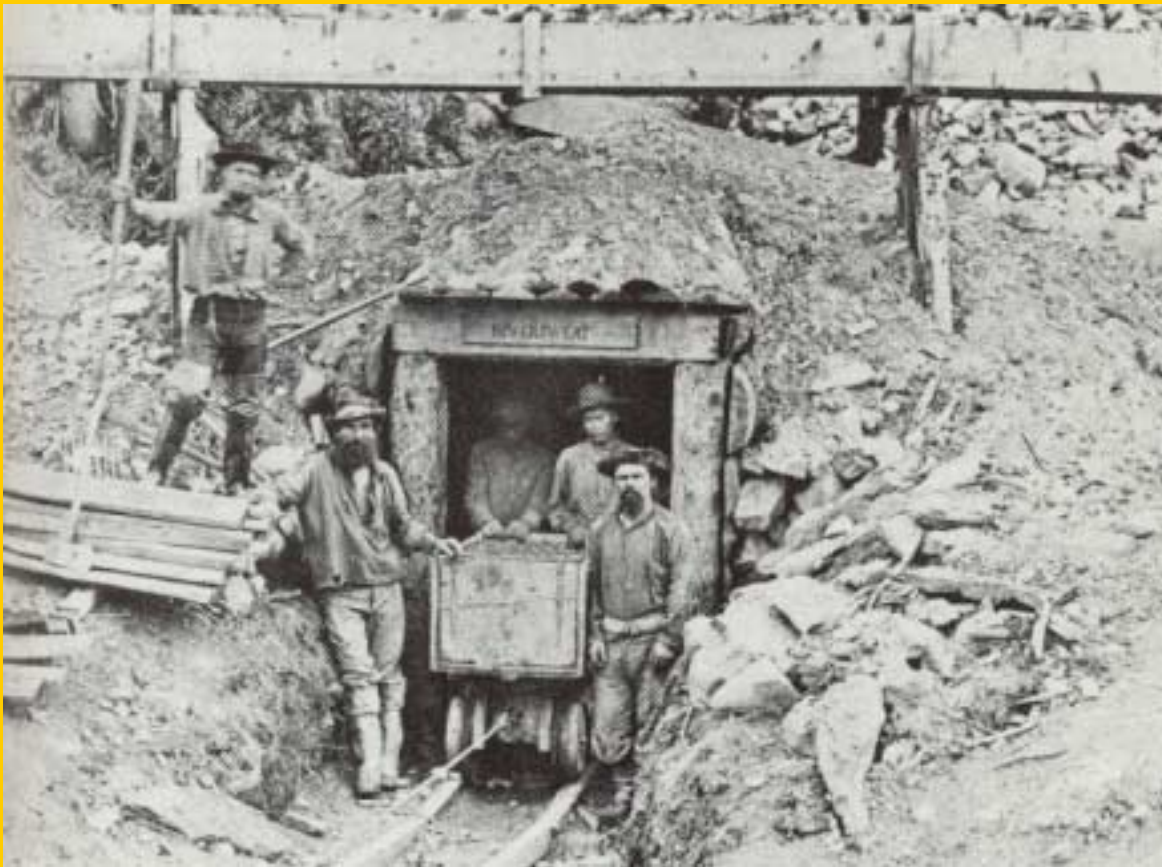




**Contributions of Asian Migrant Workers  
in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to Development of  
the British Columbian Mining Industry**



**Vivien Hui**



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Front Page:

top: Mucho Oro mine on Lowhee Creek, Daily Collection, Provincial Archives, Victoria.  
bottom: The Neversweat mine on Williams Creek, ca 1868, Provincial Archives, Victoria.

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Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

## **Dedication**

to the memory of the Asian Migrant Workers  
who came to British Columbia in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

*...they came to find gold and return home,  
but many stayed on to help found a nation...*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I must thank my **GOD** who gave me the spirit and power to write this report, as it has been a challenging task to produce such a project.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*A politically correct history leads to a distorted past and a bleak future.*

- J.L. Granatstein

*Historical truth is both painful and many-sided.*

- Michael Ignatieff

The history of Canada often considers the Compact between Lower and Upper Canada (Ontario and Quebec) as the sole basis for the formation of our nation. The story traditionally has focused on the politics of early Canada rather than the people who actually built and settled our vast land. It tends to ignore the West, with the exception of MacDonal'd's vision of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and chooses to "whitewash" the exceptional difficulties faced by the people of the time as they opened up British Columbia and the raw material wealth in the West.

Canada today has evolved into one of the most diverse nations in the world with immigrants from over 210 different nations around the world now living in harmony with mutual respect for what we love and cherish in our common land and with reverence for our cultural differences that link us to where we or our ancestors came from. Today, Asians represent over 10% of Canada's population and over 20% of British Columbia and they are a growing minority. Many of us proudly believe that Canada is a more civil and tolerant place than other countries, but surprisingly, our history lessons of the West provide evidence of quite the opposite in the early days of nation-building.

In examining the history of Western Canada and particularly of British Columbia, Canada is clearly much more than two founding nations of British and French cultures. It is the story of Asian migrant workers who helped build the mines and railways that created the wealth used to evolve our country. It is the story of ill-treatment and unfairness by the majority race over the "celestials" and the patience and silent suffering that these people practiced as they focused on a future vision for themselves and their descendants in this vast land.

Despite all attempts to control and prevent the proliferation of Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian peoples in Canada, a great number of these brave folk remained in Canada and dispersed to all major cities where today a Chinatown exists in virtually each and every major metropolis.

The story of these early settlers needs to be told and told widely. Their contribution to the Canadian Mining Industry and to the development of our cross-Canada rail system must be recognized and celebrated. All Canadians need to learn about this contribution.

We find that laws were passed to prevent Chinese laundries and restaurants from hiring white women; that the province of British Columbia passed an act prohibiting Chinese workers from participating in provincial capital projects; that Chinese workers were paid a pittance in comparison to white workers; that they were given the most difficult and dangerous jobs; that over 1500 of them died during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway; that despite the recognition paid to them by Sir John A. MacDonald for their contribution to this project, soon after the government of Canada placed a Head Tax of \$50 on Chinese immigrants that was later raised in stages to \$500. Although repealed in 1921, the tax was replaced by the Chinese Immigration Act (Exclusion Act) essentially eliminating all immigration from China until 1947. Less than 12 Chinese people came to Canada during this 25 year period although one of these did become our Governor General.

Despite all this prejudice and adversity, these hard-working people went about their business never wavering from their belief in themselves, their culture and their families to eventually gain the wealth and freedom that they so richly deserved. They came to British Columbia, their "Gold Mountain", to evade persecution in their homeland and to provide money for their families back in China. Most believed they would return home one day and many did, although some made the journey back in a coffin. But a great number of these settlers remained in Canada after the gold was gone to take up work in laundries, in restaurants, in cottage farms, and in other mines such as coal, mercury and borax. Some went on to become important import/export merchants in our major cities.

Eventually their families were reunited but in most cases this did not occur until 1947 - well after the deaths of those who were initially separated. The story may be a sad one, but it represents an important part of Canada's early history and the brave Asian migrant workers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries represent a resilient group who helped develop our country into what it has become today. Their heritage is that of all Canadians whether they are descendants of the earlier settlers or new immigrants just arriving for the first time. It deserves acknowledgment by us and our governments of today.

The original landing of Chinese in Canada is indicated to be a group of Buddhist monks who arrived in North America around 460 AD, but the evidence for this is slim and not well-documented. Captain James Cook was first to report back to Britain about its attractions and the potential for fur trade. Cook anchored in Nootka Sound in 1778 and made the first contact by Europeans with the indigenous people. Within a few years, British traders came by sea and developed a thriving fur trade with coastal natives. Among these was Captain John Meares who sailed two vessels with about 60 Chinese labourers, carpenters, and ship builders on board, from Macao to Nootka Sound. While Meares continued trading to the south, the Chinese workers began constructing a small sailing ship, the *North West America*, as well as a fort. Although seized by the Spanish, these vessels were eventually released but the fate of the Chinese workers is unknown. . According to some accounts, they were captured by Spaniards and taken to Mexico. Other reports indicate that they lived with the Nootka people, and then moved inland with native wives to begin their own settlement (V. Poy, 1998).

But immigration did not begin until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when thousands of Asian migrant workers made their way to British Columbia. To fully appreciate their involvement, it is necessary to understand the history of Asia during that time. This report aims to provide due respect to the often ignored, but very important contributions made by these people to the heritage of BC and how the BC gold rushes of the mid-1800's initiated and stimulated large immigration from the Far East. It may be difficult to imagine how a minority could affect an industry so much, but even with racial differences, daily ridicule, numerous anti-Chinese movements, political hatred, criminal activity and dangerous labor conditions, the Chinese people of that era endured to win their rights and create a place in a foreign country that they could call home. Chinatowns and Jap-towns were once political attempts to segregate Asian migrants but today, these communities are packed with tourists and local people getting a glimpse of the Chinese culture, even if it is just a meal.

The majority of these Chinese settlers originated from Guangdong and Fujian provinces. Political, social and environmental changes plagued China during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century which contributed to the major emigration of Chinese workers abroad. Between 1787 and 1850, China's population doubled while food production suffered through droughts and other natural disasters causing famine. The first settlers came in 1848 for the California gold rush and 10 years later they migrated to Victoria, BC. Their historical arrival marked the establishment of a continuous and vibrant Chinese presence in Canada.

Because of the patience, endurance, and hard work of these migrants, their descendants today can take great pride in their heritage. Today we are able to live in harmony with Canadians of all races and cultures with the knowledge that

our ancestors contributed significantly to the early development of British Columbia and Canada.

This report will look at the different aspects of Asian emigration. Why did they come? How did they come? Where did they come from? Where did they go? When did they come? What did they do? How were they treated in the beginning? How did they fight for their rights? How did they collide with BC politics? What did they invent? There are many questions to ask but there are also many answers to be found – some of which you may find very surprising.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **WHY DID THEY COME?**

*Moonlight before my bed, Could it be frost instead?  
Head up, I watch the moon, Head down, I think of home!  
- Li Bai*

#### **Rural crisis in China**

Since the establishment of China many centuries ago, the ruling dynasties governed with little concern for the impoverished. Most people accepted that the rich would become richer while the poor became poorer. Heavy taxation, high rents and interest rates charged by landlords together with the government's inability to repair the country's vital waterways drove the peasants into a state of considerable dissatisfaction. During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the population of China doubled from around 200 million to over 400 million people (Tan and Roy, 1985). The pressures of this rapid increase could only be relieved through emigration, although the government of China resisted this measure.

But the anti-emigration policy of the Manchu regime did not deter migration. In China, life was miserable in the rural areas. In the mid 1800s, banditry was endemic, and private armies were a way of life. A local war between clans, from 1856 to 1864, took the lives of twenty to thirty thousand people.

During the 19th century Tasha County in Guangdong Province had a population over half a million, but only 400 km<sup>2</sup> was suitable for cultivation resulting in a density of over 1,300 people/km<sup>2</sup> of arable land. Food production was insufficient. A typical peasant household cultivated less than one-third of a hectare of land. Since the majority of Cantonese peasants were tenants renting cropland from landlords, with declining crop yields, starvation was rampant.

Exacerbating this was the increase in land tax in Guangdong. Over a five-year period, taxes trebled on the peasant farmers - pushing thousands into bankruptcy and rendering them landless. These unstable social factors pushed the pace to emigrate.

Chinese migrants to North America came from the southern coastal provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. A majority came from the heart of the Canton delta - home to the Cantonese Guangdong - a distinct people who regarded themselves as "people of the Tang". The Cantonese language is also distinct with several sub-dialects: Toi-san, Hoi-ping, Yin-ping and Sun-wui.

There were many small rebellions, restlessness, rivalries and disunity in China during these times. Tensions and antagonisms between the peasants and the empire were only weakly subdued until the Taiping Peasant Rebellion, led by Hong Xiuquan, broke out in 1850. His uprising attempted to replace traditional Confucianism with his interpretation of Christian beliefs. The government's military forces finally destroyed the Taiping uprising in 1864 and the empire once again toughened its regulations and control of the peasant folk. (<http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/modern2.html>)

Such political persecution during and after this rebellion pushed many people to leave China, but generally with the intention to return one day. The majority of those who left were male, looking to enhance their family's economic situation by migrating to a land with hopes, dreams and most importantly, money.

### **Western Imperialism**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century opium smoking became popular in the Far East and trading in opium was a very important source of income for the colonial rulers—the English, the Dutch, and the Spanish. Although opium was available in Europe at that time, its use was not problematical.

Chinese green tea had become very popular among Europeans and Chinese silk and porcelain were also highly prized. The Chinese however, had little need of what the west had to offer except for gold and silver creating a serious trade imbalance especially for the British who were weary of sending shiploads of silver to Hong Kong. Their solution was to develop a third-party trade: exchanging Chinese merchandise with opium from India and Southeast Asia despite the banning of opium by the Chinese imperial government.

Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain began “smuggling” opium into China to support its trade with India and its markets at home. The British coveted spices and silk and silver from China and needed to create a market for commodities out of India to support its empire-building activities in the Asian sub-continent. The effects of opium on the Chinese population were so severe that the government of China sent Inspector Lin Zexu to Canton to put an end to the problem. He destroyed over 20,000 chests in the port containing approximately 2.5 million pounds of opium. (<http://www.dimensional.com/~randl/opie.htm>)

Britain responded with military action and the First Opium War (Figure 1) broke out in 1839. Severely overmatched, China lost the war and was forced to sign

"The Treaty of Nanjing" in 1842 by which considerable control of its economy was ceded to Britain. (<http://www.wikipedia.org>). Hong Kong became a British territory and England was given 'most-favored-nation' status. British nationals were exempted from Chinese law.



**Figure 1.** This painting best represents the bloodshed and chaos during the First Opium War. (<http://www.opiumaddiction.com/opium-war.htm>)

The city of Hong Kong remained British territory from that time until 1997. It is indeed ironic that the start of the occupation of Hong Kong coincided with significant emigration to other lands while the end of the occupation also witnessed significant movement of Hong Kong nationals to the same places in the 1980s and 1990s.

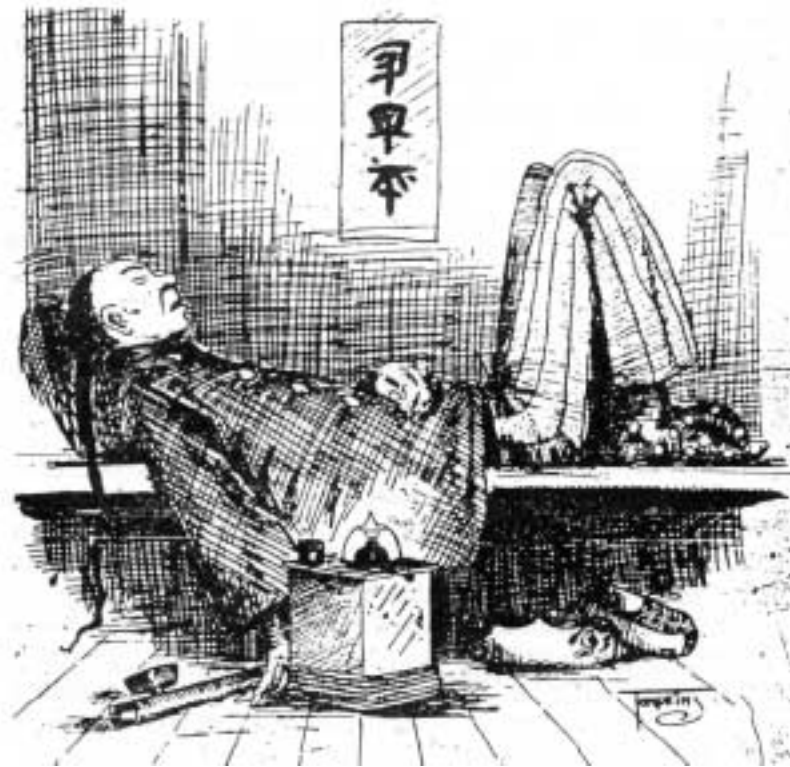
In 1856 the Second Opium War (also called the Anglo-French War) began when Britain took umbrage to Chinese officials lowering the British flag of a ship registered in Hong Kong. France participated as an ally of Britain since a French missionary was murdered in Peking (Beijing). China lost the war once again in 1859 and this time, they were forced to sign "The Treaty of Tianjin" legalizing the "coolie" trade<sup>1</sup> among other concessions. (<http://www.wikipedia.org>) Strictly speaking, the term "coolie" applied to any cheap, unskilled labour, but mainly to those from China. As a result, Chinese peasants were exported to Great Britain, Canada, the US, Cuba and Peru to work as cheap labour.

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<sup>1</sup> The word "coolie" derives from two Chinese words – "koo" meaning to rent, and "lee" meaning muscle.

### **Some Opium Facts**

As far back as 100 AD, opium has been used as a folk medicine, taken with a beverage or swallowed as a solid, but towards the middle of the 17th century, opium smoking was introduced into China resulting in serious addiction problems. In the 18th century opium addiction became so serious that the Chinese government attempted to prohibit opium cultivation and trade with Western countries. At the same time opium made its way to Europe and North America, where addiction grew out of its prevalent use as a painkiller.



**Figure 2.** "The Opium Fiend at Home in Chinatown" – cartoon from ***Vancouver World*** (Feb. 10, 1912). (Anderson, 1991)

Opium is an extract of the seedpods of the opium poppy plant. Opium was the world's first authentic antidepressant. Unlike other pain-relievers such as ethyl alcohol, opium does not impair sensory perception, intellect, or motor coordination. At low doses, opium is a stimulant instead of a painkiller. In the early days of its use in China, opium was typically a social drug and opium smoking was a form of hospitality. It was as common as cigarette smoking is nowadays.

As the amount of opium imports began to rise, the population of China began developing serious addictions because of continued heavy use. Many of the Chinese sent overseas became addicted during the voyage since the drug

provided them with temporary physical relief from the hardship of the journey. In Canada, the Chinese were particularly despised for introducing the habit of opium smoking to Victoria. In 1867, a census of Chinese settlements in regional Victoria recorded at least 80 opium shops (Figure 3) in 9 centres. It is estimated that over 40% of the Chinese workers in mining camps around the world used opium on a regular basis. (<http://www.sbs.com.au/gold/>)



**Figure 3.** At the back of opium shops, there was a “den” for users to gather and enjoy the drug together.



**Figure 4.** Not only men smoked opium, women frequently indulged as well.

### **Why did men come and not women?**

Only a small number of Chinese women came to British Columbia during this period because of the high cost and difficult travel. Women stayed at home due to the lack of jobs overseas and to care for the family, both their own and that of their husband. To provide the support offered by a family, the Chinese communities formed "tongs". *Tongs* (or community associations) served as surrogate families for single, Chinese men while they were working overseas. These associations maintained a close link to their families back home as they consisted of members of the same extended family.

In China, women in the peasant communities were not brought up to lead an independent life. Daughters were often considered an economic burden. They were often victims of infanticide or were sold as servant girls, concubines or prostitutes. Men were always the leaders of the household with the responsibility to support the whole family and so, the rush of migrants from China was male-dominated as they left their homeland responding to stories of gold in many parts of the world. Chinese migrant workers participated in numerous gold rushes in Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and South America.

Statistics from 1902 indicate that there were 92 wives among the 3,283 Chinese men in Victoria, and among these 92 families, the average size was 3.6 persons. For many other wives, they would have to wait decades—until the repeal of immigration legislation in 1947—before they could reunite with their family. The war efforts of the Chinese Canadian community, and the young Chinese men who laid down their lives fighting two wars for Canada would soften the government's immigration policy on family reunification.

In 1921 there were 37,163 Chinese men and only 2,424 Chinese women. The ratio was about 15 males for every female; not to mention that there were few child-bearing Chinese women. The absence of Chinese women inhibited the growth of a second generation of Chinese Canadians born in Canada. Demographic statistics indicate that the population of those born in Canada only increased from 7% in 1921 to 12% in 1931.

The absence of wives and women drove some lonely bachelors to visit prostitutes. In the 19th century, San Francisco entrepreneurs exported girls and women groomed for prostitution to Canada's early Chinatowns. Soon after, brothels were set up in cities and towns along the mining trails.

Many of the miners' wives back in China endured tremendous hardship. One Chinese woman, married in 1921 at seventeen years of age, was unable to join her husband in Canada until 1952; thirty three years later. For women in China, married life meant seeing their husbands a few times each decade. For others, the separation was permanent.

"He came to Canada for four years, went back to China, then came back here for another 10 years, and returned to China. He went back to China four times...Some people's husbands came to Canada and never returned...They got over here and couldn't find a job, so they never had money to send back and didn't have money to return to China, so they just stuck here." (*Peter Li, 1988*)

The women, who did come prior to the passing of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923, were the wives of the elite merchant class.

There were a small number of Chinese women who were kidnapped or sold into slavery and brought to North America. These women were forced to work as waitresses and prostitutes in the tea houses. In the early 20th century, the Woman's Missionary Society was established to rescue Chinese girls brought over for immoral purposes. The negative image of the few Chinese women working as slave girls, prostitutes and concubines was popularized in the media.

In 1902, white prostitutes outnumbered Chinese prostitutes 150 to 4.

In 1922, the British Columbia courts called "sexual relations between white women and Chinese men the ultimate in human degradation".

The Press at that time accused Chinese men of "violating" white women.



**Figure 5.** Chinese mother and child circa 1890.

### **What are Tonggs?**

The Chinese were infamous for the formation of *tonggs*, which translates to a "hall," with respect to a "meeting hall." These associations are misunderstood by Western society that views them as secret, criminal associations. Although this may have been true in some situations, the majority of the tonggs were fraternal associations based on clan, surname or locale. Since the Chinese population

came from many different villages in China, it is natural that many of these “families” tried to stay together. The tongs acted more like an extended family and played a major role in the mining camps where the men were isolated from their friends and family back home in China. Some examples of these organizations include the Oylin Association, Tsang Sang Association, Wong's Association, Lung Duck Tong, and Mee Yin Tong, all of which were established before 1894 in Barkerville. (<http://www.barkerville.ca>)

The tongs were used as gambling halls, restaurants, saloons, community centers, boarding houses, hospitals, and old-age homes. To fill the need for a family, the Chinese workers would go to sit, visit, eat, or play a game of Mah Jong, dominoes, or Fan Tan. The tongs helped them cope with the cultural and racial conflicts in Canada and served as a political organization to protect Chinese rights and preserve their language and culture. The tongs provided services for ancestor worshipping, celebrations such as Chinese New Year, and the observation of important feast days. In some cases, they also served as courts to resolve disputes between its members. Tongs were the center of Chinese communities, not just in mining camps, but throughout Canada.

Profits from gambling helped keep the tongs operating and providing many useful services. These included accommodations for new arrivals, helping members find a job, tending to the sick, paying funeral expenses, providing mail services, writing letters to family back home, and helping ailing members to return to China. In some cases, this trip took place after death as it was customary to have the bones of a deceased returned to China.

Emily Carr, the famous Canadian artist, described this practice in Victoria as follows (<http://www.barkerville.ca>):

"On the far side of the cemetery the Chinese... lay in rows in front of unpainted headboards with only Chinese characters written on them... When there were bones enough they would all be gathered together from the graves and shipped back to China."

*Chee Kung Tong:*

The most famous tong was the *Chee Kung Tong* in Barkerville. It occupied two buildings in town—one being the gathering place and hostel and the other serving as a meeting hall. The meeting hall had various rooms and altars for use by members of different status in the organization.

*Tai Ping Fong (Peace Room):*

The *Tai Ping Fong* translates as Peace Room. This tong was used as a home to care for the aged. Although most Chinese migrated with the intention to return home, poverty, sickness and age made the final journey impossible for some. In these cases, the tongs assumed the responsibility for these comrades.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **HOW DID THEY COME?**

*A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.*

- Confucius

#### **Pig Business**

The Chinese government had long banned emigration but following the Second Opium War, emigration treaties with Britain and France were concluded in 1860. The desire of western businesses for cheap labour stimulated the "coolie trade". But even prior to this arrangement, thousands of Chinese migrants had been smuggled out of China to participate in the California gold rush of 1849.

When the Chinese merchants in San Francisco heard rumours of the gold discovery in the lower Fraser River, they sent a scout to the Fraser region to verify the truth. He returned in early 1858 and assured them of gold mines in the region and thus began the Chinese migration north from California. The announcement of gold on the Fraser River brought thousands to "Gold Mountain", the Chinese term for Canada at the time. (<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/>)

In 1858, Hop Kee & Co. of San Francisco signed a contract with a shipping agent, Allan Lowe & Co., agreeing to pay the latter \$3,500 to ship 300 Chinese workers and 50 tons of merchandise to Victoria with \$20 for each additional passenger. (<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/>) In those days, it took about 13 days to travel by boat between San Francisco and Victoria. Throughout the summer and fall, scores of Chinese arrived to join in the Fraser gold rush coming by boat to Victoria, or by overland routes through the Territory of Washington. Soon after, thousands of Chinese gold-seekers arrived from Hong Kong by ship (Ma, 1979).

In the spring of 1859 another 2,000 Chinese entered B.C. from California. Most of these early Chinese immigrants were employees of large Chinese companies in San Francisco operating as an organized team. (<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/>)

The "coolie trade", also known as "Pig Business", was one of the early ways by which Chinese peasants travelled overseas. Recruiters, many backed by North

American companies, used trickery and coercion to force peasants to sign labour contracts. Some of them, whose skills were highly prized, were kidnapped and literally locked in "piggins" to be smuggled out of China by ship. Once at sea, conditions were dreadful and over a quarter of these "passengers" died due to overcrowding, lack of food, unsanitary conditions and harsh treatment. In 1888, the SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER described the conditions aboard one of these boats as follows:

"The space assigned to each Chinaman is about as much as is usually occupied by one of the flat boxes in a milliner's store. It would be a strange sight to one not accustomed to it, to see a framework of shelves, not eighteen inches apart, filled with Chinese. If a few barrels of oil were poured into the steerage hold, its occupants would enjoy the distinction so often objected to, of being literally 'packed like sardines'."



**Figure 6.** Chinese Immigrants aboard ship, 19th Century

### **"Credit-ticket" System**

Many Californians of the time considered the "coolie trade" to be slavery and they began to protest against contract labour. But businessmen of the day wanted and needed cheap labour so their answer to this campaign was to establish the "credit ticket" system in which an employer paid for a worker's passage and in return, the worker had to pay this back from the money earned. The worker was obliged to serve that company for a certain period of time during which the employer would also charge for food. Since these costs were high and the wages were very low, this system was not much better than outright slavery.

### **Paying one's own way**

A small number of Chinese merchants were able to pay their own way overseas. This group of people traveled with the hope of potential trade between China and the west coast ports in Canada. Entrepreneurs in the true sense of the word, these venturers were successful in setting up businesses that still thrive today in the centre of many Chinatowns along the west coast of North America.

Some Chinese families were able to pay for their trip by mortgaging their farms or borrowing money from friends and relatives, but this method of emigration was rare. Although small in numbers, these more wealthy immigrants played a major role in the impact of their Chinese brethren on Canadian development. Many set up businesses in cities like Victoria to serve the white and Chinese population alike. These ranged from import/export companies to laundries and restaurants. Some of these Chinese merchants helped bring coolies and contract workers to North America by recruiting and transporting them across the Pacific.

As Chinese society grew and became more established, a number of merchant families actually emerged from the mass of labourers who had arrived in search of "Gold Mountain." Perhaps none was more successful than Yip Sang who arrived from southern China in 1882.

First he washed dishes, cooked, then learned to pan for gold, but went bust. Next he sold coal door-to-door in Vancouver. Intelligent and enterprising, he soon became superintendent for Kwong On Wo Co. in charge of thousands of Chinese labourers grading the roadbed for the new transcontinental railway. In 1888 he established the Wing Sang Co. as an import-export business, then expanding into fishing, canning, lumber, and a travel agency for Canadian Pacific which brought thousands of Chinese to British Columbia. He married four times, had 23 children and 67 grandchildren who became business leaders.

Yip Sang spent the first half of his life in poverty, the second half in riches. He became a philanthropist, starting the first Chinese hospital and the first Chinese school. He organized the Chinese Benevolent Association and he was a life-time governor of the Vancouver General Hospital. When he died in 1927 at the age of 82, he had overcome poverty, prejudice, and racist laws to become one of Vancouver's most respected citizens and the unofficial mayor of Chinatown.

When coal was discovered at Nanaimo, the Chinese moved north from Victoria. However as the gold rush brought more and more miners north, by the summer of 1858, Victoria was a cluster of tents strung out in uneven rows, housing 6,000 immigrants. The Chinese formed their own tent community within this town.

By December 1858, the future premier of British Columbia, Amor de Cosmos, derogatorily referred to Victoria as "Little Canton" but undeterred by racial hatred, Chinatown quickly expanded. In 1859, a Chinese doctor, Ah Chi, opened the first

dispensary for non-Chinese on Johnson Street. Shortly thereafter, the dispensary moved to Cormorant Street to become the centre of Victoria's developing Chinatown. Prior to that, a Chinese laundry had been established.

By 1860, there were as many as 6,500 Chinese in British Columbia. Those who came in the 1860s were a continuation of the migrations to California in the previous decade. The 1871 census counted 1,548 Chinese as the bulk of them had dispersed to the interior. But as the gold mines became depleted and the construction of the railway neared completion, the distribution of the Chinese population became increasingly urban with over a third of the population living in Victoria itself by the end of the 1870s. A major Chinese company from San Francisco, Kwong Lee, opened a Victoria office on Cormorant Street. Lee Chong, a merchant from San Francisco, was put in charge. He was the first Chinese person to bring his wife and children to Victoria.

By 1880, Victoria's Chinatown had become the largest Chinese community in all of Canada. In 1911, it covered 6 city blocks, and housed approximately 4,000 people. As the community grew, Chinatown expanded to include shops, schools, herbalist stores, theatres and restaurants. During the next decade, the Chinese community increased. By 1901, its population had reached nearly 3,000. For the next fifty years, it was the largest Chinatown in Canada. However, after the 1920s, Chinatown entered a withering stage as its residential population began declining and its socio-economic activities began to wane. Nevertheless, it still was the second largest Chinese population in Canada until surpassed by Toronto during the 1940s and then later by Montreal in the 1950s.

A listing of the Chinese in British Columbia by surname and county of origin was compiled by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in 1884-85.

County	周 Chow	李 Li	黃 Wong	陳 Chin	林 Lam	梁 Leung	謝 Der	馬 Ma	別姓 Others	總和 Total
Taishan 台山		219	119	64	122	25		163	446	1,158
Kaiping 開平	408	24	56			35	82		344	949
Xinhui 新會	38	123	61	33	40	21			299	615
Enping 恩平		22	19	39		32	18		361	491
Panyu 番禺	55	39	56	34	13	22	65		513	798
Hsshan 鶴山		48	41	12	45	31			125	302
Others 其他	33	48	63	68	15	39	27	8	442	743
Total 總和	534	523	415	250	235	205	193	171	2,530	5,056

This census reveals that most residents came from 14 counties in Guangdong Province in South China. These 5000 can be classified into 129 clans according to their surnames. A total of 8 clans accounted for half the total population of Chinese in British Columbia and half also came from one of three counties.

In Vancouver, by 1886, Chinese people had begun to settle at the corner of Carrall and Pender (known as Dupont at the time). The main business was laundries. The settlement slowly spread eastward along Pender. However, all was destroyed during the disastrous fire of June 13, 1886. Within 6 months, the bulk of the buildings were rebuilt.

Because of a severe economic depression, unemployed white workers through their union expressed strong feelings against Chinese labour. The Knights of Labour believed Vancouver should exclude all Chinese. In early 1887, Anti-Chinese Leagues were formed and meetings held throughout B.C. On Feb. 24, 1887, one of these meeting was held in Vancouver following rumours that a hundred Chinese had landed in Vancouver.

After the meeting adjourned, someone called for "those in favour of running out the Chinese tonight!" The crowd responded with a roar and an estimated three to four hundred men marched through the snow to the Chinese camp at the western end of Coal Harbour Bridge. The Chinese were herded out of the camp and it was destroyed. To escape the kicking and manhandling, some Chinese jumped into the icy waters of Burrard Inlet while the rest were chased onto the CPR right-of-way without shelter. The mob returned downtown and set fire to some Chinese buildings on Carrall Street. The next day the Chinese residents were forced to leave for New Westminster.

The Chinese did not return to Vancouver until the Attorney General in Victoria introduced *An Act for the Preservation of Peace within the Municipal Limits of the City of Vancouver* and brought 36 constables from Victoria to Vancouver. By the end of 1887, present day Vancouver Chinatown began to take shape along Dupont from Carrall to Main (known as Westminster Avenue at the time) with 32 businesses. Over the next eighty years the Chinese community remained in this area expanding later to Gore St. on the east and Keefer on the south.

## CHAPTER 4

### BACKGROUND ON THE BC GOLD RUSHES



Billy Barker, founder of Barkerville (Wright, 1984)

There were three major gold rushes that affected British Columbia in the mid-1800s – the Fraser River, the Cariboo, and the Klondike. The Fraser River gold rush began in the 1850s and was followed by the Cariboo gold rush in the 1860s which eventually moved as far north as Barkerville. While the Fraser gold rush attracted the Chinese to BC, it was during the Cariboo rush that the first Chinese community was established in Canada in Barkerville. Today, Barkerville is a major tourist attraction, offering a glimpse of B.C.'s early history.

The Cariboo Rush of 1862 established the town of Barkerville, which became the hub of the Cariboo. To improve transportation between the Fraser delta and the Cariboo, the government contracted to construct a 400km wagon road from

Lillooet to Alexandria. The contractor, G.B. Wright, could not find white labourers because they were all panning for gold. Wright then had to hire 1,500 Chinese labourers to finish the work.

Afterwards, another route was developed called Cariboo Road from Yale up the Fraser to Lytton, then up the Thompson River, a tributary of the Fraser. Again, Chinese workers were relied upon to do the work because white labourers could not be found. The work was very hazardous - the road had to be cut into the cliffs and supported by wooden bridges spanning deep gullies. Landslides were frequent with many casualties. At China Bluff, named for the large Chinese population that took up residence there, the road had to be placed on a wooden trestle to clear the bluff.

In August 1896, two Yukon Indians Skookum Jim Mason and Tagish Dawson Charlie, along with George Carmack from Seattle found gold in the Klondike River and set off one of the greatest gold rushes in history. In 1897, an army of gold-seekers, unaware that most of the good Klondike sites were already claimed, boarded ships in Seattle and other Pacific port cities and headed north.

To reach the Klondike, the Chilkoot Pass was one of the most common routes. It was steep and hazardous; rising 1,000 feet over the last half-mile which became known as the “golden staircase”. There were 1,500 steps carved out of snow and ice that worked its way up to the top of the pass. Snow slides were rampant (Figure 7) taking the lives of many aspiring miners. The Klondike gold rush is today a tale of hope and hardship that has become engrained into the heritage of the Canadian nation. The Chinese participated in this rush just as they had in the earlier ones.



**Figure 7.** Exhumation of the bodies of tramway men buried in a snow slide in the Chilkoot Pass.

During the Fraser and Cariboo gold rushes, Fort Victoria (as Victoria was then known) also prospered thanks to the business provided by the gold miners who either wintered over in the city or passed through on their way north.

The Chinese from California had heard of Governor James Douglas and his fairness to racial minorities, which in part, was what drew them to British Columbia from the US. Once the gold rushes ended, many Chinese returned to Victoria to live. For a time, life in Victoria was good. The Chinese started import businesses and worked as small merchants to build a strong community.

### **Sir James Douglas**



Sir James Douglas, founder of settlement, trade, and industry for Vancouver Island and British Columbia, is often referred to as The Father of BC. He also helped the Hudson's Bay Company expand its trading monopoly into the Pacific Northwest.

Born in Demerara (now Guyana) in 1803, he was dubbed a "Scotch West Indian" being the son of a Scottish merchant and a free coloured-woman. At 12, he was sent to Lanark for schooling and at age 16, he was apprenticed to the North West Company. He became an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) on the merger of these two trading companies in 1821. Four years later, while attached to Fort St. James in New Caledonia, Douglas accompanied Chief

Factor William Connolly on the first annual fur brigade to Fort Vancouver. There he met Amelia, Connolly's part-Indian daughter who he later married in 1828.

George Simpson, governor of Rupert's Land met Douglas in 1828 and described him as a "stout powerful active man of good conduct and respectable abilities," but one who became "furiously violent when aroused". This tendency brought Douglas into such conflict with the Carrier Indian tribes of the Interior that Connolly decided to transfer Douglas to Fort Vancouver in 1830 where he eventually became Chief Trader in 1835 and Chief Factor in 1839.

In 1843, Douglas began constructing Fort Victoria for the HBC to replace the northern coastal forts. Anticipating the withdrawal of the HBC from Fort Vancouver after the British accepted the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel as the boundary between the United States and Canada in 1846, he had a trail blazed from New Caledonia to Fort Langley on the lower Fraser River. Fort Victoria became the main Pacific

depot in 1849 for furs shipped from the interior. The fear of American expansion northward caused Britain to lease Vancouver Island to the HBC for 10 years in 1849 and Douglas was appointed HBC agent on the island.

Meanwhile Britain had selected Richard Blanshard for governor of Vancouver Island - a barrister willing to serve without salary. Blanshard arrived in March 1850, but resigned shortly thereafter in August 1851. His abrupt departure from the colony was due to the harsh local conditions, HBC's treatment of striking miners at Fort Rupert, fears of Indian attacks, and the refusal of Douglas to soften his hard policy towards the local Indians. And so, Douglas was appointed Governor of Vancouver Island in October 1851, a position that inevitably led to considerable conflict of interest for him. Douglas arranged fourteen treaties with the Native Peoples of BC on Vancouver Island between 1850 and 1854 planting the seeds for many of the difficult Land Claims issues of today.

He found it difficult to reconcile the interests of being Governor and an HBC company official at the same time. The only revenue available for public buildings, schools, churches and roads derived from liquor licenses. Qualified and educated men were in such short supply that Douglas appointed his brother-in-law as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In 1856, he was instructed to establish an Assembly for Vancouver Island. Opposed to universal suffrage, he believed people wanted "the ruling classes" to make their decisions. Based on this belief, property qualifications for membership in the Assembly were set so high that only a few landowners could participate.

When gold was discovered in the Fraser Valley in 1857, an onslaught of American miners came to British Columbia searching for a "stake". These miners had strong US sympathies that could have easily brought about annexation of BC to the US. Because of this danger and in part, because of the shortage of qualified workers, Douglas invited California blacks to settle in British Columbia, specifically at Fort Victoria. This "invitation" was eventually extended to Chinese workers in California as well. The first black settlers arrived in April 1858, with the first Chinese "coolies" coming later that summer.

Douglas had originally claimed the land and minerals for the Crown but following the discovery of gold, he began issuing licenses to the miners. To attempt to control the invasion, he stopped foreign vessels from entering the Fraser River. This action appeared to protect the HBC monopoly for which he was reprimanded by Britain and so the special privileges granted to the HBC that were supposed to last until 1859 were immediately cancelled.

A new colony on the mainland was created by an act of the British Parliament. Douglas was offered this governorship on condition that he severed his fur trade connections. He was given extensive political power as it seemed unwise to Britain to give self-government to men (mostly miners) who were dubbed "wild,

miscellaneous, and transitory". In Nov. 1858, Chief Justice M.B. Begbie, upon his arrival in the new colony was whisked off to Fort Langley to supervise at the inauguration of Douglas as the first governor of British Columbia.

During his term as governor, Douglas seemed preoccupied with the welfare of the miners. For example, he ordered his gold commissioners to set up reserves for the Indians to eliminate the threat of war; to record mining and land claims; and to adjudicate all mining disputes. For the gold colony he devised a land policy that included mineral and pre-emption rights. His water legislation met the needs of the miners who employed rockers and flumes.

During the winter of 1858, he used voluntary labour to build a pack trail to the mining area above the Fraser River gorge. By 1862 he was planning to loan-finance a wagon road 640 km long following the Fraser to the Cariboo where gold nuggets had been found. The road was eventually extended in 1865 to Barkerville which had become a relatively cheerful mining community in comparison to the more somber and harsh southerly mines.

Towards the end of his term, Douglas became rather aloof perhaps due to a sensitivity to his background and that of his wife. Historical reports include complaints from some of his old friends about his pomposity and new associates were angered by his dictatorial manner. As Douglas' term as governor of Vancouver Island expired in 1863 and since British Columbia was about to be given a more liberal form of government, Britain viewed this as an opportune time for Douglas to retire. To soften the blow, he was knighted in 1863. Sir James Douglas continued to reside in Victoria until his death on August 2, 1877.

### **Matthew Baillie Begbie – the Hanging Judge**

In 1858 the British government appointed Matthew Baillie Begbie to be Judge of British Columbia. Begbie soon provided the gold commissioners with significant credibility as he toured the colony rapidly establishing British justice across the entire mainland. He relied on the traditional British practice of circuit courts by riding out to the people to try cases rather than holding court at some central location. He spent half a year away on circuit reaching every corner of the non-native settlement, no matter how remote.

Dressed in traditional robes, wig and black cap, Begbie would conduct his business from a tent. The proceedings were often held in the open if the weather was good. Most offences were fairly ordinary ones resulting from drink, greed, or lust. But from 1859 to 1872, Begbie presided over trials by jury of 52 murder cases. Five individuals were acquitted, nine found guilty of a lesser charge, and thirty-eight were convicted. Of the twenty-seven



who were hanged, twenty-two were Indians, one was Chinese, and four were white. Because of this, Begbie became known as the "Hanging Judge".

British Columbians feared that the early miners from California would bring lawlessness, vigilantism, and lynchings that were prevalent down south. Begbie's presence may have made the difference as one traveler noted in his journal:

"Passed Judge Begbie on horseback. Everyone praises his just severity as the salvation of Cariboo & terror of rowdies."

Begbie's role was perhaps summed up best in 1870 by a speaker in the legislative assembly:

"Justice has been properly administered in the country; there has been absolute security to life and property."

In 1860 a Californian white miner was accused of assaulting an Indian at Yale. Americans tended to have deep prejudices towards the native population considering them a sub-class of humans and continually having violent confrontations with them. When the charges were laid, a great deal of opposition and anger from the local miners ensued. Fearing trouble, Begbie sat in on the trial and for the first time, a white man was convicted solely on evidence given by natives. It was a somber reminder to wrongdoers that Begbie would not discriminate by race. Furthermore, there is evidence that he was actually an advocate for minority groups. A municipal by-law in Fort Victoria attempted to declare Chinese laundries to be a public nuisance that should be put out of business. In rendering judgment, Begbie stated:

"Blacksmith's forges are probably more liable to give and take fire from sparks; butcher shops are far more offensive to the eyes and clothes and olfactories of foot-passengers, with greasy and bleeding carcasses lumbering the sidewalks and infecting the air with the odour of meat curing; stables with their muck-heaps several yards high are more pregnant with pungent and misalubrious gases, large packing-cases more obstructive to the thoroughfare, than anything that can be alleged against these wash-houses. Yet all these other matters, each of which might be termed a nuisance of no common degree, are allowed to exist clustered together in the very busiest part of the centre of the city without a word of rebuke."

and with that he declared the by-law invalid.

The first two gold rushes occurred almost on top of one another. Initially, the trail to the north passed up the Lillooet Valley north of Harrison Lake. The town of Port Douglas, named after the Governor, became the jumping-off spot in the late

1858 for the Cariboo, but as the road up the Fraser Canyon began to develop, the Harrison-Lillooet Trail diminished in importance and Port Douglas essentially became a "ghost town" by 1866. Chinese migrant workers had an impact on the Harrison-Lillooet trail as well as on Port Douglas. Judge Matthew Begbie made one of his first trips to Lillooet in March 1859. His group travelled up the Fraser Canyon, but returned via the new trail to Port Douglas. His clerk, Arthur Bushby, wrote in his journal:

"... there are many Chinese travellers – good peaceful people...very polite." He was taken by the different styles that were used to carry heavy loads, "the Indians on their backs suspended by a band from their head – the Chinese on long poles over their shoulders – the Englishmen on their shoulders."



**Figure 8.** A Chinese worker carrying baskets on a pole.

A Victoria news correspondent noted,

"Hundreds of Celestials are arriving at Port Douglas for the mines."

Canada's first Chinese baby, Won Alexander Cumyow, was born at Port Douglas in 1861. Cumyow later became well known as the Vancouver court interpreter from 1888 to 1936.

Following the smallpox epidemic of 1863 which devastated so many British Columbians, particularly the First Nations peoples, an isolation hospital was built at Port Douglas to care for 10-15 patients, "white, coloured and Chinese alike."

As the Cariboo rush continued, Barkerville (Figure 9), today a tourist heritage site, became a "boom town" even as Port Douglas slipped into oblivion. Quesnel Mouth, located at the junction of the Quesnel and Fraser rivers, became the new

jump-off spot to the mine fields. When the road was finally cut through to Barkerville in 1865, the white prospectors and businesses moved out of Quesnel Forks. Chinese migrants moved in soon after and the town became an almost entirely Chinese settlement with 400 Chinese miners. By 1884 there was only one recorded white person in the town, W. Stephenson, a government employee.

Thousands of prospectors came, many of them from the U.S. and at the height of the gold rush as many as 5,000 Chinese lived in the Cariboo. With over 20,000 prospectors in Barkerville, the Chinese provided most of the necessary community services including grocery stores, cottage farming, restaurants and laundries (FabbiShushan and Duchesne, 1998).

Barkerville consisted of wooden structures on log posts on both sides of a muddy street parallel to Williams Creek. As the main distribution center, Barkerville supplied other mining communities in the Cariboo. The early Chinatown in Barkerville was nothing more than tin shacks and canvas tents. Barkerville had the first recorded Chinese restaurant, the Lung Duck. Later on, Chinatown evolved into two-storey buildings that Chinese merchants leased from white landlords. These shops served as gathering places for conversation and as a centre to find work and shelter. For these early pioneers, Chinatown was a place where they could practice their customs and speak their dialects.



**Figure 9.** The mining town of Barkerville, before the great fire. (Wright, 1984)

In 1868, a raging fire swept through the wooden homes in Barkerville leaving only one building standing in the white town, but sparing most of Chinatown

(Figure 10). By 1869, due to the efforts of the courageous miners who decided to stay, the town was completely rebuilt. (Wright, 1984)

### **The Chinese and Barkerville**

The British Columbia census of 1871 counted 1,548 Chinese in Barkerville of which only 53 were women, but by the late 1870s, Chinese families began to arrive in the Cariboo. It is difficult to determine exactly how many Chinese actually were living in the Cariboo. The numbers were often exaggerated, as a result of the racial and cultural tensions that existed. The Cariboo Sentinel reported on June 12, 1865 that for the week ending Saturday, May 27, 1865, 487 passengers entered the port of New Westminster and three quarters of these were Chinese. On May 28, 1866, it stated that there were 517 Chinese men who passed Clinton on their way to the Cariboo from the beginning of the season until May 20 of that year. (<http://www.barkerville.ca>)



**Figure 10.** The mining town of Barkerville after the great fire. (Wright, 1984)

Chinese laborers in Barkerville assisted in both businesses and mining. While the mines employed most of the migrants, merchants, grocery stores, pack trains, and restaurants also provided jobs for many Chinese settlers. To maximize efficiency in the mines, many were hired as woodchoppers to provide fuel.

Chinatown consisted of many small cabins that normally housed 3 to 6 miners. There were limited facilities and these were usually infested with rodents. There was often a wood stove for boiling water, cooking simple meals and keeping the

cabin warm. The laborers generally worked and lived in groups from the same community in China and they all used their own cook.

Although the daily life of the Barkerville Chinese is likely to have closely resembled that of the non-Chinese population, there is less historical evidence about Chinatown making it difficult to appreciate their existence. The community was separated from the white community and there was little mingling among the two groups. One of the characteristic traits of Chinese houses was a high fence. Although their houses were small, there was always a high fence encircling houses with women as it was Chinese custom for a man to protect his wife(s) from prying eyes. Most of these families tended a vegetable garden and kept poultry in their yards. The Chinese provided much of the food in the Cariboo. Chinese farmers supplied pork in the district and many of the residents provided vegetables for the wider community, to the dismay of some, as reported by the Cariboo Sentinel:

"The Chinese are not behind their brethren in taking advantage of the times. It appears that the whole of our vegetable products in daily use are held by the children of the flowery kingdom, who no doubt seeing a fine opportunity in increased demand for articles of that description have raised them at least 100 percent; potatoes (sic) that were selling a week ago for 10 cents are now up to 20 cents." ([www.barkerville.ca](http://www.barkerville.ca))

The Chinese also contributed Dim Sum to the local cuisine, which are small dough-wrapped delicacies filled with meat, seafood, chestnuts, mushrooms or other morsels.

As individual miners began to leave the Interior in the mid-1870s, a number of rich entrepreneurs emigrated from China to start mining companies. Two decades after the beginning of the gold rush, the Chinese owned more than 30 mining companies in the Cariboo and continued to produce large amounts of gold from these "depleted" orebodies (<http://www.barkerville.ca>).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE EVOLUTION OF CHINESE SETTLERS**

*We search for truth, but we are quickly wrapped up by partial truth.  
We search for kindness, but our own attachments replace it with judgments.  
We search for freedom, but our own insecurity has already imprisoned our soul.  
We search for passion, but the selfish heart has no room for compassion.*

*- Li Hongzhi*

In 1858, the Victoria Gazette featured an article under the headline:

#### **A Pioneer Chinaman:**

"We have not yet seen a Chinaman in Victoria, though a small number of citizens of the Flowering Kingdom are known to have left California in the Fraser River exodus. From a sign which appears in our streets, however, it may be presumed that John is among us and bears the euphonious and suggestive legend, Chang Tsoo. Doubtless ere long, the familiar interrogation of 'Wantee Washee?' will be added to our everyday conversation library." (Ma, 1979)

According to reports in the Victoria Gazette, the first Chinese person to arrive in Victoria was Chang Tsoo on January 30, 1858. Six months later, on June 28, 1858, the first Chinese work team arrived from San Francisco. By the fall of 1858, thousands of miners were panning for gold in the river bars and bottom flats in the lower Fraser Valley between Hope and Yale. It wasn't until 1860 that Chinese workers came directly from Hong Kong and Macau. They were shipped to Victoria where they began a 60-day journey to Lagoon, a place 20 miles northwest of Victoria. Because the Chinese landed there, Lagoon was nicknamed "China Beach" (Ma, 1979).

One stream of migrants ascended the Fraser River and dispersed to the northern frontiers. Each stop along the river became known as a "bar" - Boston Bar, China Bar, and Big Bar. Another group followed the Dewdney Trail from Hope spreading east to the valleys of the Similkameen, Rock Creek and Kootenay rivers (<http://www.cayoosh.net/fraser.html>).

The Chinese miners were only permitted to prospect in abandoned mining sites. They accepted this because such sites were cheaper and easier to acquire. Another reason was the hostility they suffered upon their arrival. Many were beaten, robbed and kicked off their claims by angry whites. In the Cayoosh region in British Columbia, whites shot and killed two Chinese in a dispute over a mining claim. Elsewhere, the whites threatened to evict the Chinese.

But despite these hardships, the Chinese miners persevered. In January 1860, the Daily Colonist estimated there were 1,195 Chinese in the gold fields. They refused to give up and soldiered on in the face of adversity. One late purchase of a non-Chinese mine in 1878 called The Dancing Bill produced \$900,000 over worth of gold under Chinese management.



**Figure 11.** Chinese miner, panning for gold on the riverbed. Chinese miners invented the gold separating rocker table shown here (Taylor, 1978)

**What is a bar?**

A bar is a ridge of sand or gravel on a shore or streambed formed by the action of tides or currents. Many Chinese miners participated in placer mining on the riverbeds (Figure 11). Everyone knew that gold could be found; however, it was the amount of gold that differed from bar to bar.

The average wage for working miners was \$30-\$40/month, but the Chinese work teams were only paid around \$20/month per man and were assigned long work hours, given heavy work loads, bullied, assaulted and often accused of stealing gold ore. By 1861 the Fraser gold rush was over and of the miners in the Fraser

Valley, it was mainly the Chinese who remained behind eking out a bare living of a few dollars a day on the abandoned bars. (Ma, 1979)

By 1862 as the gold deposits continued to diminish, the Chinese were bullied away by the Europeans for fear that they would steal their jobs. Many Chinese moved to Port Douglas, Lytton and Lillooet. The Fraser River gold deposits were becoming exhausted and mining was pursued upstream into the Cariboo. The Chinese scattered throughout BC to locations in Quesnel, Williams Lake, Soda Creek, Quesnel Forks and Keithley. In 1863, the Chinese population of Yale was 1,000, 5,000 resided in Barkerville, while 1500 inhabited Port Moody. (Ma, 1979)

By 1866 when the gold fever from this second rush began to wane, the governor estimated the Chinese population had declined to 1,705. Many of these were making their living from placer mining, which didn't require much capital. The Chinese also operated their own mines, but Europeans often came and stole their deposits with the authorities looking the other way. When white men saw a mine as no longer being profitable, they would then sell it to a Chinese miner who would dedicate himself to digging these low-grade abandoned waste piles.



**Figure 12.** The Chinese developed their own equipment to extract gold.

The Chinese miners used similar methods to other miners, but were often referred to as *yap kong* (Cantonese) or *ru kuang* (Mandarin), which means, "enter the mine". This name derived from the practice of purchasing claims that had already been worked over and attempting to extract any additional gold. The Chinese worked diligently (Figure 12) on these claims and were often well rewarded for their efforts. The term "a Chinaman's chance" originated from the white workers who harassed the Chinese miners - it described the slim chance that a Chinese miner had to find gold. (<http://modelminority.com/printout259.html>) But the Chinese miners were ingenious at inventing novel ways to extract finely-

sized gold from these so-called depleted dumps. The Chinese surprised the white miners with their ability to work on large-scale projects. Chinese teamwork was greatly appreciated by mine owners. For example, Chinese workers would use pine trees to build wing dams up to two hundred yards across a stream. They also developed a chain pump that was turned by men walking on a treadmill mounted around a central axle. Through this kind of team work, Chinese miners could make a living where individual white miners could not or would not work.



**Figure 13.** Chinese miners washing gold on the Leech River, 1909  
(Paterson, 1943).

When the gold fields were exhausted, the Chinese found employment as domestic servants in Victoria, as coal miners' helpers at Nanaimo, and as seasonal workers in the Fraser River salmon canning industry. Aside from gold, the Chinese were also an important part of mercury and borax mining. Employers coveted Chinese labourers because they were cheap and reliable.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE MAKING OF THE CPR

*Where are the coolies in your poem, Ned?  
Where are the thousands from China  
who swung their picks with bare hand at forty below?  
Between the first and the million other spikes they drove,  
and the dressed-up act of Donald Smith, who has sung their story?*

*Did they fare so well in the land they helped unite?  
Did they get one of the 25,000,000 CPR acres?  
Is all Canada has to say to them written in the Chinese Immigration Act?*

- F. R. Scott

In 1881, the government of Sir John A. Macdonald authorized Andrew Onderdonk, a contractor for the Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.) to import Chinese workers to speed up the completion of the railway. His deputy, Michael Haney, said, "Of all the Chinese I met, not one was unreliable." (Berton, 1971)

Between 1881 and 1884, the construction of the railway drew as many as 17,000 Chinese migrants to BC. They were paid about \$2 a day, a little less than the white workers, but they received much more difficult and dangerous work such as manual drilling and blasting. They should have received sufficient food to eat for such heavy physical labor, but they often were not given it. A B.C. writer Bennett William wrote in his book "Builders of B.C.":

"Their whole month's food supply was about one mat of rice (50 lbs.), only about half enough to sustain their strength for the hard manual labor they were engaged in. An occasional piece of pork was thrown to them, but not very often.

Variety was provided during the fishing season when they were fed fish heads brought by the carload from the Fraser River canneries. For this garbage they were charged from \$12 to \$15 a month. The result was that by 1884 about 2,000 had died, reputedly from scurvy, but actually from starvation." (Ma, 1979)

It is well known that many Chinese labourers died building the railway. However, there is a great discrepancy in the number of deaths. William claims an enormous 2,000 deaths; however, official reports show only around 700 Chinese people died. The actual death count is likely a number between these two since many deaths went unaccounted. (<http://www.historytelevision.ca/>)

Although the Chinese were not respected for their culture, they stood their ground when it came to superstition. They wouldn't work anywhere near a dead body or where a person had died. When a man died on the job, the gang who had been working with him was moved to another section of the mine.

Taken from The Last Spike (page 202-203):

"Haney [Andrew Onderdonk's deputy] once came upon two thousand Chinese all sitting idle; one of their numbers had fallen off the bank and his corpse lay far below, spread-eagled on the rocks. In vain the walking boss argued and swore. He pointed out that it was impossible to reach the body. The bank was a sheer precipice, and no boat could approach it through the boiling waters.

'Well,' said Haney, 'what do you propose to do? Can't have these Chinamen standing around until that Chinaboy disintegrates.'

The walking boss scratched his head. 'There's an Indian who promises to move that body for ten dollars. I've tried to make a deal with him but he won't budge on that price and it's too much.'

'Never mind how much it is,' Haney retorted. 'Pay it and get those men back to work.'

He moved off down the line. During the evening a sharp explosion was heard in the canyon. When Haney returned, the Chinese were back at work and the body had vanished. The Indian had stolen some dynamite and caps, lowered them with a smouldering fuse down the canyon wall, and blown the cadaver to bits." (Berton, 1971)

The Chinese were not only commended for their abilities but also for their character. They didn't give up or quit despite being mocked and rejected. They trudged on and completed the longest railway in North America by 1884. While the whole country was celebrating the completion of the long-awaited C.P.R., the first Canadian Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, announced in Parliament, "without the great effort of Chinese labourers, the C.P.R. could not have been finished on schedule, and the resources of western Canada could not also be explored." (Berton, 1971)



**Figure 14.** Chinese workgang on CPR track.

But decades before their fellow countrymen were praised for building the railway, Chinese miners also gained recognition. They refused to give up the gold fields and soldiered on in the face of adversity, so much so that by 1875, the largest Chinese mining companies together produced gold to the value of \$300,000. These companies included Quang Lee, Dang Sing Dang, Sing Dang and Loo Gee Wing. The Ah Cow Mining Company operated near Nelson Creek in 1873 and there is evidence that the company mined this area for 20 years (Con et al, 1982). Of nearly 2,000 gold miners registered in the province in 1883, almost 1,500 were Chinese. About them the Inland Revenue Inspector commented:

“The larger number of claims in the province are owned and worked by Chinese, their more frugal habits, their greater industry and more moderate expectations of reward, making profitable to them claims that the white miners regard as not having sufficient attraction. But for the Chinese, the production of gold in this country would not reach nearly the sum shown.”

In 1879, Edgar Dewdney, the government engineer, said, “In a country where there are mining operations starting up in every direction, you cannot depend on the white labour; they run to the mines and leave the employer in the lurch, and the only labour they can depend upon is the Chinese.”

On Vancouver Island, the Chinese worked as coal miners. Cumberland, the coal mining centre northwest of Nanaimo and just south of Courtney had a Chinatown that rivaled San Francisco and Vancouver. Half the population of Cumberland spoke Cantonese. After mines closed in Cumberland and Nanaimo, some of the Chinese miners came to Vancouver and opened pig farms. On Mitchell Island, the Mah family delivered fresh pork everyday to the top hotels in Vancouver. In those days before the Knight Street Bridge, a ramp provided access for a truck to reach Marine Drive. It contained the cabin of the government food inspector, specifically to deal with that extensive farm occupying the west end of the Island.

Dr. J.S. Helmcken, who had arrived at Vancouver Island in 1850, told the first Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration in 1885 that

“The Chinese have cultivated the soil, raised vegetables, are employed in tanneries and at the canneries, in boot and shoe making, some in coal and gold mining and other labours. Having done these things, they have benefited the country. They have been producers – the one thing the country stands in need of.”

The Chinese helped link Canada from coast to coast with railway tracks built on hard work, determination and perseverance. The Last Spike was driven in 1885 but no Chinese worker was invited to attend the ceremony. Instead, most workers were simply let go. Some went back to China while others found work in industries such as forestry, saw mills, fishing canneries, coal mines and domestic services. Most moved to the east in search of other job opportunities.

As for those workers who remained in B.C. but could not find employment, the Chinese community did not sit and watch them die. In Victoria, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association was established to serve the needs of the abandoned workers and new immigrants. The CCBA looked after the poor, ill, and homeless. The organization fought racism, acted as mediator in disputes between the Chinese and white community, and represented Chinese Canadians well-before the Canadian government took on their responsibility. The existence of the CCBA shows there was a permanent and stable Chinese force from almost the very beginning dedicated to the aide of Chinese people in Canada.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **TREATMENT OF THE NEW IMMIGRANTS**

The Chinese could work for less than Canadian labourers because their families were in China and the money they sent home would buy much more in China than it did in Canada. This caused resentment of Chinese workers, reflected in crimes committed against them. On August 6, 1860, a group of Indians attacked the Chinese residence at the gold mine in Port Douglas. Two Chinese were killed and others were robbed of all their belongings. On April 25, 1861, a group of whites shot two Chinese in Yale. In 1864, a Chinese woman was murdered and her abandoned body was found in Quesnel Fork. In 1886, a Chinese miner was robbed of 8,000 dollars worth of gold by bandits in Clinton. (Ma, 1979)

Not only were hate crimes being committed against the Chinese but white people were trying to force them out of the industry and the country. The public claimed that the Chinese could not assimilate, were "unfair" competition in the work place, and drained money from the country. In order to calm these complaints, the Provincial Legislature in 1878 unanimously decided that the Chinese could no longer be employed on provincial public works. (Tan and Roy, 1985).

One would presume that those who had made such a major contribution to the development of Canada would receive a more superior social standing. However, almost all of the Chinese were laid off in 1884 after the completion of the railway. (Ma, 1979) Many of them returned back to their homeland, but those who could not travel to China, continued to find work despite all attempts to prevent them. Although Vancouver Island's coal companies had willingly employed Chinese helpers, white workers began a campaign to ban the employment of Chinese who earned less than half the daily wage of white miners. With limited and contradictory evidence, they claimed that the Chinese were unsafe workers.

Yielding under the pressure of the bitter coal miners, the provincial government encouraged the Chinese to leave. In 1884, it imposed a head tax of \$10 on all Chinese; it banned Chinese customs such as exhumation of bodies for shipment back to China and the non-medical use of opium (Tan and Roy, 1985).

Despite Prime Minister Macdonald's kind words, the federal government also decided that large numbers of Chinese were no longer required and increased the head tax to \$50 on all Chinese entering Canada after Jan. 1, 1886. (Tan and Roy, 1985)

In 1900, the Laurier government raised the head tax to \$100 and appointed a Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, which concluded that the Chinese were "obnoxious to a free community and dangerous to the state." In 1904, the government raised the head tax once again to \$500, a sum that virtually halted all Chinese immigration until 1908. (Tan and Roy, 1985).



**Figure 15.** Chinese Head Tax Receipt, issued by the Canadian Immigration Branch. Vancouver, 2 August 1918.  
Courtesy Vancouver Public Library, photo #30625

Even though the numbers of Chinese migrants were substantially decreased, this did not stop the violence against Chinese miners. Fake tax collectors would steal Chinese gold but the real tax collectors were just as bad, killing those poor souls who refused to pay. In the diary of one of these rogues, he wrote, "I was sorry to stab the poor creature; but the law makes it necessary to collect the tax; and that's where I get my profit."

After being dismissed from their jobs in 1885, thousands of workers returned once again to the Cariboo region to try mining one more time. White rascals tried

to earn "protection money" and gangs of roughnecks began attacking the Chinese everywhere. It became popular to cut off their queues and carry them in their belts as a sign of manhood.

### **What is a queue?**



**Figure 16.** A typical Chinese Emperor hat and an attached queue.

Under Manchu law, Chinese men were required to comb their hair into a single long braid called a queue. It was very humiliating for Chinese to have their queues cut off since among other dishonorable things, it signified that a man had been disowned by his family.

Chinese people could not testify against whites in court so whenever there was a riot involving whites against Chinese, although the whites would be arrested none would be convicted because there were no witnesses. Police tried to sustain order but the pressure of the public was so great that they were forced to look the other way. Many police officers even joined the public in mocking and mistreating the new migrants.

On August 8, 1853 the local newspaper wrote, "A Canadian yesterday attacked a Chinaman, beating him shamefully. The Chinamen in the neighborhood were afraid to interfere and the Canadians, of whom there was a large crowd, stood by and saw the poor Chinaman abused. The assailant held the unfortunate Celestial by the queue and kicked and beat him until he was tired, and when the poor fellow got loose and was going off, a policeman came up, saw by his bloody face that he had been in a fight and arrested him."

As the economy slowed, political parties wanted to win the favor of the voters by fighting for better working conditions and more jobs for Canadian workers. They blamed the Chinese for holding down wages and living standards. They told the workers the only way to improve their lives was to stop the Chinese from working. Slogans such as "Chinese must go!" "Yellow Peril," and "Chinese Menace" were rampant (Anderson, 1991). On August 7, 1869, Robert Holloway, editor of the Cariboo Sentinel, reported:

"Chinatown is universally voted a nuisance in Barkerville in every shape, sense or manner. Pigs are fed in the streets in front of the buildings; there is no regular sidewalk, the drainage is corrupted with animal and every kind of filth; in short every inconvenience and disagreeableness characteristic of a semi-barbarous race is

present in Chinatown. Let the Grand Jury take this subject into consideration with a review to removing or modifying these evils. Pig feeding in the streets ought to be stopped forthwith. A great many Chinamen have been sick lately, and no wonder. Let us compel them, however, for our own safety, to pay some attention to sanitary conditions. We have now a neat, clean-looking town, but its neatness is marred by the causes above referred to." (Wright, 1984)

However, Holloway neglected to mention that before the Barkerville fire, the white section of town had been in a similar condition; only after rebuilding were improvements made.

To win votes, politicians started using the Chinese as scapegoats and passed laws against them. People did not realize that when Chinese workers were driven out of the workforce that businesses were often forced to close, putting even more Canadian workers on the unemployed list. All they understood was that their families were hungry because they didn't have a job and that drove them to violence.

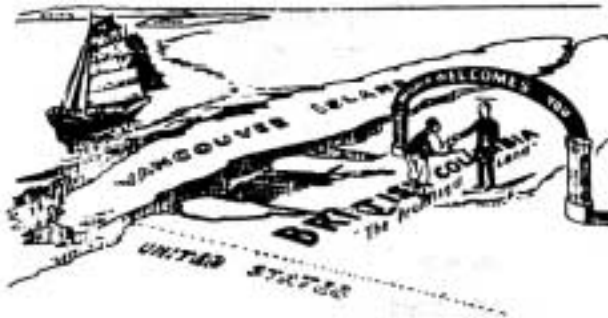
### **Secret Societies**

How was order kept among a group of people that the government didn't care about? The supporters of the Ming Dynasty in North America started the *Chee Kung Tong*. It held the structure of a triad society and the ultimate purpose was restore the Ming dynasty and its motto was "Overthrow darkness, restore the light." It first started in North America during the California Gold Rush as the Chinese chased after the gold rush, the *tong* followed. (<http://www.barkerville.ca>)

The first *Chee Kung Tong* in Canada was established in Barkerville in 1863. Like other *tongs*, it offered cultural, social and political comfort for the Chinese living away from home. Secretly, with funding from the workers, they were supporting the overthrow of the Chinese government. In 1912, the Manchu Dynasty in China was finally overthrown with the financial help of the *Chee Kung Tongs* located throughout China and North America.

The *Chee Kung Tong* had dominating power in the Chinese community of Barkerville. "Currently, one of the buildings in Barkerville depicts two Chinese sayings: on the left 'Outside nine mountains lie beautifully verdant' and one the right 'Inside the temple three gods are solemnly seated', the three gods being Lao Tzu, Buddha and Confucius." (<http://www.barkerville.ca>)

When its ultimate purpose was achieved, the secret reason for the *tong's* existence disappeared. Thus, the name was changed to the Chinese Freemasons and is now better known as the Freemasons Society.



# Liberal Candidates

are pledged to a

## White British Columbia



Right Hon. **VICTOR ODLUM**  
"The Chief Head Fighter"  
Liberal Candidate  
VANCOUVER SOUTH

**COPY OF TELEGRAM**  
CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY (LIMITED) TELEGRAM  
TELEGRAM  
I AM A BIG FAN  
WANT TO GO TO THE PACIFIC COAST  
I AM A BIG FAN  
WANT TO GO TO THE PACIFIC COAST  
I AM A BIG FAN  
WANT TO GO TO THE PACIFIC COAST

Who is to dominate British Columbia---the White or the Yellow man? Shall it be through the negligence of the Meighen Government as represented by the Hon. H. H. Stevens, that the development of this wonderful Province of



**MAYOR GALE**  
"The Big Game Hunter"  
Liberal Candidate  
VANCOUVER CENTRE

ours is to come under the domination of the Yellow Race? Speaking at the Opera House on the evening of September 19, eleven years ago, Mr. Stevens promised---  
"That one of my first acts, if elected, would be to try to improve the conditions of fishing on the Pacific Coast." The report of this meeting also states that Mr. Stevens "regretted to see the N.C. fisheries so largely in the hands of the Asiatics." And, still at another meeting at the Horse Show Building on Monday night of September 18, in the same year, the report reads: "Mr. Stevens, waving his hands about, told them what mighty things he would do, if he were sent to Ottawa. About eleven years have passed. What has Mr. Stevens done? Absolutely nothing! What are the results? 144 Japanese and 20,342 Chinese have been admitted in the last ten years. One birth in every nine in British Columbia this year is that of an Oriental child. Over one hundred logging and shingle camps are now entirely Japanese. Out of 1961 salmon licenses the Japanese hold 200. The Japanese control 10,147,000 acres of British Columbia's choice orchard lands. The Chinese control 14,751,771 of the choice stock farm lands. These are the bare facts.

## What is the Remedy?



**M. A. Macdonald**,  
B.C.  
"Country's Old Time  
Senator"  
Liberal Candidate  
SUDBURY

Each Liberal Candidate has pledged himself to make a White British Columbia. Sitting on the Government side---as they undoubtedly will under the new Government---they can achieve this purpose. They will make British Columbia a White man's country. They will develop our boundless resources, our mines, our forests, our fisheries, and our fertile valleys for the profit of the White man. Each Liberal Candidate believes that every "job" in British Columbia should be occupied by the White Man. It is indeed a sorry state of affairs when a returned citizen, who has won the highest reward at the disposal of his country---Michael O'Rourke, V.C.---publicly states that "the Meighen Government and the Oriental have turned him into the bread bin." If you would remedy these conditions you will mark your ballot on December 6 FOR THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE!

Figure 17. Taken from the *Province* December 3, 1921. (Anderson, 1991)

# 50,000 ORIENTALS IN B.C.

For Vancouver Centre



J. Lee (Hon.) MacIsaac

For Vancouver Harbour



C. C. Brown, M.P.

For Vancouver East



J. Lee (Hon.) MacIsaac

**C.C.F. Party Stands PLEDGED to Give THEM the Vote**

**The LIBERAL Party is OPPOSED to Giving These Orientals the Vote**

**WHERE WILL YOU STAND ON ELECTION DAY?**

A Vote for ANY C.C.F. CANDIDATE is a VOTE TO GIVE the CHINAMAN and JAPANESE the same Voting Right that you have! A Vote for a Liberal Candidate is a VOTE AGAINST ORIENTAL Enfranchisement

**Canada's Next Government Will Be Liberal!**

Under the new Liberal regime Canada will follow Britain's lead forward to prosperity ---even as Australia and South Africa already have done. It is important that Vancouver and the Lower Mainland have a solid Liberal representation at Ottawa in harmony with the new Mackenzie King Government which will be in power after October 14th.

*Vote For Vancouver!* X

When you go to the polls on Monday, Oct. 14, remember a vote for your Liberal Candidate is a vote for Greater Vancouver.

**Calendar of Liberal Meetings First Three Days of This Week**

Vancouver Centre	Vancouver Harbour	Vancouver East	Vancouver South
<p>Monday, Oct. 14, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>	<p>Monday, Oct. 14, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>	<p>Monday, Oct. 14, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>	<p>Monday, Oct. 14, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>
<p>Tuesday, Oct. 15, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>	<p>Tuesday, Oct. 15, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>	<p>Tuesday, Oct. 15, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>	<p>Tuesday, Oct. 15, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>
<p>Wednesday, Oct. 16, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>	<p>Wednesday, Oct. 16, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>	<p>Wednesday, Oct. 16, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>	<p>Wednesday, Oct. 16, 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.</p> <p>St. James' Presbyterian Church, 1100 St. James St. W.</p>

Remember, polls open at 8 A.M.; polls close at 4 P.M.

**INSURE VANCOUVER'S FUTURE BY VOTING LIBERAL ON OCTOBER 14**

For Vancouver South



Alex M. Stewart, M.P.

For Vancouver South



J. Lee (Hon.) MacIsaac

For New Westminster



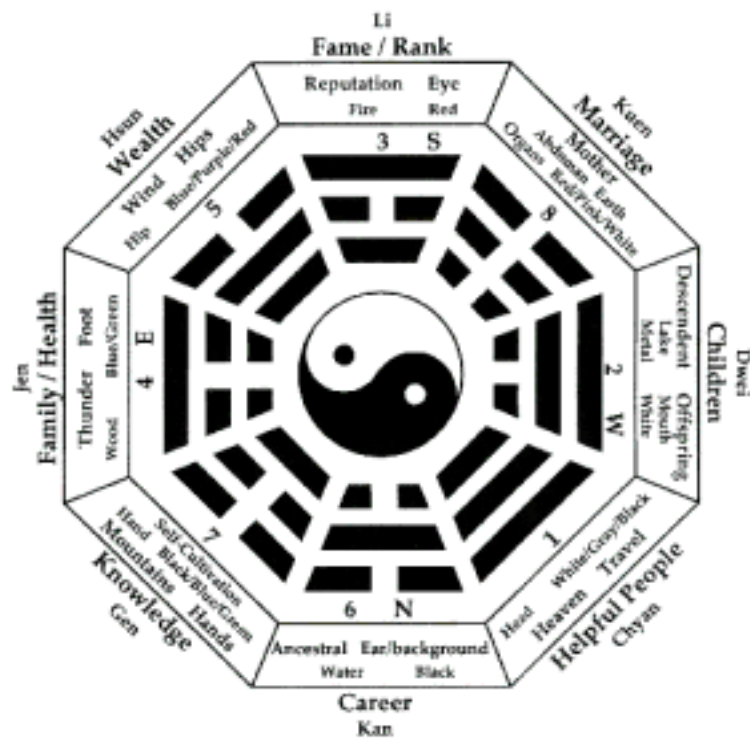
Thomas Reid

Figure 18. Taken from the *Province* - October 7, 1935. (Anderson, 1991)

The Freemasons were also known as Zhigongtang (CKT). The public was unsympathetic towards the Chinese and the police often looked the other way when judging Sino-Canadian fights. That gave a perfect opportunity for a group of individuals to rise up and solve problems for themselves. That's how the CKT got started and that's how the Chinese community managed to maintain order during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Tan and Roy, 1985)

## CHAPTER 8

### CHINESE CULTURE AND CHILDREN



A Chinese *Feng Shui* Tool - The Bagua Octagon<sup>1</sup>

Location and colours, the foundation for *Feng Shui*, plays an important role in Chinese culture, but it was not understood by western society of the time. *Feng Shui* refers to the Chinese art or practice of positioning objects, especially graves, buildings, and furniture, based on a belief in patterns of yin and yang and the flow of chi that have positive and negative effects. Different colours are seen on the walls of buildings, clothing, and merchandise packaging since Chinese associate certain colours with meanings.

<sup>1</sup> used to determine preferred locations for room arrangements and colours For example, white was commonly used in gambling halls to foster bad luck for the gamblers and good luck to the house. (<http://www.geomancy.net>).

The Chinese workers also brought their religious beliefs with them. Major Chinese religions include Buddhism, Daoism, and Popular Religion. The Chinese in Barkerville who practiced Popular Religion would worship gods through shrines or altars. Shrines or altars would be placed in homes or halls to pay tribute to the gods through the burning of idol “money” and food, usually ornamented with candles, bowls of fruit, red paper and other decorative items. Representations of the Kitchen God and Guang Di, the God of War and Patron of Adventurers, are in the Barkerville collection. The Chinese in Barkerville also practiced Confucianism which is not a formal religion. Confucianism is based on a philosophy developed by the great Chinese scholar Confucius, and is perhaps the most important aspect of Chinese daily life.

They also brought their culture with them; they ate Chinese food, used Chinese commodities, performed operas and practiced martial arts. They built temples for worship and held festivals. The older generations of Chinese migrants gave birth to a new generation of Canadian-born Chinese (CBC) children. The strength of the Chinese culture has caused many Chinese children to go through an identity crisis. To add to this problem, there is a language barrier today between the new generation of children and the older generations of parents from China. The children often feel their parents inferior because of their lack of skill in English.

Chinese children brought up in Canada had new skills to learn and social values to uphold. Over the years the changes that took place in Canada included reduced family sizes and reduced adult authoritarianism. In China, children were taught to have manners, be patient, conform and be gentle whereas in Canada, independence, expressiveness, and assertiveness were considered the new qualities that children should possess. With this new Canadian style, Chinese children have rejected parental control and demanded more freedom in making decisions.

For these reasons, the history of the hardworking Chinese miners was not passed down with dignity and pride in Canada. Many children and grandchildren of the working era forgot or neglected the significance of their culture in this country, especially in the province of B.C.

But here is what can happen if one believes in the innocence of children.

### **A Trip Back in Time**

by

Meg Iredale-Gray

Age: 11 (1999)

School: Mayne Island Elementary, Mayne Island, BC

<http://www.histori.ca/students/studentProject.do?ID=11375>

One September I was visiting Barkerville with my family, Sept. 15th to be exact, my birthday. Something amazing happened to me, something you won't believe. We were having breakfast at the Wake-Up-Jake Cafe. I was done, so I went outside and wandered up the street to the old Waterwheel on Williams Creek.

Waterwheels are built of wood. First of all a wood flume brings water from the creek onto the wheel; then water pushes the wood slats on the waterwheel and the weight of the water keeps the wheel going around. As it goes around, a rope with a bucket attached gets lowered into the mine, where a miner fills the bucket with 'paydirt' and the waterwheel brings the bucket back up to surface. The miners at the top of the mine empty the bucket of dirt into a sluice where the dirt gets washed off, leaving the gold behind! I sat down by the Creek beside the waterwheel when suddenly everything started to go blurry.

Then it is fine again and everything seems normal - except everything looks older and more used. And there are people; it is no longer a ghost town!

Around me are many Chinese men and white men dressed in baggy, dirty clothes. They are all talking together. I can hear snatches of their conversation - they are talking about the gold claims and a recent strike at the Shamrock mine. They seem to be congratulating one man - a small man with a big mustache and a bit of a beard. He invites all his 'mates' for a drink at Barry and Adlers Saloon. I start to follow them.

Then I see four ladies sitting on a porch. Three are dressed in red except one in a white dress with big, hooped skirts. The miners start to sing:



"Bonnie are the hurdies, O!  
The German hurdy-gurdies, O!  
The daftest hour that ere I spent,  
Was dancin' w' the hurdies, O!"

**Figure 19.** Hurdy-gurdy girls in the Canadian gold-fields (circa 1850s; photo, BC Archives)

Then I see a Chinese girl about my own age. She is going in the same direction so I slow to wait for her. I say hello. She looks at me as if I am very strange. I am thinking she is strange because I have never seen a Chinese girl dressed like

her. She is wearing black baggy pants with a long yellow and blue tunic on top. She has long black hair bound in a tight braid down her back.

She looks hard at me then with a small smile, she says hello. I like her immediately even though I have just met her.

"What's your name?" I ask.

"I am the daughter of Wa Lee" she tells me "and my name is Wa Chan."

She doesn't speak very good English, but I speak no Chinese. "My name is Meg", I tell her, "How old are you?" She holds up 10 fingers to show me she is ten years old. I grin, "Hey, I'm ten too. Today is my birthday!"

She says: "I am going to my father's store. He runs Wa Lee Washing and Ironing but has many beautiful things for sale too. Do you want to come?"

We walk up the main street of Barkerville. At Kelly's General Store we see mules being harnessed and saddled. As we walk up the boardwalk, Wa Chan tells me this is Cataline's Pack Train. Mules haul goods and letters into Barkerville and gold and letters out.

Then we see the miner who just struck it rich leaving Barry and Adlers saloon. Just then Wa Chan trips and the miner catches her.

"Are you all right?" he asks. "Oh! You are the girl from Wa Lee's store, aren't you?"

"Yes", says Wa Chan timidly.

"I have laundry at your father's store - shall I accompany you?" he says. "By the way, my name is Dave - what's yours?" he asks me.

"My name is Meg" I say "and it's my birthday today. I'm ten."

"Now we've got two things to celebrate - I struck it rich today; we had dug to 52 feet. I was panning out some dirt when I saw in my pan a 3 ounce nugget! That was pretty big and I was rich, and I was excited! Let's celebrate."

Wa Chan says: "I know, we can go to the Lung Duck Tong. They have a special tea and dim sum today. Will you join me there to celebrate your good fortunes? But here we are at my father's store."

Inside laundry is hanging everywhere - shirts, blankets, tunics, trousers, red long underwear! It is hot from the fire in the big woodstove and all the sad irons heating on the stove. There are also a lot of beautiful objects - jade rabbits, red

velvet bags, glass animal figures, lacquer boxes, strange coin jewellery, slabs of green jade, gold calligraphy scrolls! I have to buy something! I spy a little glass rabbit sitting on a shelf. It looks lonely.

"How much is this little bunny?" I ask Wa Chan.

"Ten cents", she says.

Then I see a lovely lacquer box and ask Wa Chan what it costs. She replies that it is ninety cents. I think of the dollar in my pocket and pull it out and give it to Wa Chan. She thanks me and opens a secret drawer and slips the dollar in.

Dave collects his laundry and we go to the Lung Duck Tong. As we are walking from Wa Lee's to the Lung Duck Tong, two men come racing through on horses. We have to run to get out of the way.

At the Lung Duck Tong there are many people and lots of trays of food that look wonderful. There is shrimp wrapped in white sticky pastry, rice, egg rolls, little pork pastries, and a big bowl of won ton soup that we share.

Wa Chan looks sad. I ask her why. "See the old man over there smoking a long pipe? I am promised to him in marriage. I do not love him."

I feel so sorry for her that I give her the friendship bracelet I made last week. She gives me a lovely jade rabbit and a Chinese coin necklace. "For your birthday and good fortune" she whispers. Dave gives me a small gold nugget in a leather poke. I feel wonderful with my new friends. Then we visit the Goldsmith and he makes me a silver ring with the gold nugget on it.

Suddenly, we hear, "Fire! Fire!". People are running on the plank sidewalk and someone exclaims, "Good God, what is up!" We run to see the cause of the alarm and are astonished to behold a column of smoke rising from the roof of Barry and Adler's saloon, where Dave's friends are drinking. The fire is blazing now in the Bank of British North America. Suddenly there is an explosion of coal oil tins and we see tins and blankets and bedding flying 200 feet in the air. Let's find water but there is none to put out this fire.

We hear someone yelling: "The fire was caused by a miner trying to kiss one of the girls ironing in Barry and Adlers saloon. They knocked against the stove displaced the pipe that went through the canvas ceiling and through the roof which at once took fire."

"Look - a bucket chain; we must go to help." Wa Chan calls in a scared voice.

We see her father Wa Lee helping with the water chain and go to join him. His store has already burned - where we were only an hour before. We work hard from 3:00 p.m. to late into the night. We are so tired. We are covered in soot and our hands are blistered from passing water buckets.

Wa Chan and I go to sleep in the Chi Kung Tong because everyone is sleeping there. There is nowhere else to sleep - everything, the whole town, has been burned except for most of Chinatown. I had heard about the Barkerville fire in my own time, but to be in it has been a real eye-opener. To be frightened; to feel the heat and smell the smoke and to have callused hands from working 10 long hours to help put it out, what a day! But I still can't fall asleep.

I feel very homesick so I get up. I leave the Chi Kung Tong and go and sit by the waterwheel once again. It is past midnight and I think if only I could go back to my own century now, I would be in time for breakfast.

All of sudden things started to go blurry and I found myself sitting beside the waterwheel in 1999! I walked back to the Jake and found Mom, Dad and my brother starting breakfast and it was still my birthday, September 15th. 1999. As I slipped through the door of the Wake-up-Jake, I saw a Chinese girl who looked just like Wa-Chan staring at me from across the street. We smiled at each other. In my pocket I felt the jade rabbit and the lucky coin necklace.

It really wasn't a dream!

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **HOW MINING HELPED BRITISH COLUMBIA BECOME A PROVINCE**

*The whole point of the CPR Trans-Canada railway was to move minerals and other wealth-creating raw materials from British Columbia to the value-added facilities of central Canada.*

In 1867, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario formed the Confederation of Canada. The significance of the British Columbia gold rush helped support the process by which Canada accepted British Columbia into the Confederation. This section of the report will examine the reasons why BC joined and also why it needed to. As well, it will explain how the Canadian Pacific Railway came into existence.

After the Confederation of the first four provinces, Sir John A. MacDonald wanted to extend the North American union to include British Columbia. However, most leaders thought that it was too far west to even consider its eligibility. Vancouver Island had been made a separate colony in 1849 and on 1858, British Columbia was awarded colony status because of the first gold rush.

James Douglas, Governor of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, decided that a wagon road was needed along the Fraser River to the town of Barkerville. They began to build the Cariboo Road, which was expected to cost \$1,000,000. Although this would mean better transport of goods, British Columbia could not afford to complete the road. (<http://www.edu.pe.ca/>)

As gold began to run out, Vancouver Island and British Columbia were joined together to make one colony and tremendous poverty followed. For this reason, the Canadian government was slow to accept BC as part of its Confederation. A committee was established in Victoria and its members soon were demanding that BC be allowed to enter the Dominion of Canada. In April 1870, the committee sent representatives to Ottawa. It was agreed that the Canadian Government would help pay off debts that BC had accumulated and would also give the local government money to work with. (<http://www.edu.pe.ca/>)

Not everyone in British Columbia wanted to join Confederation. However, there was only three choices. First, they could remain a British colony, but many people felt they were too far away from Britain and they believed they were too weak on their own. The second idea was to join the United States since so many of the miners came from California. A petition was sent out to determine the degree of support and only 104 out of 10,000 people polled wanted to join the US. The third and most popular choice was to join the Canadian Confederation. This is what the British wanted and so did most people in the colony. This meant that BC could have their own provincial assembly and elect representatives to stand in Parliament in Ottawa under the British flag. (<http://www.edu.pe.ca/>)

More delegates from BC were sent to Ottawa to meet with MacDonald and Parliament. They reached an agreement to allow BC to join the Confederation.

Part of the original agreement was to build a wagon road across the prairies to link British Columbia to the eastern provinces. However, MacDonald promised to do even better than a wagon road. He announced the dream of a railway, one that would become the famous Canadian Pacific Railway.

Canada was pleased to have rich resources from British Columbia such as gold and lumber. BC was accepted as part of Confederation and on July 20, 1871, it became part of the Dominion of Canada.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **ASIAN EXCLUSION: BEGINNING AND END**

*...Canada..., with its four centuries of give-and-take, compromise and acceptance, wrong-doing and redress, is...a forgiving society. We try...to forgive what is past....The forgiving society works towards...the future. The forgiving society enables people to behave well toward one another, to begin again, to build a society in hope and with love.*

**- Her Excellency the Right Honourable  
Adrienne Clarkson  
Governor General of Canada**

Other Asians immigrated to Canada following the Chinese who came for gold.

Japanese began arriving in Canada in 1877—and between that year and 1914 over 10,000 Japanese came to British Columbia. Most were from poor farming and fishing villages on the southern islands of Kyushu and Honshu and, like the Chinese, most were young, single men hoping to make enough money to send home. Similar to the Chinese they couldn't hold professional jobs, but were limited to wage-laborer positions particularly in fishing and farming (Shibata et al, 1977).

In 1903, Sikhs from India began to settle in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. For the next 5 years over 5,000 immigrants, mostly men, came to British Columbia to take advantage of the strong economy. Many of these early immigrants worked in the lumber industry and a few opened their own mills. South Asian immigrants initially fared much better in British Columbia than did the Chinese or Japanese pioneers since they enjoyed certain rights and privileges as British subjects. The South Asians usually had some English language skills and understood European culture making their transition into Canadian society somewhat easier. In addition, Chinese and Japanese immigration had been sharply curtailed prior to 1903 leaving many jobs open for

the South Asians. However, it took only a slight economic downturn to turn the tide against these British subjects. As jobs became increasingly scarce, it was time to blame the South Asians (along with the Chinese and Japanese) for taking jobs from white Canadians. (<http://depts.washington.edu/canada/asian.html>)

Almost all politicians felt forced to support the anti-Asian sentiments rising in British Columbia at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1902 the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration declared all Asians, "unfit for full citizenship ...obnoxious to a free community and dangerous to the state," preparing the way for restrictive immigration policies. The following year, in 1903, the Chinese head tax was raised to \$500 per person. This had an almost immediate extreme effect on Chinese immigration. Just prior to this new tax, almost 5,000 Chinese immigrants entered Canada while only 8 Chinese entered the country in the following year! Most of the men, and some women, coming to Canada were from impoverished regions of China. Almost no one could afford to pay such a high head tax just to enter the country.

Though immigration was now severely limited, a poor economy in Vancouver continued to produce strong discrimination by unemployed whites towards Asians eventually leading to creation of The Asiatic Exclusion League in British Columbia in 1907. Within months of its founding, the League staged a protest in downtown Vancouver. The race riot that ensued was partially in response to the British Columbia government refusing to suspend Asian immigration. Vancouver was experiencing an economic slump at the time and in that year alone 11,000 Asians had immigrated to British Columbia despite the steep head tax. The economic situation combined with this influx of Asian immigrants made for a volatile situation.

On September 8th, 1907 several thousands league-organized marchers met in downtown Vancouver and made speeches about the "yellow peril" drawing more and more supporters until about 15,000 had gathered. They carried banners reading "Keep Canada White" and "Stop the Yellow Peril". They burned an effigy of Dunsmuir, the coal-mining baron on Vancouver Island, who "dared" to hire Chinese. After getting the mob fully worked up, the leaders encouraged the group to make its way to Chinatown and Little Tokyo where they looted and burned and destroyed thousands of dollars in property. The Chinese did not fight back, but the Japanese did and many on both sides were hurt in this riot. Because the South Asians lived in a different part of the city, their community was spared the violence.

In response to this riot and other smaller skirmishes, the government did not attempt to deal with racism, but instead decided to limit Asian immigration further. The Premier of British Columbia is quoted as saying, "To admit Orientals in large numbers would mean in the end the extinction of the white people, and we always have in mind the necessity of keeping this a white man's country."

By 1910 the federal government had set up new immigration policies to solve the Asian "problem". From that point on, all Asians had to arrive with at least \$200 in their pockets which essentially put an end to Asian immigration. For the Chinese this meant \$200 in addition to the \$500 head tax. To slow down immigration from Japan, the Canadian and Japanese governments made a "gentleman's agreement" to limit Japanese immigrants to 400 persons per year. In 1928 this number was reduced to 150 per year. The South Asians presented a more complex problem.

The South Asian settlers in Canada were confused about the disenfranchisement policies being weighed against them as they believed that for the last half century they held the same rights and responsibilities as did any other British subject. With pressure from Britain, the Canadian government came up with another excuse to curb South Asian immigration—the British government was opposed to a head tax or to any policy that would set East Indians against the colonialist government in India.

Instead the federal government created a clever piece of legislation that did not address the South Asians directly, but served to deny them access to Canada. In 1908 an immigration law was passed only allowing entry to those traveling by "continuous passage" from their country of origin to Canada. For both the South Asians and Japanese this was not possible as there was no such thing as a direct ticket to Canada. So British subject status came to mean very little and families that were separated had to make some hard decisions. Stephen Leacock, a famous Canadian humorist, wrote of this legislation, "Hindu immigration to British Columbia was ingeniously side-tracked by the 'continuous journey' rule, as smart a piece of legislation as any that ever disenfranchised Negroes in the South. The Hindus were free to come, but only on a 'through' ship, and there were no 'through' ships."

### **The 'Komagata Maru' Incident**

Perhaps one of the heart-rending moments in the history of South Asian immigration to Canada is the Komagata Maru incident. In 1914 a clever Sikh leader named Gurdit Singh attempted to challenge the "continuous passage" legislation. He hired a ship, the Komagata Maru, and planned a non-stop voyage to Vancouver with 376 East Indian immigrants. When the freighter anchored in Burrard Inlet in Vancouver, Canadian immigration officials would not allow the men to disembark.

Negotiations carried on for two months after which the federal government expelled the ship and men and escorted them back out to sea. (Twenty of the men were allowed to disembark—the first official act of the recently formed, Royal Canadian Navy.) The Komagata Maru incident cost the East Indian men much time and expense and was perceived across Canada as a blatant act of racism.

Because of the "continuous journey" law, there was little South Asian immigration to Canada between 1908 and 1947 when the restriction was finally lifted. In fact, many of the men who had settled there left for the United States or India in an effort to reunite with their families. In 1919 a law was passed to allow wives and children to join the men who had immigrated earlier. Nonetheless, the South Asian population fell to around 1,000 persons and by the early 1950s there were only about 2,000 South Asians in Canada.

In the early 1920s, after the First World War, the Canadian economy was in a slump because many wartime industries were closing and veterans were returning to look for work. Once again resentment towards the Chinese grew. As a result, the Canadian government implemented "The Chinese Immigration Act" (Exclusion Act) in 1923 essentially banning Chinese immigration for the next 24 years (Tan and Roy, 1985). Not until after World War II, in 1947, were Chinese once again allowed to immigrate to Canada. While South Asian families were allowed to reunite after 1919, wives and children of the Chinese men were not allowed to join their husbands and many of the early pioneer men were left bachelors in Canada for the next 20-plus years.

"Poverty-stricken bachelor-men were left alone in Gold Mountain, with only a few dollars left to send back to China every month, and never enough dollars to buy passage home", wrote Wayson Choy in his novel, *The Jade Peony*, "Dozens went mad; many killed themselves. The Chinatown Chinese call July 1st, the day of celebrating the birth of Canada, the Day of Shame."

When the Second War started in 1939, 500 Chinese-Canadian men served in the Canadian army with some becoming secret agents in South East Asia. Feelings of resentment subdued and after the war in 1947, the Exclusion Act was repealed and the Chinese were once again allowed to immigrate to Canada. (V. Poy, 1999).

The new rush of immigrants from China was much different from the first batch. These new immigrants were highly educated, most were professionals and able to speak English fluently.

Although today's Chinese immigrants have little in common with the hard-working Chinese labourers of a century ago, they are beginning to recognize the contribution of their ancestors and the debt we Canadians owe to their memory. Many of these new Chinese migrants have become successful and renowned writers, fine artists, politicians, and filmmakers in both Canada and United States. They have devoted themselves to shedding light on the history of the earlier immigrants and bringing alive what was formerly buried in shame.

"The 1950's and 60's were the decades of re-unification for thousands of Chinese Canadian families. I came to Canada with my mother in 1956. I was 7 and my

father had not seen me since I was 10 months old. My mother was 51, my father was 53. They were like strangers when they met. They had to get to know each other all over again. They had lost the best years of their youth, being separated by Canada's racist laws. My grandfather died in 1966. He was never reunited with his wife." (Dere, 1995)

It was almost 20 years later before the Japanese were excluded from entry into Canada, but the nature of that exclusion is also one of the most tragic events in Canadian history.

The evacuation of Japanese Canadians (or *Nikkei Kanadajin*) from the Pacific coast in early 1942 was the greatest mass movement in the history of Canada. By the eve of Pearl Harbor, nearly 23,000 people of Japanese descent made their home in Canada, mainly in British Columbia. Three-quarters of these people were naturalized or native-born citizens. They were foresters and fishermen, miners and merchants. Except for industrialists who profited from cheap Asian labor, much of white British Columbia regarded the Japanese Canadians with suspicion, if not rabid hostility. Over the years the Nikkei had been targets of unremitting discrimination and occasional violence.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and Hong Kong kicking off the worst period of history for the Japanese in North America who were seen as enemy aliens from that point on. Within days of the bombing, over 1,000 Japanese Canadian fishing vessels were seized in Canada putting almost 2,000 Japanese-Canadian fishermen out of work. The government almost immediately established the British Columbia Security Commission and announced a policy of wholesale evacuation of Japanese Canadians from the "coastal defense zone". Both the Canadian and U.S. governments ordered the relocation of all Japanese persons living along the West Coast to isolated town and camps further inland.



**Figure 19.** Japanese fishing boats seized and corralled at Annville Dike.

From March to October about 22,000 Japanese were relocated under the "War Measures Act". Approximately 75% of these people were naturalized Canadians. In the U.S., about 110,000 Japanese were relocated under the "War Relocation Authority". In both countries, all belongings and property of the Japanese were sold and most of the proceeds were not awarded to the owners. Personal property, businesses and over 1,000 Japanese farms in Canada were seized. Families were told that since they wouldn't be gone long, they needn't bring much with them.

A Minister in the British Columbian government announced, "Let our slogan be for British Columbia; no Japs from the Rockies to the seas." Other politicians weren't so blatant and insisted that the relocation was for security reasons and some even suggested it was to protect the Japanese from mob violence on the Coast. Today some historians actually claim this wasn't an internment since the communities were not fenced or guarded. However, even if technically these Japanese may not have been interned, their activities and freedoms were severely restricted and they lost virtually all their belongings, the ability to earn an income, and they were placed in areas where their freedom was severely restricted. In other words, the outcome was the same as if they had been put in guarded camps.

The Japanese were herded like cattle into livestock pens at the Pacific Exhibition Grounds in Vancouver. Then they were put on trains and sent to remote areas in the interior of British Columbia. Thousands of men were taken north to work on road crews to pay for the cost of interning their families and entire families were sent to sugar beet farms to work as laborers in Alberta and Manitoba. "The beet farmers met us at the railway station," remembers one Japanese man who was relocated, "For them it was like picking up slaves".

Several years later, in 1945, the Japanese in Canada were given a "choice" to be deported back to Japan or relocate east of the Rockies. Most chose to stay in Canada. In 1946, the government attempted to deport 10,000 Japanese Canadians but public outcry made this impossible. By the end of the Second World War the Japanese community in Canada was shattered and the spirits of the people all but broken. Few returned to the West Coast and those that went east did so as family units and small groups, but not as entire communities.

It wasn't until after the War that the Canadian (and American) governments began to accept Asians as part of their citizenry and removed all anti-Asian immigration restrictions. By the late 1940s, Asians were enfranchised and in the 1950s, racist immigration policies were lifted although quotas remained in place. By the 1960s all immigration restrictions were removed and significant numbers of Asian immigrants once again began to come to Canada.

The new immigrants are vastly different from the earlier young peasants who worked so hard to secure a place for themselves in the New World — they are highly educated, most are professionals, and many speak English as well as their own language. These new immigrants have made a place for themselves in Canadian society. Though racism and discrimination still exists in Canadian society, these recent immigrants have had a much easier life.

Some of the wrongs committed against Asians in North American have been addressed. In August 1988, US President Ronald Reagan gave the survivors of the Japanese internment (over 60,000 individuals) \$20,000 U.S. in compensation. One month later Canada's Prime Minister Brian Mulroney gave each individual wronged in Canada \$21,000 (about 16,000 people). In addition, the Canadian government established the Canadian Race Relations Foundation with 24 million dollars and gave moneys to the Japanese Canadian Redress Foundation to assist in rebuilding the community.

Said one survivor after the redress was announced, "I could not be overjoyed at winning money; it goes much deeper than that. Now I am a real Canadian. And from today on, I can hold my head up." The President of the National Association of Japanese Canadians and leader of the redress movement, Arthur Miki, was later awarded the Order of Canada—the highest honor awarded Canadian citizens—for his work on behalf of the Japanese-Canadian community.

The early Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian immigrants to the west coast of Canada gave a great deal of their life's energy to the building of the infrastructure of the country. All of the early pioneers came to Canada prepared to work hard to send money home to support their families and build new lives in Canada. In a great many cases this was a long and lonely sacrifice and very few were supported by white settlers who had come before them. Neither did they receive protection from the government. In almost all cases, Asians were paid less than whites and had no rights or privileges in their new country. Bit by bit they were disenfranchised until, eventually, immigration was denied altogether separating families and leaving individuals alienated from their loved ones sometimes for an entire lifetime. Thousands of men and women sacrificed and endured a great deal in order to be accepted as citizens of Canada and the U.S. and their stories are a vital part of the history of the West.

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **CONCLUSION**

*"I know a man whose school could never teach him patriotism, but who acquired that virtue when he felt in his bones the vastness of his land, and the greatness of those who founded it."*

Pierre Elliott Trudeau,  
Exhaustion and Fulfillment:  
The Ascetic in the Canoe, 1979.

Although probably not thinking specifically about the Asian migrant workers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it is clear to me that Pierre Trudeau would not mind applying this quotation to these builders of our country and to include them among our founding fathers. Their descendants today have acquired the same patriotic fervor for Canada shared by their European-derived brethren.

Although not widely recognized, the Chinese migrants were undeniably a tremendous part of the history of mining in British Columbia. In examining our rich history, we often neglect to acknowledge that the Chinese contributed just as much, if not more in some cases, than the Europeans. Without the Chinese workers, BC's gold rush might not have been so successful; without their continuous spirit and hard work, the Canadian Pacific Railway might not have been completed so quickly. Their toils and perseverance contributed to the development of wealth and culture in our beautiful province. The pain they endured in developing the Cariboo Wagon Trail and building the Canadian Pacific Railway can be measured in many ways – lower costs, faster work, greater numbers of deaths, etc. Because of their efforts, today we have a prosperous Chinatown in numerous cities. They deserve to have their history proclaimed widely; they deserve just as much dignity as any other race and culture that inhabit our country.

Over 150 years ago, my ancestors first tried to become a part of Canadian culture, but barriers were set up to prevent integration. The public didn't like them; the policeman didn't help them; the government used them as scapegoats;

the newspapers wrote inaccurate stories about their society; roughnecks took them as prey. In order to survive, Chinese people isolated themselves and created Chinatown to secure each and every migrant from China. They believed that by sticking together they would they be able to establish a foundation in this province and this country.

Conversely, in modern-day BC, multiculturalism is a concept that has evolved to be an accepted norm. Various races and cultures, some of whom were widely denigrated in the early years, now occupy prominent government positions. The melting pot of Canada encourages multicultural immigration and hopes for integration within different ethnic communities. However, the Chinese people are used to retaining their own cultural identity; they resist the melting-pot idea. The irony lies in realizing that the desire of their ancestors is finally becoming a reality, but it has also become the greatest fear of modern Chinese people. It is the fear of total unity, unity with the society that once banned their immigration that once hated them, that once treated them like slaves, and the loss of their cultural identity.

The importance of the Chinese to the early development of Canada is not a common topic within European descendants because of the harsh and unfair treatment that was brought upon the Chinese workers by their ancestors. Shame prevents acknowledgement of the awful truth. Similarly, this history is not well known among the Chinese community because mining is no longer a common practice for Chinese immigrants and many families have been assimilated. Despite the lack of opportunities for the early Chinese migrants, it is my hope that this report can open eyes and help people become more interested in the mining history of BC with respect to the Chinese workers. The Chinese community was once unable to trust the White community. However, inspired by our ancestors, the friendship between Chinese and Euro-Canadians has grown considerably over the past half century and will continue to grow past prejudices based on ignorance.

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<http://www.ccnc.ca/> — This is the official website for the Chinese Canadian National Council and includes a newsletter and current events.

<http://www.asian.ca/history/> — An extensive Asian Canadian history site.

<http://www.asian.ca/publications/> — Asian Canadian web site presents resources, news and information related to various Asian cultural groups based in Canada and North America.

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/SSEAL/SouthAsia/diaspora.html> — A site covering the histories of South Asians in North America with a special section on Canada.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **A Time Line of Canadian Immigration Practices**

1770s

United Empire Loyalists encouraged to settle in Canada to counter French domination in Lower Canada.

1794

Legislation affecting immigration introduced giving power to commissioners to examine immigrants from the US and reject those unlikely to become loyal and suitable settlers.

1812

After the war of 1812-1814, economic depression in Europe sends tens of thousands of poor Britons to Canada.

1830s to 1870s

German settlements built in Ontario, German Mennonites also establish in the Prairies. Following Confederation, Dutch, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Finns, Icelanders, and Hungarians begin settling the west. On the west coast, Asians become a significant portion of the population after the Fraser River gold rush of the 1850s.

1841

Robert Baldwin and Louis LaFontaine form the Compact that eventually results in the union of Upper and Lower Canada. LaFontaine, a lawyer, is elected to the Lower Canadian Assembly at the age of 23. He is respected for his dedication to French Canada. Baldwin is also a lawyer who enters politics early in life. He is committed to changing the Canadian political system. In 1841, elections are called after the reluctant union of Upper and Lower Canada. LaFontaine runs in a Quebec riding called Terrebonne, but 200 armed thugs prevent his supporters from voting, and he loses the election. But Baldwin is elected in two different ridings in what is now the area of Toronto. He consults with the constituents in one of those ridings—Fourth York—to see if they will agree to have LaFontaine serve them in his place. He asks LaFontaine if he would agree to run in a by-election in Toronto. LaFontaine agrees and campaigned in Toronto on a platform of French-English cooperation. He wins his seat with a generous majority. Baldwin's gesture—making room for LaFontaine—wins him support of francophone reformers in Lower Canada.

1850s

Canada's population at 2,300,000. Protestant English encouraged to emigrate and fill the better agricultural lands in the colony. British government encourages emigration to relieve crowded and impoverished areas in England and populate North America to defend colony against possible war with U.S.

1851

Coal discovered in Nanaimo, B.C., and gold in Fraser Valley in 1858 leading to large influx of Chinese immigrants and growing hostility towards them because of their culture, life style, and willingness to work for low wages.

1860

Colony of Vancouver Island introduces legislation proposing a \$10 head tax on all Chinese entrants into Canada. It is defeated. We should recognize that people of conscience existed even then.

1862

US Government Act prohibits coolie trade by U.S. citizens using American vessels.

1868

The US State Department concludes the act does not apply to the transport of Japanese persons.

1869

Terms of the act are expanded to include all Asian peoples.

1866

France, China and Britain sign Convention to regulate emigration of Chinese laborers under contract giving voice to the principle that the "Chinese government throws no obstacle in the way of free emigration...to the departure of Chinese subjects, embarking of their own free will." Through most of the Ch'ing dynasty, emigration had been punishable by death (although rarely enforced).

1867

Confederation creates Dominion of Canada. Immigration not encouraged and so population growth rate is slow. Immigration becomes the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture.

1869

First Immigration Act establishes a head tax of \$1.50 a person. Medical checks of ship passengers when they arrived are done in quarantine station.

1871

B.C. Legislative Council introduced an act proposing a \$50 head tax. It was defeated.

1872

B.C. Legislature passes an act removing Chinese and Native Indians from the voters lists in B.C. The act is affirmed until 1875 and all Chinese are officially removed from B.C. voting lists. B.C. Legislature introduces legislation attempting

to exclude Chinese labour on public works projects. It is defeated. US Immigration Act amended to prohibit landing of criminals and other "vicious classes."

1875

B.C. Legislature passed the Qualifications and Registration of Voters Act taking away the right of Chinese Canadians to vote in elections in British Columbia. US Government Act forbids importation of "coolies" from "any Oriental country" as well as importation of Asian women...for lewd and immoral purposes..." or "for the purposes of prostitution"

1878

The first Anti-Chinese Society is formed in Victoria. The province legislates against Chinese labour being used on any public works project. B.C. Legislature proposes legislation imposing a \$10 special tax on Chinese Canadians. It is passed, but ruled unconstitutional by the courts in British Columbia.

1879

Paupers and destitutes are excluded from admission to Canada unless master of the ship they arrive on supplies money to support them.

1882

US Government passes the Chinese Exclusion Act suspending immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years. US Government sets up an administration fee on each immigrant of 50 cents a head.

1883

Only registered voters in British Columbia are allowed to serve as jurors in both civil and criminal cases.

1884

B.C. Legislature introduces an act to prevent Chinese from acquiring Crown land. It was declared ultra vires by the courts in British Columbia. An act to prevent Chinese immigration was disallowed by the Governor General of Canada. The Chinese Regulation Act was declared ultra vires by the courts in British Columbia.

1884

Dominion government appoints a Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration.

1885

Canadian Pacific Railway western section is completed. The Dominion government passes an act to restrict and regulate Chinese immigration into Canada and a \$50 head tax is imposed. This was the first time the federal government, succumbing to pressure from BC imposes a head tax.

1887

White mobs attack Chinese workers at Coal Harbour in Vancouver and burn the homes of 90 Chinese workers in the Carrall Street area.

1888

US Government Chinese Exclusion Act extends a permanent ban on the entry of Chinese laborers. This act attempts to force the Chinese government to modify existing treaty agreements. Many Chinese workers are trapped in limbo unable to return to the US because they are on a visit to China during this time.

1891

US Immigration Act adds persons with "loathsome or contagious disease, polygamists, and persons "assisted by others to come" to List of Excludables. Promises of employment by advertising in foreign countries are prohibited. Transportation companies can only use "ordinary commercial" representations to gain passengers. If an alien enters illegally or become a public charge within one year of entry, the cost of return is charged to the transportation company.

1892

Cholera enters Europe by way of Asia leading to quarantine legislation in the US.

1892

Ellis Island opens and 80% of immigrants to the US come through here over the next two decades - mainly Europeans.

1896

Canadian Pacific Railway completed finished from coast to coast opening up new settlement areas. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's government begins to promote immigration.

1900

The Dominion government sets up a Royal Commission to study Japanese and Chinese immigration in response to B.C. government political pressure. The Commission concludes Asians "are unfit for full citizenship, obnoxious to a free community and a danger to the state". The Dominion government revises the Chinese Immigration Act raising the head tax to \$100, effective 1902.

1902

Disabled are excluded from immigration.

US Government Act continues to enforce all Chinese Exclusion laws.

1903

The Dominion government: revises the Chinese Immigration Act raising the head tax to \$500, effective 1904. B.C. Legislature removes municipal franchise from

Chinese Canadians excluding them from certain professions in British Columbia. Agreement made between the US Commissioner General of Immigration and the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company to designate 4 ports of entry for Chinese: Sumas, WA; Portal, ND; Malone, NY; and Richford, VT. The CPR will deliver all Chinese immigrants to the U.S. to Chinese inspectors at those ports, and will return same back to Canada if found inadmissible.

1896-1914

Three million immigrants arrive in Canada.

1907

Chinatown in Vancouver is attacked by white mobs. US Government Act strips women of their citizenship upon marrying an alien.

1910

\$200 required as landing tax for Asian immigrants. (For Chinese, this is over and above the \$500 head tax.)

1910

Agreement between the CPR and the U.S. government is terminated. For a while the CPR. brings Chinese émigrés from Halifax to Boston.

1911

A new agreement is signed such that all Chinese are investigated at Vancouver and then put on board and allowed to go so trains are not delayed. The program is started because of Canada's new law allowing any Chinese person to enter if they pay a \$500 head tax. Thus, Chinese persons refused at Malone, New York, for example, can secure their freedom at Montreal by having a "friend" pay their head tax for them.

1914

Ship with nearly 400 Sikhs from Punjab of India refused entry to Canada, returns to India.

1914

A \$250 landing fee is required from everyone.

1922

The Dominion government: passes a resolution in favour of terminating Chinese immigration effective July 1, 1923.

1923

The Dominion Government revises the Chinese Immigration Act banning immigration of any Chinese into Canada, except for merchants, university students, Canadian-born Chinese and diplomatic personnel.

1923-47

Only 44 Chinese immigrants are legally admitted to Canada. This number has been erroneously reported in various publications as 8 and 12.

1926

Sponsored immigration introduced.

1933-45

Canada takes in 4,000 to 5,000 Jews, one of the lowest admittance rates in the world.

1936

Immigration becomes the responsibility of Department of Mines and Resources.

1842

Velma Demerson is arrested and jailed for one year in Toronto under the Female Refugees Act for being "incorrigible", i.e., she fell in love and is living with a Chinese man.

1947

The 1923 act excluding Chinese from immigrating into Canada is repealed. The B.C. Legislature grants Chinese-Canadians the right to vote. Peacetime immigration policy is announced emphasizing sponsorable relatives and resettlement of displaced people.

1949

Citizen and Immigration Department created.

1950

New regulations broaden admissibility of unsponsored immigrants to include a number of countries as well as immigrants who have the skills and social suitability to settle in Canada.

1951-81

4.4 million immigrants arrive.

1957

37,000 Hungarian refugees are admitted into Canada.

1962

Canada announces anyone qualified from anywhere in the world can be considered for immigration "entirely on personal merits, without regard to race, colour, or country of origin."

1976

Immigration Act of 1976 created. It largely forms today's immigration policy. A point system is introduced to evaluate all applicants from all parts of the world on an equal basis.

1992

The B.C. Legislature passes a resolution urging the Federal Government to pay restitution to the descendants of those Chinese immigrants forced to pay the Head Tax.

1995

The Federal Government suspends negotiations regarding redress to the Chinese community for the Head Tax.

1995

A Head Tax of \$975 is placed on all immigrants applying to Canada from all parts of the world except for refugees. It is called a Right of Landing Fee.

2000

Prime Minister Jean Chretien dismisses application of the fee to Kosovar refugee applicants as a "little problem".

2002

Manitoba Legislature passes a motion requesting the Head Tax to be removed.

2002

New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark announces that her government has decided to make a formal apology to Chinese New Zealanders and to their descendants who paid a poll tax and suffered other discrimination imposed by statute.