

Remaking Calgary's Chinatown: Ethnic Leadership and the United Calgary Chinese Association, 1979 – 1989

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For Calgary's Chinatown

List of Abbreviations

APC	Association portugaise du Canada
CBA/CCBA	Chinese Benevolent Association/Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association
CCC	Chinese Canadian Club
CCCS	Calgary Chinese Cultural Society
CCF	Chinese Culture Foundation
CCNCE	Chinese Canadian National Council for Equality
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CANL	Chinese Association of Newfoundland
CPF	Chinese Protection Federation
CPS	Calgary Police Service
CRAC	Chinese Ratepayers Association of Calgary
CZS	Calgary Zoological Society
KMT	Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party)
PRC	People's Republic of China

ROC	Republic of China
SPOTA	Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association
STEP	Summer Temporary Employment Program
SOC	Save Our Children
UCCA	United Calgary Chinese Association

Acknowledgements

From the start I wanted this thesis to be rooted Calgary's Chinatown, in a sense of people and place unique to the city my family embraced as home. It was in Archives and Special Collections at the University of Calgary that I found the United Calgary Chinese Association and became fascinated with the stories it told about late twentieth century Canadian society.

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Introduction

In early 1979, the United Calgary Chinese Association's (UCCA) President Sen Mah sent a letter to the city's mayoral office. Ten years after the UCCA's formation, this letter reminded Mayor Ross Alger that, "This association was formed to encompass all the family associations and groups which comprise the Chinese Community in Calgary." The letter listed twenty UCCA member organizations, a range of Chinatown establishments including the National League and Chinese Freemasons, clan associations, and cultural groups. With the association's breadth of membership, Sen Mah could proclaim "that the United Calgary Chinese Association is the only complete representation within Chinatown."¹

The UCCA's founding objectives were:

- 1) To promote community spirit and good citizenship
- 2) To preserve and promote Chinese culture and tradition
- 3) To consider issues affecting the interest of the community, and
- 4) To render services to the poor and needy²

Their objectives drew on the practices of Chinatown's traditional associations: clan, district, and political groupings that had provided for the welfare of their members since the earliest waves of Chinese settlement in North America. But the UCCA's focus on community, citizenship, and culture also reflected a new era of Canadian society, one that opened doors to new opportunities and challenges for Chinese Canadians. The Chinatown and Chinese community in Calgary that the UCCA claimed to represent in the late twentieth century was much different than their early twentieth century beginnings: there were more women and

¹ Correspondence, Sen Mah, President, UCCA, to Ross Alger, Mayor of Calgary, March 16, 1979, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 185, Joe Khu Fonds, Archives and Special Collections (ASC), University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

² "十五週年銀禧紀念 Silver Jubilee Commemorative Program," 1994, M-9510, Box 13, Folder 255, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

children; more dialects of Chinese spoken; and English signs on businesses. Still standing in the neighbourhood were the buildings that housed Chinatown's earliest organizations, the Chinese Masonic Hall, the National League Building, and clan associations.³

Across the diaspora in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Chinese migrants organized themselves along patrilineal lines, their surnames, and on a larger scale by their villages and counties of origin. These clan and regional associations, along with groups formed through political affiliations, have ensured the survival of overseas Chinese communities through times of struggle and triumph. In North America, these organizations were sites of mutual aid, friendship and celebration, and nodes in transnational networks of knowledge and opportunity, especially in the early twentieth century when settler-colonial governments, notably the United States and Canada, deemed Chinese migrants alien threats to be restricted from entering the country, discriminated against and segregated from mainstream White society. As the century progressed and nation-building priorities changed; Chinatowns and Chinese communities changed too. The welfare functions of the traditional associations, having operated for decades, were supplanted by state social agencies and policies, their advocacy increasingly took a back seat to the activism of younger, English-speaking, locally-born Chinese. More women and children appeared in Chinatown as successive immigration reforms in both countries slowly ended decades of exclusion. Chinatown reoriented around families in the post-war period and the old bachelors looked less to their clans for social support.⁴ In the 1960s Chinatowns across North America faced new adversaries: bureaucratic entities promoting demolition and displacement

³ J. Brian Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain: From China to the Canadian Plains* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd, 1991), 100-107. For information about these buildings, visit Heritage Calgary's digital inventory: <https://www.heritagecalgary.ca/explore-inventory>.

⁴ Xiaojian Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America: immigration, family, and community, 1940-1965* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 103-104.

under the banner of urban renewal and inner-city revitalization. Calgary's Chinatown community came together in response to the threat of a multi-lane highway project that would cut through Chinatown. Unlike larger cities, such as Vancouver, San Francisco, and New York, Calgary's Chinatown did not have a Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA)/Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA). The CCBA had operated as the overarching community organization in each of those urban centres since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first overarching organization who claimed to speak for Calgary's Chinatown was the Sien Lok Society, a group of Chinese businessmen and professional who organized to fight the freeway project and succeeded in doing so.⁵ Post-war urban renewal threats and the Sien Lok Society's success made clear the need for a collective community voice.

Many of Calgary's Chinese people, including leaders of the traditional organizations, did not see Sien Lok's business-dominated leadership as sufficiently representative, so they sought to form an umbrella organization accountable to all of Chinatown's residents and community. In spring of 1969, the voices of Chinatown's most prominent clans, political groups, and community leaders came together to form the United Calgary Chinese Association (UCCA).⁵ From its formation to the present day, the UCCA has endeavored to meet their founding objectives and fulfill their mandate to represent Chinese Canadians through social, cultural, and civic initiatives. This thesis examines the UCCA from 1979 to 1989, a period when the association's claim to being the pre-eminent representative body for Calgary's Chinese community was most strongly backed by their wide-ranging initiatives and advocacy. I argue

⁵ The UCCA's current website and *A Century of the Chinese in Calgary* (Calgary: United Calgary Chinese Association, 1993) states this founding meeting was attended by 19 associations. Dawson records that it was 20 associations, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain*, 157. In a call for membership published in *The Canadian Chinese Times*, November 10, 1983, they state it was 23 founding associations. Sen Mah's letter to the Mayor in 1979 lists 20 member organizations, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 185, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

that throughout this period the UCCA strengthened their claims to being a unifying body and a voice for Chinese Calgarians through local, community-centered initiatives and advocacy that was rooted in a sense of place, culture, and Calgary's Chinese heritage. The UCCA continued traditions of service and representation established by early twentieth century Chinese organizations but also drew on advocacy methods of Asian American activists and Chinese organizations across North America. They built relationships with organizations and elites outside of Chinatown and engaged with state multiculturalism policy. The association represented a new wave of Chinese community leadership that was modern in outlook, but conscious of tradition, that embraced multiculturalism and sought prosperity for Chinese Calgarians in and out of Chinatown's boundaries.

“Overseas Chinese” and the UCCA Leadership

In this thesis I often use the terms “overseas Chinese” 华侨, “ethnic Chinese” 华裔, and “Chinese diaspora” to refer to my historical subjects. All of these terms are used in the scholarship to collectively refer to Chinese migrants and their descendants around the world. UCCA publications and correspondence directed at their members refer to them as “ethnic Chinese,” for a non-Chinese audience they used “Chinese community”, and to the Chinese (People's Republic of China, PRC) embassy the UCCA referred to their constituency as “Calgarians of Chinese descent.”⁶ For post-war North American Chinese, “overseas Chinese” ceased to be an appropriate personal identifier when their social status increased and they became fully fledged citizens of democratic, multicultural nations.⁷ The term is also too broad

⁶ Terms drawn from various UCCA correspondences and publications, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁷ Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Evelyn Hu-DeHart. Introduction to *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora*. Edited by Kuah-Pearce, Khun Eng, and Evelyn Hu-DeHart (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 12.

for the UCCA's context, as the association's focus is ultimately local, and the UCCA presidents primarily discussed in this thesis were not born in China at all.⁸ Douglas Tims, president from 1980 to 1985, was born and educated in New Zealand. Joe Khu, president from 1985 to 1988, was born in the Philippines (Figure 1). But both Tims and Khu identified as "ethnic Chinese" and sought community in Calgary's Chinatown. Therefore, I will refer to the UCCA and their members as "ethnic Chinese" or "Chinese Calgarians." This thesis will draw comparisons between UCCA actions and those of other North American Chinese community and activist groups, for which I will use "Chinese diaspora," "overseas Chinese," and "North American Chinese" to be more specific.

⁸ Sen Mah, who would step down as president in 1980, did experience the trajectory that "Overseas Chinese implies", immigrating from Guangdong (Canton), China to Canada. Sen Mah, Obituary, Calgary Herald Obituaries, accessed March 19, 2025, <https://calgaryherald.remembering.ca/obituary/sen-mah-1084361752>.



Figure 1. The UCCA's Board of Directors for 1984-1985, in the UCCA special edition newsletter, 1984. The top photo of the middle row is Doug Tims, his Chinese name being 楊景南. Tims was the UCCA's president at the time of this newsletter's publication. Pictured in the top-right is Joe Khu, whose Chinese name was 邱文祚. M-9510, Box 9, Folder 149, Joe Khu Fonds.

Review of the Literature

A review of scholarship on Chinese migration and overseas Chinese communities in North America reveals two trends that have endured across disciplines, shifts in theory and methodology. Henry Yu identifies the first trend as one of periodization, where the history of Chinese Canadians and Chinese Americans are split into two halves of the twentieth century.⁹ Around the mid-nineteenth century to the Second World War was a period characterized by restrictive immigration laws, anti-Asian racism, and inward-looking, male-dominated Chinese enclaves. Historical scholarship on this period is most interested in examining social, political, and economic manifestations of anti-Asian racism and their consequences for Chinese migrants. World War II is treated as an interregnum between this first half and the following decades. Histories of post-war North American Chinese examines immigration reforms, integration of Chinese people into the dominant society, and the impact of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism as state policies on ethnic communities. Scholars of this post-war period focus on the factors behind changing immigration policy, how those changes affected Chinatowns, how social orientations between pre-war immigrants, post-war immigrants, and locally-born Chinese differ, and the rise of activist pan-Asian solidarities.

Much of the historiography conflates Chinese communities with Chinatowns. Tying into the periodization, scholarship on overseas Chinese communities in the early twentieth century almost always focus on Chinatowns in urban centers, especially in Vancouver, New York, and Toronto.¹⁰ There is less written about prairie and mid-west Chinese communities, though this

⁹ Henry Yu, "Who are we? When are we? A Migration History That Reframes Race, Ethnicity, and Immigrants at Canada's 150," in *Immigration, Racial and Ethnic Studies in 150 Years of Canada: Retrospects and Prospects*, edited by Shibao Guo and Lloyd L. Wong (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 41. In this chapter Henry Yu utilizes a similar periodization to divide the migration history of Canada in general, though he is more specific to split what the pre-immigration reform decades into two separate half-centuries: 1867-1920s, and 1920s-1970s.

¹⁰ Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press,

scholarship is emerging.¹¹ In scholarship on the post-war period Chinatowns continue to be a central topic, but the emphasis is on their “decline” due to demographic and societal changes, and the struggle to save them by community organizations and activists. Early twentieth-century Chinatowns have been depicted as inward-looking ethnic enclaves operated independently from dominant society, while late century Chinatowns were outward looking and interested in intercultural bridge-building, surviving because of relations with people and organizations outside its boundaries.¹²

Sociologist Paul Siu’s 1952 article “The Sojourner” has had a significant impact on the historiography. Siu argues that early Chinese migrants in North America were marked by their sojourn in this foreign land, to “do a job and do it in the shortest possible time.” The “sojourner” tended to associate only with people from his own ethnic group and resisted any influence of the dominant society.¹³ Siu emphasized common interests and cultural heritage as major factors to community formation and to the sojourner’s isolation from dominant society.¹⁴ Philip Q. Yang challenges Siu’s depiction of Chinese migrants and argues that they had transnational orientations. While there is a long history of labour-oriented migration from southern China to

1988); Richard H. Thompson, *Toronto’s Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization of an Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press, 1989); Bernard Wong, *Patronage, Brokerage, Entrepreneurship, and the Chinese Community of New York* (New York: AMS Press, 1988).

¹¹ J. Brian Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain: From China to the Canadian Plains* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1991); Alison R. Marshall, *Cultivating Connections: The Making of Chinese Prairie Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Alison R. Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor: Early Chinese Settlement in Manitoba* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

¹² Eva Xiaoling Li and Peter S. Li, “Vancouver Chinatown in Transition,” *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 7, no. 1 (2011): 15, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1163/179325411X565380>. See Hsiang-Shui Chen, *Chinatown No More: Taiwan Immigrants in Contemporary New York*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013); Min Zhou, *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); and Xiaojian Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America: immigration, family, and community, 1940-1965* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

¹³ Paul C.P. Siu, “The Sojourner,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 58, no. 1 (1952): 35, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1086/221070>.

¹⁴ Siu, “The Sojourner,” 35-36.

Southeast Asia, Chinese migrants to North America often settled permanently and were involved in local affairs. Current scholarship also explains the “sojourning” orientation and Chinese people’s formation of ethnic enclaves as a product of the social, economic, and political circumstances Chinese migrants found themselves in as much as it had to do with cultural values.¹⁵

Chinatowns were born from necessity. Geographer David Lai’s posits racism as a primary factor in the creation of Chinatowns, most clear in how white landlords’ refusal to lease properties in desirable areas of town pushed Chinese settlements to the fringes of urban societies. Chinese people grouped together and limited their contact with white people as a “self-defence measure used by the Chinese to avoid open discrimination and hostility.”¹⁶ In her study of Vancouver’s Chinatown, Kay J. Anderson argues that coerced segregation and racialization of Chinese people were mutually enforcing principles. By facilitating Chinese people’s voluntary segregation in Vancouver into a defined area, the dominant society drew boundaries between “their” territory and “our” territory, using space and place to legitimize their racist othering.¹⁷ Chinatown’s economic, social, and cultural isolation from the dominant society facilitated the development of an independent sub-economy. An absence of Chinese women and children in early communities meant little interaction with acculturating forces, such as schools, and made it necessary for Chinatown’s residents to develop new understandings of kinship and family. Early Chinatowns were also homogenous in their ethnic makeup, occupied predominantly by Chinese men from the 四邑 (Siyi, Four Counties region) and 三邑 (Sanyi, Three Counties region) of China’s 廣東 (Guangdong) province. As Henry Yu explains in “Rise and Fall of the Cantonese

¹⁵ Philip Q. Yang, “The ‘Sojourner Hypothesis’ Revisited,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 241, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dsp.2000.0003>.

¹⁶ David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), 34.

¹⁷ Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 29-31.

Pacific, 1850-1950,” migrants from Siyi accounted for more than half of all Chinese migrants to Canada between 1958-1949.¹⁸ Migration networks linking China and North America were maintained through kinship relations and shared experiences. In North America, Chinese migrants formed associations for mutual aid based on these kinship ties. These clan associations joined continent-wide networks of other clan associations, district associations, and political organizations.

Alison Marshall’s scholarship on early Chinese settlement in Manitoba argues for the importance of voluntary organizations, especially the local 國民黨 (Kuomintang, KMT, Chinese Nationalists) branch, to the social survival of Chinese-Manitobans. In addition to providing housing and employment, branch houses encouraged socialization, and KMT leaders organized fundraisers, picnics, and cultural festivities.¹⁹ Through participation in their local KMT branch, Chinese men built networks of business partnership and mutual aid, with each other and with people from other ethnicities and social groups whom they invited to social events.²⁰ Participation in voluntary organizations, such as the KMT, fostered the homosocial relations vital to the “Way of the Bachelor” that ensured the survival of the Chinese community. Associational life and ethnic leadership was from the start male-dominated and would still be in the UCCA’s time.

¹⁸ Henry Yu, “The Rise and Fall of the Cantonese Pacific,” in *The Transcultural Streams of Chinese Canadian Identities*, ed. Jessica Tsui-yan Li (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 35 (Table I.I). For an examination at why the labour-migration tradition was so strong in the Siyi and Sanyi regions, read Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882-1943*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹⁹ Alison R. Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor: Early Chinese Settlement in Manitoba* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 35.

²⁰ Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor*, 39; Also see Alison R. Marshall, “Married Nationalists: Charles Yee and Charlie Foo,” in *Cultivating Connections: The Making of Chinese Prairie Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 94-109. The opportunities for social networks through KMT membership are prominent in the life stories of Charles Yee and Charlie Foo, two Manitoban Chinese settlers who became community leaders and intercultural bridge-builders through their dedication to the KMT cause. Both men fostered strong relationships with non-Chinese society, Yee as a businessman and through his Ukrainian wife, Foo in his advocacy against Chinese exclusion and fundraising efforts for the KMT and the Chinese War Relief Fund.

Scholarship on diasporic communities make efforts to identify people and organizations by name to return agency to individuals, but also to emphasize the structured hierarchy of Chinatowns and overseas Chinese communities where one organization or person could acquire influence over the entire group.²¹ Introducing Yip On in her study of Chinese power brokers, Lisa Mar makes clear that On's political influence was derived from his leadership in prominent Chinese community organizations. As the leader of the Chinese Empire Reform Association and a prominent member of the Chinese Freemasons, On held sway over British Columbia's rich Chinese merchant class and was highly regarded by the Freemason's province-wide membership.²² In his struggle for power against Chinese-Canadian lawyer David Lew, both power brokers mobilized Chinese migrants' transnational ties and played on old regional rivalries. Yip On rallied fellow country-men who were Siyi merchants to form a 四邑會館 (Four Counties Benevolent Association) for his cause, while David Lew sought support from Sanyi merchants and their district associations.²³ Mar's power brokers were representative of early twentieth century ethnic leaders in Chinatowns across North America, whose personal power was exercised through, on behalf of, and with the support of community organizations.

Richard H. Thompson and Bernard Wong's anthropological surveys of Toronto's Chinatown and New York's Chinese Community, respectively, emphasize the centrality of

²¹ Names, faces, and even personal narratives can be found in correspondence and private documents, i.e. journals, but also documents created and kept by the state. For an examination of community leaders in Manitoba, and their individual stories, see Alison R. Marshall, *Cultivating Connections: The Making of Chinese Prairie Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014). For an example of Chinese migration in the state archives, see Lily Cho, *Mass Capture: Chinese Head Tax and The Making of Non-Citizens* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021). Timothy Stanley's examination of the 1922-1923 Victoria School Strikes highlights the efforts of the Chinese Canadian Club and includes discussion of the most outspoken CCC members against school segregation. Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

²² Lisa Rose Mar, *Brokering Belonging: Chinese in Canada's Exclusion Era, 1885-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 30.

²³ Mar, *Brokering Belonging*, 37.

associations to the social organization of early Chinese communities in North America.²⁴

Thompson describes overseas Chinese communities as segmented and into a pyramidal structure with clan associations as the lowest level of affiliation that joined district associations, with an overall city-wide organization as the highest level of authority.²⁵ This organizational structure functioned as a “government within a government” that “unified all the Chinese in a particular locality, protected them from the outside government, and regulated internal community welfare and recreation.”²⁶ In New York, the overarching body was the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA). In the early twentieth century, the New York CBA’s mandate was to promote unity, arbitrate disputes, and maintain peace in the community. Wong posits that the CBA was viewed in its time as an agent of cultural stability in Chinatown and an insulating force hampering intercultural bridgebuilding and maintaining Chinese people’s social isolation from the dominant society.²⁷ The networks formed by associations around North America enabled overseas Chinese to call on each other for support. In his analyses of the Victoria Students Strike of 1922, Timothy J. Stanley describes these transnational networks as an imagined community, “so entrenched by the 1920s that it became a basis for organizing support for the students’ strike.”²⁸ Supporters of the strike wrote to overseas Chinese associations in other countries and to media outlets in China.

Patricia Roy’s trilogy on anti-Asian politics in British Columbia explores the colony’s, and then province’s responses to Chinese and Japanese immigrants. The first two books analyze how British Columbian attitudes towards Asian immigrants grew increasingly hostile from the

²⁴ Bernard Wong, *Patronage, Brokerage, Entrepreneurship, and the Chinese Community of New York* (New York: AMS Press, 1988); Richard H. Thompson, *Toronto’s Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization of an Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press, 1989).

²⁵ Thompson, *Toronto’s Chinatown*, 11.

²⁶ Thompson, *Toronto’s Chinatown*, 54-56.

²⁷ Wong, *Patronage, Brokerage, Entrepreneurship, and the Chinese Community of New York*, 84-85.

²⁸ Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 172.

mid-nineteenth century to the start of World War II, and how those sentiments drove policy making.²⁹ The third book: *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada 1941-67*, brings her comprehensive analysis of anti-Asian attitudes and policies to a close. Roy sees the Second World War as “a real turning point in their relationships with the larger Canadian community” for Chinese Canadians.³⁰ She identifies how British Columbian Chinese communities encouraged sympathies generated by the Sino-Japanese War and promoted allied solidarity during World War II. Chinese Canadians contributed to the Chinese War Relief Fund, the Red Cross, and Victory Loans, while the Canadian media praised China’s efforts against Japanese aggression.³¹ As the major Chinese political organization in most Chinatowns, KMT branches reorganized to more strongly emphasize their transnational ties to China. In Toronto the KMT reorganized into the Chinese Protection Federation (CPF), headed by leaders of Toronto’s major clan and district associations. The CPF’s claims to leadership were legitimized by the KMT banner, the local and transnational influence of its leaders, and rhetorics of patriotism to elicit cooperation from all members.³² Alison Marshall’s *Cultivating Connections* contributes a prairie perspective to war-time community organization. Winnipeg’s KMT branch led boycotts on Japanese-made goods and solicited war relief funds from Chinese entrepreneurs across prairie Canada. The KMT in Winnipeg also called for a spirit of unity amongst local Chinese organizations.³³ While they were not called up for military service until the war’s end, Chinese Canadians participated in the war effort and some Chinese people volunteered, earning prestige

²⁹ Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and the Chinese and Japanese Immigrants 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989); Patricia E. Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

³⁰ Patricia E. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941-1967* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 148.

³¹ Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship*, 150-151.

³² Thompson, *Toronto’s Chinatown*, 69-70.

³³ Marshall, *Cultivating Connections*, 105.

and further strengthening the community's patriotic image. Roy sees the success of the Chinese-Canadian war effort as leading directly to their enfranchisement and loosening of immigration restrictions in the years after the war.³⁴

In *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority*, Madeleine Hsu challenges mainstream understandings of the "exclusion period" in the United States, highlighting instead "selection" of certain Chinese migrants and the political and economic reasons for allowing their entry. The book makes clear how selective immigration as a nation-building policy created Asian-Americans as the "model minority."³⁵ Laura Madokoro's *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* also discusses selective entry, by examining how settler-colonial nations handled post-war Chinese refugees from Hong Kong. *Elusive Refuge* highlights the tensions present in discussions of Asian refugeehood that reflected Cold War anxieties and still present notions of racial superiority. Madokoro argues that settler-colonial nations accepted Hong Kong as a means to further their humanitarian images, meet Cold War ideological aims, and as a way to rectify their histories of Asian exclusion that did not fit into their contemporary liberal-democratic ideal.³⁶ The key takeaways from this scholarship on mid-century immigration reforms for my examination on late twentieth-century Chinese communities is the concept of the "model minority" for Asian Americans, and that the demographics of North American Chinese communities changed drastically as a result of policy changes. In a departure from the early twentieth century waves of male labour migrants, Chinese immigrants after 1967 included women, entire families, and immigrants with higher levels of education.³⁷ As

³⁴ Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship*, 154-168.

³⁵ Madeline Y. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 8.

³⁶ Laura Madokoro, *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 23-25.

³⁷ Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown*, 153-157.

Chinatown's traditional "bachelor society" re-formed around families and Chinese people integrated into the dominant society, the traditional associations of Chinatown had to adapt.³⁸

The post-war decades also saw a general decline of downtown cores in North American cities, as residential and social activity suburbanized, upwardly mobile locally-born Chinese and new immigrants also moved out of Chinatown into suburban neighbourhoods, or established new majority-Chinese neighbourhoods outside of city centers.³⁹ Chinatowns' activist resistance to urban renewal in the 1960s and 1970s have received attention from Chinese-Canadian scholars, but also in urban histories and histories of activism. Tina Loo's study of the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA) and the fight for Vancouver's working-class neighbourhoods is a detailed case study of grassroots activism grounded in community needs and values. SPOTA's negotiations with the city of Vancouver is instructive in understanding how community organizations worked within existing political structures and hierarchies to meet their goals and empower citizen participation.⁴⁰ While the traditional power brokers of the pre-war period, in particular the Chinese Benevolent Association, appear in Loo's study, Loo shines the leadership spotlight on SPOTA executive and public relations secretary Shirley Chan.⁴¹ Chan, who was a young university student well versed in local politics and social justice, was representative of a post-war generation of Chinese community leaders who ignored traditional associational affiliations in favour of orienting the community outwards towards resources and networks in the dominant society.⁴² Scholarship on post-war Chinese community building is

³⁸ Zhao, "Remaking Chinese America," 103-104.

³⁹ See Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown*, 188-199. Thompson describes three adjacent majority-Chinese neighbourhoods in downtown Toronto by the 1960s, including the original Chinatown (Chinatown Proper), mix-used Chinatown East, and residential Chinatown West.

⁴⁰ Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: Forced Relocation and Making a Good Life in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 193-194.

⁴¹ Loo, "A Fourth Level of Government?," 167, 178.

⁴² Wong, *Patronage, Brokerage, Entrepreneurship, and the Chinese Community of New York*, 270, 279-281.

most concerned with the transformation of Chinese people into fully fledged Canadian and American citizens, the dismantling of exclusionary immigration policies and integration of Chinese North Americans into mainstream society and politics.⁴³ New groups of ethnic leaders emerged, with locally-born Chinese, war veterans, and young Asian American activists getting the most scholarly attention.

Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Evelyn Hu-Dehart's *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora* identify new forms of voluntary organizations established alongside, or to replace, traditional organizations (i.e. the clan and political associations) to meet new needs of the existing population and new migrants in the latter half of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ For Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart, these 社團, voluntary organizations, are extensions of traditional organizations in three ways: (1) relationship building with non-Chinese, (2) going beyond mutual aid and protection to "actively promote commercial, cultural, education and related interest to members and the wider communities, and (3) oriented towards the mainstream civil society, with goals to assist the "localization and relocalization processes of the Chinese within the adopted country."⁴⁵ The volume's chapters focus more on the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, but gives valuable insight on how voluntary associations formed and adapted to the challenges and opportunities of their diasporic community. The UCCA's mandate and their actions in the 1980s fit nicely with Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart's characterization of voluntary associations, demanding an examination of its late-century Calgarian context. Wing Chung Ng's *The Chinese*

⁴³ For an analysis on the invention of the "model minority" situated within the larger framework of the American civil rights era, see Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013). Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015) offers a comprehensive examination of how Asian Americans became the "model minority" through selective immigration policy.

⁴⁴ Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Evelyn Hu-DeHart, editors, *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006).

⁴⁵ Kuah-Pearce and Hu-DeHart, *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora*, 14.

in *Vancouver, 1945-80: the Pursuit of Identity and Power* examines identity formation, negotiation, and cultural consciousness through Vancouver's Chinese organizations and ethnic leadership.⁴⁶ Ng analyses how different generations of Chinese Canadians' sense of identity was defined and mediated by their transnational ties to the "Old World" and experiences in the "New World"⁴⁷ The book sheds light on prominent organizations and Chinese-Vancouverites, how their relationships with each other, Canadian society, and the Chinese state influenced Chinese-Canadian identity formation in Vancouver. In *Rethinking the Asian American Movement*, Darryl Maeda defines Asian-American activism as specifically the kind that came into being in the 1960s and 1970s, whose central framework emphasized "power and self-determination, rather than civil rights," and "global transformations and multiracial, international coalitions even as they acted locally."⁴⁸ Maeda introduces prominent Asian-American organizations; most were formed by young people, all were left-aligned, and all sought to provide alternative politics and community-building services in opposition to the traditional Chinatown leadership.⁴⁹

Scholarship on late twentieth century Chinese communities is still emerging in the historiography. The current North American perspective tends to ignore the continued survival of Chinatown's traditional associations in favour of highlighting new forms of community organizing and activism. This examination of the United Calgary Chinese Association aims to situate Calgary's Chinatown alongside that of Vancouver and Toronto, which has dominated previous scholarship, and highlight new forms of ethnic leadership that emerged in the late twentieth century. Calgary Chinatown's successful resistance against urban renewal in the 1960s

⁴⁶ Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999).

⁴⁷ Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*, 8.

⁴⁸ Darryl J. Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 29.

⁴⁹ Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement*, 35-49. See sections on *Red Guard Party/I Work Kuen* and *Asian Community Center/Wei Min She*.

birthed new organizations and showed ethnic leaders the power of a united community. This thesis examines the continuities and discontinuities between the traditional clan and district associations, assumed to be declining throughout the mid-century, and the civic and cultural oriented ethnic organizations of the late-century. Understanding the lasting influences of early Chinatown social structures, especially the associations, helps us bridge the periodization of Chinese North American histories and better understand the resiliency of ethnic enclaves over time. This thesis will also consider the differences and similarities in how Calgary's Chinese community leaders saw themselves, their members, and their organization's mandates, in comparison to those in other North American Chinatowns. When much of the scholarship on post-war Chinese communities focus on locally-born young activists, the UCCA's middle-aged male leadership seems more similar to their early century counterparts than their contemporaries. This work explores the UCCA's claims to representation and community unity, and their efforts to orient Chinatown towards the dominant society through interpersonal relationship building, collaboration, and cultural celebration. At the same time, the UCCA's leaders honoured the legacies of their member associations, taking responsibility for Chinatown's residents and providing social services. To the existing scholarship I contribute a detailed look, using English and Chinese language sources, at the community organization of a Chinatown that has received sparse attention, in a period of Chinese-Canadian history that has received even sparser attention. This work highlights the generational shifts happening in North American Chinese communities in the late twentieth century, emphasizing continuities and change in leadership, values, and senses of belonging. Moreover, my focus on Calgary's Chinatown contributes a place-based analysis that examines these community leaders' heterogenous, hybrid diasporic identities that were constantly being renegotiated in response to local and transnational circumstances.

Discussion of the Sources, Notes on Translation, and Positionality

I analyze the UCCA through their associational documents, which are found in the Joe Khu Fonds, currently held by the University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections. Joe (José) Khu was born to an ethnic Chinese family in Manila and received higher education in the Philippines and in mainland China. In 1973 Khu immigrated to Canada with his immediate family and settled in Calgary. The fonds were donated by Khu himself to the Glenbow Library and Archives in 2017, a collection of documents from the UCCA office, but also the Calgary Chinese School, the Chinese Cultural Centre Association, and the Sino-Canada Culture Association, among many other Chinese community organizations that Joe Khu was an active member of.⁵⁰ Covering 1975 to 2004, the fonds include constitutional documents, correspondence and official communications, grant applications, and many meeting notes, minutes, and news clippings. UCCA-related documents fill five boxes and are scattered around the rest.

Language and authorship are two things to consider when analyzing the UCCA through this archival collection. While most of the documents are typed in English, many are handwritten or typed in traditional Chinese script. These include correspondence with other Chinese organizations, clippings from Chinese print media, and meeting notes. As a logographic writing system, Chinese characters each encode pronunciation and meaning which are compounded and joined into sentences to encode more complex meaning.⁵¹ Modern Chinese administrations each undertook language reforms to reduce and simplify Chinese characters, aiming to make the

⁵⁰ The physical collections of the Glenbow Archives are now held at Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary. Browse the complete fonds on the University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections website: Fonds F3059 – Joe Khu fonds, <https://searcharchives.ucalgary.ca/joe-khu-fonds>.

⁵¹ William S-Y. Wang, Chaofen Sun, and Ping Chen, “Language Reform in Modern China,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Linguistics*, edited by William S-Y. Wang and Chaofen Sun (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 537.

language more accessible to encourage literacy.⁵² China's Nationalist government attempted script simplification as part of their development of a national language 国话 (Guohua, "national language") in the 1930s, developing a list of simplified characters that were never disseminated due to internal government opposition. Six years after the establishment of the PRC in 1955, party officials attempted language reform again to overhaul not just the spoken standard, but also the Chinese script.⁵³ Language reform was a campaign for national unity and modernization to create a socialist Chinese language of 普通话 (Putonghua, "common language") in opposition to the Nationalist's Guohua.⁵⁴ These reforms by the PRC were significant in the mainland, but largely did not affect overseas Chinese communities. Overseas Chinese communities continue to use the traditional script, as do Taiwan and Hong Kong, to the present day. The use of traditional script does not necessarily indicate the UCCA's, or Joe Khu's, allegiance to the Nationalists and Taiwan, but as the literature review showed, many traditional Chinatown establishments were historically KMT-aligned. The bilingualism of the sources shows an increasing use of English in Calgary's Chinatown, especially for official correspondence and record keeping.

I discuss language reforms in mainland China for their significance to how I interact with the sources and to introduce my positionality in approaching this topic. I am a first-generation immigrant from mainland China. My family immigrated in 2009, departing after my sixth birthday in late April. From 南宁 (Nanning), the capital city of our home province of 广西 (Guangxi), we flew to 北京 (Beijing) and then Vancouver. We continued to Calgary, where my

⁵² Wang et. al, "Language Reform in Modern China," 538.

⁵³ Janet Y. Chen, *The Sounds of Mandarin: Learning to Speak a National Language in China and Taiwan, 1913-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023), 217.

⁵⁴ Chen, *The Sounds of Mandarin*, 218.

aunt and her family had already been settled for years. My father's choice to settle in Calgary because he had a relative there alludes to the lasting influence of early twentieth century Chinese chain migration practices. My parents were economic immigrants: father had a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from one of the most prestigious universities in China; mother was an accountant with years of experience in municipal ministry. My parents spoke Putonghua, Cantonese, and their county dialects, but my pre-kindergarten classes only taught us Putonghua and the accompanying simplified Chinese script. Therefore, my approach to the Chinese-language sources in the Joe Khu Fonds is one of double translation. I first parse the text for characters I do not recognize in their traditional form and re-write them in the simplified script. Only after I am able to read the text as a Chinese text, do I start translating it to English to be used in this thesis. I am not formally trained in translation, my translation work for this thesis is informed by Valerie Pellatt and Eric T. Liu's *Thinking Chinese Translation: A Course in Translation Method: Chinese to English*. I acknowledge that my understanding of the formal schema of the text, its structure, semantics, punctuation, etc. is influenced by the content schema, the picture built up as I apply my background knowledge and understandings of the topic to the text.⁵⁵ Finally, I admit that my only familiarity with associational life is being dragged to Chinese New Years potlucks of the 广西老乡会 (Guangxi hometown association) by my parents. In my experience, kinship ties and associational affiliations in our present day continue to be maintained by Chinese Canadians, now facilitated by the internet and WeChat.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Valerie Pellatt and Eric T. Liu, *Thinking Chinese Translation: A Course in Translation Method: Chinese to English* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 14.

⁵⁶ The current website for Calgary's Chinatown, run by the Chinatown Business Improvement Area, still maintains a directory of associations: <https://www.calgarychinatown.com/>

Methodologically, I approach the UCCA understanding that its story is told and recorded by its leaders – educated, middle-aged men with established families and careers who had both the passion, time, and energy to expend on managing an organization of this scale. They are most similar to the post-war "new immigrants" that primarily came through Hong Kong and Taiwan, already exposed to Western influences and with the language and education abilities to integrate into the dominant society right away.⁵⁷ The UCCA's president for most of our period of analysis, from 1980 to 1985, was New Zealand-born Douglas Tims. Before migrating to Canada and taking leadership in the UCCA, Tims' resume already boasted degrees from the University of Canterbury, senior computer programmer titles at Shell Oil, and professorships at both the University of Calgary and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.⁵⁸ A founding member of Storybook Theatre, Douglas Tims was involved in cultural initiatives inside and out of Chinatown.⁵⁹ Tims, Khu, and their colleagues were the driving force and the public face of the UCCA in the decade under examination, it is through their lens that we make sense of the actions and initiatives of the association.

My analysis utilizes frameworks of Canadian multiculturalism and ethnic communities.

After more than a decade as official government policy, in 1988 Canadian multiculturalism was

⁵⁷ Jack Hang-tat Leong, "The Dynamics of Cultural Identity of Chinese in Toronto, 1960s-2010s," in *The Transcultural Streams of Chinese Canadian Identities*, edited by Jessica Tsui-yan Li, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 175.

⁵⁸ Folder 196 of the fonds contain documents from the time of Douglas Tims' death and funeral, including a biography, obituary, and memorial photos. The survival of these documents, for them to be organized and stored away in such good condition, attest to Douglas Tims being a beloved member of the UCCA and the Chinese community at large, and a close friend of Joe Khu. M-9510, Box 11, Folder 196, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁵⁹ Douglas Tims' obituary in the *Calgary Herald*, May 19, 1985, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fmay-19-1985-page-37-91%2Fdocview%2F2258838366%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>; and an article about him, Elaine Husband, "Friends Mourn Courageous Leader," *Calgary Herald*, May 26, 1985, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fmay-26-1985-page-14-84%2Fdocview%2F2259001210%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>. Interestingly, Storybook Theatre itself credits Ellen (Ellie) Tims, wife of Douglas Tims, with the theatre's founding, their *History* web page does not mention any other founders by name, <https://www.storybooktheatre.org/history>.

enshrined in legislation. While reflecting the post-war embrace of liberal pluralism and democracy, official multiculturalism was a continuation of Canada's settler-colonial nation-building project, to maintain the Anglo-Canadian as the norm against which other ethnic, racial, and cultural groups were the "multicultural Canadians."⁶⁰ The Canadian Multiculturalism Act's preamble committed the state to "a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians," with an implied clause that the "multicultural heritage" eligible to be preserved and enhanced must be acceptable to the overall nation-building project, and will be used by the ethnic group to contribute to Canadian society.⁶¹ The state's embrace of cultural pluralism as a form of resource extraction from non-Anglo Canadians was well established by the time it was implemented as official policy. Franca Iacovetta's study on the International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto examines cultural events where new immigrants were expected to "perform their ethnicity – and to do so in ways that displayed their desire to become Canadian citizens," and to "demonstrate the pleasing cultural forms that they were offering as a contribution to society."⁶²

In this period of Canada's multicultural blossoming, Chinatowns were being reevaluated under the framework of expressions of acceptable difference; its distinctly "Chinese" characteristics were framed as cultural contributions to the Canadian mosaic.⁶³ Chinese-Canadians as an "ethnic community" underwent reconsideration in the post-war period, during the exodus of Chinese peoples from Chinatown and its simultaneous commercialization and opening-up. The term "community" traces a history of tensions "between sense of domination

⁶⁰ Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1998), 79.

⁶¹ Mackey, *The House of Difference*, 79.

⁶² Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 95.

⁶³ Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 212.

and subordination, of generality and intimacy.”⁶⁴ There is the imagined community, conceptualized by Benedict Anderson in 1983, to explain nations and nationalism. Central to my analysis is “community” as used by participants themselves to counter outside authority, to claim a shared identity that could be used to claim recognition within the social system.⁶⁵ Could Chinese Canadians in the late twentieth century be considered a diaspora community? In his essay “Diasporas,” James Clifford identifies diaspora as characterized by “a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship [with the homeland]”.⁶⁶ For Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart, the Chinese diaspora best fit these characteristics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Chinese migration was driven by economic and political turmoil in the homeland, and especially in settler-colonial destinations where Chinese migrant communities experienced common experiences of “rejection, marginalization, discrimination and oppression by host societies,” which encouraged “diasporic Chinese communities to forget a strong sense of identification and empathy for each other’s common plight.”⁶⁷ In North America, if pre-war Chinese communities best represented the typical diasporic experience, then how did post-war and late century waves of Chinese migration and settlement fit in to this definition? When migrants became integrated into the host society, could we still continue to speak of a diasporic community?⁶⁸ For the UCCA and late century Chinese Calgarians, the tensions between local and global, between them and their place

⁶⁴ Richard Tyler, “Comprehending Community,” in *Returning (to) Communities: Theory, Culture and Political Practice of the Communal*, edited by Stefan Herbrechter and Michael Higgins, (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006), 21.

⁶⁵ Tyler, “Comprehending Community,” 24.

⁶⁶ James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 305, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/656365>.

⁶⁷ Kuah-Pearce and Hu-DeHart, *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora*, 6.

⁶⁸ Kuah-Pearce Khun Eng and Andrew P. Davidson, eds., Introduction to *At Home in the Chinese Diaspora* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008), 2.

in the diaspora, were ever present. The association emphasized their rootedness in Calgary as the final destination and home at times, and evoked familiar social practices and cultural icons of their Chinese homeland at other times. Diasporic Chinese kept significant social and cultural elements “stashed in their personal and collective memories,” reproducing them into the host society.⁶⁹ Voluntary associations, social customs and religious practices, language, make up these significant social and cultural elements, core identifiers of “Chineseness” that resonated with the entire diaspora, but could take on localized and adapted forms governed by the peculiarities of a specific migrant community, in a specific place and time.⁷⁰ Chinese Calgarians may have conceded any desire for return, and may have been limited in their support for homeland politics, but they were still “diasporic” in their sense of collective memory, trauma, shared cultural practices and traditions that made their community in Calgary mutually understandable to diasporic Chinese communities around the world.

A theoretical framework informing my analysis of the UCCA’s leadership in particular is that of post-war masculinity. While this study has little to do with Douglas Tims’ or Joe Khu’s family lives, we can understand their stalwart involvement in Calgary’s Chinese community as extensions of their commitment to their middle-class nuclear families. Masculinity, like femininity, involves an “active process of performing attributes and expectations that are coded male.”⁷¹ The characteristics of this performance vary. There are ethnic considerations, such as the Confucian virtues deeply embedded in overseas Chinese communities. Confucian teachings have been reproduced in early overseas Chinese communities to include nationalist values and

⁶⁹ Khun Eng and Davidson, Introduction to *At Home in the Chinese Diaspora*, 7.

⁷⁰ Khun Eng and Davidson, Introduction to *At Home in the Chinese Diaspora*, 7.

⁷¹ Robert Allen Rutherford, “Introduction,” in *Making Men, Making History: Canadian Masculinities across Time and Place*, edited by Peter Gossage and Robert Allen Rutherford (Vancouver Toronto: UBC Press, 2018), 16.

support for the KMT.⁷² Values of loyalty, male relationships, and education were emphasized. These values manifested in the social and physical structures of clan associations and support for Chinese-language schools. The UCCA's leadership continued a Confucius-influenced performance of masculinity, including the virtue of 孝順 (Xiaoshun, filial piety) in their patronage of Chinatown's youth and elderly. As successful immigrant men, Joe Khu and Douglas Tims also fulfilled the "model minority" stereotype, described by Hsu as "exemplary immigrants with education credentials, entrepreneurial ambitions, strong work ethics, valuable job skills, and exemplary family values."⁷³ They modeled that stereotype on an individual basis, but also in their management of the UCCA as a "model minority" organization that as we will see, worked within the structures and norms of the dominant society to meet their objectives.

Overview of the Chapters

This thesis follows the UCCA's efforts to claim representation for a Chinese-Calgarian community, efforts that association leaders pursued in and out of Chinatown between 1979 and 1989. As my chosen case studies, events and instances of advocacy and activism, are scattered throughout the decade, I have organized the chapters thematically to make sense of what the UCCA was doing. In every chapter I draw comparisons between the UCCA's circumstances and actions with those of ethnic leaders and organizations in other North American Chinatowns in the post-war period and the late century. I aim to situate the UCCA within larger frameworks of Chinese community building but also to emphasize that diaspora communities were heterogenous, and Chinatowns are each unique in their pasts and presents.

⁷² Marshall, *Cultivating Connections*, 36-39.

⁷³ Hsu, *The Good Immigrants*, 236.

The first chapter discusses the UCCA's mobilization of fundamental aspects of "Chineseness", rooted in culture, nostalgia for the homeland, traditional practices and Confucian values, to encourage a collective identity in Calgary's Chinese population. When planning festivities the UCCA and their peer organizations considered their audience, which in the late twentieth century included multiple generations of ethnic Chinese each with unique migration trajectories and reasons for settlement in Calgary, and non-Chinese spectators encouraged to experience cultural spectacles by the Canadian state's multicultural project. The association paid close attention to the community's elders, legitimizing their claims to cultural and ethnic leadership through the rituals of Confucian filial piety, a traditional practice that resonated with all ethnic Chinese, and in the context of overseas Chinese communities paid symbolic homage to Chinese-Calgary's forbearers.

Chapter two considers the UCCA's relationship building and advocacy outside of Chinatown, arguing that their efforts at influencing institutions and elites in the dominant society were rooted in concerns for Chinatown and Chinese-Calgarians. UCCA leaders sought close relations with the Calgary Police Service as part of their project to improve Chinatown's image and encourage positive conceptions of the neighbourhood. When the association spoke out about government issues, such as education budget cuts, they emphasized the needs of their constituency. Given the opportunity to collaborate on events of international prestige, such as Calgary's 1988 panda loan, the UCCA chose to be a background player to not insert political agendas into their ultimately civic and cultural centered mandate. The UCCA's advocacy outside of Chinatown reflected a nuanced consideration of Chinese-Calgarian identity, values, and needs. The third chapter discusses tensions, fissures and conflicts by highlighting conversations around Chinatown urban development in the 1980s. In this period, the UCCA's visions for a resident-

centered, Chinatown-for-the-Chinese put them in conflict with other stakeholders in the neighbourhood, including a non-Chinese development, businessmen and landowners, and an elite that represented the old Chinatown establishment. This chapter seeks to situate Calgary Chinatown's experience of urban development with those of better studied locales, like Vancouver, but also understand its specifics in regard to Calgary Chinatown's history, community opinions and intra-community conflicts. Each chapter aims to build an image of the UCCA and its leadership as a new generation of ethnic community leaders, a generation that honoured and studied the legacy of old Chinatown's traditional associations, drew from the methods of its contemporaries across North America, but was also deeply rooted in a sense of place and its immediate community.

Chapter 1: Celebration and Traditional Practices Within Calgary's Chinatown

Unlike other North American Chinatowns, Calgary's did not have a precedent of unity under an umbrella organization nor a history of inter-associational strife that warranted overarching authority.¹ The UCCA's claims to unity and representation had to be built from the ground-up and constantly affirmed. To support and legitimize their claims to a united community, especially when considering recent immigrants and locally-born Chinese who were not members of UCCA's member associations, any initiatives had to be broadly appealing and participatory. Aiming to transcend family, district, political, and religious affiliations, UCCA initiatives sought alignment with core identity markers of "Chineseness" and "Overseas Chineseness", the fundamental beliefs and values of Chinese culture that resonated with Chinese-Calgarians and the Chinese diaspora as a whole.² What is considered "core" to the insider, a member of the diasporic community, may not be considered "core" to somebody outside of the community. Core identity markers were those indispensable even in hard times, for Chinese Canadians it was Chinese New Year, which was consistently celebrated throughout the exclusion period, the Chinese language, and traditional associational life, while markers of identity, like clothing, religion, or economic occupation, are arbitrary and changed with circumstances.³

¹ Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Evelyn Hu-DeHart, editors, *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 7.

² Juwen Zhang, "Chinese American Culture in the Making: Perspectives and Reflections on Diasporic Folklore and Identity," *Journal of American Folklore* 128, no. 510 (2015): 466, <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/article/598431>. Zhang's concept of core and arbitrary identity markers is fully discussed in 张举文, "传统传承中的有效性与生命力." *温州大学学报(社会科学版)*22, no. 5 (2009): 12-17.

³ Zhang, "Chinese American Culture in the Making," 467.

From the sources I identify two fundamental markers of “Chineseness” that the UCCA harnessed to legitimize their claim to serve Chinese-Calgarian interests and promote community unity. First, I examine the association’s Chinese New Year celebrations. Their management of public-facing galas and smaller participant-oriented initiatives reflected a genuine understanding of Chinese Calgarians’ local and transnational affections. The choice of performers and performances for these celebrations mobilized participants to reproduce collective cultural memories, strengthening the sense of diasporic community by generating nostalgia for the homeland and its folklore, and recollecting shared experiences of migration and settlement. Second is the association’s performance of filial piety. Filial piety has been reinterpreted and adapted over time to serve varied interests in Chinese history. My examination focuses on the virtues of exhibiting care, respect, and reverence for one’s elders and ancestors.⁴ I argue that the UCCA’s efforts to provide for the social well-being of Chinatown’s elderly residents, through everyday interactions and celebratory activities, was an indirect but potent display of filial piety adapted to a modern diasporic context. Chinatown’s elderly residents were not directly related to UCCA leaders, but these elders represented the first generation of Chinese settlers to be honoured for their past contributions to a Chinese heritage in Calgary. Attending to Chinatown’s elders represented the UCCA’s dedication to Chinese Calgarians as a whole. While intergenerational bonds were created from associational life in the early twentieth century, those bonds strained in the post-war period when the Chinese community diversified because new waves of immigrants and coming-of-age locally-born Chinese could not relate to the older generation’s experiences of social alienation and shared hardship. The UCCA’s efforts to reinforce those bonds drew on Confucian filial piety as a core marker of Chineseness, a belief

⁴ Alan Chan and Sor-Hoon Tan, editors, *Introduction to Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 2-3.

that would have resonated with the upbringings of all ethnic Chinese to bridge differences in life experience. While this chapter focuses on the celebrations and rites meant to engage Chinese-Calgarians, I also identify how the association embraced Canadian multiculturalism. The heavy emphasis on folklore for Chinese New Years performances and having child performers from the Chinese language schools, shows an effort by the organizers to present the most universally appealing parts of Chinese culture to their audience, to promote their community and Chinatown in a positive light.

Chinese New Years

“Yesterday was Chinese New Year. The local Celestials celebrated in regulation style.” This statement or some variation of it appeared annually in the local news sections of Calgary’s daily newspapers dating back to the 1890s.⁵ As the centerpiece of the Chinese festival calendar, the first day of the lunar year is celebrated across the Chinese diaspora. The mode and methods of celebration varied across time and space. In urban North America, celebrations were contained in Chinatowns, while rural Chinese settlers celebrated even more intimately in the restaurants and cafes owned by themselves and friends. Organizing Chinese New Years banquets, parades, and variety shows for members was a social responsibility of traditional associations.⁶ The associations were predominantly male and led by merchant class men, whose leadership in the community and financial resources were mutually enforcing sources of influence.⁷ Chinese New Year was the annual opportunity for organizers to promote their association, forge new professional connections, renew kinship ties and reinforce social

⁵ This statement is taken directly from the February 19, 1901, publication of *The Daily Herald* (later renamed the *Calgary Herald*), under the column “City and District”, *The Daily Herald*, February 19, 1901, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Ffebruary-19-1901-page-5-8%2Fdocview%2F2252297501%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

⁶ Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart, *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora*, 8.

⁷ Xiaojian Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America: Immigration, Family, and Community, 1940 – 1965* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 96-97.

hierarchies.⁸ As Chinese people integrated into the mainstream society, Chinese New Year festivities became a tool of cultural promotion and increasingly became public spectacles of ethnic culture. Simultaneously, social and political changes in the Sinosphere tugged at overseas Chinese people's transnational heartstrings, prompting responses by all levels of overseas Chinese organizations.⁹ In North American Chinese communities, hosting the annual Chinese New Year celebration became a bid for cultural authority and the recognition of that authority by not just Chinese people, but also by non-Chinese participants. In some urban centers new Chinese organizations enacted their own visions for New Years celebrations that challenged the programming of the old elite.¹⁰

In their efforts to bridge their multigenerational community, the UCCA's cultural productions appealed to their audience's sense of place, playing on sentimentality for the Chinese homeland, its folklore, and identification with Calgary's Chinese heritage. If the UCCA's Chinese New Year productions made any statements about Chinese politics, it was subtle and obscured by an emphasis on locally created, folk-culture inspired performances. Celebrations in this period were large-scale, public-facing concerts organized by a coalition of Chinese civic-cultural organizations. The UCCA was part of this organizing group every year, as were the Calgary Chinese Cultural Society, Chinese Public School, Sino-Canada Cultural

⁸ Alison R. Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor: Early Chinese Settlement in Manitoba* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 46.

⁹ For insight into the conflicts in San Francisco's Chinatown caused by normalization of US-PRC relations, and subsequent recognition of the PRC in the 1980s, see Chiou-Ling Yeh, *Making an American Festival: Chinese New Year in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 144-148. The overview of key organizations in Daryl J. Maeda's *Rethinking the Asian American Movement* gives examples of PRC aligned Chinese-American organizations that were formed as alternatives to traditional Chinatown associations; Daryl J. Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 35-39.

¹⁰ See Chiou-Ling Yeh, *Making an American Festival: Chinese New Year in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 122-49; and Mu Li, "From the Ethnic to the Public: The Emergence of Chinese New Year Celebrations in Newfoundland as Vernacular Cultural Heritage," *Western Folklore* 77, no. 3-4 (2016): 277-312, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A805903651/LitRC?u=ucalgary&sid=bookmark-LitRC&xid=dba1f714>, for two examples.

Association, and the University of Calgary Chinese Students Society. In this coalition, only the Chinese Public School dated back to the early twentieth century. These organizations, sharing the responsibility for preserving and promoting Chinese culture, exemplified the multi-polarity of late century Chinatowns. The organizations in this group could all be considered “civic-cultural” organizations. Zhou and Lee, in their analysis of Chinese immigrant organizations in the United States, characterize civic-cultural organizations as less focused on place of origin, and more focused on “meeting various settlement demands for members beyond economic needs.”¹¹ In Calgary, these organizations served the community’s social and cultural needs. While this planning cohort brimmed with the new elites, their New Years celebrations were inclusive of Chinatown’s old associations. The Chinese Freemasons (also known as the Chee Kung Tong, Masons, and Hong Men) often sponsored the event and performed sporadically, notably the opening Lion Dance in 1981 and a martial arts demonstration in 1987.¹² Considered a fraternal association, secret society, and sworn brotherhood at various times and places across the diaspora, Chee Kung Tong chapters were some of the oldest overseas Chinese associations. In North America, CKT chapters first sprang up in West Coast gold mining camps and moved into the continent with migrants seeking work.¹³ The CKT chapter established in the British Columbian town of Bakersville in 1862 is reported to be the first in Canada.¹⁴ There is evidence

¹¹ Min Zhou and Rennie Lee, “Transnationalism and Community Building: Chinese Immigrant Organizations in the United States,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 647, no. 1 (2013): 35, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1177/0002716212472456>.

¹² In other years, the opening Lion Dance was also performed by the Chinese Public School and Chinatown’s various athletic clubs. Chinese New Years concert programs, various years, M-9510, Box 1, File 8, Box 2, File 27 and 28, Box 12, File 211 Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

¹³ Fredy González, “The Chee Kung Tong: A Voluntary Sworn Brotherhood across the Cantonese World,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 47, no. 16 (2024): 3652-3653, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2363532>.

¹⁴ González, “The Chee Kung Tong,” 3653.

for a chapter in Calgary by 1908, and the Winnipeg chapter was founded in 1910.¹⁵ By including the Chinese Freemasons in Chinese New Years celebration, planning committee leaders were affirming the Freemasons' prestige in Chinatown society and acknowledging their contributions to Chinese settlement in Calgary. In return, the Freemason's willing participation in these events were public showings of support for the newer civic-cultural associations, the old guard passing on their entrenched legitimacy to the new.

Along with being an organizer, the Chinese Public School's students were consistently present at Chinese New Year celebrations, their skits, dances, and choral assembles occupying multiple slots on the programs. Chinese schools were important establishments in Chinatowns. Calgary's Chinese public school was founded in 1920. As their mandates centered language and cultural preservation, these schools were supported by local associations, including an overarching organization if there was one, and schools in more prominent Chinatowns received financial assistance from Chinese governments.¹⁶ Chinese schools were valuable not only for educating the enclave's children, but also for their transnational ties. As we will see throughout this thesis, the UCCA maintained strong friendships with the Chinese Public School and championed education. The Chinese Public School's cooperation in these Chinese New Year celebrations again legitimized the mandates of their civic-cultural organizers, and supported the UCCA's claims to represent all Calgarians especially.

The planning committees deeply valued the local, and these celebrations were a stage for Calgary's Chinese cultural clubs, social groups, and businesses. When planning and rehearsing

¹⁵ Chinatown Context Paper, The City of Calgary, 2019, <https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/pda/pd/documents/current-studies-and-ongoing-activities/tomorrows-chinatown/chinatown-context-paper.pdf>, 13; Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor*, 27.

¹⁶ Kuah-Pearce and Hu-DeHart, *Voluntary Organizations in the Chinese Diaspora*, 235.

these performances, members of old Chinatown mixed with newcomers to the community and Chinese Calgarians outside of Chinatown. These celebratory moments were intergenerational, bringing together children, young adults from the University of Calgary's Chinese Students Society and Chinatown's athletic clubs, and the leaders of Chinese Calgary's cultural and ethnic associations. Every performance listed in the surviving Chinese New Year concert programs were by a "Calgary Chinese" group, except in the 1980 program when the Calgary Vietnamese Canadian Association contributed a choir performance. The choice to center ethnic Chinese performances, especially when the event was promoted to a broader non-Chinese audience, was deliberate. The civic-cultural organizations making up the planning committee, UCCA included, were claiming authority to determine acceptable representations of Chinese culture and asserting that authority over the participating groups. Including only local Chinese performances was also possible because Calgary historically has had a stable Chinese population, and the city's Chinese population in the 1980s was large enough to support diverse organizations. In places like Newfoundland where the Chinese population was smaller, Chinese New Years celebrations had to invite outside groups to partake.¹⁷ Inviting outside groups ensured high quality performances

¹⁷ Li, "From the Ethnic to the Public," 301.

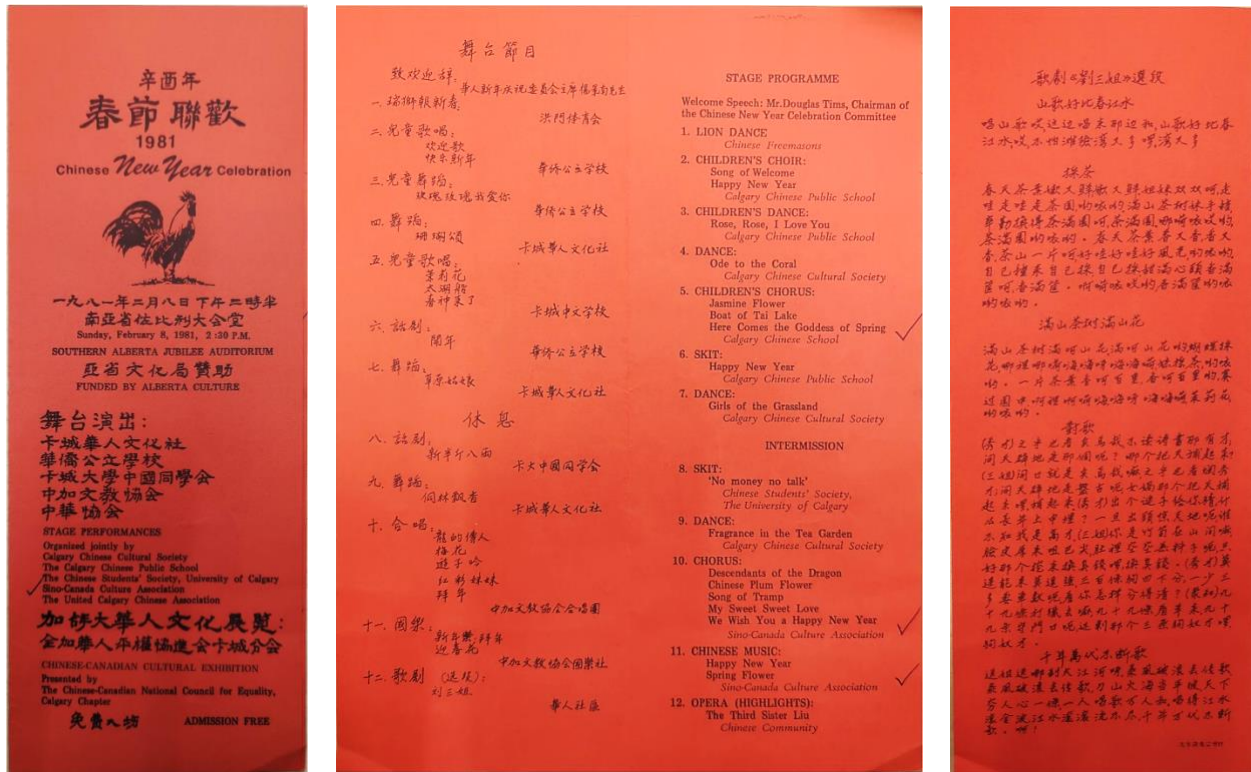


Figure 2. The 1981 Chinese New Year Celebration concert program, M-9510, Box 1, Folder 2, Joe Khu Fonds.

but was less intimate and made these events more touristic. While still public, the UCCA and their co-organizers were dedicated to a celebration rooted in Chinese culture and Calgary’s Chinese heritage.

Though the UCCA were joint organizers every year, their influence was most prominent in 1981 when Douglas Tims, then UCCA president, was the chairman of the organizing committee and gave the opening speech. Tims’ position as committee chairman and the event’s public face would have assured the association’s input was strongly considered. This section considers Chinese New Year 1981 in more detail, examining the organizers’ efforts to reach an audience outside of Chinatown, but also make intimate connections with their ethnic Chinese audience’s diasporic sentiments through performance that referenced homeland folklore.

The 1981 celebration was held at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium's performing arts venue, located across the river and up a hill from Chinatown. Douglas Tims joked to the media about sacrificing parts of the event for the venue, that there would be no parade that year because "It's too long a walk from Chinatown to the Jubilee ... The lion would get too tired."¹⁸ Hosting a celebration of this scale outside of Chinatown symbolized the increasingly outwards orientation of Chinese ethnic elites, who aimed to not just preserve culture, but promote it. In Mu Li's conception of the three stages of development for ethnic festivals, this celebration bridged the second stage: "a festival for the community," and the third "multipresented shared heritage."¹⁹ The celebration program was printed on red paper, featuring a rooster icon to mark the zodiac year and bilingual English and traditional Chinese text (Figure 2). Language and folklore were the core aspects of culture and heritage being invoked. But the presence of English text and the Jubilee location, invited people outside of the ethnic community to participate as spectators. In this way the "festival for the community" was also consciously oriented towards the mainstream gaze. Being able to acquire the Jubilee as a venue indicated that Chinese people were not just accepted into Calgarian society, but also that their ethnic celebration was accepted as an important cultural event worthy of such a prestigious location. Funded by Alberta Culture, the celebrations were linked to wider national multicultural initiatives. When he introduced the act in 1971, Pierre Elliot Trudeau encouraged ethnic groups to not only preserve their culture, but also "promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity."²⁰ All of the Chinese New Years celebrations organized by the UCCA

¹⁸ Suzanne Zwarun, *Calgary Herald*, February 7, 1981, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Ffebruary-7-1981-page-29-218%2Fdocview%2F2258976393%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

¹⁹ Li, "From the Ethnic to the Public," 280.

²⁰ Pierre Elliot Trudeau 1971, cited in Li, "From the Ethnic to the Public," 287-288.

and their collaborators reflected the multicultural context of the period. Li observes the efforts to adhere to multiculturalism as taking on “festival tourism” elements, where “celebrations are creolized by the organizers to combine the Chinese individuals’ perspectives on Chineseness with the multicultural expectations of non-Chinese attendees.”²¹ His evaluation of this “multipresented shared heritage” stage of ethnic festival was based on the Chinese Association of Newfoundland’s (CANL) Chinese New Years events from 1977 onwards. Li argues CANL’s celebrations “presented new definitions of Chineseness in the context of Newfoundland where both Chinese and Western cultures were located simultaneously.”²² CANL chose celebration dates to better fit the working schedules of non-Chinese guests at the detriment of Chinese guests, the activity choices, and the amount of non-Chinese guests at these events.²³ The UCCA’s Chinese New Year events strived for participation from the dominant society, but those outside of the Chinatown-based networks of clan and cultural organizations were welcomed only as consumers of these events. Performances were by Chinese organizations and showcased Chinese folk traditions and stories.

1981 also marked a decade of official diplomatic relations between Canada and the PRC, an accomplishment that most Chinatown establishments would have preferred to leave unacknowledged as to not provoke any residual tensions between those still loyal to the Nationalist vision, mainly the older generations, and the newer generations who acknowledged the PRC. Under these circumstances, the final act of the 1981 Chinese New Year celebration, “Opera (Highlights) The Third Sister Liu”, must be seen as a subtle ode to mainland China as the

²¹ Li, “From the Ethnic to the Public,” 293.

²² Li, “From the Ethnic to the Public,”

²³ Li, “From the Ethnic to the Public,” 293, 295.

diasporic homeland, if not a declaration of allegiance to the PRC.²⁴ Evoking the Southern Chinese folk heroine 劉三姐 (Liu Sanjie, Third Sister Liu), was a direct appeal by the organizers to their audience's transnational affections. The folkloric Liu Sanjie was a beautiful young woman from the Zhuang minority of Guangxi, dubbed a "singing immortal" of folk songs. The legends of Liu Sanjie place her as a champion of rural peasantry most famous for humiliating a landlord and his literati entourage in a singing competition.²⁵ In the late 1950s, Guangxi province's local Chinese Communist Party department of propaganda undertook an oral storytelling project, collecting and compiling Liu Sanjie's legends from Guangxi's local population. The legends were made into a musical, and then the film *Third Sister Liu* in 1960. Both productions were nationally successful, and the film was disseminated outside the PRC.²⁶ Lanjun Xu, in her study on the relationship between *Third Sister Liu* and diaspora Chinese identity politics in Singapore, argues that the film's heavy use of Guangxi scenery was directed at Southeast Asian overseas Chinese, reminding them of their 南洋 (Nanyang, South China Sea) connections and "assuage their homesickness."²⁷ Undoubtedly present in the highlight reel, this imagery of southern China would have resonated with Calgary's overseas Chinese in the Jubilee's audience too. Though regions of origin for North American Chinese diversified in the mid-century, the majority of Chinese immigrants were still from Southern China, including the Southern mainland provinces, Hong Kong, and as secondary migrants from Southeast Asian

²⁴ "1981 Chinese New Year Celebration concert program," M-9510, Box 1, Folder 8, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

²⁵ Eddy U, *Creating the Intellectual: Chinese Communism and the Rise of a Classification* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 139.

²⁶ U, *Creating the Intellectual*, 138-141.

²⁷ Lanjun Xu, "Contested Chineseness and Third Sister Liu in Singapore and Hong Kong," in *The Cold War and Asian Cinemas*, edited by Poshek Fu and Man-Fung Yip, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2019), 75.

countries.²⁸ *Third Sister Liu*'s rural peasant affinities were also analogous with localized farming histories of Chinese-Albertans. Early Chinese settlers in Alberta engaged in market gardening and worked on cattle ranches in addition to the North American-wide ethnic economy of laundries and restaurants.²⁹ The film was first and foremost propaganda, Eddy U describes its creation as feat of "tight supervision, multilayered organization, skillful storytelling, and ingenious artistic techniques, orchestrated by the CCP"³⁰ The party released it outside of China as propaganda, one of many films meant to soften the differences between Communist China and non-Communist Southeast Asian countries, promoting friendship through shared identity markers.³¹ Therefore, the UCCA's and the New Years planning committee's choice of *Third Sister Liu* highlights as the finale fulfilled additional purposes aside from evoking their audiences' transnational nostalgia. The choice was also a nod to their community that these organizations were representing a new generation of immigrant and locally-born Chinese leaders who did not object to Canada's recognition of the PRC as the only China. For the UCCA specifically, who had the Chinese National League and multiple old clan associations in their membership, *Third Sister Liu* can be understood as their renunciation of international politicking and a show of neutrality, confirming the association's culturally-focused, locally-oriented mandate.

The tensions between old Chinatown establishments and the new generations of immigrants have played out on Chinese New Years celebration stages. Chiou-Ling Yeh

²⁸ The continued use of Traditional Chinese script in newspapers and correspondences, which denotes spoken Cantonese, in Calgary also evidences the continued primacy of Southern Chinese origins. Taiwan and Hong Kong use the traditional script to this day. Joe Khu is one example, while his family's regional origins are not known, Khu himself was born and raised in the Philippines and spent time in the Southwestern city of Chengdu for university.

²⁹ J. Brian Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain: From China to the Canadian Plains* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd, 1991), 641.

³⁰ U, *Creating the Intellectual*, 148.

³¹ Xu, "Contested Chineseness and Third Sister Liu," 74.

examines a case in 1960s San Francisco, when the Chinese Culture Foundation (CCF), an organization founded by locally-born Chinese, challenged the Chinese Chamber of Commerce's monopolization of ethnic cultural production.³² The annual Chinese New Year event in San Francisco was a parade and pageant historically hosted by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which the CCF criticized as lacking cultural significance. The CCF's own event in 1975, the Spring Festival, "emphasized traditional peasant celebrations, in line with the rhetoric of communist China," and focused on programming for families. Just like the UCCA's event would do with *Third Sister Liu*, the CCF presented films and photography exhibits of contemporary China to "fulfill a need for those who did not have a chance to visit their homeland." Yeh reads these events as a manifestation of the CCF's political affiliation, in opposition to the old establishment's (i.e. San Francisco's Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the CCBA) Nationalist loyalties. By incorporating the traditional associations under their umbrella and encouraging their participation in cultural productions, like Chinese New Years performances, the UCCA was aiming to mitigate any emerging generational divisions. Inviting the Chinese Freemasons to contribute every year, for example, encouraged the continued survival of these organizations and was a show of respect to their leaders, even if changing social and political circumstances rendered their historic duties obsolete. With their old responsibilities of mutual aid supplanted by social welfare and government bodies, the UCCA's leaders encouraged Chinatown's old associations to join them in Canada's multicultural nation-building project, turning the attention of Chinatown establishments to cultural preservation, promotion, and building their ethnic community.

³² Yeh, *Making an American Festival*, 138-141.

The UCCA embraced Canada's multicultural project, utilizing provincial government funding for many of their cultural retention and education efforts. The number of government grant applications and final reports in the Joe Khu Fonds indicates one avenue through which the association accessed government resources in the 1980s. In using government dollars, they were also negotiating a Chinese-Albertan identity – one steeped in Chinese culture and values, but also immersed in Alberta's economy, society, and politics. The UCCA's 1987 "Alberta Through the Eyes of the Chinese Photo Contest" encouraged "the Chinese community to present their view and feelings of the province" as the project evaluation describes. The photo competition was advertised in Calgary and Edmonton, gaining over two hundred entries from over fifty photographers. Their photographs were displayed at the Jubilee Auditorium as part of the 1987 Chinese New Year event. The program was funded by the Alberta Ministry of Multiculturalism Multicultural Retention Program. Under the Alberta Cultural Heritage Act, the program meant to "encourage the preservation, enhancement and development of artistic, historical and language resources by Alberta's ethno-cultural community."³³ Programs like these emphasized support for the commodifiable fragments of culture, mobilizing these ethnic "gifts" in the multicultural nation-building project.³⁴ Eva Mackey's analysis of Canadian multiculturalism argues that the project of Canadian nation-building "has not been based on the erasure of difference but on controlling and managing it," to discourage political mobilization by minority groups.³⁵

But ethnic groups also chose to apply for government funding and chose which cultural "gifts" to share. For the UCCA, participation in the national multicultural project meant

³³ "Multicultural Retention Assistance Program," informational booklet, M-9510, Box 12, Folder 227, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

³⁴ Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*, (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1998), 79.

³⁵ Mackey, *The House of Difference*, 160, 165.

opportunities to engage audiences outside of Chinatown, and through careful management of these opportunities the association and their peers promoted an image of Chinatown as safe, culturally vibrant, and welcoming. While earlier post-war forays into celebratory and commercializing cultural pluralism heavily favoured the immigrant-gifts discourse to “sidestep the harsh material realities of immigrant life,” as Franca Iacovetta recognized in her analysis of the International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto’s cultural events, official multiculturalism’s monetary funding in the late century gave ethnic groups more agency in what “gifts” they chose to share.³⁶ Spring Festival ’80, hosted by the UCCA and its usual partners, included a theatrical performance about early Chinese workers on the Canadian Pacific Railway titled “Wong Hoi”, put on by the University of Calgary Chinese Students Society. Based on the program’s description of “Wong Hoi,” the students did not shy away from reimagining the hardships faced by their immigrant forbearers for the audience.³⁷ The 1987 “Alberta Through the Eyes of the Chinese Photo Contest,” however commodifiable, was not a display of Chinese “folk art” but an effort by the UCCA to highlight their member’s experiences of migration and settlement in Alberta. The project showed the association’s efforts to develop a Chinese- hybrid identity based on local place, a modern diasporic addition to the regional, place-based identities early migrants brought with them to Canada – the old generation were Four Counties Taishanese, Three Counties Taishanese, Cantonese, etc., the new generation could be Chinese-Albertan, identifying with their specific place of settlement instead of departure.³⁸ Later in 1987 the UCCA applied again for government funding. The proposal does not survive but the UCCA’s subsequent project

³⁶ Franca Iacovetta, *Before Official Multiculturalism: Women’s Pluralism in Toronto, 1950s-1970s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 255.

³⁷ “Spring Festival ’80: Calgary Chinese Community Salutes Alberta 75,” concert program, M-9510, Box 2, Folder 27, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

³⁸ Henry Yu, “The Rise and Fall of the Cantonese Pacific,” in *The Transcultural Streams of Chinese Canadian Identities*, ed. Jessica Tsui-yan Li (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 33-34.

evaluation report details a public lantern show and competition. Between January and February of 1988, the UCCA used this funding to host public workshops on lantern-making. Some of these lanterns were displayed for that year's Chinese New Year celebrations and later in the year at the Calgary Zoo alongside its "Panda Magic" exhibit, an event I will discuss in Chapter 2.³⁹ This project fit more cleanly into the favoured "immigrant gifts" narratives but was also in line with the association's mandate of cultural preservation and promotion. Before official multiculturalism, ethnic groups taking part in the Toronto International Institute's multicultural events also negotiated with their Canadian hosts in a "dialectical dance of accommodation and resistance," demanding support for their own efforts, political clout, and cultural authority in exchange for their participation.⁴⁰ The UCCA was controlling and managing their community's displays of difference as much as official multicultural policy was. As the following chapters affirm, the UCCA was not overtly political in either the local or transnational arena. Their participation in multicultural nation-building was ultimately community oriented and more akin to civic boosterism. The association employed government resources to meet their mandates of cultural preservation, promotion, and community building, participating in the nation-building project on their own terms and for the benefit of their local Chinese-Calgarian community.

Practicing Filial Piety

In their initiatives for Chinatown's elders, past and present, the UCCA fulfilled a key tenet of Chinese culture: filial piety. Filial piety was the virtue of reverence for one's ancestors and elders. This included deep respect and consideration for parents and in-laws, taking care of

³⁹ "Project Evaluation Report: Lantern Show and Competition," M-9510, Box 12, Folder 227, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁴⁰ Iacovetta, *Before Official Multiculturalism*, 251.

parents in old age, and regular worshipping of ancestors.⁴¹ In diaspora, practices of filial piety had to be flexible, especially during the exclusionary period in North America when many Chinese settlers were physically distant from their parents and ancestral home. The social events for Chinatown's elders and the annual gravesite organized by the UCCA adapted the practice of filial piety more broadly to encompass the community as a whole, outside of blood relations.

A notice was posted in a March 1988 publication of the *Canadian Chinese Times*, an invitation from the UCCA to their annual Qingming cemetery visit. The Chinese text reads: "With respect to tradition, the UCCA will host the festival on April 3rd, to pay tribute to the ancestors at the old and new cemeteries." This visit was proposed "Firstly, to remember the contributions of the ancestors, secondly to practice the filial piety of Chinese culture."⁴² The spring-time festival of Qingming revolved around ancestor veneration. In China family members gathered at the graves of their deceased family members for "tomb sweeping," tidying the grave site, and to make offerings of food, wine, and symbolic goods.⁴³ In North America, Chinese people adapted Qingming customs to their circumstances. In some cases, the practice of tomb sweeping and ancestor veneration became more confined to the nuclear family, in others the event was taken on by traditional associations, worshipping in place of distant family members.⁴⁴ The UCCA's invitation insinuated their event as venerating all of Calgary Chinatown's

⁴¹ Alan Chan and Sor-Hoon Tan, editors, Introduction to *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 2-3; Wei Djiao, *Being Chinese: Voices from the Diaspora* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), 203.

⁴² "中華協會通告" "United Calgary Chinese Association notice", clipping from *The Chinese Times*, March 1988, M-9510, Box 13, Folder 232, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada. Translation is my own.

⁴³ David Chuenyan Lai, Li Chuang Paper, and Jordan Paper, "The Chinese in Canada: Their Unrecognized Religion," in *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada*, edited by Paul Bramadat and Davidtran Seljak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 99.

⁴⁴ For more about ancestor veneration practices, read the oral histories of T.Y., "Eating Cats," 35-41; and Rochelle Wong de la Cruz, "Leong Wong-Kit the Paper Daughter," 62-69, in Djiao, *Being Chinese: Voices from the Diaspora*.

forbearers. In this sense the UCCA's event was similar to "Decoration Day" in Manitoban Chinese communities, a day of veneration specifically for the earliest Chinese bachelors that shared no blood relations.⁴⁵ Marshall argues that Decoration Day, which is still observed in the present, "functions to connect the Chinese community to the earliest settlers and creates connections among first-, second-, third-, and fourth generation Chinese Canadians, permanent residents, students, new immigrants, and temporary foreign workers."⁴⁶ By publicly advertising their Qingming event and requesting "support and participation from Chinatown's Churches, association leaders, and people from all works of life," in their invitation, the UCCA also aimed to foster intergenerational relationships.⁴⁷ The invitation also evoked the virtue of filial piety, which would have been potent in this period of organizational fragmentation in urban Chinese communities. As Chinese organizations split along lines of political affiliation, ethnic identity, and socio-cultural orientation in this period, "filial piety" remained a ubiquitous value, part of the core identity marker of "a Chinese-style family ethics which also extends to the realm of interpersonal relationships."⁴⁸ The old and new cemeteries referred to were the Chinese Cemetery, north of Union Cemetery on MacLeod Trail, established in 1908, and the Chinese section of Queen's Park cemetery, next to Confederation Park on 4th Street NW.⁴⁹ As organizers of

⁴⁵ Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor*, 47.

⁴⁶ Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor*, 57.

⁴⁷ "中華協會通告" "United Calgary Chinese Association notice", clipping from *The Chinese Times*, March 1988, M-9510, Box 13, Folder 232, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada. Translation is my own.

⁴⁸ Zhang, "Chinese American Culture in the Making," 461. Zhang is citing anthropologist Yih-yuan Li's "Little Tradition" of Chinese identity, in Yih-yuan Li, "Notions of Time, Space, and Harmony in Chinese Popular Culture," in *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*, 383-398, eds. Junjie Huang and Erik Zürcher (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

⁴⁹ Chinatown Context Paper, The City of Calgary, 2019,

<https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/pda/pd/documents/current-studies-and-ongoing-activities/tomorrows-chinatown/chinatown-context-paper.pdf>, 45; The Chinese Cemetery, City of Calgary,

<https://www.calgary.ca/parks/cemeteries/chinese-cemetery.html>; A search of the "Births, Deaths, and Memoriams" columns in the *Calgary Herald* publications evidences the "Chinese Section" at Queen's Park cemetery. UCCA president Douglas Tims, at his death in 1985, was also buried at Queen's Park, *Calgary Herald*, May 19, 1985, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fmay-19-1985-page-37-91%2Fdocview%2F2258838366%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

important ritual events like Qingming, the UCCA claimed to continue the responsibilities of early Chinatown's traditional associations, and therefore also claimed their entrenched legitimacy. The UCCA demonstrated a dedication to not just present-day Chinatown, with its outwards, multicultural orientation, but to Calgary's Chinese heritage.

The association's poignant displays of filial piety also included the social activities they organized for Chinatown seniors. Senior residents living in Chinatown's apartment towers looked forward to a lively summer in 1984 as the UCCA launched their *Community Program for Senior Citizens*. Through the provincial Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP), the UCCA brought on four high school and post-secondary students to direct a series of services and events catering to Chinatown's seniors. Compiled by the STEP employees, the program's final report provides detailed snapshot of a summer in Calgary, describing the museum tours, social gatherings, and intergenerational knowledge-sharing when STEP employees translated, interpreted, and hosted English classes. Correspondence throughout the summer reveal a high degree of collaboration between the UCCA and other Chinese establishments to support the program. The report also lists the names and addresses of program participants.⁵⁰ In the post-war period Chinatowns were opened to outside influences, social service agencies and activist organizations with wider resources networks supplanted the welfare responsibilities of traditional associations.⁵¹ In this context, the UCCA's utilization of government funding placed them on an even financial playing field as outsider social service agencies, while their member associations maintained their connection to traditional circles. The *Community Program for Senior Citizens*

⁵⁰ Amy Chan, Eric Lim, Lynette Lo, and Janet Mathias, "Community Program for Senior Citizens (Program Report) 1984," report, 1894, M-9510, Box 10, Folder 178, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁵¹ Richard H. Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization of an Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 200.

incorporated some aspects of traditional association responsibilities, including liaising with the non-Chinese organizations and hosting social activities. For example, a STEP employee facilitated conversations between a resident of Continental Plaza, a rental building in Chinatown, and their cable company, translating between English and Chinese for the resident. Another student translator escorted a senior citizen to her doctor's appointment, interpreting and communicating the senior's concerns. The employees organized trips to the Calgary Zoo, local museums, and public parks. Through their programming the UCCA also promoted multicultural values to senior citizens. They created experiences for participants outside of Chinatown, facilitating intercultural understandings and connections. "China Night Party" hosted at Carter House Senior Citizens Home, and "Senior Citizens Day" at Riley Park encouraged intercultural interaction in a social environment facilitated by food and entertainment. "China Night Party" included a Chinese costume fashion show, dinner, and prizes. At Riley Park "different cultures such as the Chinese, the Scottish, and the Irish entertained the seniors via interesting dances and displays."⁵² Through shared food and entertainment, these events generated "social heat," excited extraordinary situations that were opportunities to form new friendships and new understandings of participant's social worlds.⁵³ For many Chinatown seniors who had few reasons to leave the neighbourhood, these opportunities were valuable efforts towards promoting multicultural values and intercultural understanding.

The program also hosted English language classes throughout that summer. In the early twentieth century teaching English to Chinese migrants was a responsibility embraced by

⁵² Amy Chan, Eric Lim, Lynette Lo, and Janet Mathias, "Community Program for Senior Citizens (Program Report) 1984," report, 1894, M-9510, Box 10, Folder 178, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁵³ Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor*, 14.

Christian churches as part of their missionizing agenda.⁵⁴ Some Asian American activist groups also offered English classes; for example in New York, the Basement Workshop Chinatown Community Planning Program taught English and other skills for adjusting to American life to new immigrants.⁵⁵ The UCCA followed these models, but their target audience of senior citizens reflected a specific concern for their well-being and independence, a reframing of the “care for the elderly” aspects of filial piety.

The final report includes a writing sample from these classes, in practiced English Cho Wang Yu shared her experiences of living in Canadian cities. She wrote, “London, Ontario is the first city I lived in Canada ... Only a few Chinese restaurants are in the city. We can only enjoy the Chinese ‘Tim Shum’ on the weekend.” Cho reminisced about her first years in Canada. Mrs. Cho’s first city of settlement was one of loneliness, but after moving to Toronto she found community in its Chinatown where “we can go there to enjoy ‘Tim Shum’ or Chinese food any time we like” and played “mar chuck” with her many friends. Mrs. Cho moved to Calgary with her son in 1983. Activities hosted by ethnic organizations, like these English classes, were often newcomers’ first interactions with their new cities. Mrs. Cho praised Calgary’s C-Train system in her writing: “I always go to China Town by C Train from S.W., it will take me only fifteen to twenty minutes. It is very convenient.”⁵⁶ Even when Chinese families moved to the suburbs, they still looked to Chinatown as their center of activity. Mrs. Cho lived in southwest Calgary but commuted often to Chinatown. The final participant lists showed senior citizens joining the program from all around Calgary, though a majority of the addresses were apartment buildings in

⁵⁴ Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain*, 88. In early 20th century Calgary, the Chinese Mission (Later Chinese United Church) provided English classes every weekday evening and Bible study on Sundays.

⁵⁵ Daryl J. Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement*, 112.

⁵⁶ Amy Chan, Eric Lim, Lynette Lo, and Janet Mathias, “Community Program for Senior Citizens (Program Report) 1984,” report, 1894, M-9510, Box 10, Folder 178, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

Chinatown. The UCCA recognized the importance of English for Chinese seniors, these classes opened doors for independence – being able to travel and shop around the city, to read English news and advertisements – especially for seniors living outside of Chinatown.

The community program also gave opportunities for the UCCA to promote their patronage of Chinatown elders to the wider Chinese-Calgarian community, drawing on the association's personal connections with local businesses to acquire supplies for its programming. For "China Night Party," the UCCA encouraged Calgary's Chinese proprietors to demonstrate their own filial virtue and benevolence through donations of party foods. Gordon Yee, owner of the Fragrance Inn Restaurant in Chinatown, donated seven pounds of Barbequed Pork for the dinner. The grocer Food City, operated by Henry Chow, contributed thirty-one pounds of shrimp, ten pounds of flank steak, seven pounds of Boston Butt pork, and ten pounds of broccoli. Food also flowed in from Hang Fung Foods and Hungs Noodle House; Other groups donated gift certificates, facilities, and labour to the program. It is notable that the UCCA president, Douglas Tims, personally signed off on communications with donors. The cooperation of Chinese businesses reveals the UCCA's loose webs of social control, tying themselves, their member organizations, and these businesses together through good works devoted to the Chinese community.

Conclusion

The UCCA's cultural initiatives reflect the association's deep understanding of "Chineseness" in their modern diasporic context. Chinese New Year celebration programs from the 1980s show the UCCA as active participants in Calgary's Chinese community, working with Chinatown's traditional associations and new civic-cultural organizations to produce annual performances that re-affirmed collective memories and showcased ethnic pride. The

association's socio-political orientation is revealed in these programs, too. The UCCA oriented themselves towards Canadian society and a hybrid Chinese-Canadian identity, only making the subtlest statements about Chinese politics and remaining committed to unity. The UCCA also legitimized its claims to represent Chinese-Calgarians through patronage of the most respected members of Chinese communities across the diaspora: the elderly. By evoking the virtue of filial piety, the association gained moral legitimacy and strengthened relationships with other Chinese organizations and businesses. These were not novel responsibilities; the UCCA was following in the footsteps of previous Chinatown institutions. But the association embraced the multicultural context of their time and was able to mobilize their leadership's Western educations and worldviews alongside their intimate knowledge of Chinatown's history, which shaped the perspectives of the Chinese Calgarians they claimed to represent. The association's mobilization of fundamental aspects of "Chineseness", namely celebrations and rituals, and fundamental aspects of Chinese-Calgarian heritage, like the importance of the historic organizations, constructed and reinforced a sense of collective identity and diasporic community in Calgary's ethnic Chinese people.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Khun Eng and Davidson, Introduction to *At Home in the Chinese Diaspora*, 3.

Chapter 2: The UCCA's Advocacy and Community Building Outside of Chinatown

The post-war decades saw major achievements for Chinese communities combating their marginalized positions in North American society. In Canada, Chinese veterans led the charge for enfranchisement, citing their military service as fulfilled responsibilities of citizenship that should lead to citizenship rights.¹ Chinatown's old guard, the CCBA and clan associations, promoted positive images of Chinese people through cultural performance and commercializing ventures in Chinatown, while still performing their traditional duties of brokerage and social support. This opening up of Chinese communities, along with increasing economic and social opportunity outside of Chinatown, necessitated the formation of new organizations to serve new needs. These new organizations, like the UCCA, continued to base their activity in Chinatowns because the neighbourhood was still the first stop for new immigrants and the "symbolic locus of ethnic identity and community," as Vancouver's Chinatown is described in Wing Chung Ng's book *The Chinese in Vancouver*.² Their goals differed from the traditional organizations. Many of these new organizations had civic-cultural and service-based mandates, mandates shaped by their visions for Chinatown and visions for homeland politics. In some Chinatowns, new organizations, their leaders, and spokesmen supplanted the influence of traditional organizations, while others experienced moments of cooperation and solidarity. Both groups of ethnic elites aimed to preserve and grow their bases of influence. By the 1980s, the UCCA had a strong base in Chinatown and had maintained their member organizations for over a decade. This chapter examines the ways in which the association worked to grow their influence and foster friendships outside of Chinatown by reaching out and responding to Calgary's non-Chinese state and

¹ Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 44.

² Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*, 109.

cultural authorities. The chapter explores the considerations behind who the UCCA chose to affiliate with and how they managed these affiliations. These examples show that the association's first actions were always private, preferring to advocate for their community via personal correspondence from the UCCA leadership to their target audience before undertaking public initiatives. They also show that the association leaders, though themselves not long-term residents of Chinatown, understood the historical relationships and challenges facing Chinese people in North America and were able to apply those understandings to their efforts.

Changing Chinatown's Reputation: the UCCA's Pro-Police Stance

Claiming representation and voice, as the UCCA did for Calgary's Chinese community, came with responsibilities for how their members were perceived by those outside of the ethnic community. By the late twentieth century Chinatowns ceased to be neighbourhoods of concentrated Chinese residence but still remained the most physical embodiment of Chinese people and their ethnic identity, values, and behaviours. The UCCA's directors may have all lived in the suburbs, but their mission of representation was rooted in Calgary's Chinatown. In 1981, Douglas Tims shared the UCCA's vision for Chinatown with the *Calgary Herald*: "a little pocket identifiable to all Calgarians as Chinatown, and to the Chinese it would be a cultural and educational oasis in the concrete jungle."³ The UCCA wanted Chinatown to be safe, an "oasis" welcoming to all. For that they had to contend with stereotypes of Chinatowns as places of crime and vice, stereotypes established decades before the UCCA came into being. Perceptions of North American Chinatowns were formed simultaneously with the ethnic enclave's physical space as it developed in the early 20th century. Writing about Vancouver's Chinatown, Kay J.

³ Cristine Bye, "Chinatown Old and New," *Calgary Herald*, May 2, 1981. <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fmay-2-1981-page-158-254%2Fdocview%2F2258809599%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

Anderson posits that, “‘Chinatown’ belongs as much to the society with the power to define and shape it as it does to its residents.”⁴ White supremacist discourse that justified the settler-colonial project in Canada positioned white people as the most “desirable resettlers” and Chinese migrants as “interlopers.” This belonging vs. unbelonging binary explained why Chinese people were relegated to certain areas in the first place.⁵ According to Timothy Stanley, the ghettoization of Chinese people into concentrated areas was integral to their racialization.⁶ Chinese settlements grew into Chinatowns as their surrounding white settlements grew into cities but grew socially and culturally distant from mainstream society. Chinatowns across North America gained reputations for being physically dirty and morally corrupt. Social reformers and newspapers focused on gambling, drugs, and prostitution, associating Chinese people with these vices to legitimize Anti-Asian sentiments and exclusionary immigration policy. As Anderson argues, these characterizations were entirely self-referential and “signified many of the impulses that Europeans feared and attempted to repress in themselves,” scapegoating Chinese settlers, a very visible minority due to their distinct residential and labour patterns, was a means to distance the white population from these issues.⁷ Portrayal of Chinatowns as neighbourhoods of deviance and squalor continued in the public imagination and rationalized the containment of Chinese people well into the post-war period. Social and political marginalization in the United States and Canada continued after exclusionary immigration policies were removed.⁸

⁴ Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 10.

⁵ Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 51.

⁶ Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy*, 120.

⁷ Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 93.

⁸ Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 187.

Chinese North Americans pursuing equal citizenship rights and integration into mainstream society in the post-war period had to contend with these negative stereotypes of their Chinatowns. Calgary's Chinatown was considered historically significant by the 1980s and was still the clearest reference to "Chineseness" for non-Chinese Calgarians. Because Chinatown's reputation was so closely linked to vice, any efforts to improve the image of Chinatown in the post-war period must have included fostering positive relations with local authorities, especially law enforcement and the local press. For the UCCA and their peer organizations, improving their reputation involved two paths of action. First, the association sought to build trust and encourage open communication between Chinese Calgarians and the Calgary Police Service (CPS) through public town halls. While relationship building happened in the community, the UCCA vigilantly monitored media representations of Chinatown and denounced unfavorable reporting. The UCCA also took to the media to praise the police service's efforts at crime prevention and community outreach.

Despite the Canadian state's efforts to promote multiculturalism, the racial tropes of earlier settler-colonial rhetoric remained conspicuous in the popular imagination. At times, mainstream press sensationalized their reporting on contemporary Chinatown using historic associations with vice, perpetuating anti-Chinese anecdotes that frustrated the Chinese community. A 1980 article in *Alberta Report*, titled "Cowtown's Chinatown," meant to highlight the opening of Chinatown's first police office, also claimed that prostitutions, drugs, and gambling were running rampant in the neighbourhood's organized crime rings. Instead of interviewing the appointed Chinatown Constable, Randy Perett, or CPS Police Chief Brian Sawyer, the reporter talked to an anonymous former detective who described Chinatown as "a

mystery to police and the Chinese want to keep it that way.”⁹ This “Mysterious Chinatown” trope drew directly from early twentieth century racializations of Chinese people as fundamentally alien to white society and culture, and Chinatowns as alien spaces.¹⁰ There is no record of a UCCA reaction to this article, but it was included in the file alongside a copy of a letter from the Calgary chapter of the Chinese Canadian National Council for Equality (CCNCE), who wrote to the editor of *Alberta Review*. The Calgary CCNCE president accused the reporter to have “equated the Chinese Community with organized crime, prostitution, and drug trafficking” and “implied that the Chinese Community is purposely keeping some evil dark secrets from the rest of the Canadians.”¹¹ Two points in this letter stand out as similar to how community leaders in other North American urban centers contended with the negative reputations of Chinatowns, which informed the UCCA’s strategy during the 1980s. First, Chinatown leaders argued that organized crime was “a task that [was] properly the responsibility of the government and a task that no local or ethnic group [was] expected to undertake alone.”¹² When a national panic arose over the perceived rise of juvenile delinquency in post-war America, San Francisco’s Chinese community leaders attributed the problem to a range of broader issues from the breakdown of the home to the post-war recession.¹³ Their first campaign against juvenile delinquency involved petitioning the state for resources to construct recreational facilities and extracurricular activities for Chinatown’s youth. San Francisco’s Chinese leaders connected issues of juvenile delinquency to issues of citizenship, and as Ellen D. Wu describes

⁹ “Cowtown’s Chinatown: A police PR man won’t crack the enigma or the organized crime,” *Alberta Report*, July 25, 1980, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 187, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

¹⁰ Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 101; Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy*, 84.

¹¹ Correspondence, James N. G. Yu, President, CNCCE Calgary Chapter, to The Editor, *Alberta Report*, July 25, 1980, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 187, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

¹² Wu, *The Color of Success*, 184.

¹³ Canadians had similar understandings of the juvenile delinquency panic and also saw recreation and structured activity for youth as a solution, see Tamara Gene Myers, *Youth Squad: Policing Children in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2019).

in *The Color of Success*, Chinese community leaders “stressed their right to state resources to stamp out youth crime as equal and deserving members of the polity.”¹⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, the UCCA used state resources in the form of provincial multiculturalism funding to host public events that promoted positive images of Chinese culture and Chinatown. UCCA leaders also looked to relationship-building with the Calgary Police Service to improve Chinatown’s reputation.

Calgary Chinatown’s historic relationship with law enforcement was one fraught with conflict. In 1892, city authorities called on the NWMP to enforce the quarantine of a Chinese laundry because one of the workers accidentally brought smallpox into the city after a trip to Vancouver.¹⁵ In the subsequent riots, where white Calgarians ransacked Chinese residences and stole from businesses, both city police and the NWMP failed to disperse the rioters until white residents of the neighbourhood expressed concern. As violence continued for weeks after the initial riot, municipal authorities did nothing to protect the Chinese residents or to stop the perpetrators.¹⁶ Conflations of Chinatown with crime invited constant scrutiny from law enforcement. In the 1910s, raids were especially intense under Police Chiefs Alfred Cuddy and David Ritchie, whose strategies favoured physical break-ins and property destruction against these establishments’ own surveillance systems and barriers. After a raid on the Chinese Masonic Temple, five Masonic leaders sued Cuddy and the City of Calgary for one thousand dollars, citing damages and unlawful entry.¹⁷ In this early period of settlement, Chinatown businessmen

¹⁴ Wu, *The Color of Success*, 182.

¹⁵ Kristin Burnett, “Race, Disease, and Public Violence: Smallpox and the (Un)Making of Calgary’s Chinatown, 1892,” *Social History of Medicine* 25, no. 2 (2012): 366, <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hkr111>.

¹⁶ Burnett, “Race, Disease, and Public Violence,” 370.

¹⁷ J. Brian Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain: From China to the Canadian Plains* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd, 1991), 131.

and leaders sought open, public negotiations with authorities, leveraging white lawyers and favorable words from white allies for their best chance at fair play.

Calgary's Chinatown, like others in North America, received regular police surveillance but were only granted official police stations serving the community later in the century. Calgary did not have an established police office in Chinatown until 1980. In San Francisco, the SFPD Chinatown detail operated as plainclothes officers independent from regular police into the 1960s.¹⁸ SFPD used the same narratives of Chinese difference and innate criminality to justify their Chinatown detail. They believed that Chinatown residents would associate blue uniforms with the "tyrannical officials of the courts of China" and uniformed police would only encourage gambling establishments to be more vigilant in hiding their operations.¹⁹ A concern for San Francisco's Chinese community leaders, as the UCCA would also identify as an issue in Calgary, was the disconnect between police and Chinese residents. In the 1940s and 1950s, San Francisco Chinatown's entrepreneurs supported police professionalization, petitioning for an official precinct and open dialogue with the community to replace the Chinatown detail cared solely to suppress gambling.²⁰ After Calgary Chinatown's police precinct opened with celebration, the UCCA maintained the positive note by encouraging open dialogue between the CPS and Chinese-Calgarians.²¹ In late 1983 the association hosted a town hall, inviting representatives of associations, churches, as well as the general public, to discuss their concerns with CPS representatives (Figure 3). The announcement, published in Chinese in *The Canadian Chinese*

¹⁸ Christopher Lowen Agee, *The Streets of San Francisco: Policing and the Creation of a Cosmopolitan Liberal Politics, 1950 – 1972* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 23.

¹⁹ Agee, *The Streets of San Francisco*, 23-24.

²⁰ Agee, *The Streets of San Francisco*, 24.

²¹ Chinatown welcomed the new police office with a lion dance, *Alberta Report, Lion Dance Celebrating opening new police Chinatown office July '80*, July 14, 1980, photograph, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.

Times, advocated for community members to “assist the city police in eradicating crime and maintaining Chinatown as a community where people can live and work in peace.”²² Earlier that

year, the *Canadian Chinese Times*

published a joint letter of praise for the CPS that was signed by the UCCA, their peer organizations, and the newspaper editor. This letter commended CPS efforts in Chinatown, specifically the service’s Race Relations Unit, and for “providing perfectly suited personnel who can relate and communicate with the community.”

This “perfectly suited personnel” was

Randy Perett, who “was fully accepted and became part of the community” and was

considered an adopted “guardian and son” to Chinatown’s senior citizens.²³ Perett had previously been a Mormon missionary in Hong Kong and spoke Cantonese. His familiarity with the Chinese culture and language enabled him to build relationships with Chinatown’s residents. But his success must also be attributed to the support of community leaders, like the UCCA, and their outspoken praise for Chinatown policing in the ethnic and mainstream press. Throughout the 1980s, the relationship between CPS and Chinese-Calgarians remained positive. In 1985, the

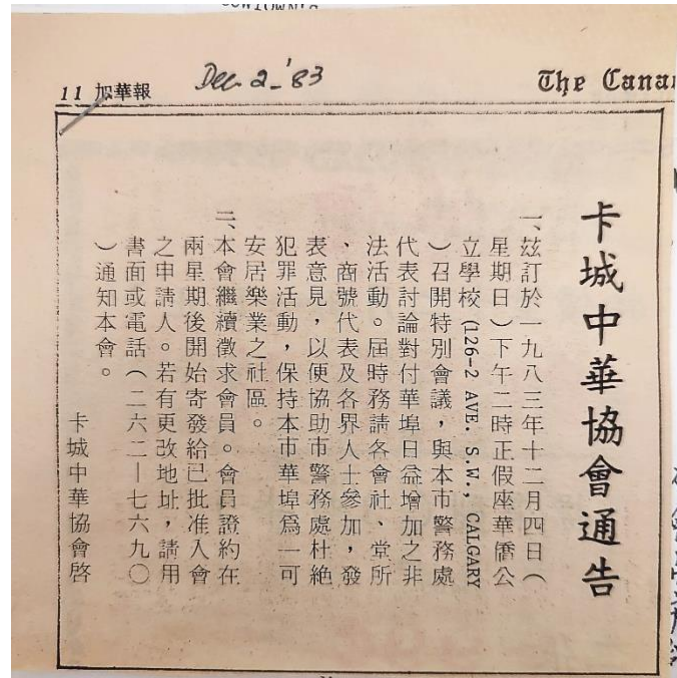


Figure 3. UCCA Notice in *The Canadian Chinese Times*, re: Police Town Hall, newspaper clipping, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 187, Joe Khu Fonds.

²² “中華協會通告” “United Calgary Chinese Association Notice,” clipping from *The Canadian Chinese Times*, December 2, 1983. M-9510, Box 11, Folder 187, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada. Original text in Chinese, translations are my own.

²³ Correspondence, to Brian Sawyer, Chief of Police, City of Calgary, published in *The Canadian Chinese Times*, clipping, July 17, 1983, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

UCCA hosted a town hall with representatives from the CPS's Race Relations Unit to gauge community attitudes towards the police service. Joe Khu even took it upon himself to give advice on behalf of the association, writing directly to the police chief in 1989. Khu's first insight was that rising crime rates in Chinatown were because of recent immigrants, specifically those from Hong Kong who were "familiar with the criminal ways in Hong Kong," and recommended that CPS target those crime lords. Khu's choice to distance himself and his UCCA peers from recent immigrants reveals another emerging generational divide. Late century immigrants from Hong Kong were identified by the established Chinese communities as either ends of a spectrum. They were either "business first, Chinese second" new money elites who shared no solidarity with the ethnic Chinese community, or working class "cheap labour" with gang affiliations and tendencies considered unacceptable by a community that had fought so hard against accusations of vice in its neighbourhoods.²⁴ Khu's concern for these Hong Kong gangsters disrupting the careful image of Chinatown his association, and the Chinatown establishment as a whole, was constructing was not misplaced. Hong Kong criminal organizations had worked with the old tongs in New York's Chinatown for decades and started recruiting Chinatown youth in the 1960s to form youth gangs. Gang members served as bodyguards for gambling establishments, ran drugs, and harassed businesses.²⁵ Toronto's Chinatown elite identified similar problems with the Hong Kong immigrants, attributing increased criminal activity and tensions in the Chinese

²⁴ Richard H. Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization of an Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 272-274. While Joe Khu's concern was for the working class Hong Kong migrants, the arrival of new money also caused increased tensions in North American ethnic Chinese communities. In late 1980s Vancouver the "Monster Homes" of Hong Kong migrants, real estate investments encouraged by the Canadian government, came under controversy for their impact on the heritage and aesthetics of the neighbourhoods – unlike the Strathcona issue in the 1960s, the Chinatown establishment distanced itself from the investors' cause. For an analysis of this controversy and a discussion of the limits of ethnic solidarity, see Laura Madokoro, "Chinatown and Monster Homes: The Splintered Chinese Diaspora in Vancouver," *Urban History Review* 39, no. 2 (2011): 17–24, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A256457885/WHIC?u=ucalgary&sid=summon&xid=41bcb915>.

²⁵ Jan Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 51-52.

community to these newcomers.²⁶ While Calgary was a much smaller city than New York or Toronto, Khu's anxieties towards this wave of immigrants were shared by Chinese community leaders across North America. In this instance Joe Khu identified the UCCA and its members with the cultural and historic legitimacy of "old" Chinatown in his correspondence, outlining the differences between a crime-free Chinatown and the criminal new immigrants for the city police.

Despite distancing themselves from the Hong Kong newcomers, Khu's next piece of advice shows a recognition of similarities in values and behavioral norms based on their shared ethnic and cultural Chinese background. Khu informed the police chief that "crime lords and parents of juvenile delinquents are very sensitive to community censure," and advised the CPS to work with the Chinese language press to publish lists of people charged with crimes. Meditating disputes in early century Chinese communities was a primary responsibility of clan associations and the overarching association, for example the CCBA.²⁷ These clan associations bound people together by surname, which created a sense of extended kinship and mutual responsibility. Khu was advising the CPS to name criminals to be publicly shamed by the Chinese community, seeing crime prevention as a collective effort.²⁸ He also advised that these names should only be printed in the Chinese language press and not the mainstream English newspapers. Keeping all discussion of crime within the community, including behind closed doors at town halls only announced in the Chinese press, was central to the UCCA's strategy for improving the image of Chinatown.

²⁶ Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown*, 274-275.

²⁷ Xiaojian Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America: Immigration, Family, and Community, 1940 – 1965* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 96.

²⁸ Wu, *The Color of Success*, 194.

Denying the presence of criminality in the Chinese community was a method also used by other North American community leaders in the second half of the twentieth century. This denial was reasoned through Chinese cultural values, in particular Confucian family ethics, appeals to Western domesticity, and good citizenship. Returning to CCNCE Calgary's response to "Cowntown Chinatown," their second point was that Chinese Canadians were exceptionally good citizens, and no less law-abiding than any other citizen group.²⁹ In the mainstream press the UCCA maintained this stance of "clean Chinatown." When the media broadcasted Police Chief Brian Sawyer's comments about organized crime in Calgary's Italian and Chinese communities, made at a professional conference of police chiefs in September of 1983, UCCA president Douglas Tims rushed to Sawyer's defense. Speaking to the *Calgary Herald*, Tims asserted that the media had unfairly sensationally distorted Sawyer's comments. Tims wrote, "There is no evidence of organized crime in Chinatown. We don't accept that kind of people living in our community."³⁰ What "kind of people" lived in Chinatowns then? In post-war San Francisco, Chinese American spokesmen heavily promoted representations of Chinatown as "an idyllic community comprised of harmonious households."³¹ Proponents of the nondelinquency discourse, according to Ellen D. Wu, reasoned that Chinese values of respect and "unquestioned obedience" towards elders, and the busy schedules of Chinese kids who jumped from public school to Chinese classes to extracurriculars, naturally discouraged criminal activity.³² As I will discuss in the next chapter, the UCCA also strove to remake its Chinatown into a family-oriented, community-first neighborhood. UCCA narratives of Chinatown emphasized preserving its

²⁹ Correspondence, James N. G. Yu, President, CNCCE Calgary Chapter, to The Editor, *Alberta Report*, July 25, 1980, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 187, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

³⁰ Judy Walters, "Chinese Leader faults news media," *Calgary Herald*, September 1, 1983.

<https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fseptember-1-1983-page-26-86%2Fdocview%2F2258707098%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

³¹ Wu, *The Color of Success*, 186.

³² Wu, *The Color of Success*, 190, 194.

sanctity for senior residents and promoting Chinese culture and values through education and celebration. Promoting positive relations with the CPS added another layer of legitimacy and authority to the UCCA's goals for Chinatown, while residents benefitted from a police force with whom they could communicate. To rehabilitate Chinatown's reputation was to win the hearts and minds of those who scrutinized it most. The UCCA's courting of the police service through personal correspondence and internal community discussion was complemented by their willingness to call out sensationalist media depictions of Chinatown. Despite Chinatown's fraught history with law enforcement, the UCCA saw the CPS as non-Chinese peers worthy of building relationships with. Their efforts reflected the association's overall outward-facing perspective towards Chinese-Calgarian relations with their city.

Speaking Out: Community Advocacy and Democratic Citizenship

The UCCA's claims to representing a unified Chinese community dignified their requests and recommendations when corresponding with non-Chinese organizations. Petitioning elected representatives to work for their electorate's best interests was a key responsibility of democratic citizenship and UCCA presidents exercised this responsibility often. They wrote to various levels of government on topics that included self-promotion, invitations to association celebrations, grievances against other Chinese community leaders, and protests against policy changes that negatively affected their community.

Writing under UCCA letterhead to Premier Don Getty in 1987, Joe Khu expressed his concerns about education budget cuts and their impact on the Community School program. A Calgary Board of Education brochure described Community Schools as designated neighbourhood schools that offered programs to "meet educational, recreational, cultural and

social needs of all community members.”³³ Funded by the municipal and provincial levels of government, this program included after-school activities open to the public, parent and community engagement, and social services. By the late 1980s, Calgary had ten Community Schools, half of them located in inner city neighbourhoods.³⁴ Khu’ letter specifically addressed the Langevin Community School, established in 1967 in the community of Bridgeland-Riverside as one of the first Community School programs.³⁵ Bridgeland-Riverside’s proximity to the railway and downtown made it attractive to working-class European immigrants in the early twentieth century.³⁶ By the mid-century the neighbourhood was considered a “Little Italy” for its concentration of Italian settlers.³⁷

The UCCA’s letter petitioning against budget cuts to Community Schools broadly, and to Langevin’s program specifically, was short but powerful. Joe Khu invoked the community’s immigrant history and mobilized Canadian multicultural and humanitarian ethos to make his case. Focusing on Langevin school, whose location meant it served Chinatown, Little Italy, and the burgeoning newcomer and ethnic neighbourhoods of Calgary’s Northeast, showed the UCCA’s awareness of the limits of their association’s influence. It also reflected their efforts to cast a wider net to claim participation of and advocacy for not just Chinatown’s established community, but also new immigrants from China and Southeast Asia. The association spoke for the “Chinese parents and their children” who used community school resources, especially those

³³ “Community Schools,” brochure Calgary Board of Education, 1984, M-9510, Box 12, Folder 224, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Jean-Marc Lemire, *Langevin Community-School Project of Calgary: An Evaluation*, Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of the Province of Alberta, 1972, 2.

³⁶ Antonella Fanella, *With Heart and Soul: Calgary’s Italian Community* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999), 37.

³⁷ Fanella, *With Heart and Soul*, 53.

who were “mostly refugees who came from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.”³⁸ Between 1979 and 1982, Canada welcomed an influx of migrants from Southeast Asia. Amongst the ethnic Vietnamese, Laotian, and Khmer were many ethnic Chinese who had been part of the Southeast Asian Chinese diaspora for centuries. They were categorized as refugees by the Canadian government and media, either fleeing persecution, protesting the Communist regime, or otherwise leaving homes devastated by war for opportunities at a better life. Migration continued into the 1980s, guided by Canadian family reunification policies.³⁹ As an ethnic Chinese born in the Philippines, Khu was personally connected to this Southeast Asian diaspora. But appealing to the plight of families and refugees was also strategic. Khu called on the province’s multicultural and humanitarian ethos, in line with national multicultural policy, to maintain Langevin school’s ability to host programs that assisted in cultural retention and promoted intercultural understanding. Cultural preservation was especially important for Vietnamese newcomers, many of whom considered their traditional cultures endangered by the Communist regime.⁴⁰

Khu explained that community school activities were “one effective way to integrate these newcomers into the mainstream of Canadian life,” and therefore indispensable resources to local neighbourhood unity, and the greater multicultural agenda. Khu’s final plea, understanding that lobbying against budget cuts wholesale was beyond the UCCA’s influence, was that Langevin’s budget be spared and its ability to serve Calgary’s ethnic communities preserved.⁴¹ His emphasis on integration reflected the UCCA’s local orientation, and the experiences of the

³⁸ Correspondence, Joe Khu, President of the UCCA, to Don Getty, Premier of Alberta, January 20, 1987, M-9510, Box 12, Folder 223, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

³⁹ Louis-Jacques Dorais, “From Refugees to Transmigrants: The Vietnamese in Canada,” in *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas*, edited by Wannu W. Anderson and Robert G. Lee (Rutgers University Press, 2005), 170-171. Laura Madokoro, *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 179.

⁴⁰ Dorais, “From Refugees to Transmigrants: The Vietnamese in Canada,” 180.

⁴¹ Correspondence, Joe Khu, President of the UCCA, to Don Getty, Premier of Alberta, January 20, 1987. M-9510, Box 12, Folder 223, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

association's elite, all of whom achieved success through integration into Canadian society before becoming ethnic leaders.

Langevin's programming brochures from the 1980s provided a full list of Community School offerings. There was a resident social service worker from the City of Calgary, adult drop-in sports, children's creative programming, and English as a Second Language courses from the YWCA that included a "Reading and Writing for Immigrants" supplemental.⁴² The school's facilities also hosted a Ukrainian school, Korean school, a Filipino dance group, and basketball court times for Caribbean, Korean, and Filipino groups. Chinese translations of some portions of Langevin's January 1987 newsletter suggests that a significant ethnic Chinese population attended the school. There were enough students to host a public "Chinese Variety Show" in the middle of the school day for Chinese New Years.⁴³ The UCCA also contributed programming to the Community School; in the spring of 1987 Teresa Woo Paw, a UCCA director and a future Progressive Conservative MLA for Calgary-Mackay, organized weekly Tai Chi classes.⁴⁴

As the Community School program was volunteer-run with many of its cultural activities facilitated by ethnic organizations, Langevin School was not only a site of intercultural interaction and cultural preservation, but also a place where newcomers were instilled with democratic principles of volunteerism and community participation.⁴⁵ The UCCA's support for community schools demonstrated the association's ability to apply broad national discourses of

⁴² "Community School Winter 87 Programs, 1987," brochure, 1987; "Langevin Community School Newsletter #5, January 8, 1987, M-9510, Box 12, Folder 223, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁴³ "Langevin Community School Newsletter #5, January 8," 1987, M-9510, Box 12, Folder 223, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁴⁴ "UCCA Board Minutes," April 6, 1987, M-9510, Box 9, Folder 158, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁴⁵ Shibao Guo and Yan Guo, "Multiculturalism, Ethnicity and Minority Rights: The Complexity and Paradox of Ethnic Organizations in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 43, no. 1 (2011): 72, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A317779821/LitRC?u=ucalgary&sid=summon&xid=840a1d71>.

multiculturalism and democratic participation to local issues. Including newcomers and Southeast Asian refugees, many of whom were also “Overseas Chinese” (华侨), under their representational umbrella reflected an awareness of possible tensions between the different generations and waves of Chinese migrants and aimed mitigate these divisions.

“Panda Magic” 1988: Behind the Scenes

In early February of 1988, Xi Xi and Qun Qun were ferried off their Canadian Airlines flight to the Calgary Zoo. The two pandas faced swarms of local media, high profile guests, and more than 1.3 million visitors during their time in the city – a “Pandamania” of excitement that coincided Calgary’s hosting of the Winter Olympics that same year.⁴⁶ Arranged between the Calgary Zoological Society (CZS) and the Chongqing Zoo of the PRC, this panda loan was significant for all of its stakeholders. “Panda Diplomacy” had been a hallmark of PRC foreign relations since the nation’s inception, but in the late 1980s its methods shifted towards short-term, market based loans that reflected the nation’s economic “open-door policy” under Deng Xiaoping.⁴⁷ Pandas for Calgary was one of the first loans in that market model and was symbolic of China’s re-entry into the global economy in that period. For Calgary, Xi Xi and Qun Qun’s arrival went hand-in-hand with the 1988 Winter Olympics to mark the city’s own emergence on

⁴⁶ “Small steps took zoo from two deer to world-renowned refuge,” *Calgary Herald*, June 4, 1989, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fjune-4-1989-page-81-102%2Fdocview%2F2266322474%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>; Canadian Airlines International advertisement, in the *Calgary Herald*, February 5, 1989, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Ffebruary-5-1988-page-22-144%2Fdocview%2F2266151836%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>. “Calgary Zoo palatial for giant pandas,” *Calgary Herald*, February 5, 1989, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Ffebruary-5-1988-page-49-144%2Fdocview%2F2266151993%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

⁴⁷ Kathleen Carmel Buckingham, Jonathan Neil William David, and Paul Jepson, “Diplomats and Refugees: Panda Diplomacy, Soft “Cuddly” Power, and the New Trajectory in Panda Conservation,” *Environmental Practice* 15, no. 3 (2013): 263, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1466046613000185>.

the international stage and gave the CZS world-class zoo status.⁴⁸ Similarly, the UCCA's involvement in this project marked their first foray into transnational initiatives, and was an opportunity to foster relationships with Calgary's elite cultural institutions that would further legitimize their claims to represent Chinese-Calgarians. The UCCA was a silent partner of the CZS; their name does not appear in media reports on the panda loan in either the English or Chinese language press. Not wanting to be publicly associated with the project must be considered purposeful because the association had always been wary of declaring political allegiance to either the ROC or the PRC. The UCCA's local orientation appealed to multiple generations of Chinese Calgarians across political divisions, while the panda loan overtly proclaimed friendly relations with the PRC.

Coined during the Cold War, "Panda Diplomacy" was a powerful tool of the PRC's public diplomacy. Pandas were a universally appealing symbol of China as a nation and culture that worked to familiarize people with the country and to increase their appreciation of that country.⁴⁹ For the PRC, parading pandas around the West aimed to foster an image of China as a "trustworthy and responsible member of the international political community" along with promoting positive views of Chinese culture and PRC policies.⁵⁰ The United States received their first pandas in 1941, gifted by the KMT government as a thank you for aiding in the war against Japan. Panda diplomacy became a regular strategy of the PRC during the Cold War, in this period its inherent political nature was the most obvious. When the United States normalized relations with the PRC in 1972, President Nixon was presented with two pandas.⁵¹ Canada

⁴⁸ Correspondence, Peter Karsten, Executive Director, Calgary Zoological Society, to Joe Khu, President, UCCA, March 18, 1987, M-9510, Box 12, Folder 218, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁴⁹ Falk Hartig, "Panda Diplomacy: The Cutest Part of China's Public Diplomacy," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 8, no. 1 (2013): 51, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.intyb/hagjd0008&i=53>.

⁵⁰ Hartig, "Panda Diplomacy," 52.

⁵¹ Hartig, "Panda Diplomacy," 60.

resumed diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1971, but did not receive pandas until the 1980s. A period of adjustment followed the resumption of diplomatic relations between the PRC and Canada in 1971. The PRC was suspicious of the Trudeau government's "takes note" policy regarding PRC claims over Taiwan, and Canada's refusal to completely cut off Taiwan caused mutual frustration leading up to the 1976 Montreal Summer Olympic games.⁵² By the mid-1980s, Canada-China relations had smoothed out and the PRC's panda diplomacy priorities shifted to the "capitalist lease model" that sought out prestigious zoos connected to markets for Chinese products.⁵³ Calgary would have been only the second Canadian city to host pandas, after Toronto in 1985. The CZS's request for pandas had to make a case for relationship building with PRC zoological authorities and prove they had an energized audience that would make the loan economically fruitful. To fulfill these two requirements, the CZS solicited endorsement from all three levels of Canadian government and Calgary's most prominent cultural and economic organizations. Chosen as the Chinese community liaison and representative, the UCCA was first introduced to the CZS through Dr. K.W. Chang. Chang was the founding president of the Calgary Chinese Cultural Association and had served on the UCCA board of directors alongside Douglas Tims and Joe Khu from 1984 to 1985.⁵⁴ Like them, Chang was a foreign born and educated ethnic Chinese who immigrated to Canada following immigration reforms in the 1960s.⁵⁵ He was a math professor at the University of Calgary and had the upper middle-class profile and elite connections that positioned him to be a cultural "broker" for both sides.

⁵² B. Michael Frolic, *Canada and China: A Fifty-Year Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 51. For more on the 1976 Montreal Games, see Chapter 3 "The One-China Policy," 58-92.

⁵³ Buckingham, David, and Jepson, "Diplomats and Refugees," 263.

⁵⁴ "United Calgary Chinese Association 1984 -1985 Board of Directors," M-9510, Box 9, Folder 149, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada. As noted in the previous chapter, the CCCS collaborated with the UCCA for Chinese New Year celebrations throughout the 1980s. In the next chapter, we will see Dr. K.W. Chang throw his support behind the UCCA's visions for Chinatown.

⁵⁵ Kok Wah Chang, Obituary, McInnis & Holloway Funeral Homes, <https://www.mhfh.com/obituaries/Kok-Wah-Chang?obId=34715258>.

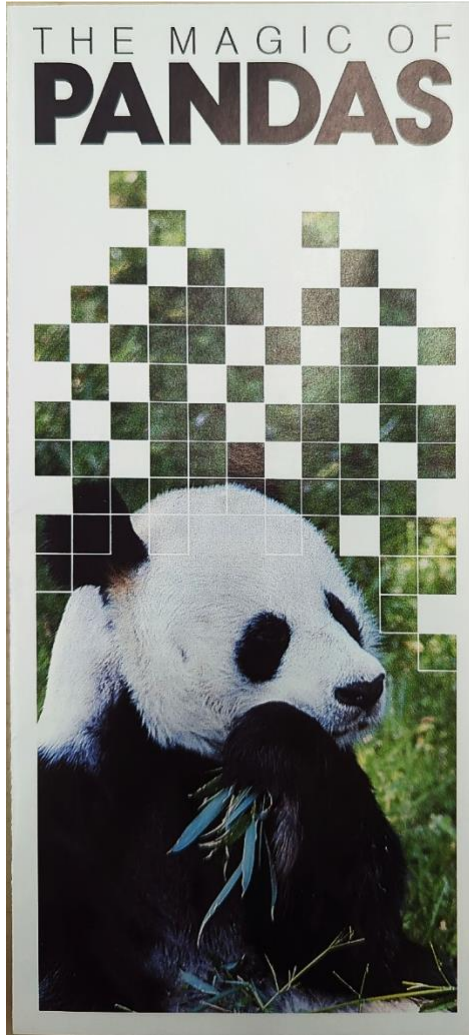


Figure 4. Front cover of "The Magic of Pandas" brochure by the Calgary Zoological Society, M-9510 Box 12, Folder 218, Joe Khu Fonds.

The UCCA's letter of endorsement for the project met both of the CZS's goals. Writing to the Chinese Ambassador in Ottawa, Joe Khu invoked the diasporic ties between overseas Chinese and the homeland while strongly championing Calgary. In his letter, Khu referred to the community as "Calgarians of Chinese descent", referencing bonds of ethnicity and culture that preceded political affiliation and included multiple generations of Chinese Canadians. He endorsed the Calgary Zoo as a "world class zoo" and welcomed the ambassador to visit. As the "Panda Magic" project moved ahead, the UCCA was named an official project supporter alongside organizations like the Calgary Stampede and Exhibition and Calgary Chamber of Commerce (Figure 4). Panda

Magic was the association's entry into mainstream elite circles of cultural patronage and leadership. Acquiring a

social base outside of Chinatown was important for late twentieth century Chinese organizations to access state multiculturalism funding and to create new opportunities for fundraising and collaboration. Vancouver's Chinese Culture Centre received an outpouring of support after organizing a festival for Habitat – the United Nations Forum on World Housing, in 1976. This included a favorable lease of Chinatown land for their cultural center, recognition from the Canada Council, and city sponsorship of "China Month" programming.⁵⁶ Broader networks were

⁵⁶ Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*, 115.

especially important for ethnic organizations because by the late 1980s ethno-specific organizations that served just one group were falling out of vogue with state funding initiatives. Ethnic organizations were sometimes criticized for promoting separatism, receiving “special resources” from the state which undermined principals of equality.⁵⁷ Through Panda Magic, the UCCA associated themselves with and built relationships with Calgary’s cultural hegemons, like the Calgary Stampede and the Zoo, while still emphasizing their ethnic and cultural loyalties to their Chinese Calgarian members. At the CZS’s request, the UCCA arranged cultural performers and planned their own cultural displays to complement the panda exhibition. While the association was not publicly recognized for their efforts, Panda Magic supporters and collaborators would have become familiar with the UCCA name through the CZS’s regular Panda Magic Bulletin newsletters that updated supporters on the project.

Recognition by Calgary’s cultural elite opened up access to resources and support networks outside of Chinatown. Also important was recognition by the Chinese Embassy, for which the UCCA was spared of having to take an explicit political stance. Any public engagement with the Chinese Embassy would have been tantamount to pledging loyalty to the PRC, which would have risked alienating those with pro-ROC sentiments. A strong political stance was also inconsistent with the association’s otherwise local orientation. The UCCA’s steadfast focus on issues directly impacting Chinese-Calgarians can be compared to the outlook of locally-born Chinese in the post-war period, who wanted to promote a cultural identity independent of Chinese politics.⁵⁸

Though the idea of a Nationalist vs. Communist proxy war in Calgary’s Chinatown would make a compelling story, political factionalism was not unique to the Chinese diaspora.

⁵⁷ Guo and Guo, “Multiculturalism, Ethnicity and Minority Rights,” 75.

⁵⁸ Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*, 86-87.

Post-war Montreal, where many Portuguese professionals, intellectuals, and political exiles cast out by the Estado Novo regime settled, became home to the *Association portugaise du Canada* (APC). APC's mixed membership of upper-middle class professional and working-class men had equally mixed feelings about associating with the dictatorship governing their homeland. When the Portuguese consul offered a subsidy to the APC, the association's entire founding administration resigned. A later APC president resigned to start an anti-fascist club when his criticism of the Portuguese Prime Minister and some Montreal Portuguese businessmen angered association members.⁵⁹ Like the APC, the UCCA was responsible to a diverse demographic of Chinese-Calgarians. The range of UCCA member organizations, which included historic Nationalist strongholds like the National League and the Chinese United Church, necessitated treading a middle ground that did not publicly denounce nor support either the PRC or the ROC.

Aya Fujiwara's comparative analysis of Scottish, Ukrainian, and Japanese ethnic elites in the twentieth century identifies internal divisions between nationalist and communist Ukrainians, and between *issei* ("first generation") and *nisei* ("second generation") Japanese.⁶⁰ Both nationalist and communist Ukrainians aimed to present themselves as the real defenders for democracy and the most loyal Canadians.⁶¹ Nationalists campaigned for Ukrainian liberation and against the Soviet Union while communists believed in Slavic solidarity and sought to "bridge the ideological gap" between Canada and the Soviet Union.⁶² The *issei* and *nisei* generational divide smoothed over in the post-war period and develop a cohesive voice with the formation of the National Japanese Canadian Citizens Association.⁶³ Post-war Japanese ethnic elites focused

⁵⁹ Gilberto Fernandes, *This Pilgrim Nation: The Making of the Portuguese Diaspora in Postwar North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 118-119.

⁶⁰ Aya Fujiwara, *Ethnic Elites and Canadian Identity: Japanese, Ukrainians, and Scots, 1919-1971* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 39.

⁶¹ Fujiwara, *Ethnic Elites and Canadian Identity*, 113.

⁶² Fujiwara, *Ethnic Elites and Canadian Identity*, 119-120.

⁶³ Fujiwara, *Ethnic Elites and Canadian Identity*, 32

on redress for discriminatory wartime policies, namely interment and seizures of personal property, and for the franchise.⁶⁴ Japanese Canadians emphasized democratic participation in Canada over Japanese nationalism and imperialism, seeing the Japanese royal family as a symbol of relationship-building with other countries and separating them from memories of the war.⁶⁵ Like the Japanese and Ukrainians, Chinese North Americans also split along generational and political lines. In Vancouver's Chinatown old timers, locally-born Chinese, and new immigrants often found themselves at odds regarding the community's depth of care for homeland politics. The old guard remained loyal to Nationalist China (ROC), while the native born were "typically indifferent to Old World politics" as Wing Chung Ng characterized them in *The Chinese In Vancouver*.⁶⁶ Ng identifies post-war immigrants as anchoring their sense of Chineseness to the historical civilization of China, while locally-born Chinese were more Canadian-oriented. Direct political affiliation was divisive, as seen in San Francisco when members of the Chinese Workers Mutual Aid Association, Min Qing (Chinese American Democratic Youth League) and Bay Area student groups gathered to celebrate the establishment of the PRC on 9 October, 1949. The ceremony was ambushed by a group of rioters, organized by the KMT branch with CCBA officials giving orders and distracting police from the riot.⁶⁷ Into the late 1980s, even when the PRC relations with the west had been normalized for more than a decade and most old Nationalists resigned themselves to a world with "Two Chinas," the UCCA still treaded a middle ground. Community unity was always tenuous, and the UCCA would not put their claims to that unity at risk for Old World politics.

⁶⁴ Fujiwara, *Ethnic Elites and Canadian Identity*, 115

⁶⁵ Fujiwara, *Ethnic Elites and Canadian Identity*, 135

⁶⁶ Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*, 86.

⁶⁷ Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America*, 117-119.

Panda Magic was perfect for UCCA leaders to subtly communicate their acceptance of the PRC without having to broadcast that stance to their community. Working with the CZS meant the Zoo's leadership was the public face of partnership and the focus of PRC officials, while the UCCA elite gained prestige as cultural brokers between the two parties. As an official supporter of the project, the UCCA entered Calgary's cultural elite circles, expanding their base of support and giving mainstream legitimacy to their claims to represent the Chinese-Calgarian community. While Panda Magic received broad media coverage, the UCCA's involvement in the project remained inconspicuous. During the planning stage, the association hosted a welcome banquet for the Chinese Ambassador. Despite being the organizers and hosts, the only evidence of their involvement in the banquet was a thank you letter from the CZS's Special Projects Coordinator, who wrote to Joe Khu stating "we ate too much of course but it was a good evening."⁶⁸ Considering how media friendly the UCCA leadership was regarding other events and issues, the association's focus on providing logistical support only, such as finding translators for visiting dignitaries, acquiring housing for the Chinese technical team accompanying the pandas, and providing cultural programming, must be understood as a deliberate decision to stay out of the public eye.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed some of the UCCA's outreach towards Calgary's elite organizations and people but is by no means comprehensive. Throughout the 1980s, the association took on many initiatives, such as fundraising for the Calgary Food Bank, donating to the Red Cross's Ethiopian Famine Relief fund, and occasionally speaking out in support or in

⁶⁸ Correspondence, Eric Albury, Special Projects Coordinator, Calgary Zoological Society, to Joe Khu, President, UCCA, October 19, 1987, M-9510, Box 12, Folder 218, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

protest of local politicians. The examples discussed were those with the most surviving documentation that could be compiled into cohesive narratives. Like many other ethnic organizations in the late twentieth century, the UCCA was primarily concerned with access to state resources and support for their civic and cultural mandates. As such, they carefully chose which mainstream elite organizations to associate with and controlled the extent that association was publicized. Their choices also reflected a deep understanding of the underlying generational and political tensions in Chinatown. Friendly relations with the Calgary Police Service meant the UCCA could hold them accountable to the community. In their correspondence UCCA leaders claimed to speak for all Chinese Calgarians, adding gravitas to their petitions. In the case of Langevin Community School, Joe Khu's letter showed the association was knowledgeable about the city's past and present and was able to activate that knowledge in their advocacy. The concern for new immigrants and refugees expressed also evidences the UCCA's claims to represent all Chinese-Calgarians. Working with the Calgary Zoo opened up new doors for interaction with Calgary's cultural elite and connected association leaders to PRC dignitaries without having to pledge loyalties to either side of the "Two Chinas" divide. These case studies show the UCCA's consistent locally-oriented, community-first values in their goals to mitigate generational tensions and create a collective base of support in and outside of Chinatown.

Chapter 3: Conflict and Challenge: Negotiating Visions for Chinatown

Compared to other urban Chinatowns in the late century, the line of ideological differences and priority was not so clearly drawn between Calgary Chinatown's old establishment and later generations. By incorporating the traditional organizations under their umbrella, the UCCA de-emphasized differences to exalt their narrative of a united voice. Of course, ethnic groups were not monolithic in their values or priorities. Different visions for Chinatown and Chinese-Canadian citizenship emerged in the post-war period and developed with post-1967 demographic changes. Ethnic organizations and elites, each claiming to represent the interests of a section of or the whole of their ethnic community, came into conflict with each other and with institutions of the dominant society.

The competition for influence, voice, and ultimately power through representation was not unique to the late twentieth century, nor was it unique to Chinese enclaves. Early twentieth century Chinese power brokers bolstered their economic status with leadership positions in traditional associations and fostered symbiotic relationships with white elites, creating coalitions and competing factions. Vancouver's Yip On challenged North America's anti-Chinese immigration laws locally, facilitating fraudulent entries with vague translation, coaching, and signing off false papers.¹ On a transnational scale, Yip On led boycotts against American goods protesting their immigration restrictions in 1905, and dedicated time in China and Hong Kong working towards modernization as a leader of the Chinese Empire Reform Association.² In *Brokering Belonging*, Lisa Mar contrasts the merchant elite, China-oriented leadership of Yip On

¹ Lisa Rose Mar, *Brokering Belonging: Chinese in Canada's Exclusion Era, 1885-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 28-29.

² Mar, *Brokering Belonging*, 28-29.

to that of Canadian-educated lawyer David Lew, who Mar positions as a “challenger” to On. Lew fostered personal relationships with prominent members of Vancouver’s Liberal Party and used his legal expertise to argue for reform of immigration policies and processes.³ Post-war, ethnic factions jostled for cultural authority and representation as well as for political influence in an era of democratic liberalism and increasing cultural pluralist values. Urban renewal schemes in the 1960s and 1970s brought Chinese-Canadians together in their respective cities, and encouraged inter-ethnic cooperation, as in the case of Vancouver’s SPOTA.⁴ But the responses to these municipal projects could also reveal competing visions for development between the participating community groups and the fragility of their coalitions.

This chapter analyzes three interrelated issues of urban planning on the UCCA’s docket in the first years of the 1980s. The UCCA leadership’s visions for their late century Chinese-Calgarian community were clearly reflected in the issues they chose to address and the resources they drew on for support. These case studies also reveal the social standings and understandings of Chinatown’s elite in this period. Douglas Tims and his fellow UCCA elite were Canadian-oriented, liberal-minded multicultural leaders negotiating with non-ethnic elites on equal footing. They saw themselves as different than the merchant elites and Nationalist leaders of Chinatowns past and aimed to remake Calgary’s Chinatown in their vision.

The conflicts under examination all start in the early 1980s and continued the conversations about Chinatown redevelopment that started in Calgary in the 1960s,

³ Mar, *Brokering Belonging*, 22.

⁴ Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 102; Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: Forced Relocation and Making a Good Life in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 164-169.

conversations that are ongoing in the present day.⁵ Central to these issues was the UCCA's vision for a community-oriented, resident-centered Chinatown. A conglomeration of Western and Chinese values, reflecting the association leadership's cultural hybridity, made up this vision. The UCCA conceived of a Chinatown that was primarily residential and where all business and services benefited the community first. Promoting this vision involved coming head-to-head with diverse business interests and negotiating with the city, as my examination of the "Continental Plaza Affair" and the UCCA's Chinatown planning proposal will show. While the UCCA collected most of Chinatown's traditional associations under its umbrella, their influence was not uncontested. As the case studies reveal, the UCCA identified their biggest adversary in George Ho Lem. An established businessman who had connections to city bureaucracy, Ho Lem's influence in Chinatown's post-war development ties the three case studies in this chapter together. In their opposition of the people and projects they deemed incompatible with their visions of Chinese-Calgary, the UCCA steadfastly maintained their community-first values. Their advocacy drew on historic Chinese community strategies of government petitioning, but also the language and methods of their contemporaries in the Asian American movement and those fighting urban renewal in other North American cities. Locally, the UCCA benefited from standards for citizen participation established by the Sien Lok Society in their fight against highway developments in Chinatown. As I will discuss later in this chapter, it was Sien Lok that established a community voice for Chinese-Calgarians when conversations about urban renewal first began in the 1960s.

⁵ The most recent municipal initiative is titled "Tomorrow's Chinatown", a thirty-year multi-phase project that includes an Area Redevelopment Plan and a Cultural Plan. See the City of Calgary website for more information on this ongoing project: <https://engage.calgary.ca/tomorrows-chinatown>.

The “Continental Plaza Affair” and Other Concerns

A folder titled “Continental Plaza Affair” resides the Joe Khu fonds, containing an array of letters and newspaper clippings all marked up with handwritten comments in English and Chinese. This “affair” started on 3 September 1982 with a letter from UCCA president Douglas Tims to the city’s Chief Development Control Office expressing his concerns about the Continental Plaza residential tower in Chinatown.⁶ Speaking with the voice of “members of the Chinese community as well as the Chinatown residents, Tongs and Family Affinity Associations, Senior Citizens and parents of the 300-plus children who attend the Chinese Public School,” the letter claimed that the Continental Plaza was being illegally used as a hotel and a site for bootlegging and prostitution.⁷ Tims continued to condemn Continental Plaza’s adjacent building in his letter, a business called Orient Express that he described as an establishment for cabaret shows that “has attracted another type of undesirable element into the Chinese community ... namely the homosexuals.”⁸

While Tims’ complaint about the unwelcomed activities happening in Continental Plaza spiraled into a year-long dialogue of correspondence, petitions, and public protest, Orient Express received little more attention after the city’s initial response. As an otherwise forgotten part of the “Continental Plaza Affair”, I want to briefly discuss this secondary complaint. Queer people have always transformed commercial and social spaces in their locales into safe spaces for personal expression and socialization. In smaller prairie cities, like Calgary, queer spaces

⁶ The correspondences place Continental Plaza at 110 – 3rd Avenue SW, which should in the present day be the Five Harvest Plaza, whose address is listed at 108 – 3rd Avenue SW. There is no other high-rise apartment-style building in the area that Continental Plaza could otherwise be.

⁷ Correspondence, Douglas Tims, President, UCCA, to the City of Calgary Planning Department “Re: Elimination of undesirable activity in Chinatown of prostitution, homosexuals, bootlegging and vice. Operations concerning the Continental Plaza and the ‘Orient Express’ – 110 3rd Avenue/Centre Street,” September 03, 1982. M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁸ *Ibid.*

were being formalized and explicitly created starting in the late 1970s; they were clubs and



Figure 5. Oriental Express Advertisement in *The Calgary Sun*, August 6th, 1982. This newspaper clipping was attached in Douglas Tims' letter to the City's Chief Development Control Officer, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds.

restaurants, like the Orient Express, but also social services and community hubs.⁹ In *Prairie Fairies*, Valerie Korinek reflects on the scarcity of sources and analysis of Alberta's queer history, a result of the scarce scholarship on contemporary Alberta more generally that allowed "the stereotypes of an old, reactionary, largely rural Alberta continue to hold sway."¹⁰ Korinek notes that Calgary has fewer oral histories and fewer archival holdings for queer history in comparison to other prairie cities. Kevin Allen's ongoing work on Calgary's queer histories has produced an archival collection of materials from 1972 to the present day, currently held by Archives and Special Collections at the University of Calgary.¹¹ Outside of Tims' statement that the Orient Express's entertainment was attracting homosexuals, and the newspaper clipping of an Orient Express advertisement he attached to this letter showing three brightly dressed drag performers on a stage, I have found few other references in the archival record of the

⁹ Valerie Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 24.

¹⁰ Valerie Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 219.

¹¹ Browse the complete fonds on the University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections website: Collections C0075 – The Calgary Gay History Project Collection, <https://searcharchives.ucalgary.ca/the-calgary-gay-history-project-collection>. For more about Kevin Allen and his work, visit the Calgary Gay History Project website, <https://calgarygayhistory.ca/>

establishment being a queer space (Figure 5).¹² Therefore, I will focus on Tim's opinion of its patrons as an "undesirable element" for this brief analysis.

The re-orientation of urban Chinatowns towards commerce and tourism had been an ongoing process since the end of World War II. City planners and Chinese businessmen alike sought to emphasize Chinatowns' historic footprint and ethnic uniqueness. Chinatown commercialization projects involved "beautification" and "preservation" as part of the broader urban planning rhetoric of revitalization, which included provisions for parking, sidewalk paving, and restoration of building facades.¹³ Calgary's Chinatown did not deviate from this phenomenon, by this period it was home to a vibrant nightlife that attracted Chinese and non-Chinese patrons and continued commercialization was an ongoing discussion. From this understanding, we can place Tims' indictment of the Orient Express as rooted in concerns about family and community reputation, rather than a concern for maintaining the neighbourhood's Chinese character specifically. Tims used the wellbeing of Chinese families, children and elders, as justification for condemning the establishment. The idea of "protecting" children from queer influences was an established narrative for anti-gay organizing by the 1980s. As a term it rose to prominence because of Save Our Children (SOC), an anti-gay, profamily organization formed in Florida in response to a proposed ordinance outlawing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Celebrity singer Anita Bryant, spokesperson for SOC, mobilized the rhetoric of parents' rights and protection for the White heteronormative nuclear family during her North

¹² The Great Imposters were regular performers at the Orient Express, that same August their performance was praised by the Calgary Herald, Vivian Rudd, "The Great Imposters put on a good act," *Calgary Herald*, August 11, 1982. A great thank you to Kevin Allen, Calgary's preeminent gay historian, for sending the news clipping. Kevin Allen's book *Our Past Matters: Stories of Gay Calgary* also informed the writing of this section.

¹³ As described in the example of Vancouver, in Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 221-223.

American tour.¹⁴ Bryant introduced Alberta to her anti-gay rhetoric in 1978, performing in Edmonton on her Christian Liberation Crusade tour.¹⁵ As Gillian Frank explains in her analysis of the SOC, their narrative rested on the dangers of “sexual deviancy,” and falsely claimed that homosexuals recruited children. SOC argued that protecting queer rights would open up doors for child molestation and endangerment.¹⁶ Tims’ description of an “undesirable element” drew on this rhetoric. He emphasized the Orient Express’s proximity to the Chinese Public School, which operated in the evenings and on weekends, and highlighted the possibility of danger to students. Frank identifies the origins of “sexual deviancy” narratives in anti-black racism, and similar language was historically used to justify anti-Chinese agitation and policies.¹⁷ In the early twentieth century, Chinatowns were considered physically and morally polluted enclaves home to Chinese men who were themselves sexual deviants threatening White women, and by extension the White race.¹⁸ The male-dominated “bachelor society” of early Chinatowns, and racialized economic segregation that relegated these early settlers to “feminized” forms of labour (i.e. laundry work, cooking) created an image of Chinese men as themselves feminized and homoerotic.¹⁹ Chinese women, a rare sight in early Chinatowns, were imagined as prostitutes.²⁰ Tims’ anxieties about homosexuals in Chinatown reflected his anxieties about Chinatown’s

¹⁴ Gillian Frank, ““The Civil Rights of Parents”: Race and Conservative Politics in Anita Bryant’s Campaign against Gay Rights in 1970s Florida,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, no. 1 (2013): 141-143, <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/article/493004>.

¹⁵ Kevin Allen, *Our Past Matters: Stories of Gay Calgary* (Calgary: ASPublishing, 2018), 60.

¹⁶ Frank, “The Civil Rights of Parents,” 143-144.

¹⁷ Frank, “The Civil Rights of Parents,” 144.

¹⁸ For more detailed analyses of constructing racialized danger in North American Chinatowns, see Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, Chapter 3, “Constructing Race through Place and Practice, 1886-1920,” 73-105; Enakshi Dua, “Exclusion through Inclusion: Female Asian Migration in the Making of Canada as a White Settler Nation,” in *Sisters or Strangers?: Immigrant, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History*, ed. Marlene Epp and Franca Iacovetta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 126-47; and Kristin Burnett, “Race, Disease, and Public Violence: Smallpox and the (Un)Making of Calgary’s Chinatown, 1892,” *Social History of Medicine* 25, no. 2 (1 May 2012): 362-379. The scholarship on this topic is comprehensive.

¹⁹ Chiou-Ling Yeh, *Making an American Festival: Chinese New Year in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 176.

²⁰ Dua, “Exclusion through Inclusion,” 131-132.

historic association with sexual deviancy and the social status of Chinese Canadians as a whole. Maintaining their “model minority” status meant strict adherence to the middle-class heterosexual gender norms that white society, even in the late century, fought to uphold. The UCCA’s priority was the well-being and reputation of their Chinese-Calgarian community, they enforced adherence to these norms as a means of “fitting in.”

Tims’ Chineseness too ascribed heteronormativity, albeit with different understandings. Homosexuality and homoerotic practices were common in ancient China, but considered a pursuit of the literati class and always peripheral to Confucian gender hierarchies and family institutions.²¹ In the twentieth century Western scientific perspectives on sexuality contributed the construction of homosexual subjects as “a violation of the heterosexual order to be silenced, or as a threat to patriarchal order to be regulated,” layering onto already strict Confucian behavioral norms.²² Maoist China persecuted homosexuals based on medical discourses and restrictions on unacceptable social behaviour, namely 流氓 (liumang, hooliganism). The PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong remained sexually conservative into the late century, in 1978 homosexuality was classified as a sexual disorder in PRC medical texts.²³ For Tims, cabaret and its queer patrons were “undesirable” in relation to the modern, middle-class Chinese-Calgarian Chinatown that the UCCA strived for, in which the heteronormative nuclear family was an ideal that transcended differences in cultural understandings.

Nuance is necessary in analyzing this brief comment about Oriental Express, nestled within a letter addressing much more pressing issues for the UCCA. There are no other

²¹ Travis S.K. Kong, “The Sexual in Chinese Sociology: Homosexuality Studies in Contemporary China,” *The Sociological Review* 64, no. 3 (2016), 497-498, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12372>.

²² Kong, “The Sexual in Chinese Sociology,” 500; Yeh, *Making an American Festival*, 183.

²³ Kong, “The Sexual in Chinese Sociology,” 500.

references to queer people, spaces, or actions in the Joe Khu Fonds. Because the UCCA mandate ultimately focused on Chinese community, culture, and values, the association's anti-gay sentiments are best understood as driven by aims of protecting the social cohesion of Chinatown. There is no evidence of Tims, the UCCA, or any prominent UCCA members participating in anti-gay activism or being part of anti-gay organizations. It would be a stretch to make any direct connection between the UCCA and groups like the SOC in Florida or the rise of "New Right" ideologies in Alberta, especially considering that these mainstream religious conservative movements foregrounded whiteness as the central mission – the UCCA's members, as integrated as they were, could never be white.²⁴

On 12 October 1982, the City of Calgary Planning Department responded to Tims' September letter regarding the establishment's license and the Land Use By-law with a brief reference to the Orient Express: "We have no way of knowing, nor do we have the authority to approve or refuse a land use based on the type of clientele, entertainment, etc. such a use may attract."²⁵ There was no further comment by the UCCA or the city regarding Orient Express.

Petitioning and Protesting: The Continental Plaza Affair

The Planning Department Response on 12 October explained that Continental Plaza's new ownership applied for a development permit, and no action could be taken on Tims' concerns until their application process was completed.²⁶ Two weeks before, the UCCA also

²⁴ Frank, "The Civil Rights of Parents," 135-137.

²⁵ Correspondence, Douglas Tims, President, UCCA, to the City of Calgary Planning Department "Re: Elimination of undesirable activity in Chinatown of prostitution, homosexuals, bootlegging and vice. Operations concerning the Continental Plaza and the 'Orient Express' – 110 3rd Avenue/Centre Street," September 03, 1982. M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

²⁶ George Steber, City of Calgary Planning Department, to Douglas Tims, President, UCCA, "Re: Continental Plaza – 110 – 3 – Avenue S.W. Orient Express – 102 – 3 Avenue S.W.," October 14, 1982, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

received a letter from Continental Plaza's lawyers, accusing the association of defamation and requesting retraction of their claims and an apology.²⁷ For Continental Plaza's owner Bradley Chapman and the city, this issue was about land use and the right to conduct business. For the UCCA, it was a battle to preserve the sanctity of their Chinatown in the name of its residents and Chinese Public School students, and to fortify the collective Chinese-Calgary voice under their umbrella for the ongoing discussions about Chinatown development. Pursuing this conflict publicly using the Chinese and English press also reflected the UCCA's goals to turn the hearts and minds of Calgarians towards their visions for Chinatown.

The UCCA's primary method of opposition was letter-writing and petitions, drawing on their member organizations' voices to bolster their own. In early December 1982, Continental Plaza's Change-of-Use application was approved by the city. A coalition of Chinatown stakeholders immediately appealed the approval. The appellants were The Chinese Public School, Commercial Tenants of 110 Third Avenue SW (Continental Plaza), the UCCA, and the Calgary Chinese Cultural Society (CCCS). Supporting their appeal were letters from "the major Tongs and Family Associations and Organisations which represent the largest group of the Chinese Community."²⁸ In his analysis of the Victoria Students Strike of 1922-1923, Timothy Stanley explains letter writing as mobilizing "the legitimating discourse for the state system of the times" to demand justice, fair play and the rights of taxpayers and citizens.²⁹ In the late twentieth century, taxpayers and citizens' rights were still important, but the protesting

²⁷ Correspondence, C.D. O'Brien, Opposing Council, Bennet Jones Barristers & Solicitors, to Douglas Tims, Chairman, United Calgary Chinese Association, September 29, 1982, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

²⁸ Douglas Tims, "Re: 110 – 3rd Avenue S.W. Conversion of a Chinatown Low-Rental Housing Complex to a Hotel," December 12, 1982, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

²⁹ Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 169.

associations also drew on discourses of cultural preservation and ethnic identity. As the UCCA explained to their Chinese audience in an article for the *Canadian Chinese Times*, Continental Plaza was constructed partially with taxpayer money, that the cost was “\$400 000, loaned by the federal government’s Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation,” for the purpose of being low-income housing.³⁰ Their anger was at the waste of taxpayer dollars, for purpose-built affordable housing to be misappropriated for profit. To the UCCA, the Continental Plaza (called 雙喜大廈 “Double Happiness Plaza” in Chinese newspapers) was supposed to benefit Chinatown’s low-income residents. Its conversion to a hotel threatened their community’s security and it’s “Chinese character.” Their protest echoed SPOTA’s rationale against redevelopment in Vancouver that decades earlier asked “How can there be a Chinatown without Chinese in it?”³¹ Three of the four appealing parties, (the UCCA, the Chinese Public School and the CCCS) were “civic-cultural” organizations whose mandates included meeting their member’s settlement needs beyond economic integration.³² They drew on their legitimacy as community-centered, culture-oriented organizations to argue that Continental Plaza was an inappropriate presence in the neighborhood.

³⁰ “為什麼准許雙喜大廈該營酒店是不道德及不負責任行為” “The reasons it would be unethical and irresponsible to allow Continental Plaza to operate as a hotel,” clipping from *The Canadian Chinese Times*, May 27, 1983, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada. Article is in Chinese, translation is my own.

³¹ Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 207.

³² Min Zhou and Rennie Lee, “Transnationalism and Community Building: Chinese Immigrant Organizations in the United States,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 647, no. 1 (2013): 35, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1177/0002716212472456>.

With no answer to their appeal into the summer of 1983, the UCCA escalated the issue by writing to the City Council. This complaint emphasized community trust and the community environment, as well reminding council members of the social contract created between Chinatown and the city regarding urban planning after the last two decades of Chinese community action to preserve the neighbourhood.³³ The morning before Council's vote on the



Figure 6. Captioned "Outside City Hall, protestors voice opposition to proposed rezoning in Chinatown. In the Calgary Herald, June 14, 1983. Photo by J.

³³ Douglas Tims, "Re: Amendment No. 83/20 Proposed redesignation from CM-1 to DC to accommodate a conversion of a low-income rental apartment to a Hotel within Chinatown" June 03, 1983, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

rezoning, the association also led a protest at City Hall.³⁴ A photograph in the *Calgary Herald* showed protestors carrying signs reading “BAN HOTELS IN CHINATOWN” and “APARTMENT YES HOTEL NO” (Figure 6).³⁵

As the voice and leadership for Calgary’s Chinese community, the UCCA drew on local and transnational legacies of advocacy and organizing. Decades earlier during the Victoria Students Strikes, locally-born and educated Chinese formed the Chinese Canadian Club (CCC) to lead the campaign. Like the UCCA would do, the CCC discussed the issue in Chinese and English-language newspapers, negotiated directly with the local school board, and mobilized support from Chinese businesses. In New York, the social justice group Asian Americans for Equal Employment (AAFEE) formed to protest the lack of Asian American construction workers at Confucius Plaza, a high-rise development located in Manhattan’s Chinatown. While AAFEE let pickets at the construction site, the New York CCBA represented the community in negotiations with the city council.³⁶

Continental Plaza’s owner Bradley Chapman also took to the press, accusing Chinatown residents of assaulting his building with Molotov cocktails, rocks, and arson attempts. In response, the UCCA mobilized their members’ ethnicity and collective memories of anti-Chinese discrimination to neutralize the accusations and maintain the moral high ground, Tims responded to the accusations that he was “incensed at the remarks and slurs made against our race.”³⁷

³⁴ Merv Anderson, “Old foes help piece Chinatown puzzle together,” *Calgary Herald*, June 14, 1983, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fjune-14-1983-page-9-104%2Fdocview%2F2259265608%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

³⁵ Cathy Motherwell, “Charges of Violence Fuel Hotel Squabble,” *Calgary Herald*, June 14, 1983, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fjune-14-1983-page-22-104%2Fdocview%2F2259262748%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

³⁶ Jan Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 134.

³⁷ Cathy Motherwell, “Charges of Violence Fuel Hotel Squabble,” *Calgary Herald*, June 14, 1983.

The surviving documents present democratic citizen participation, by way of correspondence and protest, as what won the UCCA their victory over Chapman and Continental Plaza. Chapman's land-use change application was ultimately denied, and the building returned to operating as a long-term rental tower.³⁸ Unfortunately, correspondence between Continental Plaza's lawyers and the UCCA's legal counsel is not in the archival record. What we do have is a letter from Beaumont Proctor Barristers and Solicitors to the UCCA, confirming that the two sides have been in contact over the summer, but the matter has been suspended on request of Continental Plaza.³⁹ The response from UCCA's directors was warm, acknowledging Beaumont Proctor as the "legal counsel for UCCA since its inception" and thanking them for continued services.⁴⁰ Beaumont Proctor's friendliness towards the UCCA and their ethnic agenda shows how integrated into mainstream society the association's leaders were.

Envisioning Chinatown: The UCCA's 1982 Proposed Redevelopment Guidelines

The Continental Plaza affair made clear the UCCA's vision of a Chinatown for the Chinese community. This vision remained steady throughout the early 1980s, when the UCCA and a coalition of Chinese real estate interests submitted competing development proposals to the city. Precedent for community participation in Chinatown redevelopment schemes was set in the mid-1960s when Ray Lee assembled Chinatown businessmen and professionals into the Sien Lok Society to oppose a proposed Bow Trail extension and twelve-lane riverside parkway that would rip the neighbourhood apart.⁴¹ Sien Lok drew on what Jo-Anne Lee describes as

³⁸ Note that in the summer of 1984, when the UCCA's *Community Program for Senior Citizens* was underway, Continental Plaza had Chinese senior residents.

³⁹ Henry M. Beaumont, Beaumont Proctor Barristers and Solicitors, "Re: Continental Plaza," October 25, 1983, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁴⁰ Correspondence, Douglas Y. Tims, Chairman, UCCA, to Henry Beaumont, Beaumont Proctor, November 07, 1983, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 189, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁴¹ J. Brian Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain: From China to the Canadian Plains* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd, 1991), 156.

“culturally hybrid forms of engagement” in her analysis of SPOTA’s activism. Like SPOTA, Sien Lok employed “everyday social practices of hospitality and food traditions traditionally used for cultivating kinship relations and forging social ties, melded with traditional political lobbying practices.”⁴² The Society invited delegates from all levels of government on “walk and dinner” tours, showing government officials Chinatown’s vibrancy and its importance to newcomers and old-timers alike.⁴³ Sien Lok drew on their economic resources and nation-wide connections to host the National Conference on Urban Renewal As It Affects Chinatown in April of 1969, inviting delegates from all major Canadian cities to share their experiences of urban renewal and visions for their Chinatowns. They also sent delegations to Ottawa to lobby for federal backing.⁴⁴ The Sien Lok Society was ultimately successful against the Bow Trail extension and their activism set the tone for community involvement in Chinatown projects across the country. When the UCCA formed in 1969, Sien Lok fell under its umbrella and its membership disbanded. Brian Dawson speculates that the UCCA was formed in response to Sien Lok Society’s lack of consultation with some Chinese community groups.⁴⁵ While all extant records show the UCCA speaking positively about Sien Lok’s advocacy, it is notable that the society was a group of businessmen, and many members of the Sien Lok Society were later Chinatown Ratepayers Association of Calgary (CRAC) members. By the early 1980s, the major

⁴² Jo-Anne Lee, “Gender, Ethnicity, and Hybrid Forms of Community-Based Urban Activism in Vancouver, 1957–1978: The Strathcona Story Revisited,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 14, no. 4 (2007): 381–407, 394 – 395.

⁴³ Sien Lok Society’s fight for Chinatown was covered thoroughly by the mainstream press. “City Plans Tour of Chinatown,” *Calgary Herald*, August 12, 1969, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Faugust-12-1969-page-19-76%2Fdocview%2F2253821612%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>; Jacques Hamilton, “Something Must Be Done: Leslie: Chinatown Gets Attention,” *Calgary Herald*, August 20, 1969, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Faugust-20-1969-page-33-80%2Fdocview%2F2253701383%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

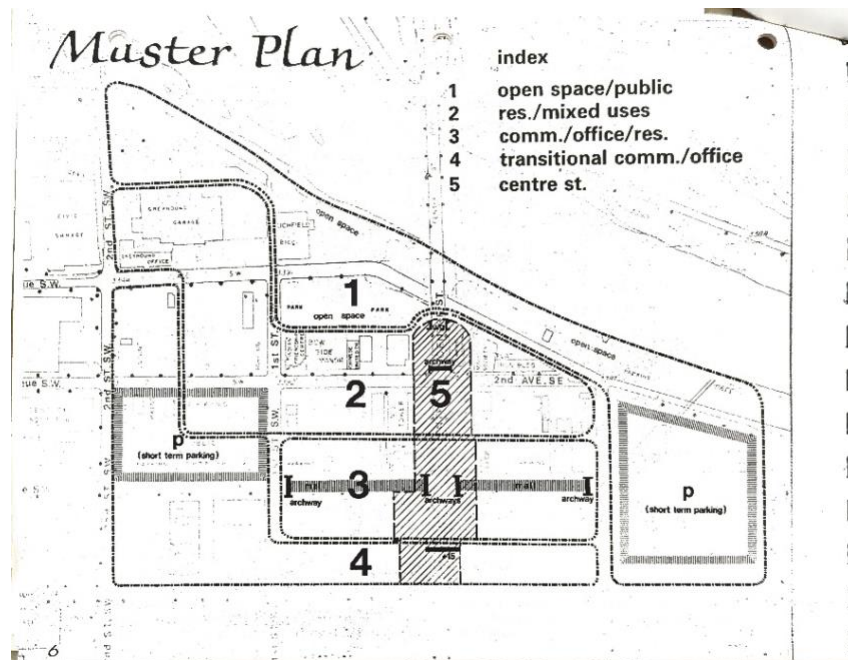
⁴⁴ Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain*, 156; Bob Cohen, “Hopes of Saving Chinatowns Look Bright After Ottawa Visit,” *Calgary Herald*, June 17, 1969, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fjune-17-1969-page-7-66%2Fdocview%2F2253733359%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

⁴⁵ Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain*, 157.

groups in conversation with city planners were the Chinatown Development Foundation (originally named the Chinatown Development Task Force), the UCCA, and the CRAC.

As with all other endeavors, the UCCA promoted its voice in urban renewal talks as the voice of all Chinese Calgarians. In CRAC's "Chinatown Development Proposal," the organization introduced themselves as a group of "businessmen, landowners, and developers with both the expertise and the financial resources necessary for a project of this size."⁴⁶ This period of Chinatown development from 1982 to 1983 was marked by the different priorities of UCCA and the CRAC's proposed planning guidelines.

Analyzing the CRAC and the UCCA's proposals for Chinatown planning reveal each organization's values and priorities. While they share some similarities, such as recommending the use of Chinese motifs on buildings, their visions were ultimately contradictory. The CRAC



proposal separated Chinatown into 5 zones, of which Zones 3 and 4 were for commercial and office spaces and Zone 5 was Centre Street (Figure 7). Only two zones were designated residential, public, and mixed use.⁴⁷ The *Calgary Herald* explained the

Figure 7. CRAC's proposed "zones" for Calgary's Chinatown, in "Chinatown Development Proposal" submitted by The Chinatown Ratepayers Association, pp. 6, M-9510, Box 14, Folder 261, Joe Khu Fonds.

CRAC plan was for "double

⁴⁶ Chinatown Ratepayers Association, Chinatown Development Proposal, October 1982, M-9510, Box 14, Folder 261, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

density,” adding half a million feet of commercial space and almost 2 million feet of office space to the neighborhood throughout their 5 zones.⁴⁸ The UCCA’s “Proposed Planning Guidelines for Calgary Chinatown” introduced Chinatown as a “complete community,” and “a community that caters to the education/cultural needs of the community as well as a resting place for the senior citizens.” Residential primacy was prioritized, the plan advocated for increasing the density of non-profit public housing and a pedestrian overpass to remedy the Centre Street traffic that created a “barrier” between Chinatown East and West.⁴⁹ The UCCA plan was distributed to all of its member associations in early August 1982 for revisions and approval, responses were all supportive with minor suggestions: the National League wanted more public parking and a commitment to clean streets; the Eng association wanted By-Laws prohibiting hotels and prostitution “for the sake of our old folks and school children.”⁵⁰ Dr. K.W. Chang, on behalf of the Calgary Chinese Cultural Society, expressed his approval of the proposal followed by a subtle condemnation of the CRAC as selling-out Chinatown land and putting the livelihoods of small merchants, the poor, and the elderly at risk with their commercial interests.⁵¹

In his study of the post-war North American Portuguese diaspora, Fernandes observes that once Portuguese businessmen and professionals achieved success outside of the ethnic market and became members of the mainstream middle class, they “distanced themselves from

⁴⁸ Peter Morton, “Chinatown division reopens,” *Calgary Herald*, October 7, 1982. <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Foctober-7-1982-page-20-109%2Fdocview%2F2258611761%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

⁴⁹ United Calgary Chinese Association, Proposed Planning Guidelines for Calgary Chinatown, August 2nd, 1982, M-9510, Box 14, Folder 261, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁵⁰ Correspondences Re: responses to the UCCA’s Proposed Planning Guidelines for Calgary’s Chinatown, draft, M-9510, Box 14, Folder 261, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada. The Eng Association response was dated August 12, a month later the UCCA would complain to the City about the very issues of hotels and prostitution, sparking the Continental Plaza Affair.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

the civic initiatives of their less privileged co-nationals, or only engaged from a distance.”⁵² In the post-war period, many locally-born Chinese-Canadians left Chinatown for the growing suburbs, but remained engaged in a myriad of civic initiatives that included campaigning for immigration liberalization and the franchise. They formed new service and cultural organizations and kept close watch on the evolving political situation between mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.⁵³ Downtown urban renewal schemes in the 1960s drew people back into Chinatown, especially the Asian American movement’s locally-born young adults who saw the fight to protect Chinatown as a chance to re-stake their claims to the neighbourhood and its ethnic identity. The UCCA’s leadership further proved that physical distance did not mean sentimental distance. As chapter one of this thesis argued, the association’s cultural initiatives were deeply connected to Chinatown’s heritage and emphasized the importance of its long-established associations. In their *Proposed Planning Guidelines*, the UCCA’s concept of a “complete community” focusing on education, culture, and senior residents reflected the values of each of its member organizations, from the family associations to the Chinese Public School. In contrast, the CRAC’s plan, imagined by people whose businesses were in Chinatown and integrated into the enclave’s economy, only engaged with the neighborhood’s housing needs and cultural values from a distance. The UCCA and their peers’ subtle condemnations of landlordism can be read to infer the organization’s more progressive values. More obvious in their anti-landlord sentiments was the UCCA leaderships’ own circumstances of immigration and settlement; Joe Khu’s business ventures were not in Chinatown, while Douglas Tims and K.W.

⁵² Gilberto Fernandes, *This Pilgrim Nation: The Making of the Portuguese Diaspora in Postwar North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 125.

⁵³ Peter S. Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, 2nd edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998), 44-46, 84-84.

Chang were academics. The UCCA's leadership had less economic stake in Chinatown and cared more about the cultural and service responsibilities that they voluntarily engaged with.

Challenging the Old Guard: The UCCA and George Ho Lem

This chapter has highlighted ways the UCCA challenged the elements deemed undesirable to their vision for Calgary's Chinatown. The Orient Express and Continental Plaza were considered unsuitable for Chinatown's family-centered environment. They considered CRAC's proposals for development a selling-out of Chinatown by its landowning class. For all their calls for ethnic unity, the UCCA did not shy away from challenging Chinese community elites who did not share their views. A generational divide was developing. The UCCA's leadership represented a post-1967 generation of middle-class, readily integrated economic immigrants and were individually established professionals. Within Chinatown they had to compete with Canadian-born Chinese men whose prestige drew on the wealth and legitimacy of their family's long history in the enclave. One such elite was George Ho Lem.

George Ho Lem's father, Ho Lem (何林) arrived in Calgary from Canton and Vancouver in 1901. He rose to prominence in Calgary's nascent Chinatown as an entrepreneur, devoted member of the Chinese Mission (later the Chinese United Church), and Nationalist. Ho Lem solidified his community standing during the Chinatown Relocation Issue of 1910, negotiating with City Council alongside other Chinese elites for Chinatown's new (and present-day) location at 2nd Avenue and Centre Street South.⁵⁴ Ho Lem's sons benefited from his prominence and improved the family's standing as pioneers in their own right: Frank was a renowned marksman

⁵⁴ Chinatown Context Paper, The City of Calgary, 2019, <https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/pda/pd/documents/current-studies-and-ongoing-activities/tomorrows-chinatown/chinatown-context-paper.pdf>, 23; Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain* 71; Brian Brennan, *Alberta Originals: Stories of Albertans Who Made a Difference* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2001): 39-41.

and became the first Chinese commissioned officer in the Canadian forces, Charles was the first Chinese president of the Kiwanis Club, while David and George followed their father's entrepreneurial footsteps to open Rosedale Cleaners in Calgary.⁵⁵ Every adult Ho Lem was a member of the Sien Lok Society and attended the society's 1969 conference on urban renewal.⁵⁶ Even before his entrance into politics, George Ho Lem was deeply entrenched in Chinatown's male-dominated traditional power structure – a merchant, patron, and power broker contemporaneous with the merchant-patron-power-brokers of North America's other Chinatowns. George Ho Lem's prestige within Chinatown was steady and enduring, drawing on the authority of his father and the popular influence of his brothers. His was connected to mainstream elites through his membership in the Junior Chamber of Commerce and the United Citizens Association. Ho Lem was Calgary's first Chinese Alderman, serving two consecutive terms from 1959 to 1965. He moved to the Social Credit Party and was elected as the first Chinese Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1971. In the 1970s George Ho Lem formed the Chinatown Development Task Force. The Chinatown design brief prepared by the Task Force was approved by the City Council in 1976 was the first comprehensive plan for Chinatown development to be enacted and was the model for both the UCCA and CRAC's visions.⁵⁷ Ho

⁵⁵ Chinatown Context Paper, 29, 26; Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain* 213-214. Frank's marksmanship skills were repeatedly highlighted in local news, examples: "Ho Lem Makes Perfect Score," *Calgary Herald*, May 4, 1940, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fmay-4-1940-page-27-28%2Fdocview%2F2252809893%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>; "Noted Marksman Takes Officer Course," *Calgary Herald*, July 22, 1942, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fjuly-22-1942-page-15-16%2Fdocview%2F2252805737%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

⁵⁶ "National Conference on Urban Renewal as it Affects Chinatown," conference proceedings, The Sien Lok Society of Calgary, 1969, ASC, University of Calgary, 13.

⁵⁷ David Cheunyan Lai and Lloyd Seiban, "Calgary Chinatowns 1988 – 2015," Chinese Canadian Heritage Fund, Simon Fraser University, David See-Chai Lam Centre for International Communication. https://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/calgary_chinatown_en.html.

Lem appeared on the political scene again in late 1982, when he was nominated for a vacant Senate seat.

It was in response to Ho Lem's senate nomination that the UCCA's grievances towards the man surfaced. Under UCCA letterhead, Douglas Tims wrote directly to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau:

Normally, if a fellow Chinese-Canadian is being considered for a position of trust, respect, and honour, such as a Senator, we Chinese-Canadians should feel very proud and honoured as well. However, this is not the case in this instance. George Ho Lem has been the focus of much strife and divided emotion in our community. Controversy involving this man is unresolved.⁵⁸

As a Chinatown landowner and entrepreneur of the old guard, as well the most prominent member of the CRAC who gave the ratepayer's association much of its prestige, Ho Lem was already at odds with the UCCA's prerogatives. The "controversy" that Tims continues to explain in his letter is that George Ho Lem was Continental Plaza's developer and its first owner.

Bernard Wong's study of New York's Chinatown identifies a system of formal positions with all of its accompanying rights, obligations, and resources as the basis of the community's patron-client relationships.⁵⁹ Similar sentiments regarding rights and obligations explain the UCCA's grievances against George Ho Lem. In his letter to the Prime Minister and in press interviews Tims explained that Ho Lem was able to buy city land at-cost and was only eligible for a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) subsidized mortgage because he proclaimed the development responded to surveys indicating a need for low-income housing.⁶⁰ As an established

⁵⁸ Douglas Tims, "Re: Replacement for Senator," December 14, 1982, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 190, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

⁵⁹ Bernard Wong, *Patronage, Brokerage, Entrepreneurship, and the Chinese Community of New York* (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 115.

⁶⁰ Douglas Tims, "Re: Replacement for Senator," December 14, 1982, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 190, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada; Merv Anderson, "Old foes help piece Chinatown together," *Calgary Herald*, June 14, 1983,

patron and leader of the Chinese community, Ho Lem was expected to follow through with his promises. By selling the development for profit just years after its completion, Ho Lem reneged on the social contract between him and Chinatown's residents. For the UCCA, Ho Lem was a vestige of an old order of Chinatown merchants, whose social status was tied to their businesses and the land those businesses stood on. The prestige of the commercial class was itself a vestige of the exclusionary period, because "merchant" was the only exempt class during the Head Tax years and after 1921 was the least restricted category of entry.⁶¹ Labour migrants, once arrived, were restricted to work in Chinese businesses by the language barrier and anti-Chinese sentiments.⁶² While the dream was to open their own restaurant or laundry, like George Ho Lem's father succeeded in doing, obtaining social mobility involved an arduous process of paying off debts to sponsors, immigration brokers, and employers, and budgeting regular remittances to family before funds could be put aside for entrepreneurship.⁶³ Being a successful Chinatown merchant in the early twentieth century meant having the financial resources to influence fellow Chinese and foster friendships with non-Chinese. Though the UCCA was an umbrella organization for Chinatown's traditional associations, most of them founded by and historically led by the merchant class, its leadership had no personal connection with that history and little reverence for it. The UCCA's position in regard to Ho Lem's capitalistic endeavors was similar to how radical Asian American organizations viewed the old Chinatown establishments of their locales. New York's AAFEE condemned the CCBA as "dominated by "factory owners, merchants and landlords"" who only served their own interests.⁶⁴ Cooperation between the

<https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fjune-14-1983-page-9-104%2Fdocview%2F2259265608%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

⁶¹ Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, 34-35.

⁶² Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, 47.

⁶³ Mar, *Brokering Belonging*, 28.

⁶⁴ Daryl J. Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 97.

CCBA and AAFEE were tenuous as their methods of advocacy often clashed, the CCBA preferred behind-the-scenes negotiations characteristic of early twentieth century power brokerage while the AAFEE favoured vocal public protest.⁶⁵ The UCCA also enjoyed negotiating in the court of public opinion, involving the mainstream and ethnic press alongside more traditional methods of letter writing.

George Ho Lem's position in Canadian political circles could not be matched by any UCCA executive, but the association did have some national connections. Following his letter to the Prime Minister, Tims also wrote to the president of the Chinese Canadian National Council for Equality informing them about their disagreement with Ho Lem. Tims warned the president that Ho Lem has been lobbying Chinese organizations for support and implored the CCNCE to take due diligence when choosing a senatorial candidate to endorse.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Between 1982 and 1983 the UCCA saw their vision for a resident-centered, community-oriented Chinatown for the Chinese challenged by other stakeholders. The UCCA's leaders constructed their elite identities in opposition to long-time businessman and developer George Ho Lem, claiming genuine interest in Chinatown's community and culture in contrast to the merchant elite's commercial interests. The association's proposal for Chinatown to remain low-density, a residential enclave in the midst of commercial downtown core, reflected their deep concern for the primarily working class, low-income residents of Chinatown, even if the UCCA's leaders themselves had little personal experience of living in the ethnic enclave. By

⁶⁵ Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement*, 97.

⁶⁶ Correspondence, Douglas Tims, President, UCCA, to Dr. Lillian Mah, President Chinese Canadian National Council, January 23, 1984, M-9510, Box 11, Folder 190, Joe Khu Fonds, ASC, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada.

opposing George Ho Lem and the CRAC's development proposal, the UCCA elite constructed themselves as educated, middle-class "model minority" immigrants dedicated to civic-cultural community service. Their ability to utilize traditional methods of outreach, such as letter-writing, but also strategies of protest and press engagement used by their activist contemporaries, evidences the association's cultural and generational hybridity. Continental Plaza and its neighboring Orient Express proved to be a thorn on the UCCA's side, as their operation was considered antagonistic to Chinatown's family-friendly environment. Through petitions and protests, Calgary's Chinese community was able to convince City Council to vote against Continental Plaza's rezoning – a victory for Chinatown's social and cultural cohesiveness. Tims' unresolved complaints about Orient Express showed the limits of the association's influence and revealed the prejudices held by the UCCA's elite against other marginalized groups.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, two men were in clearest focus as successive presidents of the UCCA, spokesmen for Chinese-Calgarians, and beloved members of the community. Douglas Tims was ever present in the archival record through his correspondence with other community leaders, politicians, and city bureaucracy, the event plans and grant applications he personally oversaw, and in the array of *Calgary Herald* articles where he was the public face of the UCCA and Chinatown. Then there was Joe Khu. By the time Khu retired from official community functions, he had held executive positions at the Sino-Canada Culture Association and the Calgary chapter of the CCNCE, represented Chinese-Albertans on the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council, and served the UCCA as its president from 1985 to 1988.¹ His careful collection of associational documents, news, and correspondence made my investigation into this decade of UCCA activity possible.

Between 1979 and 1989, under the leadership of these two charismatic, educated and dedicated men, the UCCA pursued its claims to be a unifying, representative force through a variety of initiatives and advocacy in and outside of Chinatown. Their leadership exemplified the perspectives and values of a generation of Chinese ethnic elites and community leaders that emerged in the decades after the Second World War across North America. The UCCA was modern, civic minded, and embraced the Canadian multicultural project as a means to meet their mandates of cultural preservation and promotion. Their ability to command a unified Chinese-

¹ José Bun Kee Khu, Obituary, McInnis & Holloway Funeral Homes, <https://www.mhfh.com/obituaries/Jos-Bun-Kee-KHU?obId=34752746>.

Canadian community rested in a careful balance of the past and present, drawing from the methods, symbolism, and prestige of old Chinatown to respond to the needs of the new.

In chapter one I discussed the UCCA's achievements in identifying and mobilizing fundamental aspects of Chinese culture, those rooted in celebration, folklore, tradition, and ritual. As a coordinator of annual Chinese New Year celebrations, the association maintained a careful balance of honouring Calgary's local Chinese history, appealing to the global diasporic Chinese sentiments, and performing folk traditions for a non-Chinese audience. In their programming for Chinese elders, including annual cemetery visits for the Qingming festival, social services, and celebratory events, we see practices of the ancient Confucian virtue of filial piety adapted for a modern diasporic community. Those adapted practices continued the flexible kinship sentiments that ensured the survival of Chinese-Canadian communities in the early twentieth century.

Chapter two examines UCCA correspondence in three case studies of advocacy and collaboration with non-Chinese organizations. The UCCA's concern for the Chinese-Calgarian community, which was still embodied in the physical space of Chinatown, was obvious in their careful relationship building with the Calgary Police Service. The association aligned itself with CPS as a harmonizing, law enforcing influence that wanted to promote Chinatown as clean, safe, and welcoming to all. In Joe Khu's petitions against education budget cuts we see an understanding of the needs of Chinese-Calgarians and new immigrants, and the UCCA's efforts to embody all of their voices. When the Zoo requested the UCCA's help in arranging Calgary's first panda loan, the association chose to be a silent partner. Their contributions, speaking for Chinese-Calgarian interests to the Chinese embassy, arranging banquets, logistics, and programming, facilitated their entry into Calgary's cultural elite and put the UCCA on the diplomatic stage. But the background nature of these activities meant the UCCA was able to

steer clear of political statements and avoided stimulating the underlying political tensions in their diasporic Chinese community.

The investigation returns to Chinatown in chapter three, to continue the conversation around Chinatown revitalization and development that started two decades earlier with the Sien Lok Society and their fight against the multi-lane freeway proposal. In advocating for their own visions for Chinatown, the UCCA referenced methods of activism used by their forbearers in Calgary, and those of community organizations and Asian American activists in other North American cities. The association's challenge of commercialization and density, wanting instead a resident-centered Chinatown-for-the Chinese, led to their condemnation of a prominent developer and Chinatown elite of the old generation, George Ho Lem. The George Ho Lem case revealed generational tensions in Chinatown, specifically between the locally-born children of Chinatown's founders whose prestige came from their families' long history as ethnic leaders, and a generation of more recent immigrants who arrived already educated, upwardly mobile, and able to integrate into Canadian society right away.

The UCCA and its leaders positioned themselves as successors to old Chinatown's power structure and elites. The association sought to study and honour Chinatown's history and drew its prestige from its traditional associations and sense of place. Ultimately though, the UCCA was outward looking, they embraced multiculturalism and sought relationships with non-Chinese organizations, they considered themselves equal players in conversations about crime and urban development. Under the leadership of the UCCA and their peer civic and culture-focused organizations, Calgary's Chinatown moved towards a new era of openness, of cultural celebration and promotion.

The UCCA and Calgary's Chinatown: From Then to Now

After 1989, the UCCA continued to coordinate Chinese New Years celebrations, cemetery visits, and continued to advocate for Chinese-Calgarians. The association's biggest triumph in the late-century, which was equally a triumph for Joe Khu and Dr. K.W. Chang, was when the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre opened in 1992. Located on the edge of Chinatown next to Prince's Island Park, the building was first imagined as a hub of social and cultural activity in Chinatown by Khu, Chang, and Tims in the early 1980s when the UCCA produced their plans for Chinatown development. The UCCA donated monetary funds and organizational expertise to this project. The Chinese Cultural Centre to this day offers extracurricular sports, arts, and language classes, and is the premier venue for Chinatown festivities, from Chinese New Years to Lantern Festivals.

In the late 2010s, the City of Calgary identified Chinatown for development once again, initiating a series of community engagement events and correspondence with community leaders and organizations. "Tomorrow's Chinatown" is an ongoing project that seeks to guide future development in the neighbourhood, emphasizing its heritage, unique cultural character, and cultural importance for Chinese Canadians.² The project's emphasis on community engagement is the lasting legacy of every Chinese community organization and leader that advocated for Chinatown in the century before: from the first ethnic leaders who established Chinatown's permanent home by the river; to the Sien Lok Society's urban activism; to George Ho Lem's developments and the UCCA's campaign for its own visions.

² "Tomorrow's Chinatown," City of Calgary, accessed March 20, 2025, <https://www.calgary.ca/planning/projects/tomorrows-chinatown.html#plans>.

Today, there is not one person or organization who can speak for Chinatown but many activists and community leaders partaking in conversations about cultural vibrancy, historical preservation, and the future of the neighborhood. The Chinatown Business Improvement Area is the driving force of the area's aesthetic improvements and public festivities.³ Friends of Chinatown, a group based in mutual aid and volunteer ethos started by Chinese-Vietnamese entrepreneur Alice Lam, works to share the stories, history, and culture of Chinatown through low-barrier recreational activities and an active social media feed.⁴ Both groups closely engage with Chinatown's traditional associations, the cultural centre, and smaller organizations to host public events. Calgary's Chinatown is so vibrant and has so many stories to tell – I hope this work encourages an appreciation of its resilience in the face of challenge, and the adaptability of its community leaders as successive generations of Chinese migrants make Chinatown their social and symbolic home.

³ Calgary Chinatown Business Improvement Area Website, accessed March 20, 2025, <https://www.calgarychinatown.com/>. The website includes directories of Chinatown's restaurants, services, shops, and associations.

⁴ Alice Lam website, accessed March 20, 2025, <https://alicelam.org/>; Friends of Chinatown website, accessed March 20, 2025, <https://friendsofchinatown.org/>.

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