discuss apology wording, apology delivery and legacy ideas, clear themes began to emerge that provided a deeper understanding of the hardships endured by Chinese Canadians.

These themes highlighted the critical importance of developing guiding principles for the apology — it must be sincere and respectful and demonstrate meaningful commitment from the apologizer, the legislative assembly of British Columbia, to Chinese Canadians in B.C. communities. These principles were affirmed at every consultation forum. Participants and speakers emphasized that government needs to acknowledge that an effective and appropriate apology must demonstrate respect towards Chinese Canadians, sincerity on behalf of the legislative assembly and a commitment to engage in ongoing meaningful initiatives that lead towards reconciliation.

The majority of forum participants understood that a true reconciliation will not occur immediately, but will take focused and sustained efforts.

Many participants expressed a wish to avoid a pervasive stereotype that Chinese Canadians were simply in it for themselves by asking for costly legacy initiatives. These participants were well aware that a fine line exists between providing enough resources to facilitate reconciliation associated with the apology and balancing the fiscal challenges faced by government.

The remainder of this section presents the recommendations that reflect many hours of discussions during the forums and a large number of written submissions. The recommendations reflect the consensus views of forum participants.

4.1 The Apology Wording and Delivery

The majority of participants considered the apology to be a worthy initiative and an essential step towards reconciliation. They believed the formal apology should be brought forward and supported by all members of the legislative assembly, and introduced by the Premier. A common theme was that Chinese Canadians did not want the apology to be a partisan issue. The apology must be given to “set things right” and begin the road to reconciliation.

At every forum, the Chinese Canadian participants conveyed the same message: “The apology should take place at the legislative assembly through a proper legislative motion representing all MLAs and voted on by all MLAs.”

Many thoughtful presentations were given about the wording and delivery of the apology. The following are a few examples:

- Fred Kwok, Grandmaster of the Chinese Freemasons, Vancouver: “The apology should be made in simple language so that it can be understood by everyone. The apology then becomes part of the education platform.”

- Dr. David Chuanyan Lai, Professor Emeritus from University of Victoria and a Member of the Order of Canada: “[I] suggest that] the Province apologizes for discrimination for which it is responsible. No apology by the Province should be made for local governments in British Columbia for their [historical] discriminatory practices.”
• James Chu, President of the Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver: “The B.C. government at the legislative level should issue a formal apology to address the hurts and suffering of the Chinese who were subject to discriminatory acts. Further, the B.C. government should acknowledge the social and economic contribution of the Chinese workers past and present.”

Throughout the consultation, participants emphasized the importance of addressing the passage of time. Many suggested that the apology should be delivered in a manner that acknowledges both the particular circumstances of the historical legislation and that government-sanctioned discrimination and racism are not prevalent today.

Finally, there was overwhelming consensus that this issue was not to become a political issue, nor was it to be used to divide Chinese Canadians or the province.

**Recommendation: Wording of the Apology and Motion**

It is recommended that the wording of the apology address, first and foremost, the historical wrongs endured by Chinese Canadians and reflect the government’s commitment to ensuring that the historical wrongs engendered by discriminatory legislation never will be repeated. The following is the suggested wording:

**Apology**

*Today we express our sorrow and regret for historical provincial government practices that were once considered appropriate. While the governments which passed these laws and policies acted in a manner that were lawful at the time, today this racist discrimination is seen by British Columbians --represented by all members of the legislative assembly – as unacceptable and intolerable. We believe this formal apology is required to ensure that closure can be reached on this dark period in our province’s history. The legislative assembly’s apology today signifies our deepest regret for the hardship and suffering our past provincial governments imposed on Chinese Canadians.*

*The entire legislative assembly acknowledges the perseverance of Chinese Canadians that was demonstrated with grace and dignity throughout our history while being oppressed by unfair and discriminatory historical laws. Moreover, we acknowledge the overwhelming contribution by Chinese Canadians to British Columbia’s culture, history and economic prosperity.*

*On behalf of the Province of British Columbia, and on behalf of the entire legislative assembly, we sincerely apologize for the provincial government’s historical wrongs. We are sorry for the discriminatory legislation and racist policies enacted by past provincial governments. We will ensure that this never happens again.*
Legislature Motion

Be it resolved that this Legislature apologizes for more than a hundred laws, regulations, and policies that were imposed by past provincial governments that discriminated against people of Chinese descent since 1871, when British Columbia joined Confederation, to 1947. These laws and policies denied British Columbia’s Chinese communities’ basic human rights, including but not limited to, the right to vote, hold public office, or own property; imposed labour, educational and employment restrictions; subjected them to health and housing segregation, and prevented them from fully participating in society. The House deeply regrets that these Canadians were discriminated against simply because they were of Chinese descent. All members of this House acknowledge that we all aspire to be a fair and just society where people of all nations and cultures are welcomed, accepted and respected.

Be it further resolved that the House acknowledge that the Chinese Canadian Community endured untold hardships and persevered with grace and dignity. We acknowledge that despite being subjected to discriminatory laws, policies and practices, the Chinese community has made, and continues to make, substantial contributions to the culture, history and economic prosperity in our province.
Recommendation: Delivery of the Apology

It is recommended that the formal apology be delivered by the Premier in the legislature, supported by all members of the legislative assembly, to demonstrate government’s respect, sincerity, and commitment towards the apology and reconciliation.

4.2 British Columbia’s K-12 Education Curriculum

The overwhelming consensus at every forum and at every meeting was the need for the government to integrate a new version of B.C.’s history into the education curriculum. In terms of legacy initiatives, updating the education curriculum is a key cornerstone of reconciliation. As Mr. Paul Wong stated at the Burnaby forum, a message heard consistently at every forum: “The issue is all about education – it needs to be all about education. Please add to the curriculum for the youth to come in future years.”

The goal is to ensure that the “history of British Columbia considers new perspectives rather than the Eurocentric version of history taught in classrooms of the recent past.” At the Richmond forum, Ziaming Zhu expressed a commonly held view when he eloquently shared a Chinese saying: “If we drink this water, we must think of the origin of this water.” He went on to say that “the wrongs in the past were a shame to this country and only if it is acknowledged can forgiveness from our ancestors be received.”
The opportunity to develop new, more contemporary approaches to teaching history is a real one. The Minister of Education, who attended the forum in Richmond, has made it clear that teachers, public servants and politicians fully appreciate that they share responsibility for updating the history curriculum, and that this process will be ongoing, rather than a one-time review.

**Recommendation: Update of British Columbia’s education curriculum to include historical wrongs**

It is recommended that the government update its education curriculum to include learning objectives related to historical wrongs. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of International Trade have committed to adding age-appropriate resources for the K-12 curriculum. This includes lesson plans and other supplemental resources to encourage students to discuss the issue of historical wrongs in an age-appropriate manner. It is also recommended that the curriculum-based supplemental resources include support for teachers to assist them in utilizing the resources and lesson plans.

**4.3 Public Education and General Awareness**

The apology and the commitment to curriculum change are only the beginning.

The government must recognize the contributions of Chinese Canadians, and that all members of the legislative assembly admire their resilience and ability to forgive.

Most participants believed the discussion of an apology for historical wrongs as an opportunity that should be seized. As one forum participant said, “Reflecting on the past, we now have an opportunity to leverage the dark past into a brighter new future.”

This would entail increasing public education initiatives to ensure that all British Columbians, as well as new immigrants, understand the province’s collective history and the racist and discriminatory laws and policies that prevailed in its early days.

Many forum participants emphasized that “British Columbians must be aware of what the government is apologizing for.” This public education cannot occur with a single event or with an extended series of community forums. It will require sustained efforts by government, educators and community groups to re-tell the story of B.C.’s history, so the “real history” becomes as well known as that iconic photograph of Donald Alexander Smith driving the last railway spike at Craigellachie.

**Recommendation: Online access to forums**

It is recommended that if individuals and organizations agree, their submissions to the forums be made available to the public in an easily accessible online format. This will ensure that the diversity of views put forward during the consultation process will not be lost.
Recommendation: Royal BC Museum public education initiatives

It is recommended that the Royal BC Museum, in partnership with the Ministry responsible for multiculturalism, prepare public education initiatives illustrating the contributions of Chinese British Columbians and their untold stories in the history of British Columbia.

Recommendation: A book profiling the contributions of notable Chinese British Columbians

It is important to celebrate the diversity of B.C.’s culture. Consistent with that, it is also important to celebrate the accomplishments of Chinese British Columbians, past and present, and to recognize their positive contributions to the prosperity and rich diversity of this province.

It is recommended that the provincial government prepare and publish a full-colour book similar to BC People: Portraits of Diversity in BC. This book would be distributed to cultural centres, libraries and schools so the general public and new immigrants can see the impressive accomplishments of Chinese Canadians in British Columbia.

4.4 Legislation

In the view of many participants, the root cause of the historical wrongs was the discriminatory and racist legislation enacted by British Columbia, or in the case of offending federal legislation, encouraged by the Province.

At the Prince George forum, Mr. Simon Yu of the Chinese Benevolent Association voiced the view held by many at every community forum: “We need to be sure that all discriminatory legislation has been overturned.”

While it is understood that the over 160 pieces of discriminatory legislation have been repealed, a thorough review of the legislation described in the consultations should be undertaken to ensure nothing has been overlooked. A further objective of this legacy initiative would be to ensure that new legislation does not contain racism.

Recommendation: Review of legislation

It is recommended that the government undertake a review of legislation identified in the consultation to ensure it has been repealed, and to review legislation procedures to demonstrate that British Columbia does not have, nor will it ever produce, racist legislation again.

4.5 Historical Sites, Artifacts and Commemorations

With their long history in British Columbia, Chinese Canadians have created a wealth of historical sites and artifacts. To ensure that these remain part of the legacy of their success, it is important to establish what and where these are. Local government experts and community organizations around the province could identify sites and artifacts of historical significance.
The consultation process also conveyed desire for the B.C. government to establish a commemorative monument or monuments. In the Prince George forum, a local Chinese Freemason suggested that monuments with Chinese and English inscriptions be located in prominent locations so that current and future generations can see and appreciate the contributions made and hardships experienced by their Chinese ancestors.

Most participants believe that this is a goal worth pursuing. It was pointed out that projects already in place or underway could provide useful building blocks for a more comprehensive program. One such example is the Royal BC Museum, which has several ongoing historical initiatives.

**Recommendation: Historical sites and artifacts inventory**

It is recommended that an inventory identify historical sites and culturally important locations and artifacts. The inventory would include a plan to ensure that Chinese Canadians can honour and preserve their cultural history in perpetuity.

**Recommendation: Historical significance of clan associations**

It is recommended that a project be initiated to recognize the significance of the role of clan and society associations, which were founded in the spirit of kinship, and served historically to address the social, political and financial needs of Chinese Canadians in communities across British Columbia.
Recommendation: Commemorative plaques and/or monuments

It is recommended that one or more plaques or monuments be created to commemorate the positive contribution of Chinese Canadians to B.C.’s history, culture and prosperity. Possible locations for plaques or monuments could include: Greater Vancouver; Barkerville, Nanaimo or Kamloops. Consideration will also be given to a design competition for a commemorative plaque or monument in Victoria at the Legislature.

4.6 Funding for Legacy Initiatives

The financial commitment to the recommendations will be met. One million dollars ($1 million) will be allocated for legacy initiatives. It will draw on financial resources from existing ministry base budgets and the planning and management efforts of public servants. The budget for legacy funding must reflect a set of well-defined initiatives with identified funding sources. Without this assurance, fears that resources might be diverted from important areas such as health care and public services could create divisions between communities.

Through smart management and project partnerships, meaningful initiatives, such as those reflected in the recommendations are possible with existing resources for multiculturalism and education.

Recommendation: Funding for Legacy Initiatives

It is recommended that legacy funding of $1 million come from within the existing budget of the Ministry responsible for multiculturalism.

4.7 Integrating Legacy Initiatives

Another strong and recurring sentiment among participants was related to accessing and utilizing existing resources and not “re-inventing the wheel” with regard to public education materials. When asked during the consultation sessions about legacy initiatives, participants often focused on the significant materials and initiatives already prepared (or underway) from other jurisdictions and the community at large.

For example, the federal government’s apology in 2006 brought forward a multitude of information and historical legacy projects. Additionally, independent filmmakers, writers, artists and entrepreneurs have developed materials and are telling the stories of Gold Mountain and the history of Chinese Canadians in British Columbia.

The vast array of historical and contemporary information about the historical wrongs and the contribution of Chinese Canadians to B.C.’s society is impressive. A recurring theme throughout the consultation sessions was that government could serve a great purpose by not only creating new resources, but also by coordinating and consolidating these existing resources into a B.C. website/portal.
**Recommendation: Coordination of legacy initiatives**

It is recommended that the Ministry responsible for multiculturalism coordinate legacy initiatives and other web-based information related to Chinese historical wrongs. This may include resources related to historical wrongs experienced by other ethnic groups and information about the contributions of these communities.

### 4.8 Head Tax Redress

Despite varying viewpoints on this emotional issue, there was underlying agreement around government’s purpose: Above all, participants see the role of government as enabling true reconciliation. To some, that enabling includes financial compensation to individuals, but to most Chinese Canadians, it does not.

The issue of possible government compensation was raised during the consultations. The Head Tax Families Society of Canada made the proposition that the government should repay the head taxes on the basis of one certificate, one payment. However, the majority of Chinese Canadians participating in the consultations did not support individual compensation, citing the federal government’s head tax compensation in 2006. This is demonstrated by the submissions of the Victoria Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association and the Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver, two of the oldest Chinese associations in North America, and many other Chinese community organizations.

Many participants indicated that the legislation that caused “the most damage and hardship for families was the Exclusion Act. That legislation divided families and created unprecedented hardship. The head tax was only money.” Others emphasized that paying and identifying individuals for compensation from descendant families would be divisive for the province as a whole and divisive within some descendant families themselves.

As David Choi, Director, National Congress of Chinese Canadians emphasized, “The head tax issue is not the only issue, and should not lead and overshadow the entire process.” The historical context as presented in this report supports this statement. Also noted by Thomas Chan, President of the Victoria Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association stated (which was echoed by the majority of Chinese community associations throughout the consultation), “There should be no monetary compensation for individuals for the head tax or other discriminatory legislation.”

**Recommendation: No individual compensation for head tax redress**

It is recommended that there be no individual compensation for head tax redress.
5 Conclusion

The Province of British Columbia believes that a formal apology is required to ensure closure can be reached on this dark period in the province’s history. Over the coming months, the Province will begin implementing the legacy and education recommendations made in this report. Through these efforts, British Columbians can move forward together, with a shared history and future.

Reaching out and confronting a painful time in our collective history is an opportunity to contribute to the healing process and educate ourselves and all British Columbians about a time we can and should not forget. In order to move forward, steps need to be taken to address past wrongs. It is recognized that true reconciliation will not occur immediately, but will take focused and sustained efforts.
Appendix 1: Terms of Reference and Consultation

Forum Locations

Consultation Terms of Reference

Background

The Chinese community in British Columbia suffered legislated inequality and discrimination between 1885 and 1923 when multiple forms of discriminatory legislation were imposed, including the Chinese Immigration Act and again in 1923 to 1947 when Chinese individuals were restricted from entering Canada under the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Purpose

The government will engage with British Columbia’s Chinese community associations and individuals who were directly and indirectly impacted by prejudicial legislation to work towards offering an appropriate public apology, read in the provincial legislature and supported by all parties in the B.C. government.

Financial redress from the provincial government will not be considered by the minister. In 2006, the federal government acknowledged their role in legislative injustices with a parliamentary apology and ex-gratia payments to surviving head tax payers and surviving spouse of head tax payers only.

Goals

Hold seven community consultation forums to bring together relevant Chinese community associations and individuals directly impacted by historical wrongs, to seek input on the best approach in providing an apology.

Specifically, consultation forums will:

1. Seek input from community associations and individuals who were directly and indirectly impacted by historical discriminatory legislation.
2. Engage local representatives from a number of Chinese-Canadian communities to confirm consultation locations and receptivity.
3. Conduct focused consultations seeking comment, suggestions and advice regarding the wording and delivery of an apology from the legislature.

Reporting

The minister, in collaboration with members of the Opposition, will prepare a consultation summary following the conclusion of the consultation process that will include:

1. A brief synopsis of public comments, suggestions and advice.
2. Comments and observations from the minister.
3. Recommendations, including wording and delivery advice of any apology from the legislative assembly.
Consultation Forum Locations

Consultations will be held in various communities. These consultations are open to the public.

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<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Sunday, November 17, 2013 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association, 636 Fisgard Street, Victoria, BC V8W 1R6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kamloops</td>
<td>Thursday, December 19, 2013 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Coast Kamloops Hotel &amp; Conference Centre, 1250 Rogers Way, Kamloops, BC V1S 1N5</td>
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<td>Vancouver</td>
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<td>Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver, 50 E Pender St, Vancouver, BC V6A 3V6</td>
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<td>Kelowna</td>
<td>Tuesday, January 14, 2014 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Burnaby</td>
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<td>Prince George</td>
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<td>Radisson Hotel Vancouver Airport, 8181 Cambie Road, Richmond, B.C. V6X 3X9</td>
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Appendix 2: Profiles of Consultation Forum Hosts

Victoria Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association

The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Victoria was established in 1884 as the only Chinese consulate in Canada, until a consulate was created in Ottawa in 1908. The association united Chinese Canadians in British Columbia in their protests against the discriminatory laws passed by the provincial government of the time. Today, this venerable organization is the hub for Chinese culture in Victoria and the focal point for coordinating local cultural events and services.

Kamloops Chinese Cultural Association

The Kamloops Chinese Cultural Association was incorporated in 1977 and is a non-profit organization working to enhance the community and contribute to the betterment of its children and society. The association provides language classes, has a University Scholarship and Bursary Foundation Fund and contributes to the City of Kamloops for enhancing the Kamloops Chinese Heritage Cemetery. The association works with the Kamloops Multicultural Society and Kamloops Immigrant Services to promote diversity.

Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver

The Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver is an umbrella organization for over one hundred (100) associations and societies of Chinese origin in the Vancouver Lower Mainland. The Association was founded in 1895 and by 1906, was formally registered as a non-profit organization in the province of British Columbia. Since its inception, the CBA has worked diligently to promote equality for Chinese Canadians and to foster better understanding with other community groups.

Highlights of the association’s past efforts include food distribution to unemployed Chinese Canadians in 1913, a plea to review Canada’s immigration laws in 1924, an appeal to grant Chinese Canadians the right to vote in 1947, and numerous petitions between 1947 and 1967 to solicit amendments to Canadian immigration laws to facilitate the reunification of Chinese Canadian families. Current community involvement includes the creation of an affiliated non-profit society to provide low-cost housing and frequent fundraising campaigns to assist the victims of natural disasters in Canada and abroad. The CBA has become the organizer for many social and multicultural projects, including popular annual events such as the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) Parade, the Chinatown community celebration for Canada Day and community service for Remembrance Day.
Okanagan Chinese Canadian Association, Kelowna

The Okanagan Chinese Canadian Association is a non-profit organization whose goal is to promote mutual understanding, respect and acceptance among different cultural communities in the Okanagan region. The association builds partnerships with different levels of government to encourage and facilitate the full participation of people of Chinese descent in the social, cultural and economic life of the Okanagan community.

Prince George Chinese Benevolent Association

The Prince George Chinese Benevolent Association is a non-profit organization that was established shortly before 1945 to protect the interests of Chinese people, particularly the new Chinese immigrants who did not belong to other Chinese organizations and needed assistance. Its mandate then was to provide a voice to Chinese Canadians who could not speak the local language. Over the years, the association has changed its focus and the current association focuses on providing a cultural basis and gathering place for Chinese Canadians by raising awareness and fostering and perpetuating the Chinese culture and language.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Established in 1973, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is one of the largest social service agencies in British Columbia. It is a charitable organization for the purpose of promoting the well-being of Canadians and immigrants. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. provides services in settlement, language training, employment, family and youth counselling, business and economic development, health care, housing and community development. There are over 20 service locations in Metro Vancouver and 2 overseas offices. Programs are delivered in culturally sensitive ways to meet the needs of clients.

The Association of Chinese Cultural Promotion - Canada

The Association of Chinese Cultural Promotion – Canada (ACCPC) is a non-profit organization formed to promote and develop Chinese culture in Canada. ACCPC has been hosting community cultural events celebrating Chinese art and fashion since 2007, including the 2008 Beijing Olympic Photo Exhibition; 2010 Vancouver Olympic Photo Exhibition; 2010 Shanghai Expo Photo Exhibition; the 2011, 2012 and 2013 Water Cube Chinese Youth Singing Contest; Richmond Lantern Festival; White Rock Lantern Festival and the Vancouver Chinese Cultural Festival.

Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver

The Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver was founded in 1973 with the support of government and of 53 community organizations and shortly afterwards was duly constituted and registered with the provincial and federal governments as a nonprofit, charitable organization. A full city block was designated in the heart of Vancouver’s Chinatown and to serve the people of Richmond, a branch office was opened there in 1991. The Chinese Cultural Centre Museum & Archives, with its ongoing and permanent art exhibits, library, and conference hall is open to the public in 1998.
Appendix 3: Consultation Forums Costs

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