



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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**Chinese Immigration in BC told as a story that is both local and global, historical and contemporary in
A Seat at the Table at MOV**

Belonging, racism, agency and resilience explored through Chinese Canadian restaurant and food culture

VANCOUVER, BC – The **Museum of Vancouver** (MOV) and the University of British Columbia (UBC) in partnership with the Province of British Columbia proudly present *A Seat at the Table: Chinese Immigration and British Columbia*, a new feature exhibition opening to the public this November 19 2020.

A Seat at the Table looks at Chinese immigration to this province as a story that is local and global, historical and contemporary. Using food and restaurant culture as an entry point, *A Seat at the Table* at MOV features stories that point to the great diversity of immigrant experiences and of the communities that immigrants develop.

In this 4000-sq ft exhibition, environments evoking the quintessential Chinese Canadian diner and dim sum restaurant, set the stage for moving stories of separation, loss and alienation but also of solidarity, tenacity and success. Seated in a restaurant booth, visitors learn about people like Chin Nee Young, who arrived on Vancouver Island in 1908 at the age of 14. Another story comes from Kee Toy Joseph, a Squamish artist who explores his Chinese ancestry through art. Then there is the Wu Family, originally from Taiwan, who were among the first to introduce bubble tea to the Vancouver region in the 1980s.

Animated maps, short films, virtual reality and art installations show Chinese immigrants forging social connections with other migrant and Indigenous communities in British Columbia while maintaining ties with their relatives in China. These stories underscore the extent of systemic racism and its enduring impact on Chinese Canadians while highlighting their ability to resist, organize, seek justice and thrive. The exhibition's tone strikes a balance between playful and serious. Its crowdsourcing elements illustrate this approach: one interactive digital wall displays photographs of people's favourite Chinese Canadian restaurants while another station asks visitors to fill in cards shaped like restaurant order pads with their thoughts on how to fight everyday racism.

With its sister exhibition located in Chinatown, *A Seat at the Table* at MOV is one of the largest museum projects on Chinese Canadian history and culture in Canada to date. The research component includes an extensive and ongoing oral history project. The exhibition itself seeks to diversify representations of Canada and make them more inclusive. It also seeks to transform public understanding of Canada's long engagement with the Pacific, and successive waves of Chinese migration. Fresh perspectives on migration, diaspora, cultural representation and agency encourage the public to rethink what it means to be British Columbian.

The large-scale project team includes a diverse advisory committee of public historians, activists, academics, local artists and museum professionals from different parts of BC. The project is co-curated by Denise Fong (Doctoral Candidate, Interdisciplinary Studies, UBC), Viviane Gosselin (Curator, Director of Collections and Exhibitions, MOV) and Henry Yu (Professor, Department of History, UBC). The exhibition is designed by Goodweather Studio.

To further explore the exhibition themes, MOV and partners are developing a host of public programs including: virtual curatorial talks, exhibition tours, workshops, community collaborations, and more.

Denise Fong, Co-curator: “We hope that this exhibition will offer a creative space for many more conversations to be had about what it means to be Chinese Canadian, whether you are third generation Chinese Canadian with deep roots in this country, or if you have just arrived in Canada as a new immigrant.

Viviane Gosselin, Co-curator: “The knowledge sharing that has taken place between individuals, community groups, academics and museum professionals for the production of *A Seat at the Table* project is exceptional and will resonate with diverse audiences who will recognize themselves in the stories.”

Professor Henry Yu, Co-Curator: “Through their struggles in the face of racism and exclusion, Chinese Canadians helped make BC a more inclusive and just society overall. There is still much work to be done, and the project will help play a role in inspiring younger generations, especially newcomers, to understand the continuing and ongoing efforts that all of us must strive towards to struggle to acknowledge our past and continue to change BC for the better.”

About Museum of Vancouver

The Museum of Vancouver connects Vancouverites to each other and connects Vancouver to the world. The museum’s programs, exhibitions, and collections bring people together and inspire conversation about the future. The museum, an enthusiastic civic advocate, is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring a socially connected, civically engaged city.

About the University of British Columbia

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is a global center for teaching, learning and research, consistently ranked among the top 20 public universities in the world and recently recognized as North America’s most international university. UBC encourages bold thinking, curiosity and initiative, so you can realize your greatest potential.

Exhibition Sponsors: Province of British Columbia, City of Vancouver, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Listing Information

Dates:

A Seat at the Table: Chinese Immigration and British Columbia

MOV Exhibition November 19, 2020 – December 2021

Chinatown Exhibition: August 2020 – December 2021

Locations:

Museum of Vancouver: 1100 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, BC

Hon Hsing Athletic Club: 27 E Pender, Vancouver, BC

Website:

museumofvancouver.ca/a-seat-at-the-table

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