

**CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
IN VANCOUVER'S CHINATOWN**

by

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Abstract

Vancouver's Chinatown is the largest of its kind in Canada but is also, arguably, part of the economically poorest large urban postal code area. Despite its rising incomes and real estate prices, as indicators of growth, Chinatown has become increasingly polarized economically, as well as socially, by contesting ideals as to what actions should be taken to attempt revitalization. Therefore, I argue that Chinatown can be understood by two rationales. The first being through the concept of *Space*, where we understand a location as a physical built environment in geographic relation to its surroundings or quantitatively by valuations such as real estate. Processes such as redevelopment applications use space as the primary justification for understanding what to build and where. I argue, however, that there needs to be a greater effort in acknowledging pre-existing contexts of the space in question and this can only be done through culturally appropriate community engagement. By this I mean through understanding a location as *Place*, which recognizes the ways in which space is shaped by human experience and ascribed affective meaning by the community through nostalgia and a shared history.

The following work will provide a historical chronology of Chinatown's formation to provide context; a case study of the development application for the site at 105 Keefer to demonstrate Chinatown as an example of space; and a proactive look at future projects like the City's application for a UNESCO designation to propose how Chinatown additionally needs to be recognized as place. The goal of this research is to suggest that there has been a lack of culturally appropriate community engagement because development is understood primarily through space and that has led to uneven restructuring in Chinatown's past. If Vancouver's Chinatown hopes to become a more equitable environment, one that moves beyond the confines of multiculturalism, it will need to approach community collaboration more holistically. To ensure that processes do not further marginalize groups disproportionately, I argue and propose the idea of 'culturally appropriate community engagement' as a process to be built into planning practices.

Lay Summary

This research aims to provide a reimagining of how we think about community engagement, one that does more to encapsulate the cultural context of pre-existing communities. Specifically, in regard to Vancouver's context, the following provides a historical chronology of Chinatown's formation; a case study of the development application for the site at 105 Keefer; and a proactive look at future projects like the City's application for a UNESCO designation. The methodology includes an ethnographic study acknowledging the lived experiences of community members and will compare the theories of *Space* and *Place*. I argue that Chinatown may be viewed as space, independent physical geography, as was the case of 105 Keefer. Alternatively, Chinatown can be seen as place where space considers the context and affective nature of culture. It is through the acknowledgment of the latter that we can rethink the process 'culturally appropriate community engagement' in Vancouver's Chinatown.

Preface

The following research is an independent and original work done by the author, T. Mark. The research interviews for this work was done following the guidelines stated by the University of British Columbia's Research Ethics Board [certificate number H19-00394].

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List of Abbreviations

ACAM	Asian Canadian and Asian Migration studies program (UBC)
CCAP	Carnegie Community Action Project
CCG	Chinatown Concern Group 唐人街關注組
CCHSBC	Chinese Canadian Historical Society of British Columbia
CHAMP	Cultural Heritage Assessment Management Plan
CHAPC	Chinese Historic Area Planning Committee
CSHBA	Chinatown Society Heritage Building Association
CMHC	Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
CTT	Chinatown Transformation Team
DTES	Downtown Eastside
FSR	Floor Space Ratio
HAHR	Historic Area Height Review
HDC	Historic Discrimination Against Chinese
HIP	Heritage Incentive Program
LSG	Legacy Stewardship Group
SPOTA	Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association
VCRC	Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee
UBC	University of British Columbia

Acknowledgements

My initial writing process was guided by a quote by novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen who stated “Writers from a minority, write as if you are the majority. Do not explain. Do not cater. Do not translate. Do not apologize. Assume everyone knows what you are talking about, as the majority does. Write with all the privileges of the majority, but with the humility of a minority.”

This research is a product of not only my work but also the enduring support of my family, friends, and chosen networks. This journey would not be possible without their unconditional encouragement. Firstly, I thank my family who have always housed, supported, and motivated me. I would especially like to thank my supervisor Dr. Thomas Hutton for his endless patience and guidance throughout my entire graduate degree. Additionally, my thanks go to Dr. Christopher Lee who has provided me mentorship not only throughout my thesis writing process but also during the majority of my time at UBC. Chris and the ACAM program are responsible for introducing me to the importance of community work and equipping me with the tools to articulate this work. Although it was a quick process, I am also extremely thankful to have had the chance to study along Christine Nesbitt and the other Ph.D. student/candidates who provided a support system for me.

My research talks to engagement and so it goes without saying that this work is the result of the entire community that has supported me. Countless people found the time to hold both formal and informal conversations with me and provided their insights. I am so thankful for everyone who has been a part of this journey with me. In particular, I thank Hayne Wai for being such a generous knowledge provider and an equally enjoyable person to have coffee with. I would also like to share my gratitude for the folks at the Chinatown Transformation Team, Belle Cheung and Helen Lee, as well as Leslie Shieh, Shirley Chan, Dr. Danielle Wong, Dr. Henry Yu, Christy Fong, Angela Ho, Janet Lam and the SCARP administration team. Additionally, to those who have asked to be unnamed and whom have provided me with interviews and information that were crucial in making this thesis.

I would also like to acknowledge that I received financial funding through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and that this work took place on the ancestral, traditional, unceded and occupied Indigenous territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, and in particular, the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm, the Skwxwú7mesh and the Tseil-waututh Nations.

Chapter 1: Introduction

WHAT IS “CHINATOWN” ANYWAY? IF IT IS NO LONGER AN OPIUM/GAMBLING DEN, WOULD THE NON-CHINESE BE GLAD TO HAVE IT BACK WITH NEON LIGHTS EVERYWHERE? WITH SOME FULLY RESTORED 1900-ERA BUILDINGS, COULD WE SAY THAT WE AS A CITY SUPPORT “HERITAGE” (AND WOULD WE DRAW MORE TOURISTS)?

OR DO WE HAVE NEW “CONTEMPORARY, GREEN” 12-, 15- OR 30-STOREY CONDO TOWERS AND OTHER LUXURIOUS OR “FUSION” FACILITIES, WHICH SAVE ONE FLOOR FOR A “CHINESE CULTURAL CENTRE” AT ITS PRESENT SITE? – JOE WAI

Vancouver’s Chinatown is the largest of its kind in Canada but is also, arguably, part of the economically poorest large urban postal code area¹ The City defines Chinatown as geographically bound by Gore, Hastings, Union, and Taylor street.² Diverging from its history as being a neighbourhood comprised of only ethnically Chinese, formed by racialized policy rather than choice, Chinatown is now a contentious location of ‘multiculturalism.’ Multiculturalism being a loaded idea in of itself to be unpacked later.^{3 4} In the context of Vancouver’s hyper-inflated housing market, Chinatown is facing insistent redevelopment pressure, as well as re-zoning that places constraints upon the cultural landscape.

Arguments can be made for both sides as to whether redevelopment is needed for Vancouver’s Chinatown, though I believe this binary to be an overly reductionist imagining of

¹ In an article written in the Vancouver Sun, Skelton, C., argues that the poorest large urban postal code is V6A which encompasses parts of the DTES, Strathcona, and Chinatown.

<http://vancouversun.com/news/staff-blogs/is-vancouvers-downtown-eastside-really-canadas-poorest-postal-code>

² Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization plan:

<http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/chinatown-revitalization.aspx>

Vancouver Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee:

<http://vancouver.ca/your-government/chinatown-historic-area-planning-committee.asp>

³ Ijaz, Nadine, and Heather Boon. 2018. Chinese medicine sans chinese: The unequal impacts of canada's “Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework”: Language rights and chinese medicine regulation. *Law & Policy* 40 (4): 371-97.

⁴ Krysa, Isabella, Mariana Paludi, and Albert J. Mills. 2019. The racialization of immigrants in canada – a historical investigation how race still matters. *Journal of Management History* 25 (1): 97-113.

the community's evolution. Therefore, it is my intention to reframe the discourse of the conversation to acknowledge that urban redevelopment will proceed regardless of whether or not stakeholders see it as necessary. The reality is that Chinatown's urban landscape, and therefore social framework, is changing. Rather than approaching the topic from a purely economic standpoint, for example, how re-development could financially revitalize Chinatown, I am more interested in the utility of culture for Chinatown and how current urban planning approaches may be re-thought in a more 'culturally appropriate' manner. For this research, when using the term culturally appropriate I mean to build upon and integrate, in chapter 4, the geography theories of Yi Fu Tuan and the foundational cultural planning practices introduced by Graeme Evans.^{5 6}

Media reports praise the almost doubling of Chinatown residents' incomes over the last 10 years⁷ but this growth has been uneven.⁸ Some of these factors include gentrifying forces and a concentration of wealth held by interest groups that do not necessarily serve the local community. This has come in the form of wealthier individuals moving into the space and inflating neighbourhood costs of a once haven for marginalized groups.⁹ Vancouver as a backdrop of expensive commodified real estate, Chinatown with a historical context of marginalization, and media facilitating a narrative has led to a contentious knowledge paradigm.

For these reasons, I would like to stress the use of qualitative and ethnographic data for my research rather than quantitative data, which may generalize or be misconstrued.¹⁰ For

⁵ Perera-Diltz, Dilani M., and Wendy L. Greenidge. 2018. Mindfulness techniques to promote culturally appropriate engagement. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* 13 (4): 490-504.

⁶ Evans, Graeme, Taylor & Francis eBooks - CRKN, Taylor & Francis eBooks A-Z, and CRKN MiL Collection. 2001;2002;. *Cultural planning: Urban renaissance?*. New York;Florence;: Routledge.

⁷ Carman, T., & Baker, R. (2017, September 16). Gastown, Chinatown incomes almost doubled over 10 years. CBC News. Retrieved October 20, 2017, from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/gastown-chinatown-incomes-almost-doubled-over-10-years-1.4291724>

⁸ Santos, C. A., & Yan, G. (2008). Representational politics in chinatown: The ethnic other. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(4), 879-899. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2008.06.006

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ https://www.bangthetable.com/resources/engagement-webinars/qualitative-analysis-community-engagement/?fbclid=IwAR2N-kG4bjisNMpBI_x-h10zdUtoH8CqGLfpqZmT-rIglxNHioGTezwvMZc

example, Chinatown may seem like a solution for housing with its lower rental prices. But alternatively, the relatively inexpensive commercial market enables gentrifiers to occupy space with minimal financial risks and by extension fragment the community. As a result, there has been a pricing out of local businesses and pre-existing communities. Specifically, the elderly community has faced pressures not only with an increase in rent but also in terms of access to affordable goods and services with the closure of culturally appropriate vendors, a concept to be defined later.¹¹

Chinatown has become disconnected economically, by gentrifying coffee shops, for example, and socially, by community groups' contesting ideals of what actions should be taken to attempt revitalization.^{12 13} Chinatown cannot be understood simply as physical space, which can be seen through its outlines on a map.¹⁴ We may, instead, look at Chinatown as a Place, which Yi Fu Tuan describes as "more than just a location and can be described as a location created by human experiences."¹⁵ Tuan's ideas of topophilia fits that of Chinatown, where sense of place becomes mixed with cultural identity by certain groups, and by extension a living affect for place and placemaking.¹⁶ Chinatown has more coffee shops, most of which entered the market in the last decade, than grocery stores, an even smaller fraction of these stores are accessible to low-income Chinese speaking seniors.

¹¹ "Retail Gentrification Report." Carnegie Community Action Project 加麗基社區行動計劃. February 2017. Accessed February 08, 2019. <http://www.carnegieaction.org/reports/retail-gentrification-report/>.

¹² Madokoro, L. (2011). Chinatown and monster homes: The splintered chinese diaspora in vancouver. *Urban History Review*, 39(2), 17-24. doi:10.7202/1003459

¹³ Santos, C. A., & Yan, G. (2008). Representational politics in chinatown: The ethnic other. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(4), 879-899. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2008.06.006

¹⁴ Taylor & Francis Social Science and Humanities Library. (1999). *Tourism geographies: An international journal of tourism space, place and environment*. Tourism Geographies.

¹⁵ Page 251: Patricios, N. N., & Tuan, Y. (1979). Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience. *Leonardo*, 12(3), 251. doi:10.2307/1574234

¹⁶ Page 163: Bale, John. 1996. "Space, Place and Body Culture: Yi-Fu Tuan and a Geography of Sport." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 78 (3): 163-171.

Many of the commercial activities that cater to these local needs are closing at the same time that skyrocketing real estate values are pricing out groups that have been residents for years. This is especially concerning considering the long history of marginalization that Chinese people have faced in Vancouver.¹⁷ To gain a more robust understanding of Chinatown as it currently exists, I would like to use the contrasting ideas of space and place as a theoretical framework as a way of better understanding culturally appropriate community engagement. And by extension, the ways in which the current disconnectedness of ‘Space’ in Chinatown, outlined by City zoning, does not accurately represent where Chinatown exists as a ‘Place’. The goal of all of this being to provide a contextually specific guide on how one might approach culturally appropriate community engagement and attempt to address what that means at a time where there has been a failure to do so, coinciding with current community reformation.

1.1 Methodology

I will be drawing upon the case study of 105 Keefer to demonstrate how Chinatown is viewed as both Space and Place. Beedie Group’s 105 Keefer development is a project that had its application ultimately denied five times and has been ongoingly opposed by local activist groups. I will be using this case study as an example of space, where development is viewed economically, by the market and city, and does not wholly take into consideration the context of displacement or social cohesion. Simultaneously, the spectacle of 105 Keefer may be viewed as an example of place. The fact that the community was willing to invest hundreds of hours of emotional labour and volunteer efforts to protect what is nothing more than a vacant lot begs the question, how is this space symbolic of place or placemaking? To unpack this information, I will refer to city documents, community testimonials, and my own experience attending the public hearings. This, of course, requires further interrogation of whom we are referring to when we denote community, and where ‘out’ groups are situated in the conversation.

My methodology comprises an intersectional combination of: a three-year ethnographic study, drawing upon empirical observations through my lived experiences working and

¹⁷ Mitchell, K. (1998). Reworking democracy: Contemporary immigration and community politics in vancouver's chinatown. *Political Geography*, 17(6), 729-750. doi:10.1016/S0962-6298(97)00070-X

volunteering in Chinatown; interviews guided by ethical research standards¹⁸, conducted in Cantonese, Mandarin, and Toisan¹⁹, to delve into what locals see as contemporary needs and how they can be met in an inclusive manner; and to a lesser extent, counter-mapping approaches to propose alternative ways we can understand place, imbued with cultural meaning and resonance, over space. I will incorporate work that I have done with the Chinatown Sound Mapping project, which takes recorded soundbites and georeferences them on a bare map.²⁰ This creates an open-source database that provides an online sound tour to better understand how nostalgia is informed by senses other than vision, where Chinese is spoken, and what public spaces are utilized.²¹

The structure of this thesis combines a chronology of Chinatown's formation and events as well as my own personal narrative. I argue that the issues Chinatown faces, and has faced, are a product of a lack of intersectional understanding in its nuances. Therefore, I have elected a somewhat untraditional structure for this particular writing. The chronology of Chinatown will provide context for some of the contemporary unevenness, as seen with the case studies provided. To encapsulate why I think this work is important I will provide not only my ethnographic research but also the voices of interviewees and my own lived experiences.

The timing and importance of this work is to build upon the current momentum of efforts being made within Chinatown. In light of redevelopment projects, gentrification, and aging populations, this could be the last chance we have to examine Vancouver's Chinatown as it is.

¹⁸ The interview process for this research follows UBC's Behavioral Research Ethics Board's guidelines <https://ethics.research.ubc.ca/about-human-research-ethics/ethics-boards#rebs>

¹⁹ Cantonese was chosen as a primary language to conduct interviews as it is the dominant Chinese language spoken in Chinatown, especially those from Southern China and Hong Kong. Mandarin is the language that is more representative of mainland Chinese who came in the wave of migrants after the Hong Kong 'handover'. Toisan is a dialect of Chinese used by the first 'Wa kiu' wave of Chinese migrants that came from the Pearl River Delta.

²⁰ The Chinatown Sound Mapping Project is created by Angela Ho, who hosted workshops which I participated in. <http://chinatownsoundmap.com/>

²¹ Patricios, N. N., & Tuan, Y. (1979). Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience. *Leonardo*, 12(3), 251. doi:10.2307/1574234

The community is facing both top-down pressures from City rezoning and condo developers, as well as bottom-up gentrification from young entrepreneurs who are taking advantage of the cheaper real estate opportunities. Externally, Chinatown is also in a multi-year application process for a UNESCO world heritage site designation, to be expanded upon in chapter 4, and also in conversation about the removal of the Georgia Viaduct. This has catalyzed media coverage, alongside cases such as Beedie's 105 Keefer rezoning application, but also has triggered internal debates as to what this land should be used for and who it 'belongs' to. From an outsider perspective, we can look at Vancouver's Chinatown as an example of "space," physical built urban environment, an environment that carries saturated financial value. But internally Chinatown may also be viewed as 'place:' 'space' that cannot be referenced without connotations in addition to community-built affection and a historical context.

1.2 Situating of the Research

Just as I argue that the timing for this study is important because of major shifts in how we understand land more than just commodified space, but also as place, this is also one of the biggest methodological limitations. Instances like 105 Keefer, being a symbolic space representing a fight for intangible placemaking, marks a sort of 'last stand' by community members. And though the redevelopment application has been denied, an outcome that shocked both pro and anti-development groups, there is still no final word on the project. Therefore, as much as I hope my research will allude to larger imaginations as to what Chinatown might look like in the future, the reality is that my comments are made on an ongoing conversation and may be rendered impractical in the following years.

For the purpose of this research, I use the terminology 'culturally appropriate community engagement.'²² This reference to cultural appropriateness stresses the importance of shared histories, an intangible binding agent, that I hope implies the collective efforts made by the community to reimagine what it means to have community engagement that works for them. By this, I mean to encapsulate the ideologies expressed by some of those I consulted. Some of whom

²² I use the term 'culturally appropriate community engagement', not because it is the best term, but because it best represents my specific research at this specific moment and fills a literary gap. Part of my research revolves around why this lexicon is difficult to define, rather we know what culturally inappropriate community engagement is, and how these oppositely help to define each other.

are participating in the Chinatown stewardship committee program, are working in the planning industry in Chinatown, or are community organizers.

As a working definition, I am referring to an approach to Planning that disregards traditional best practices, which are often operating on assumptions of equality and predominantly white spaces, and rather challenges for more consideration of how cultural landscapes, historical context, and community governance intersect. This means that the ways in which culturally appropriate community engagement plays out will be highly contextual and look differently in different settings. For my research, I will be using this *culturally appropriate* ideology as a framework, rather than a *multicultural* one. For Vancouver, I hope that this can mean moving beyond the discourse of ‘multiculturalism’ in planning, which I argue has been used to quantify ethnic space as homogenous, rather than qualify the intersectionality of a community.

Multiculturalism concludes that Chinatown is a Chinese space, and to some degree, I will argue in my research that it should be, but simultaneously it cannot be. If Chinatown is a purely Chinese space, it will always operate as an othered and racialized space, a non-white space viewed through a colonial lens. This is only marginal a progression from the newspapers of the late 1800s coining Asian ethnoburbs as exoticized oriental spaces. By the same mentality, it perpetuates the exclusionary aspect that Chinatowns are founded upon. As the original sites where Chinese people had to live, making Chinatown exclusively a Chinese place frozen in time, continues that legacy. We must adopt the understanding that space needs to be resilient, with a sense of place, if we hope to exercise progressive diversity and equity. The issue then becomes managing expectations of who defines what is culturally authentic? Culturally appropriate community engagement as a term has a lot of foundation to encompass, and so it may not be the best term, but it will be the jargon I will use for this research.

1.2.1 Scope

Despite the fact that Chinatown has a history spanning from diasporic arrival to the freeway fights to 105 Keefer, there have not been many academic materials published specific to Vancouver’s Chinatown. The current succession of growing tensions in Chinatown paired with a general inaccessibility of knowledge and information sharing also contributes to the difficulty in

producing academic work. Many of the holders of information are the older generations of Chinatown community members, a significant number of whom may not speak English or mainstream dialect of Chinese. This adds to the knowledge keeping barrier and by extension a lag in the amount of discourse being written. As a result, there is a need to recognize the change in information medium and the legitimization of spoken word narratives, social media posts, and news articles. The lack of traditional information sources and the role of the general public in shaping the community discourse speaks to changing power dynamics and governance. Much of my work will draw upon individual's testimonies, my own lived experiences, as well as media reports, rather than peer-reviewed articles for data. In terms of voices, in and about Chinatown, there has been a change in positionality and the different interests at stake, and part of this is rooted in the evolution of media. What was once rooted in anti-Chinese propaganda, may now have more nuance as authorship has become more accessible, and the audience more diverse. As stakeholder becomes more varied to reflect growingly complicated personal stances, community voices are growing louder and the ways they vocalize their ideas more wide-ranging.

The focus of my research is on community perspective, though for the scope of this project I will not be covering internal community politics or major events after the end of the most recent 105 Keefer application revision. And I will be centring the narratives around the events mentioned above. The reason I choose to emphasize lived experiences and discourse is that I believe that is how 105 Keefer failed in this context. Though I will reference some quantitative data and city documents, I argue that the lack of acknowledgment of historical context is what majorly contributed to some of the failures of 105 Keefer and other community engagement attempts.

To respect the privacy of individuals and the idea of trust as earned responsibility, I will not be discussing personal stances of community organizations. Similarly, many interviewees preferred to not have their names referred to in this project. It is my intent to best respect the diversity of opinions and ideals within Chinatown, much like any community, though I will not be explicitly navigating these community politics in this paper. I will be stating my own personal viewpoint based on the information generously disclosed to me by participants of this study but these ideas are wholly mine and not representational of any referenced group or individual. In urban planning, there are no rights or wrongs. As with 105 Keefer there were those for and

against the development. And neither side is inherently correct. Though I personally fall into the latter group and will be using my resources to explain why I argue the project failed due to a lack of culturally appropriate community engagement.²³ Urban planners are posed with large scale dilemmas, it is then their role to weigh the opportunity cost of social and economic utilities and come up with a strategy with the least harmful impact.

1.3 Positionality

This study is of particular interest to me, being a Chinese Japanese settler born and raised in Vancouver and coming from a place of privilege. I am able to pursue such work because my family migrated, paid the head tax, and became settlers in Canada. My hope is that this project can address the lack of personal articulation by marginalized groups outside of the academy and what they consider major issues in Chinatown. Chinatown is comprised of many voices, speaking in different languages with varying degrees of privilege and ableism. If this paper speaks on behalf of some of these stakeholders, then it has failed. This research is speaking from my own positionality and I hope to use my prerogative to facilitate dialogue. I also aspire to provide a more realized and intersectional understanding of the contemporary community, which would otherwise be less accessible for those outside academia or institutions. In the same regard, I would like to respect the positionality, ethics, and precarity which affect those in both positions of disempowerment and advantage. Various interviewees have chosen to remain anonymous and I also want to protect the rights and politics of civil servants. Some interviews were conducted with City staff and planners working in and whom are members of the Chinatown community. I would like to explicitly state that their comments are their own and not speaking on behalf of any unit or political platform.

With the erasure of former Japantown and Hogan's Alley, Chinatown exists as one of the few historic ethnic enclaves, which may face a similar effacing. And although there are efforts being made by both the Black and Japanese Canadian communities, Chinatown has the advantage of claim to occupied space. And so, I see this research filling the gap at an imperative

²³ I would like to acknowledge that there is a lack of public information on developer perspective and stance throughout the 105 Keefer development process. Therefore, there is an inherent bias in my research, but the goal of my project is to consolidate public information and testimonials from community members who are tied to Chinatown.

time of prevention rather than an extreme degree of ‘revitalization’. Chinatown and this research takes place on the ancestral, traditional, unceded and occupied Indigenous territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, and in particular, the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm, the Skwxwú7mesh and the Tseil-waututh Nations. Though, not the focus of this work, it is important to acknowledge that the downtown east side, which is home to a high percentage of marginalized and disenfranchised individuals, neighbours and blurs boundaries with Chinatown.

Chapter 2: Historical Context

Chinatown has become a site of contestation between activists and developers, as well as hyperinflated real estate and arguments of gentrification. All of which has been heightened with recent talks of a UNESCO heritage designation application. The following chapter will provide some insights into how Chinatown came to be a site for these conversations. In addition, it also aims to provide an overview of the migration history of Vancouver's Chinatown starting from the initial contact of Chinese migrants from Southern China and how they continue as settlers within Chinatown today. This will provide a basis for understanding the Chinese Canadian experience and how that informs a need for historical acknowledgment in contemporary community engagement.

The following will provide a history of the first Chinese migrants in what is now Vancouver. Brought into the 1900s I will examine the history of activism of migrant Chinese, and then naturalized Chinese Canadians, and how turbulence as well as opportunities shaped later migration networks. Additionally, the roles Chinese and Chinese Canadians have played in creating the rhetoric for the multicultural framework Canada now boasts. Although these contributions have been acknowledged formally, there is still a lack in understanding the degree this has connected the community to Chinatown. Using history as a basis for foundational understandings, I will refer to historical records as well as analyze the policies, and their racist undertones, to come to an understanding of the current state of Chinatown.

Library and Archives Canada notes that the first record of landed Chinese migrants in the Fraser River was in 1858 during the gold rush.²⁴ The regions of British North America, which would later become Canada as we now know it, experienced a trickle of Chinese settlers on its Pacific coast colony of Vancouver Island. At the time there were no immigration restrictions and Guangdong was in a state of political collapse, while what we now refer to as Canada provided potential untapped opportunities as an alternative to the Americas.²⁵ The following two sections

²⁴ <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/early-chinese-canadians/Pages/history.aspx#looking>

²⁵ Ibid

will be divided into motivations for emigration out of China and reasonings for immigrating into Canada.

2.1 Emigration and Immigration

Chinese settlers would first arrive on the shores of Nootka Sound and Vancouver Island in 1788 as workers to establish a fort under British fur trader John Meares.²⁶ The next wave of Chinese migrants would not arrive in what is now Canada until 1858, coming primarily from California at the time of the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush.²⁷ Facilitated by the white settler colonies, the discovery of gold along the Fraser River in 1858 attracted many Chinese workers coming from the Americas. Chinese workers in America were being robbed, murdered, and persecuted in the gold trade leading many to opt to Canada. This influx pushed for Great Britain to establish the colony of British Columbia, through Manifest Destiny, to prevent more American miners from claiming the land in the name of the United States. This would be a shift away from the Hudson's Bay trade style colonialism and into direct settler colonialism. The newly formed BC facilitated the need for labourers, and this was carried out by many Chinese workers to clear land, work on farms and fisheries, as well as build roads and the railway.

From the 1850s onwards to the end of the 19th century, the majority of these Chinese migrants came the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong province.²⁸ What is now considered one of the largest urban areas, geographically and in population,²⁹ during the 19th century was a set of lands experiencing drought, floods, and the Taiping Rebellion between the Manchu Qing dynasty and Hakka led Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.³⁰ After the loss of the second Opium Wars at the hands of the British Empire in 1860, China was forced to liberalize its port cities to European

²⁶ https://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/chart_en.html#

²⁷ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/gold-rushes>

²⁸ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/gold-rushes>

²⁹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/01/26/world-bank-report-provides-new-data-to-help-ensure-urban-growth-benefits-the-poor>

³⁰ Leutner, Mechthild. 2008. "Cooperation Networks and Actors in Semi-Colonial China, 1860-1911." *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 2 (2): 147-165.

trade. Additionally, a condition of China's surrender during the Opium War was a tribute of estimated at one-third of China's annual treasury³¹; a burden which would be carried through an increase on taxes of Chinese citizens. In conjunction, the opening of ports facilitated ease of movement and emigration out of China, and for some to Canada. The end of the second Opium War would also mark the British lease over the Kowloon Peninsula until the 99-year lease in 1898.

Foreign work was by no means a new experience for those living in the regions of the Peral River Delta. Its physical geography and proximity to the South China sea helped to secure trade routes with the British and Portuguese since the 16th century.³² The flow of Chinese worker migrants was facilitated by trade channels through South East Asia. Men worked abroad to send remittances back to their home clan associations in China. These clan associations are kin groups organized by ties and familial names to help take care of the spouses and children, an ongoing reality for many immigrant workers today. Village clans and associations would pool money together to send the able-bodied men to work overseas and to take care of their families while they were away in hopes of finding fortunes overseas, as was the case with my family history.

2.2 The Burrard Inlet 1884

Vancouver's Chinatown was founded upon the shores of False Creek. Along Carrall street, it spread up to Pender street down to Gastown. The majority of buildings were "two-storey wooden frontier style with false fronts" and leased from white landowners by Chinese merchants. While white settlers could acquire crown land through outright purchase, leasing purposes, or by pre-emption for a nominal fee, Chinese could not.³³ Therefore, in most cases Chinese had to lease inflated land through private owners and could only live in concentrated

³¹ <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/early-chinese-canadians/Pages/history.aspx#looking>

³² Page 155: Paul Yee explains that working overseas was not a new phenomenon for those in Guangzhou. Since the 18th century "Merchant trade roots were established with other parts of China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and even parts the Middle East."
Yee, P. (2006). *Saltwater City*. Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre.

³³ <https://www.straight.com/news/734491/history-shows-racism-has-always-been-part-vancouver-real-estate>

areas. One of which would congregate and become Chinatown. It was the norm to have clauses written into property titles for parcels of land to outright forbid the transfer of property to “anyone other than a member of the Caucasian race.”³⁴ This two-tier system would remain set until post World War 2 and some such covenants are still written in property title today, though the currently amended B.C. Land Title Act renders them void.

Chinatown shops served not only as places of business but for local community gathering, sending and receiving remittances, keep updated on China politics, and as a space of temporary shelter for newly arrived immigrants. These worked alongside clan association buildings which acted as shelter, places for job networking, and doled out small loans based on familial ties.³⁵ Vancouver became the site of transshipment for goods from China and as a result, Vancouver Chinatown’s formal and informal economy prospered leading to jobs in bookkeeping, porters, and working clerks. As Chinese populations grew so too did the Chinese commercial market. This allow Chinatown to act as a node for outward movement of Chinese migrants and settlers. Culturally familiar food, medicine and newspapers began to establish a presence forming a larger place for Chinatown. Though from an outside perspective, officials marked Chinatown as an opium den, unclean and disease-ridden: a site of over-crowded tenements, lack of ventilation, and exoticized danger.³⁶

British Columbia was able to join Confederation in 1871 on the condition of an agreement to build a railway from the Pacific coast through to the rest of Canada. The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) would not have come to realization without the role of Chinese labourers. In a letter he wrote to parliament, John A. Macdonald proposed that to cut costs of the CPR, the project employ Chinese workers. "It is simply a question of alternatives: either you must have this labour or you can't have the railway."³⁷ The Chinese

³⁴ <https://www.straight.com/news/734491/history-shows-racism-has-always-been-part-vancouver-real-estate>

³⁵ Page 8: Li, Eva Xiaoling, and Peter S. Li. 2011. Vancouver chinatown in transition. *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 7 (1): 7-23.

³⁶ Page 9: Ibid

³⁷ Page 249: Berton, Pierre and Wallace B. Chung and Madeline H. Chung Collection. 1974. *The National Dream, [and], the Last Spike*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

would go to fill this demand by taking the most dangerous jobs in the harshest conditions.³⁸ A notable number of Chinese workers had come from California and already had experience laying track there. These workers were paid lower wages and saved construction costs an estimated 3-5 million dollars.³⁹ Though despite their efforts, there was relatively little acknowledgment, so much so that the number of work-related deaths was never recorded and their families never compensated.⁴⁰ BC, in particular, was against paid Chinese labour. Provincial legislature passed laws against ethnic Chinese barring them from voting or being hired for certain public work projects like road building. Vancouver, in particular, had specific rules excluding Chinese from jobs that used taxpayer money. Despite this, the Canadian government continued to exploit Chinese labour to complete the CPR. Construction of the CPR started in 1880 and was finished in 1885 with a fluid estimation of 15,000 Chinese migrants coming in and out of Canada for its completion.⁴¹

The contributions of Chinese labourers did little to appeal to the majority white population. Though Canada now prides itself on ideas of multiculturalism, which is arguably problematic in itself, Canada has had a turbulent and blatantly racist history. In 1887 and 1888, a total of 208 miners had been killed in mining accidents, half of whom were Chinese. Chinese miners were blamed for their poor communication skills and other miners petitioned and

³⁸ “Many workers died from dynamite accidents, landslides, rockslides, cave-ins, cases of scurvy because of inadequate food, other maladies, fatigue, drowning and a lack of medical help. The death count of Chinese workers over the entire construction period has been estimated to be from 600 to 2,200 workers. No definite count exists because no one accepted responsibility for the Chinese workers beyond the work they did in laying the track.”

<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/early-chinese-canadians/Pages/history.aspx#looking>

³⁹ Page 28: Yee, P. (2006). *Saltwater City*. Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre.

⁴⁰ “Chinese-language historian Lee Dong-hai estimated in 1967 that 600 men were killed but UBC professor Edgar Wickberg found that number to be “conservative.” Canadian railway worker Wong Hau-hon said in a 1926 newspaper memoir that 3000 Chinese had died from disease and accidents.”

<https://www.paulyee.ca/blogDetail.php?16>

⁴¹ Con, Harry and Edgar Wickberg. 1982. *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada*. Toronto: Published by McClelland and Stewart Ltd. in association with the Multiculturalism Directorate, Department of the Secretary of State, and the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada.

succeeded in having Chinese miners banned from working underground. Though many mine owners continued to use Chinese workers as they were paid at a fraction of the cost and were not allowed to join unions. As white miners went on strike for unsafe working conditions they also burned down and looted the homes of Chinese miners. Chinese workers not only faced violence on the ground but also top-down systemically through targeted racialized policy.

2.3 The Chinese Immigration Act

Once the Canadian Pacific Railway had been built in 1885, Canada no longer saw a need for the Chinese and immediately implemented policies to curb immigration. At the time, the decision came federally rather than provincially as laws related to immigration could only be made at the highest level of government. Initially recommended in a report by Justice John Hamilton Gray, commissioner of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, the head tax was suggested to be a \$10 fine for every Chinese man, woman, and child landing at a Canadian port. That year on July 20th the Chinese Immigration Act built upon Gray's report. Imposed by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, a head tax was to be paid by every newly arrived Chinese worker and their family of \$50.⁴²

Sections included in the Chinese Immigration Act (1885):

s. 4 ". . . every person of Chinese origin shall pay into the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Canada, on entering Canada, at the port or other place of entry, the sum of fifty dollars, except the following persons who shall be exempt from such payment, that is to say, first: the members of the Diplomatic Corps, or other Government representatives and their suite and their servants, consuls and consular agents; and second: tourists, merchants, men of science and students . . ."

s. 5 "No vessel carrying Chinese immigrants to any port in Canada shall carry more than one such immigrant for every fifty tons of its tonnage; and the owner of any such vessel, who carries any number in excess of the number allowed by this section, shall be liable to a penalty of fifty dollars for each person so carried in excess."

⁴² <http://www.roadtojustice.ca/laws/chinese-head-tax>

Restrictions were also made upon naturalized and Canadian born Chinese Canadians. Those who fell in this category had to pay a fee of 50 cents to register themselves with their local authorities. Their travels leaving and coming to Canada was also highly regulated. Both the Chinese Canadian and those who paid the head tax received identification documentation but were still subject to inspection and challenge by customs officers. This led to the centralization of head tax collection and a “controller to execute the duties of the *Act* and a portioning of one-quarter of all money collected being allocated to the provinces from the general treasury.”⁴³ Their names and information were collected and recorded in the General Registers of Chinese Immigration.⁴⁴

In 1900 the Chinese Immigration Act was amended to double the fee of the head tax to \$100 with the addition that any Chinese leaving Canada must also return within a one-year period or they would be re-subject to the head tax. Three years later the head tax would rise to a staggering \$500.⁴⁵ For many Chinese men, this meant that those who had come to work to earn enough to bring their families to Canada would never realize their goal. Familial fragmentation was not uncommon for this time period and some Chinese men re-married or started new families in Canada. Amendments to the Act would continue to be made over the following decades. In 1908, a clause was edited to remove exemptions for students, though certified teachers were still exempt. Similarly, only children, considered minors of clergymen and merchants, were exempt from the tax. In 1917, immigration officers would be given the right to arrest any Chinese without warrant under the assumption that they were illegal immigrants. Four years later laws would be intensified so that anyone of Chinese descent who was not certified with the government would be subject to a \$500 fine when leaving Canada. In addition, any Chinese person away from Canada for more than two years would have to pay \$500 upon return.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Records for 1885-1949 were recorded and maintained and are now accessible at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/immigrants-china-1885-1949/Pages/introduction.aspx>

⁴⁵ Page 26: This was about the same price as the cost to buy two houses in Montreal at the time. Yee, P. (2006). *Saltwater City*. Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre.

Over the 38 years that the head tax was in play the Canadian government profited approximately 23 million CND, which was about the cost for the construction of the western portion of the CPR. Built-in large by Chinese laborers, and now additionally paid for, many Chinese workers continued to work in hopes of family reunification. But in 1923 the federal government announced the end of the head tax and the definite prohibition of Chinese immigration to Canada altogether through the Chinese Exclusion Act. After World War 1 the economy was in a slump and jobs were hard to come by. Racial tensions grew as many blamed the Chinese for taking jobs for lower pay and anti-Chinese sentiment only worsened over the following years.

Chinese men lived alone without their families as a result of targeted racist policy. The rhetoric steadily shifted towards Chinese laborers not needing as much money as white workers who had families. Congruently, marking Orientals as predators of white women. Negative stereotypes were further reinforced with parallel notions of wages being spent on opium, rather than remittances, and Chinese being economic drains. Backed by fear, the growing ‘Chinatowns’ were seen as a concentration of ‘disease and miasma’ and only added to the xenophobic Canadian discourse.⁴⁶

All of this was happening concurrently with the British Empire establishing itself as the triumphant of settler colonialism as well as the consolidation of indigenous and racialized place. Between 1911 – 1941 70% of British Columbians has some sort of ethnic origin connecting them to the British Isles. An additional 16% of the population were immigrants from another part of Europe and another fraction were white Americans. This placed minority groups like the Chinese, as well as First Nations, Chinese, South Asians, Italians and Jews, as targets of systemic and overt racism.

2.3.1 Asiatic Riots 1907

Saturday, September 7th, 1907 marked one of Vancouver’s most turbulent race riots to ever occur. Vancouver’s Asiatic Exclusion League staged a ‘parade’ calling for a halt on all

⁴⁶ Page 8: Li, Eva Xiaoling, and Peter S. Li. 2011. Vancouver chinatown in transition. *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 7 (1): 7-23.

Asian immigration to Canada. The group was a massive force consisting of about 2000 members which included merchant groups, other local organizations and had the public support of all fifty-eight of the City's trade unions.⁴⁷ A recorded 8000 – 9000 people were in attendance and marched to the old city hall at Main and Hastings. That night at 9 PM, as the crowd spilled into Chinatown, a rock was thrown into a store window. The masses soon followed and proceeded to break the windows of all of the surrounding storefronts. After several minutes the mob moved to what was then Japantown before returning. It took police four hours to control and respond to the attack.⁴⁸

The following day a white protest group tried to invade Chinatown once again, but the area was guarded by local authorities. This would continue for several days. Chinese stood atop buildings, establishing makeshift fortresses, arming themselves with rocks and bottles to throw at attackers. In the following days, Chinatown store owners set up barricades and proceeded to buy all of the firearms at local McLennan, McFeely and Co. Chinese and Japanese workers held a general strike for three days and hundreds left their jobs at hotels, restaurants, logging camps and mills. One year later in May 1908 deputy minister of labour, Willian Lyon Mackenzie King, conducted investigations and hearings for the riots. Chinatown merchants were awarded \$3,151 in property damage and \$20,236 for business loss.

2.4 World War 2 and After

During the second World War, Chinese Canadians joined the Canadian armed services. Many of these young men were the first generation born from local born parents or those uprooted back and forth between China. At the home front efforts were made to raise money through donations and public campaigns to fund the Canadian war effort as well as for sending money back home to support China's fight with Japan. When Japan bombed Shanghai in 1932 and sent armies overseas in 1937, Chinese Canadian raised money to send back to their homeland. The crimes against humanity at the hands of enemy Germany forced Canada to re-

⁴⁷ <https://www.ecuad.ca/news/2019/360-riot-walk-aims-reveal-dark-legacy-downtown-vancouver>

⁴⁸ Page 29-30: Yee, P. (2006). *Saltwater City*. Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre.

evaluate its own views of egalitarianism.⁴⁹ Before Chinese contributions in the war, the media had portrayed Chinese as backwards, othered, and dangerous. After World War 2 newspapers, labour unions, and local churches began to advocate for Chinese rights and instead shifted their racist ideologies onto Japanese Canadians.

1945 marked Canada's role in the formation of the United Nations. One of the founding premises was the equal treatment of men and women and by extension, Canada was indirectly forced to reassess its treatment of Chinese immigrants, Chinese Canadians, and its anti-Chinese laws.⁵⁰ Two years later, Canada would repeal its laws prohibiting Chinese immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Act which went against the UN Charter.⁵¹ Though they were allowed to fight for Canada, it wasn't until 1947 that Chinese Canadians would challenge and be granted the right to vote in federal elections. Despite these monumental shifts in policy and nation mentality, Chinese were still not considered wholly equal. There was still a limit on the number of family members Chinese Canadian could bring into the country.

It would take twenty years arriving to the year 1947 when Canada fully realized the removal of immigration restrictions based on race, ethnicity, as well as nationality and would substitute for the 'point system'. About 60% of the Chinese in Canada lived in British Columbia before World War 2. In 1949 when the communists asserted power in China, a noticeable portion of Chinese in Canada decided not to return as the environment and views of 'multiculturalism' were changing. As Wickberg argues, the refusal of communism, and by extension Chinese nation state, was assimilative the act of legitimizing one's self as a Canadian.⁵² In 1962 the Canadian citizenship and immigration minister would enact the Chinese Adjustment State program. This allowed amnesty upon confession for all the paper son and daughters who had entered Canada through the use of a fake birth certificate.

⁴⁹ Page 181: McKay, Ian. *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History*. Toronto: Provocations Series, 2005.

⁵⁰ <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/38-1/house/sitting-84/hansard>

⁵¹ <https://www.library.ubc.ca/chineseinbc/exclusion.html>

⁵² Page 187: Wickberg, Edgar. "Global Chinese Migrants and Performing Chineseness." *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 3, no. 2 (2007): 177–93.

2.4.1 Freeway Fights

The frontpage headline for the October 17th edition of the Vancouver Sun in 1967 read “Freeway Sliced for Chinatown. Vancouver’s City Council had slated for an eight-lane freeway to be built through Chinatown, where the Chinese Cultural Centre and Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden exists. Chinatown was to be the converging point of the freeway system. This decision was the result of a \$212,000 study recommending the use of personal vehicles in lieu of public transportation.⁵³ Protests by local groups, such as the Chinese Benevolent Society, residence associations from Grandview Woodlands and Hastings Sunrise, soon followed.⁵⁴ The City would hold two heated and overflowing public hearings. Both spreading over multiple of hours and the latter of which saw about 800 people in attendance.⁵⁵ The public outcry resulted in the cancellation of the portion meant to run along Carrall street, however a new Georgia Street viaduct would still be built to replace the existing one.

⁵³ Page 9: Wai, Hayne Yip. *Vancouver Chinatown 1960-1980: a Community Perspective*. Seattle, WA: Canadian Studies Center, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, 1998.

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

Figure 2.1 Vancouver Sun Oct 17th, 1967



The City had announced the proposed freeway cutting through Chinatown on the front page of the Oct 17th edition of the Vancouver Sun in 1967.⁵⁶

Shirley Chan, an activist who fought for Strathcona during the freeway and firehall fights, recalls the displacement she experienced throughout her life. Chan described to me the disproportionate planning procedures she remembers even at a young age. In 1956, when she was 10 years old, she would translate pamphlets and flyers handed out by the City for her mother. Media was all in English and these types of barriers effected not only the Chinese but also the prevalent Italian and Portuguese communities in Strathcona. Chan would get more formally involved in the freeway fights in 1968 as a founding member and English public relations officer for the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA). SPOTA was created out of necessity as swaths of neighbourhoods were being demolished. McLean park public housing was the first area to be displaced. People were losing their homes and only being compensated \$6000, a fraction of what they paid in a neighbourhood that was meant to be the affordable part of town. Social housing was offered to some of those who were displaced but this broke up the multigenerational family structures that were seen in many immigrant households.

⁵⁶ This scan was courtesy of Hayne Wai, author of "Vancouver's Chinatown: 1960-1980."

The market continued to be artificially depressed as no one would buy up property in fear of being displaced by the proposed freeway.

SPOTA held almost weekly meetings to inform those who could not attend public hearings or had other access barriers. City personnel were also invited to these gatherings, though they never attended. The community had difficulty justifying what it was like in the neighbourhood because there was no public documentation “for a neighbourhood that no one had bothered to record for.” So SPOTA began to do pedestrian and car counts to show the discrepancies in the myth that public transportation should be secondary to personal vehicles. They would also contribute to the two aforementioned public hearings by bringing their findings, writing letters, collecting signatures for petitions and writing Chinese news articles.

2.4.2 Firehall Fights

In 1972 the City proposed for a firehall station to be built on the site where the Mau Dan Gardens co-op housing sits. This firehall had the potential to disrupt the neighbouring Strathcona Elementary school, commercial businesses and seniors housing complex. The land was owned by the city but was “sold to a developer in 1968 for \$210,000, or about one-third of the cost of the land assembly on the condition that low-cost housing be built.”⁵⁷ However the developers never actually built the housing they promised and instead sold segments of the land to investors in 1971. Naturally the community was furious, and rightly so. Chan went on to explain how after the shortcomings of the freeway fights, it felt that the city was still bent on targeting Strathcona and Chinatown.

On December 10th, 1972 a protest in the form of a parade was organized, bringing out stakeholders from all communities involved. A public meeting was held later that day and coincidentally municipal elections were to be held the following week. All but one candidate was present for the spectacle and proclaimed that if they were elected, they would rescind the firehall

⁵⁷ Page 11: Wai, Hayne Yip. *Vancouver Chinatown 1960-1980: a Community Perspective*. Seattle, WA: Canadian Studies Center, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, 1998.

proposal and build family housing in its place.⁵⁸ Soon after it was announced two smaller firehalls would be built in different locations.

In an article written by the late Joe Wai, architect and community leader, he quoted that “Since the Freeway Debates (1966-1973), many other groups have formed in addition to the traditional “ancient” associations or societies. They didn’t necessarily agree with each other. But they led to the Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee (VCRC), as set up by city planning in 2001.”⁵⁹ This would lead to a total of 26 visioning meetings, in conjunction to the commissioned studies on height zoning by the City. These events would set the stage for the zoning, community plans, and the city led vision we now know and conversely, a dialogue, as well as critique, by stakeholders.

The freeway and firehall fights mark a victory in Chinatown’s history. And though they differ from the private sector orientation of 105 Keefer, there are a lot of parallels that can be drawn. Now examining the present, Vancouver’s cityscape has evolved quite drastically. It’s a cosmopolitan city where in 2016 immigrants made up 42.5% of the population, a 1.6% increase in immigration over the previous 5 years.⁶⁰ Since then development processes have transformed equally as well. Towers have risen and condos become the norm in a city with an inflated real estate market. These pressures have facilitated the approval of development permits to almost always go through, when considering the pre-approval stage. In the instance of 105 Keefer, the site of what once was an auto shop and is now a parking lot, we see how things are complicated during the rezoning application process. In the following chapter we will discuss why this process did not proceed as linearly as it traditionally has in other development and rezoning applications. Geographically located at the heart of Chinatown, 105 Keefer was about more than just the location but also its surroundings and what that meant for the community.

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ <https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2011/03/16/ChinatownGrow/>

⁶⁰ <https://newtobc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Vancouver-Immigrant-Demographic-Profile-2018.pdf>

Chapter 3: 105 Keefer – Case Study

On September 18th, 2014, Merrick Architecture, on behalf of Beedie Holdings Ltd., submitted the initial rezoning application for the empty lot located at 105 Keefer street and 544 Columbia street. This development came to be infamously known as “105 Keefer”, due to the fierce opposition by some local stakeholders and concerned community members. The original application was for a 13-storey development with 137 market value units, exceeding the pre-existing zoning by 4 storeys. This would be the first of five development application submissions over the next three years by *Beedie Living*, the owner of the 105 Keefer property. Apart from the proposed height limitation change, the application abided with the correct protocols. So why was it refused time and time again?

The following chapter will be a delineation of the 105 Keefer development applications, but more importantly, the community reactions to the development. What marks this instance as a special case of study is the shift in power dynamics. In a city where the hyperinflated real estate market has arguably become a tool of the market first, and for housing people second, the city has in many cases gone in favour of development applications. Regardless of being positioned as politically left or right, the Vancouver’s municipal government has had a mutualistic, or perhaps parasitic, relationship with developers in where space is commodified for profit. As Vancouver has reached a point of a near housing crisis, it is a rational attempt to build the physical space needed to shelter the population. This is where the ideas of space and place become central to understanding the role of community participation for this paradigm shift. Clearly, there is a further need to understand how intangible heritage and placemaking motivates individuals to fight for what is seemingly empty space.

3.1 Context: Chinatown’s Zoning, Plans, and City ‘Vision’

The circumstances of 105 Keefer did not occur in a vacuum. In addition to the historical context to preface an understanding, the contemporary events and rezoning of Chinatown played a large part in the outcome. In 2001 the Vancouver Chinatown revitalization committee was formed to come together as a community to encourage short- and long-term development strategies for the community. And at the start of 2002, a Chinatown Revitalization program would be implemented by the committee.⁶¹ On July 23 of the same year, the Chinatown Vision, a product of the Revitalization Program, was adopted by City Council. The Chinatown Vision was a document created through consultations with different community organizations and businesses, stating that Chinatown is “A place that tells the history with its physical environment.”⁶² The document was meant to be a high-level report that provided directions for planning aspects like heritage building preservation, the sense of security, transportation, and

⁶¹ <http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/chinatown-revitalization.aspx>

⁶² <https://guidelines.vancouver.ca/C019A.pdf>

tourism.⁶³ In March of 2004, the City drafted a five-step plan to encourage private sector investment for the betterment of those working and living in the Chinatown area. This initiative would be recorded in a report finalized at the end of 2006 and was presented to Council to outline the status of these development trends.

The following year a Heritage Incentive Program (HIP) was created.⁶⁴ This was in the form of incentives to facilitate the conservation and rehabilitation of buildings in not only Chinatown, but also Gastown, the Hastings Corridor, and later Victory Square. The program has since been updated in 2015. In addition to the HIP, City Council commissioned a Chinatown Community Plan, to be put into implementation at the start of 2005 over the next three years. The focus of this plan was “residential Intensification and Land Use, Public Realm and Transportation, Cultural Development, Economic Development, and Community and Social Development. Council also approved assistance to society buildings for rehabilitation feasibility studies and façade renovations.”⁶⁵

⁶³ <https://council.vancouver.ca/020723/rr2.htm>

⁶⁴ <https://guidelines.vancouver.ca/H012.pdf>

⁶⁵ <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/heritage-grants.aspx>

Figure 3.1 HAHR Public Consultation Summary (2009)



A list of all the public consultations held for the historic area height review (HAHR) policy implementation in Chinatown.⁶⁶

A shift in tone would occur in January 2010 when the City Planning Department would propose to Council a set of revisions to the historic Chinatown area zoning bylaw, the Historic Area Height Review (HAHR).⁶⁷ This was a City approved incremental height increase to 75ft for HA1 and 120ft for HA1-1. Chinatown is comprised of two major zoning designations, Chinatown Historic Areas HA-1 and HA-1A.⁶⁸ This was a product of over 125 hours of volunteer meetings based out of a review in 1992.⁶⁹ In light of a proposed 30 storey high rise

⁶⁶ <https://vancouver.ca/docs/planning/historic-area-height-review-policy-implementation-of-chinatown-related-items.pdf>

⁶⁷ <https://vancouver.ca/docs/planning/historic-area-height-review-policy-implementation-of-chinatown-related-items.pdf>

⁶⁸ <https://bylaws.vancouver.ca/zoning/ha-1&1a.pdf>

⁶⁹ <https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2011/03/16/ChinatownGrow/>

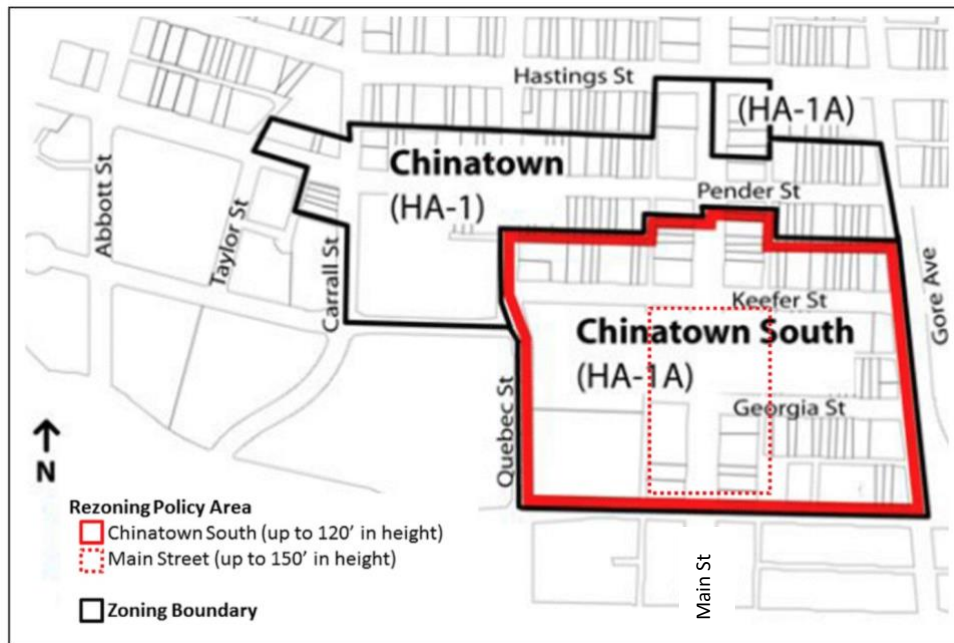
where the Chinese Cultural Centre currently exists. This application was quickly denied but would lead to further discussions on appropriate zoning heights in Chinatown and even further consultation processes, and eventually a public hearing on March 17th, 2011 to address the revised HAHR recommendations.⁷⁰ Many attempts at public engagement were made for the HAHR process, so perhaps the focus should then be placed upon whether or not community expectations were met.

It is also important to take into consideration that Chinatown is situated within the Downtown East Side (DTES) and its social issues, including those of affordable housing, substance abuse, and poverty. These dialogues have reflected on city initiatives and the distribution of funding towards social housing initiatives, or lack of, fitting into the larger 10-year framework of BC's Affordable Housing Plan. ⁷¹

⁷⁰ <https://vancouver.ca/docs/planning/historic-area-height-review-policy-implementation-of-chinatown-related-items.pdf>

⁷¹ https://housingcentral.ca/SITES/HousingCentral/Affordable_Housing_Plan/HousingCentral/Affordable_Rental_Housing_Plan.aspx?hkey=433f9af0-e946-4a37-b827-94f68667dc0b

Figure 3.2 Chinatown Zoning (2011)



Vancouver Chinatown 2011 rezoning policy. (City of Vancouver)

Chinatown's Historic Area Zoning: HA-1 and HA-1A ⁷²

With the amendments made to the HAHR, two newly built high-rise condominiums were fast-tracked for presale. These were located at the corner of Main and Keefer. One was a 10 storey 81 condo unit development with European interiors, “steps away from dozens of the city’s coolest shops, cafes and bistros”.⁷³ The other development towered at 17 stories with 134 “boutique” condos.⁷⁴ While both developments were within existing height limits for their specific sites, concern was expressed for their design, density, and socio-cultural relationship to Chinatown.⁷⁵

⁷² This figure is taken from page 5 of the 2018 “Amendments to the Chinatown HA-1 and HA-1A Districts Schedule, Design Guidelines and Policies” report.
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20180605/documents/p1.pdf>

⁷³ This information was provided in an interview with the author of “Vancouver’s Chinatown, 1960-1980: A Community Perspective”, Hayne Wai.

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ <https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/vancouver-chinatown-zoning-policy-changes-june-2018>

Pressures from opponents of development would culminate in the abolishment of the 2011 zoning. On July of 2018, the City would approve the abolishment of the 2011 HAHR that allowed for building height densification. The changes would limit redevelopments designated HA-1A, particularly South of Pender to Union, to a maximum conditional height of 90 ft and an outright height of 70 ft. This was a decrease from the 2011 bylaw allowing up to 150ft in the zoning along main between Keefer and Union street. The remainder of HA-1A areas would be limited to 120ft in height (*refer to figure 3-2*). In addition, “building widths measured from the street frontage can no longer exceed 75 ft to discourage large site consolidations and large storefronts.”⁷⁶ HA-1 zoning would remain the same, except in case of the number of floors allowed in buildings, which are allowable up to 50 or 75 ft.⁷⁷

This would divisively demonstrate the polarization of the community. Since the formation of City facilitated stewardship groups, there has been a consensus that there is a need for more bodies in the community. Councilor Kerry Jang of Vision Vancouver, stated: “Everyone came out and said; ‘We need more bodies to make it [Chinatown zoning amendments] economically viable..’ ”.⁷⁸ Though the way in which people are needed has sparked debate. The 2011 HAHR was done with the direct intention to facilitate bodies into Chinatown for business and community growth. In the last 8 years, there have been 7 mixed-use housing developments, but little has been done in terms of seniors housing. Community advocates have voiced for a dismantling of densification and instead have pushed for intergenerational participation, and by extension support for the reduction in building sizes. One main argument being that new developments do not culturally ‘fit’ into the neighbourhood and create exclusionary spaces for marginalized individuals, specifically seniors.⁷⁹ Conversely, local

⁷⁶ <https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/vancouver-chinatown-zoning-policy-changes-june-2018>

⁷⁷ “The City says it will still consider the 150-ft-tall, 15-story rezoning application for site of The Brickhouse at 728-796 Main Street under the 2011 policy as the proposal, submitted in May 2017, is midstream in the review process.”

<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/728-796-main-street-the-brickhouse-vancouver-chinatown>

⁷⁸ <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/vancouver-chinatown-council-approves-revisions-reducing-building-size-in-historic-area>

⁷⁹ <https://sites.google.com/site/zonesofex/home>

business owners and development industry representatives have opposed this now approved movement. A very real reality being the ageing out of traditional businesses, such as grocers, restaurants, medicinal, and tea shops, with fewer and fewer children taking on family businesses.

Mayor Gregor Robertson, Vision, and Green councillors all voted in favour of the revisions to the 2011 HAHR, ultimately leading to the approval. Changes were met with both support and opposition. Pro-development groups, such as the Urban Development Institute and Chinatown Voices, vocalized their opposition to the revisions. In an article in the Vancouver Sun, Chinatown Voices' spokesperson Michael Sung is quoted saying that "Those buildings (developed under the 2011 policies) are not what, I think, were appropriate for Chinatown. To have such a dramatic change, I think, erodes the confidence in the business community about what it means to partner with the city. It just doesn't feel like making housing more difficult to build and more expensive to build is a great way to solve a home affordability problem."⁸⁰ In an interview with the International Examiner, Andy Yan the director of Simon Fraser University's City Program emphasized that rather than anti-development, a greater need for more thoughtful steering in terms of place-making and neighbourhood development.⁸¹

Yan has produced ongoing works on the Vancouver housing discourse, some in particular with an ethnic and cultural lens, and attempts to attach narratives to data sets. Of particular notoriety has been his research of 172 property sales on Vancouver's west side which found that 66 percent of owners had "non-anglicized Chinese names" suggesting they were recent arrivals. 18% of these condominium sales were purchased without a mortgage.⁸² Additionally, Yan has reviewed data produced by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) suggesting that 11% of Metro Vancouver condos are owned by people who do not live in Canada.⁸³

⁸⁰ <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/vancouver-chinatown-council-approves-revisions-reducing-building-size-in-historic-area>

⁸¹ <https://iexaminer.org/vancouver-urban-planner-andy-yan-on-gentrification-racism-in-the-nw-and-the-unique-strengths-of-vancouver-b-c-chinatown/>

⁸² Yan, Andy. 2017. Hot, Uneven, and Connected : Urban Planning in Metro Vancouver's Latest Global Age.

⁸³ <https://pricetags.ca/2019/03/28/duke-of-data-andy-yan-was-right-all-alongvancouver-housing-ownership/>

⁸⁴ However, the B.C. government recently (2016) found that less than 5% of home sales were to foreign buyers.⁸⁵ Former mayor Gregor Robertson stated that “This can’t be about race, it can’t be about dividing people. It needs to get to the core issue about addressing affordability and making sure it’s fair.”⁸⁶

Yan has gone on to explicitly state that the data merely shows the role on non-residents, not necessarily foreign ownership. Contextually, the numbers allude to factors of demand and the ways in which that drives supply.⁸⁷ Equally, ownership of property can be held by Canadians who live or work out of Canada as non-tax paying resident in the same manner as the stereotypically imagined ‘crazy rich Asians.’ In contrast, the government of B.C. released a study on July 7th finding that within a three-week period in June, foreign buyers only accounted for 5.1% of homes sold across Metro Vancouver.⁸⁸ This only emphasises the fact that there are multiple voices, actors, and opinions on Chinatown. Even when looking purely at numbers, quantitative data can be interpreted from a humanistic perspective, and therefore can be used for one’s own agenda. There are many on-going and conflicting dialogues and these narratives set the foundations of how Chinatown is framed in Vancouver’s unaffordability discourse. Reductionist arguments that attribute Vancouver’s housing crisis to the lack of densification in the dozen or so blocks that make up Chinatown, may need to re-evaluate how numbers are viewed.⁸⁹

Arguments can be made for whether or not the community and City initiatives have done ‘enough.’ On the contrary, it was, perhaps, the degree of efforts that catalyzed the rallying

⁸⁴ https://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Convention/2017/Presentations/Monday~Sept~25/Yan-Dissecting_Affordability.pdf

⁸⁵ <https://www.straight.com/news/733211/preliminary-government-data-vancouver-home-sales-says-less-five-percent-go-foreign>

⁸⁶ <https://pricetags.ca/2019/03/28/duke-of-data-andy-yan-was-right-all-alongvancouver-housing-ownership/>

⁸⁷ <https://pricetags.ca/2019/03/28/duke-of-data-andy-yan-was-right-all-alongvancouver-housing-ownership/>

⁸⁸ https://www.straight.com/files/v3/files/bcgovthousingdata1_160707.pdf

⁸⁹ <https://thetyee.ca/News/2018/07/25/Downzoning-Vancouver-Chinatown/>

against the 105 Keefer development. Clearly, contributions were being put forth towards the betterment of planning processes but were they a good fit? The following section might allude that it was not. In contrast, many community members have cited that the string of long consultation processes actually may do harm in instances where they bury community voice in bureaucracies. In instances such as this, where the community feels that stakeholder meetings are only down for face value and numbers in reports, there needs to be a better understanding of what culturally appropriate means. I use the term culture not only in the commonly imagined ‘oriental architecture’ or Chinese translation, but to also encapsulate at the root of how a community wants to be engaged. The backlash demonstrated in the following section signifies that planning must think beyond the physical design of space, and rather, must understand the pre-existing context and individuals that make the place to avoid failure from the very start.

3.2 Keefer 105 Redevelopment Applications: September 18th, 2014

September 18th, 2014 marked the initial and first of five Council meetings for a rezoning application for the site that would infamously become to known as 105 Keefer.⁹⁰ The first rezoning application proposed a 13-storey building, that would change the site from an HA-1A, a Historic Area district, to a CD-1, comprehensive Development district. The first two floors of which would be designated for commercial use and the remaining 137 units would be residential units sold at market value. A designated 37% of the residential units would be single bedroom condos and the remaining 63% would be two or three bedrooms.⁹¹ The proposed development would have a floor space ratio (FSR) of 7.30 and a total floor area of 12,392 m².⁹² In addition to this, the building would have 130 underground vehicle and 175 bicycle parking spaces. The application consisted of project statistics, site, context, parking, floor, landscape, and roof plans, as well as streetscapes, building elevation and sections, and a shadow study. No heritage or cultural studies were formally implemented at this time.

⁹⁰ <https://rezoning.vancouver.ca/applications/105keefer/index.htm>

⁹¹ibid

⁹² A definition on what FSR is and how to calculate it can be found with the link provided: <https://development.vancouver.ca/documents/GlossaryofTermsBriefExplanationofZDPermits.pdf>

The open house for the first application was held on October 8th, a Wednesday at 5:00 pm, across the street from the rezoning site at the Chinese Cultural Centre. A reported 94 attendees were present on the day of. There was a total of 347 feedback responses from the original zoning application: this included 81 comment sheets, 176 online responses and emails, and two petitions made up of 90 responses.⁹³ There were approximately 49 comments made in support of the rezoning application versus the estimated 516 ‘comments of non-support.’ Pro rezoning feedback highlights included praising of the building design, contributions to ‘revitalization’, and use of the presently under-utilized space. In contrast, opposition most frequently noted a loss of Chinatown’s character, especially when considering the proximity to the Sun-Yat Sen gardens and Memorial plaza, and a general sense of mismatch for concepts of “revitalization.” In descending order of frequency, additional comments were made: about the lack of affordability; inappropriate building design in geographic context; not meeting planning objects, especially for seniors; insufficient public benefits; a demand for a moratorium on rezoning in Chinatown; fear of potential shadowing due to height; gentrification; lost opportunity for site use; and general non-support of the project without specific reasoning.⁹⁴

Interviews held with anonymous individuals who were present during all or a majority of the hearings held similar sentiments of opposition. Interviewees mentioned a fear of the negative impacts such a project may have on local businesses via gentrification and pricing out of retailers. In a report drafted by Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP), aptly titled “We are too poor to afford anything”, the group maps out retail gentrification and the ways in which some marginalized groups may face zones of exclusion from local businesses within their own neighbourhood.⁹⁵ “Zones of exclusion are spaces where people are unable to enter because they lack the necessary economic means for participation. As wealthier people move into the neighbourhood, more spaces are devoted to offering amenities that cater to them. Whenever land is used to build condos or develop businesses for wealthier people, it is removed or excluded from use by the community; it no longer becomes a place where a local community-based vision

⁹³ Appendix F: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20170502/documents/p3.pdf>

⁹⁴ Appendix F: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20170502/documents/p3.pdf>

⁹⁵ <http://www.carnegieaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CED-REPORT-PRINT.pdf>

can be implemented.”⁹⁶ In similar stances of solidarity, groups such as the Hua Foundation have voiced their concerns of food security and the disappearance of local grocers, “cultural food assets,” as well as “Chinese food distribution systems.”⁹⁷

The Hua Foundation also produced a social cohesion report, finding systemic issues with the perception and reputation of Chinatown. Some examples of these issues were the capital barriers for new businesses and a diminishing culturally appropriate labour pool, as well as a growing disconnect to traditional businesses.⁹⁸ Similar comments were made by interviewees about the general development pressures Chinatown residents face that other communities may not. The proposed units being much more steeply priced than neighbouring housing accommodations, and by extension may be a catalyst for further real estate inflation in the area. Broadly participants, stated they identify as part of the Chinatown community but do not feel they are representative of the community’s ideals. That being said, as a cross-section, they felt that public consultations were insufficient, “surface-level”, and were left with a feeling of “being unheard” and “developers going through the motions.”

The initial application was dismissed on the need for revisions to be made. It’s possible to attribute such blatant pushback from the community as a driving force for the application not going through. Though friction was quantified by rationales such as food security and retail gentrification, underlying motivations seemed to be greater. The sheer number of those speaking out against the development demonstrates a need for introspective research on the community’s defensiveness. Rather than trepidation, the community seems to be fighting for something more than the empty parking lot located at 105 Keefer.

⁹⁶ <https://sites.google.com/site/zonesofex/home>

⁹⁷ Their findings between 2009 and 2016 mark “Thirty-two percent of Chinese dry goods stores, as well as 56% of food service retailers that were in operation in 2009 have been lost as well. These results stand in stark contrast to City of Vancouver’s target of increasing food assets by 50% by 2020. <https://www.huafoundation.org/uploads/Vancouver-Chinatown-Food-Security-Report.pdf>

⁹⁸ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hU7W3DeorEQKjOLmVyHjFw_7GGEcabHy/view

3.2.1 First Revised Application: September 3rd, 2015

The first revised application came in just under one year later on September 3rd, 2015. This iteration introduced seniors social housing into the development. This would replace the initial proposition of second-floor commercial usage into 25 seniors social housing units, making the remaining 127 units market-rate residential. Public rezoning information boards were replaced two and a half weeks later, along with 5,397 information postcards being distributed. An additional 550 emails were sent through the DTES list server and rezoning application mailing list.⁹⁹ Greater efforts were made for contacting a wider cross-section of stakeholders, as the previous open house had garnered criticism for notifications not using a wide enough boundary.¹⁰⁰ This would culminate in the open house held on October 6th, again at the Chinese Cultural Center at 5:00 pm, and saw 140 people in attendance.

Compared to the initial open house, this iteration saw an increase in attendance and response, both for and against the project. Drawn from the City's 'Public Consultation Summary' similar sentiments were once again shared in support of the rezoning, in favour of the contributions to revitalization, positive development on the vacant site, and building design.¹⁰¹ There was also an appreciation for the inclusion of the seniors social housing modifications. Though in opposition, many attendees argued that there is a greater need for low-income seniors housing and that the proposed units were insufficient. The greatest concerns continued to be loss of Chinatown's heritage character as well as implications of building design and contextual mismatch. The building design was criticized for being too bulky and high, and therefore insensitive to the character of the space. Opposition comments went so far as to critique cramped unit floor plans and inappropriate choice of materials. One notable example was the choice of balconies mimicking those of society buildings. These were considered by some to be tokenistic, appropriated rather than appropriate, and having no function.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ <https://rezoning.vancouver.ca/applications/index.htm>

¹⁰⁰ <https://ricepapermagazine.ca/2016/12/105-keefer-an-interview-with-king-mong-chan/>

¹⁰¹ Page 6: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20170502/documents/p3.pdf>

¹⁰² Page 6: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20170502/documents/p3.pdf>

In 2011, Chinatown was designated a National Historic District of Canada. The designation marked efforts of community members to strive beyond standard ‘preservation’ and work towards ideas of revitalization. In an interview with a community advocate and volunteer for a non-profit grassroots group, it was mentioned that the “...process felt like a step backwards... So much so-called ‘effort’ was put into consulting [us] about the HAHR and HA-1A. We put in our time, and now that’s just going to be disregarded for the very reason we agreed to participate in their consultations.” In a similar vein, it was argued that the development should strive to improve community amenities, in particular for Chinese seniors. This drew concerns about rising property taxes, gentrification, and pricing out of locals. To counter the point of bringing in new businesses, as an effort toward revitalization, opponents noted that the types of incoming retailers would not serve the local Chinese community or benefit neighbouring businesses. Final comments called for a halt on the rezoning process, and instead, a request for more study on the impact on low-income residents from the indirect results of the HAHR.¹⁰³

3.2.2 Second Revised Application: April 15th, 2016

As one of the last remaining large land parcels in Chinatown, 105 Keefer is geographically at the heart of Chinatown, neighbouring the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Gardens, Chinatown Plaza, and Memorial statue. The second revised application marks the third instance where the community voiced their frustrations with the development and rezoning, viewed as a waste of site potential. Prior this iteration of revisal, several organizations such as the Chinatown Concern Group 唐人街關注組 (CCG) assembled a petition containing 427 signatures demanding the site be used as a community center at ground level with seniors housing above.¹⁰⁴ In response, this application proposed a senior’s cultural space in one of the commercial storefronts, to be leased at a reduced rate to arts and culture coalitions. The height of 13-storeys would remain unchanged, as would the number of senior social housing units, set at 25. Market rate rental units did, however, reduce from 127 to 119.

¹⁰³ Page 7: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20170502/documents/p3.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ <https://chinatownconcerngroup.wordpress.com/cut-the-crap/>

At this point, Beedie living had taken note of the criticisms of 105 Keefer's lack of consultations. An additional approximate 2000 postcards were distributed, targeting the neighbourhood and 24 local SRO buildings. What had previously been a few hundred email notifications was now increased to over 9400 emails. And the turn out for the open house reflected these numbers. An estimated near 500 people arrived to speak, with a total of 1,177 pieces of feedback received. There was an apparent growing concern that developers were not listening and respecting the community's desires, as noted in feedback responses. This broadened the conversation where opinions were becoming more polarized. Some local business owners were keen on the idea of bringing in a more affluent demographic to the neighbourhood. Other proponents were in favour of having more non-Chinese stores on the argument of more retail diversity. Conversely, on the other end of the conversation, youth groups, in particular, saw the seniors' cultural space as a "Trojan Horse," serving only as a tool for the application's approval.

The dialogue surrounding 105 Keefer would continue to evolve and tensions would escalate as rhetoric shifted towards the ways in which such developments are just a means for foreign buyers. Further race politics, under the guise of gentrification, would be brought up in regards to 'hipster shops' being deemed inappropriate for the area. These conversations were exacerbated by the community feeling that consultation processes were inaccessible. I interviewed several UBC students and alumni who attended all or a majority of the public hearings. They noted that as students they could make the public hearings but people like their parents who work in restaurants, or beyond the regular '9-5', could not. It's necessary to acknowledge that being able to attend these types of events is a privilege. And details such as these are not what is seen on engagement documentation and records. Though open houses were held in Chinatown, public hearings are held at city hall, usually on workdays. Many business owners can't take the time off to attend and elders, who are at the core of the conversation, cannot make the commute or need English interpreters. Additionally, public workshops, such as the urban design panel, were only held in English. The overall conversation continued to become more nuanced as stakeholders grew increasingly frustrated with decisions as well as bureaucracies and stances were becoming more solidified as a result.

3.2.3 Third Revised Application: December 12th, 2016

A revised application was submitted December 12th, 2016, with an open house following on January 10th, 2017. This revised development application would decrease in size, losing one storey and by extension decrease to 110 market residential units. The scaling back of the building was meant to address some of the contentions around the dissonant height and would include the introduction of a (non-public) pedestrian walking path at ground level instead. This raised concerns of exclusionary spaces, the facilitation of income divides, and the perceived safety of future tenants. Although the number of seniors social housing, one of the focal arguments made by local community groups, would remain the same and unaddressed. All 25 of the seniors social housing units would be purchased by BC Housing at cost.

Attendance for the open house would continue to see the same large numbers, with similar arguments being made on both sides. Two new arguments against the development and zoning included a request for more family units, in line with Chinese family types of live-in relatives. As well as fears surrounding this unit setting a precedent for future rezoning proposals. Critiques were drawn from the lack of meaningful consultations. Some attendees argued that although stakeholder meetings were held, scale and a lack of immediate action in response to what community groups were saying left people feeling unheard or tokenized to hit engagement numbers. Additionally, attendees of the open house stated that not enough preliminary research was done on neighbourhood impact. Some suggested the DTES local area plan's Neighbourhood Fit Evaluation Tool be used, more transparency in research and consultations, and more be done for community initiatives.¹⁰⁵ Noted public benefits felt unguided and amorphous as the Public Benefits Summary for the application simply listed the outcomes of 25 social housing units, a public art contribution, and a development cost levy.¹⁰⁶

By March 2nd, 2017, and additional 214 petition letters had been submitted to the City. This was a combined effort by the CCG and other Chinatown community groups. Melody Ma, a community activist and web developer for the #SaveChinatownYVR campaign, played an

¹⁰⁵ <https://bylaws.vancouver.ca/bulletin/N004.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ Appendix H: <https://council.vancouver.ca/20170502/documents/p3.pdf>

integral role in facilitating local's ability to voice their concerns.¹⁰⁷ The online platform summarized the information surrounding 105 Keefer and made the jargon more accessible for the masses to follow along or catch up on missed information. Her online letter writing generator also filled an accessibility gap by providing a centralized electronic platform that more easily allows people to voice their concern on 105 Keefer.¹⁰⁸ These concepts of system change and accessibility have happened at the grassroots level to accommodate needs that the community felt the City had missed. The City would later re-evaluate the value and validity of concern produced in mass by letter generators. Deserving a study of its own, there needs be an acknowledgment of the role of activism, unpaid social and emotional labour, and community collaboration in the fight against 105 Keefer.¹⁰⁹ Community organizing has long since transformed from the freeway fights, and the role of social media has been at the center of these commitments.¹¹⁰

3.2.4 Current Status

The public hearing for the most recent rezoning application took place May 23rd, 2017 and had staff as well as applicants present their justification for the newest proposal, followed by community stakeholders who had signed up to speak. With those who volunteered to speak, the public hearing stretched from the 23rd, 25th, 26th and finally forced council to close the receipt of public comments and questions on the 29th. This postponed the announcement of their final

¹⁰⁷ #SaveChinatownYVR is a campaign that consolidated information online to make information around zoning and policies more accessible for the Chinatown community. The hashtag also played a large role in social media (Twitter) organizing and also facilitated the process for people to speak at the 105 Keefer public hearings. It was created and led by community members.

<http://www.savechinatownheritage.org/campaigns/protect-chinatown-from-real-estate-speculation-demand-zoning-changes-now>

¹⁰⁸ <https://savechinatownheritage.github.io/105keefer/>

¹⁰⁹ Timeline of 105 Keefer related events:

https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1IkrBjv7Fj4ay7QxnUWFJu74ejSe6R_eRKH8k6pAp1HQ&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650

¹¹⁰ In the summer of 2018, I managed a work learn student who created a blog for CCHSBC compiling the role of social media, specifically twitter, in the activism surrounding 105 Keefer.

<http://blogs.ubc.ca/105keefer/>

decision and pushed discussions slated as ‘unfinished business’ to regular council held of June 13th.¹¹¹ This would all culminate in City Councils 8-3 decision rejecting 105 Keefer’s revised rezoning application. And would result in a waterfall of decisions thereafter. Following the City’s decision, Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee (CHAPC) also stated that they would not support Merricks’ development permit application on the grounds of shortcomings in “scale and massing, fine grade architecture to respond more closely to the historic character, livability (mix and size of residential units), respect for cultural significance of the Memorial Plaza site, and to engage in more robust public consultation.”¹¹²

After five proposals over the span of three years, 105 Keefer was ultimately rejected by the City’s Development Permit Board. In an unforeseen 2-1 vote, chief planner, Gil Kelley, and chief engineer, Jerry Dobrovolny, voted to reject the proposal, while assistant city manager Paul Mochrie was in favour. The most recent project submission scaled back the condo to 9-storeys, falling within zoning regulation compliance. 105 Keefer’s marks the first time since 2006 that the permit board has rejected an application. Though not in the scope of this paper, Beedie announced at the end of August of this year that they will be taking the City to court for a judicial review of 105 Keefer.¹¹³

3.3 Reflections

105 Keefer sent ripples through the community and perhaps more importantly, forced the City and developers to re-examine the importance of culturally appropriate community engagement moving forward. Though perhaps a failure, 105 is a focal event because it highlighted issues, not only in building design but in the steps leading up to development applications to set preliminary community trust. In an interview with a city staff member, it was mentioned that after 105 Keefer, we (as City planners) need to re-evaluate equity in planning processes. “As someone who works for the City, but also as a member of the community and

¹¹¹ <https://rezoning.vancouver.ca/applications/105keefer/index.htm>

¹¹² <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/minutes-chapc-20171012.pdf>

¹¹³ <https://www.vancourier.com/real-estate/vancouver-developer-takes-city-to-court-over-rejected-chinatown-proposal-1.23928991>

stakeholder, I noticed structural issues with the public hearings. Those who signed up to speak were only given 5 minutes to speak, but the City never considered the time to translate what was being said by those voicing their concerns in Mandarin or Cantonese.” This led to the public hearings extending far beyond the scheduled time block or some speakers being cut off.

There were obvious accessibility barriers for those who speak non-dominant dialects of Chinese, like Toisan which was predominantly spoken by the first wave of Chinese immigrants to Canada. In reference to cultural differences, a public environment may not be a setting in which some are comfortable speaking in, especially when it’s a predominantly English-speaking space. There is also an aspect of unpaid labour of translation or escorting community elders that should be addressed. These roles were essentially carried out youths and volunteers organized by community grassroots groups such as the Chinese Concern Group, Yarrow, or Youth Collaborative for Chinatown. In this way, perhaps 105 Keefer misunderstood Chinatown as place, but at the same time, catalyze further placemaking.

I believe that the outcome of 105 Keefer was the sum of its parts. In February 2013 the City approved a 17-storey development, far exceeding the height provisions of buildings in HA-1A zoning. Much like 105 Keefer, this development by Westbank Projects corporation was looking to change the historical HA zoning designation to a CD comprehensive development district. And this development went relatively unnoticed and without much friction from the community. It was stated by some participants in my research that they didn’t know that this project was going underway until they saw the construction already happening and felt a lack of communication from the city and developers. What became truly apparent was the change in local demographics. With this development came Starbucks, vegan eateries, artisanal bars, and by extension a spike in real estate prices and replacement of long-standing business. Although it is not my personal stance, it can be argued that these are good changes for the community. Some local business owners, both old and new, spoke in favor at public hearings about the benefits of vertical development. So, though this may not have directly affected 105 Keefer, it did set the tone of conversation about how development is thought of and polarized opinions further. Additionally, it demonstrated a possible trajectory in which Chinatown is headed.

Some interviewees felt the project was doomed to fail from inception, some thought it would go through without a hitch, while others explained how it was a breach of trust overtime

when what was said during stakeholder meetings was not reflected in application. The need for additional outreach also highlighted the lack of effort in trying to reach the general public and direct stakeholders, who as a result felt disrespected. In a piece written by Erin Meyer, a professor who works in cross-cultural management, its recounted how for negotiations in America, best practices refer to separating people from problems, focusing on interests rather than positionality, and to be able to define your best alternative to a negotiated agreement upfront.¹¹⁴ But in the context of Chinatown, and later explained in the article, “what gets you to “yes” in one culture gets you to “no” in another.”¹¹⁵

3.3.1 Re-thinking Culture and Communication

There is a general acknowledgement that communication is important when it comes to community engagement, but what does that really mean? The concept of ‘building trust’ was brought up several times by stakeholders in interviews, public hearings, and consultation meetings. Semantics and semiotics are often overlooked when considering cross-cultural engagement. For example, trust and building can be thought of dualistically as *cognitive*, based pragmatically on one’s achievements and reliability, or as *affective*, referring to emotional closeness and empathy.¹¹⁶ Meyer argues that Western business culture does its best to separate practical from emotional negotiations, while in East Asia there is a strong interplay of cognitive and affective trust.¹¹⁷ Additionally, these types of trust-building take time, especially here on a community scale. So, we must consider when we speak of trust, are we referring to business trust or relationship trust? Best practices and the foundations of Urban Planning as a field of those practices are founded upon western school of thoughts. And though I believe best practices have

¹¹⁴ https://hbr.org/2015/12/getting-to-si-ja-oui-hai-and-da?utm_sq=g12tszqoz1

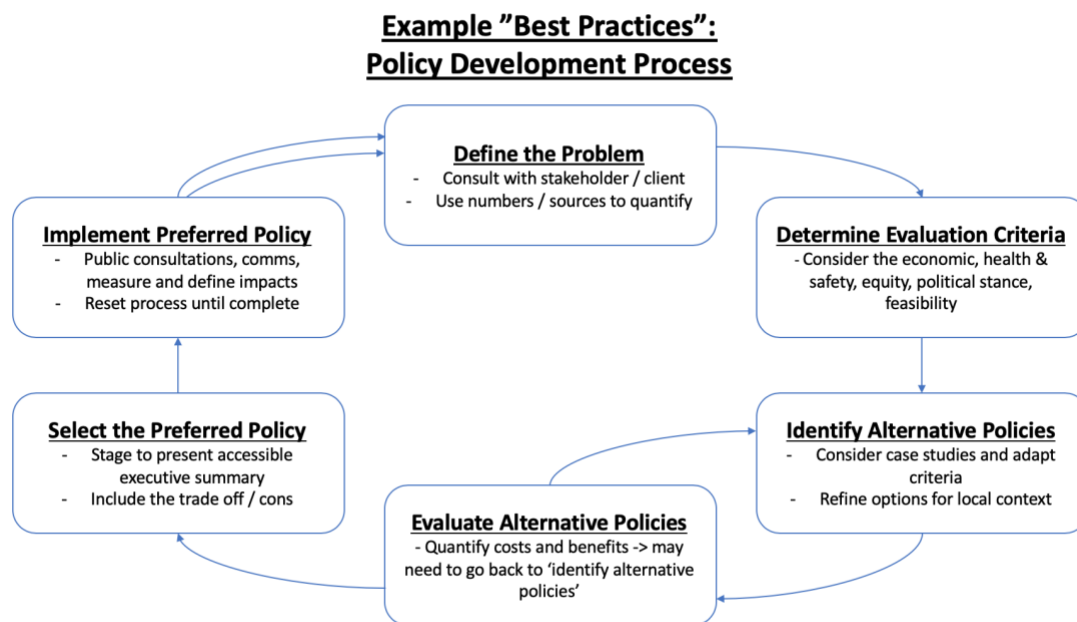
¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Wu, Xuan-Na, Xue Wu, and Wei Wang. 2016. "How do Cognitive and Affective Trust Impact Process? Outcome Interaction?" *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal* 44 (8): 1395-1407.

¹¹⁷ Meyer, Erin. 2014. *The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business*. New York: PublicAffairs.

their uses in specific settings, I would argue that it was a lack of culturally contextual understanding of place that contributed to its failure.

Figure 3.3 Example of Planning “Best Practices”



This is a visual representation of best practices as outlined by Carl Patton and David Sawicki (1993)¹¹⁸

The absence of culturally appropriate engagement and acknowledgement of community politics is actually what, I would argue, catalyzed the mobilization of the community. It’s an ethnographic phenomenon not recorded in city documents and one that is hard to describe without actually being there. Intergenerational bonds were formed as youth groups like the

¹¹⁸ The 6 categories of this flow chart build upon the basic methods of policy planning proposed by Carl Patton and David Sawicki.
Patton, Carl V. And Sawicki, David S (1993) Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning, 2nd edition Chapter 1. The Need for Simple Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. <https://www.msu.edu/course/prr/389/Pattonsawicki.doc>

Chinatown Concern Group¹¹⁹, Yarrow¹²⁰, Youth Collaborative for Chinatown¹²¹, and other informal groups sought out to fill the gap of accessibility needs of elders. Volunteers organized to drive elders to and from Council public hearings, as some elders noted it was difficult to get to City Hall or they felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods at night when stakeholder meetings ended. Additionally, volunteers translated not only at public hearings but also City documents such as the online sign-up sheet to talk at the public hearings and also assisted with navigating online resources by holding workshops. This reinforces the idea of cultural specificity. Though the City provided translations for some of these processes, it was later in the civic engagement process after it had been requested, and only addresses culture at the surface level. Referring back to Meyer's breakdown of trust as a concept, many elders may not feel comfortable disclosing personal information to strangers and civil servants, especially when considering some of the historically turbulent relations some Chinese individuals had with government.

The examples of cultural nuances discussed above demonstrate why we must re-imagine the ways we conceptualize "multiculturalism." The reason I bring this up is that I believe that multiculturalism, in the context of 105 Keefer, was used as a tool. A tool that was misguided for this particular instance, and perhaps one that only fortified 105 Keefer's shortcomings. Multiculturalism as a means to quantify space, through arts and culture funding or budgeting, then becomes about numbers and aesthetic facades. As opposed to a culturally appropriate approach which I believe acts more in line with qualitative understandings, and rather than transforming physical space, helps to personify space as place through lived experience. I believe that multiculturalism, in theory, can be a good thing, something that expresses the liberalization of society and affirms differences of lived experiences. Though when it comes to practice, specifically urban planning practices, it can prove to be problematic. As Kenan Malik argues, "It [multiculturalism] describes a set of policies, the aim of which is to manage diversity by putting people into ethnic boxes, defining individual needs and rights by virtue of the boxes into which

¹¹⁹ <https://chinatownconcerngroup.wordpress.com/>

¹²⁰ <https://www.yarrowsociety.ca/>

¹²¹ <http://ycc-yvr.com/>

people are put, and using those boxes to shape public policy. It is a case, not for open borders and minds, but for the policing of borders, whether physical, cultural or imaginative.”¹²²

These ideas of multiculturalism become problematic because they assign ties to individuals and their culture, rather than recognizing the intersectionality of one’s lived experience. In terms of policymaking, it then supposedly ‘empowers’ but only at the level of community leaders who are positioned situationally in line with state ideology.¹²³ Therein by, multiculturalism as a tool plays out in the form of lantern streetlamp hybrids, a parade once a year, or oriental style murals. On paper, these examples are quantifiable, in terms of dollars-spent or utilities produced. And by extension, a way to justify ‘enough’ has been done to make a community space engaged in an imagined culturally appropriate manner. Treating communities as homogeneous groups then works against the foundational ideas of what multiculturalism should be. This rigidity plays back into the idea of place-making and the need for flexible planning. If we are to orientalise or fetishize space to subdue it into place, then Planning has failed. Chinatown cannot survive if it is frozen in time, it must evolve in a way that does not gentrify or disenfranchise existing groups. In the same way, it cannot continue to be a purely Chinese place. If that is the case, we haven’t truly learned from the history of Chinatown.

The community’s determination to their respective causes were displayed not only in their reactions to the development but also in how they treated each other. Those present created a network of roles to ensure wellbeing for those actively participating in the public hearings. Seats were given to elders, those with the skills of active listeners volunteered their time for those who needed to debrief, and others purchased food and water for those who were ‘on shift’ for documentation of the proceedings. One of the reasons 105 Keefer was such a spectacle was because of the diverse cross section of those in attendance, many of whom traditionally had not come out these types of organizing. Vancouver is a transient city because of contributing factors such housing prices. So affective narratives like neighbourhood, race, or connection to place rather than arbitrary space, anchor people. These values help to prevent the erasure of place and

¹²² Kenan Malik op-ed on multiculturalism explaining some of its shortcomings and unintended outcomes: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/mar/17/multiculturalism-diversity-political-policy>

¹²³ <https://kenanmalik.com/2014/10/16/whats-the-problem-with-multiculturalism/>

bring people together in instances deemed dire, like 105 Keefer. The event rallied awareness to a breaking point level not seen in Chinatown since the firehall and freeway fights.

At the end of section 3.2.3, I had mentioned how vital social media was in the mobilization of community, information, and organizing. Throughout the entirety of consecutive four-day public hearings at the end of May 2017, live tweeters formally and informally distributed updates online as the public hearings went on for those who were unable to attend.¹²⁴ It would be difficult for anyone to attend all the hearings and equally difficult to keep updated on current information without the unpaid and emotional labour of those dedicated to being present. The act of online reporting is a political act, validly equal to those who chose to express themselves through spoken word poetry, to speak in Chinese without translations, or who spoke in the traditionally formal approach at the public hearings. The online presence of information added to the robustness of dialogue as it shifted ideas of how information and media are perceived and consumed by the public. Not only was information now more efficiently received by the public, but it also poses new questions of how we, and those from points of privilege, evaluate and quantify the importance of unpaid and emotional labour of those who give their time for causes.

105 Keefer is not over. The application will be back, and neither the developers nor the community knows the outcome. The only certainty is that the City will now face greater pressures from both sides with greater scrutiny for the general public. This only reinforces the idea that there is and will continue to be a need for culturally appropriate community engagement in urban planning.

¹²⁴ *Live-tweeting* is the act of posting comments about (an event) on the social media application Twitter while the event is taking place. A list of updates and live tweeters were recorded here: <https://cityhallwatch.wordpress.com/2017/05/23/105-keefer-public-hearing/>

Chapter 4: Contemporary Chinatown

On April 17th 2018, Mayor Gregor Robertson issued an apology at a special council meeting on behalf of the City for the historical discrimination of Chinese people in Vancouver.¹²⁵ ¹²⁶ There were about 500 people in attendance at the Chinese Cultural Centre and an even larger crowd that spilled into Keefer street where the ceremony was being broadcasted. Building off the head tax redress compensation in 2006, the event was meant to address the last 150 years of systemic racism.¹²⁷ Myself, and many would argue that this isn't enough, though I acknowledge the limitations and financial burden of appropriate compensation. As the mayor said, this is an ongoing effort and process of reconciliation. And so, perhaps that is where I find flaw in this 'multicultural' bureaucracy. There is an acknowledgement of the past, albeit arguably minimal, but how can we move beyond a culture of simply acknowledging a problem. We are at a time where we have become saturated with recognizing issues. The next logical step is action and I would argue that cultural appropriate community engagement is a good place to start. If reconciliation is an ongoing process, how are contemporary needs of Chinese Canadians being addressed? Needs that were systemically founded upon marginalization and discrimination of Canada's history.

4.1 Space

A staff report had stated that between the years of 2012 and 2016, Chinatown has seen an almost doubling in land values, and as a result a pricing out of long-standing businesses and community members.¹²⁸ Many of these individuals being the low income seniors who have lived in Chinatown for a majority of their lives as a result of not being allowed or welcomed in other parts of Vancouver. The irony is that Chinatown is one of the last remaining affordable low-

¹²⁵ <https://council.vancouver.ca/20171031/documents/rr1.pdf>

¹²⁶ <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/18-112-06%20chinese-apology-media-english.pdf>

¹²⁷ Survivors and spouses of the head tax, like my great-grandmother, were paid \$20,000 CND in compensation.

¹²⁸ <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/vancouver-chinatown-council-approves-revisions-reducing-building-size-in-historic-area>

income serving neighbourhoods in Vancouver, yet it is becoming increasingly unaffordable due to unhindered development that was supposed to “increase affordability.”^{129 130} When we consider housing as numbers, as a real estate market rather than homes, we are conceptualizing geographic area as space. Yi Fu Tuan, one of the fathers of humanistic Geography, defines space as “a location which has no social connections for a human being...It is more or less abstract.”¹³¹ To conceptualize abstractions we ascribed meaning. For example, in an attempt to understand space, we subvert land with value in relative terms such as economic real estate or zoning bylaws.

Before Chinatown was a Chinatown, it was, from a colonial perspective, simply land. What needs to be understood about space is that it is based on perspective. The Burrard inlet may be viewed as land waiting to be settled. A perspective that did not account for First Nations and Indigenous groups. In the same way the Chinatown, in its economic state was a site needing real estate development. These different examples show an overlay of narratives onto a physical geographic space therefore making it a place. As Tuan argues, we understand space cognitively by relating markers in relation to other things.¹³² Therefore space is a construct on the basis of the human body, on an individual or group level, and it’s interaction with the environment. For example, cartography visually represents physical space by translating scale and relative understanding of space in relation to other geographic locations.

The Chinatown Sound Map, created by Angela Ho, is a project that re-imagines how space can be conceptualized.¹³³ Diverging from traditional cartographic maps, the Chinatown Sound

¹²⁹ <https://thetyee.ca/News/2018/07/25/Downzoning-Vancouver-Chinatown/>

¹³⁰

<https://chinatownconcerngroup.wordpress.com/%e8%8f%af%e8%a3%94%e5%8a%a0%e6%8b%bf%e5%a4%a7%e4%ba%ba%e5%8d%9a%e7%89%a9%e9%a4%a8-chinese-canadian-museum/>

¹³¹ Page 6: Tuan, Yi-fu. 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹³² <https://tcاتف.hypotheses.org/177>

¹³³ I was fortunate enough to be able to participate in Angela’s summer workshops she hosted out of the Hua Foundation office and was able to record soundbites that were then placed on the sound map. <https://chinatownsoundmap.com/>

Map “is a collaborative, community-based project (...) exploring how sound contributes to our sense of place. It provides a platform for users to listen to and share different experiences in and with Chinatown through the perspective of sound.” This involved Ho hosting workshops throughout the summer and teaching participants how to use *Zoom* (audio) recorders or how to record audio files on their mobile device. The sound bites that were recorder were geo-tagged onto an open source map allowing anyone to contribute to the community project. This would allow users to listen to the sounds they might hear in a specific location in Chinatown. For example, the shouting of a fish monger or a clicking of an abacus in an herb store. This counter mapping method forces users to re-evaluate how we think of space as place, and in turn contributes to the reinforcing of placemaking. A traditional map, as an example of space, does not evoke affective connection. Alternatively, this sound making project can transports users to the specified location by stirring a sense of nostalgia or encouraging their own participation. Indirectly, the map also showed patterns of where Chinese was still spoken and how in pricier establishments there was little to no Chinese captured. Though not the goal of the project, the Chinatown Sound Map showcases how without meaning, locations or understandings of geographic location, are simply space. It is not until a meaning, collective history, or community narrative that spaces enter the process of becoming places.

4.2 Place

It was in the 1970s that Yi Fu Tuan began to reference ‘place’, or alternatively ‘cognitive space’, as a way to describe attached “meaning”, “spirit”, or “taste” of a place.¹³⁴ And conversely, how places can influence the body at the level of individual or group. “People demonstrate their sense of place when they apply their moral and aesthetic discernment to sites and locations. (...) However, other than the all-important eye, the world is known through the senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch. These senses, unlike the visual, require close contact

¹³⁴ Pocock, Douglas, Edward Relph, and Yi-Fu Tuan. 1994. "Classics in Human Geography Revisited: Tuan, Y.-F. 1974: Topophilia. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall." *Progress in Human Geography* 18 (3): 355-359.

and long association with the environment.”¹³⁵ Therefore in essence, place and placemaking comes from human habit and practice.

Place should be understood as a flexible concept. What a place means to one person or group can have an entirely different meaning to another. As was the case of 105 Keefer, which was simply a parking lot to Beedie, but symbolically meant so much more for the community. This was due to pre-existing narratives of development, gentrification, and felt disregard for the historical context. For Chinatown, place plays on a shared discourse and sense of nostalgia, one that is passed generationally. This is what Tuan refers to as topophilia, meaning a strong sense or love of a place that begins to entwine with ones perceived own culture.¹³⁶ Perhaps this speaks to why so many people, despite not living in Chinatown, felt such a need to show up and fight against developers in public hearings. The fight against 105 Keefer was not simply against the geographically situated location but also a fight against what was perceived as a threat to a groups culture and their preceding generations.

These ideas are supported by Graeme Evans work on cultural planning, specifically on the contributions of culture towards urban regeneration. Graeme came up with an extensive metric that breaks down culture’s contributions to regeneration.¹³⁷ The simplified findings were that culture is effective rather than something that can be accurately traced or quantified. And that emphasis should instead be placed on community governance, in reference to cultural and social planning policies or initiatives to ensure sustainability. Culture is made by communities, but it is also the intangible aspect that makes communities and motivates their actions.

4.3 Appropriate ‘Revitalization’ and ‘Preservation’

I would argue that in foil to the many bureaucracies and arguments of gentrification, there have also been positive, and less sensationalized, movements in Chinatown. Groups such as

¹³⁵ Tuan, Yi-fu. 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹³⁶ Bale, John. 1996. "Space, Place and Body Culture: Yi-Fu Tuan and a Geography of Sport." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 78 (3): 163-171.

¹³⁷ Page 971: Evans, Graeme. 2005. "Measure for Measure: Evaluating the Evidence of Culture's Contribution to Regeneration." *Urban Studies* 42 (5/6): 959-983.

SUCCESS, the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society, have contributed towards what some might define as community preservation by providing culturally appropriate seniors housing. Located at Dr. Dorothy Lam Building on West Pender Street, SUCCESS opened its head office in Chinatown in 1998.¹³⁸ Three years later on September 24th, 2001, they would open the Simon K.Y. Lee Care Home, a multi-level bilingual (Chinese and English) senior care facility offering 24/7 resident care. Accommodations include 21 beds designated for those with cognitive impairments and or specific accessibility needs. In 2003 SUCCESS would cater to the growing need with the addition of Chieng's Adult Day Centre, located at the same address as the Care Home, with the goal of integrating seniors with the community. The Day Centre offers weekday recreational activities, health monitoring and education programs, as well as podiatry, hairdressing, and respite care.¹³⁹ This would contribute to a total of 103 seniors' housing units and an additional 33 units of a seniors' care facilities added in 2006. The Chinese Benevolent Association opened a 46-unit seniors' home adjacent to SUCCESS in 1998.¹⁴⁰

Among the many who have contributed efforts towards culturally appropriate community engagement is Fred Mah. Mah is a Chinatown community leader and recipient of Vancouver's civic merit award who has volunteered countless hours towards Chinatown's 2011 designation as a National Historic Site. Among his many labours was the founding of the Chinatown Society Heritage Buildings Association (CSHBA) which would lead to the restoration of twelve Chinatown clan association buildings.¹⁴¹ This initiative was a direct response to City Council's approval of the Society Buildings Rehabilitation Strategy in 2007, and the CSHBA would be formed the next year in 2008.¹⁴² The CSHBA has also been involved in a 2011 Chinatown

¹³⁸ <https://www.successbc.ca/eng/company/locations/vancouver/>

¹³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁰ This information was provided by author of "Vancouver's Chinatown, 1960-1980: A Community Perspective", Hayne Wai.

¹⁴¹ One of the twelve buildings include the Chin Wing Chun building, where my paternal great grandfather was a member.
<http://www.chinatownsocieties.org/society/chin-wing-chun-tong/>

¹⁴² <http://www.chinatownsocieties.org/>

Cultural development study, in addition to the Chinese Society Legacy Program in 2016.¹⁴³ ¹⁴⁴ This work would build off the momentum from the City's Chinese Society Buildings Matching Grant Program, which started October 2014 and by the end of December had approved 1.16 million dollars in matching grants.¹⁴⁵ At the end of the three-year matching grant program, there was an amassed 2.5 million dollars including 1.2 million dollars from a developer community amenity contribution. The money was used towards repairing buildings with low-income housing, heritage spaces, and sites of cultural value.

105 Keefer was an incidence that not only forced the City to reassess how they organize in terms of community engagement but also catalyzed community organization. Since the 105 Keefer development process, more and more community, grassroots groups, and non-profits have emerged or have reoriented their core goals. Some of these groups include Yarrow, the Intergenerational Society for Justice 世代同行會, who "support youth and low-income immigrant seniors in Chinatown and the Downtown East Side."¹⁴⁶ Yarrow started organically in 2015 and gained non-profit designation in 2018. Their intergenerational volunteers have served the community by providing interpreting services that help elders access health care. This not only speaks to language needs but also aspects of transportation and confidentiality. Several groups have also come out of pre-existing structures within the Chinatown community. The Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP), and a branch the Chinatown Concern Group, are based out of the Carnegie Community Centre and produce research and visioning reports that are accessible to the community.¹⁴⁷ They do so by providing gentrification tours to the public and providing spaces in which marginalized individuals can feel comfortable accessing.

¹⁴³ <http://www.chinatownsocieties.org/initiative/buildings-planning-program/>

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.chinatownsocieties.org/initiative/legacy-program/>

¹⁴⁵ <https://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/chinatown-revitalization-in-depth.aspx>

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.yarrowsociety.ca/about>

¹⁴⁷ <https://ricepapermagazine.ca/2016/12/105-keefers-an-interview-with-king-mong-chan/>

In a survey study he conducted, Graeme Evans cited, the most important aspect for policy rationale is economic development.¹⁴⁸ Similar metrics are used when considering ‘grand projects’ such as UNESCO.¹⁴⁹ Arguably the most economically oriented organization is the Chinatown Foundation. The Chinatown Foundation was founded in 2009 and registered as a charity in 2011. The organization focuses on physical and commercial revitalization in Chinatown, chaired by Carol Lee and officed in the building where her grandfather’s dry good store used to be. The foundation has concentrated many of their efforts along the Pender corridor in Chinatown. The Chinatown Foundation has provided the financial backing to build spaces, like shops and restaurants, therein by setting an accessible basis for the community to start placemaking. Some of their projects include Chinatown Vintage, a thrift shop with an emphasis on selling donated clothing at an affordable price for the community.¹⁵⁰ The Foundation also opened Chinatown BBQ towards the end of 2017.¹⁵¹ The restaurant serves up classic Chinese BBQ staples and is headed by a wife and husband team that used to work at the Daisy Garden before it burned down in 2014.¹⁵²

The significance of a BBQ store opening back up in Chinatown is, again, rooted in a historical context.¹⁵³ There used to be more than a dozen BBQ meat shops in Chinatown but in 1975 food inspectors shut down five Chinese BBQ stores on the grounds that their meats were being stored between 60-4 C, which was deemed unhygienic.¹⁵⁴ This would cause other Chinese

¹⁴⁸ Page 1024: Evans, Graeme. 2005. "Measure for Measure: Evaluating the Evidence of Culture's Contribution to Regeneration." *Urban Studies* 42 (5/6): 959-983.

¹⁴⁹ Evans, Graeme. 2009. "Creative Cities, Creative Spaces and Urban Policy." *Urban Studies* 46 (5/6): 1003-1040.

¹⁵⁰ I volunteered at Chinatown Vintage when it first opened. The clothes were donated by many people my parents’ age who grew up in Chinatown but no longer had any specific ties to the place. Chinatown Vintage operated as a special space because it facilitated a connection for people to come back to the community or to at least open up a dialogue about the changing community. Beyond just a business it served as an informal space for people to come in and have a cup of tea and chat.

¹⁵¹ <https://chinatownbbq.com/about/>

¹⁵³ Wai, Hayne Yip. *Vancouver Chinatown 1960-1980: a Community Perspective*. Seattle, WA: Canadian Studies Center, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, 1998.

¹⁵⁴ This campaign would eventually be taken all the way to Parliament Hill in Ottawa where merchants brought a suckling pig for cabinet members to compare what was normally prepared with pork that was

BBQ meat stores to also halt their business in solidarity and eventual led to a protest to save Chinatown BBQ products.¹⁵⁵ ¹⁵⁶ Many today still talk about how they felt this was a discriminatory targeting of a specific cultural foodway. In the 1970s and 80s, Chinatown not only housed but fed a large low-income community, many of whom survived off affordable BBQ meats.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, BBQ meats have an intangible culture attached to them where foods such as whole roast pig would be eaten on special occasions like Chinese New Year's. In more recent years we see a continual diminishing of traditional businesses. At the end of 2015, Wall Financial Corporation began developing a cluster of buildings at the Southwest corner of Gore and East Hastings.¹⁵⁸ This would include the closure of another BBQ meats store and the rise of another condo development.

The Chinatown Foundation also owns the property located at 58 West Hastings in the DTES. The vision for this site is a 10 storey condominium, the first 3 floors of which will be commercial and medical offices operated by Vancouver Coastal Health, with a total of 231 units.¹⁵⁹ Although former mayor Robertson promised 100% social housing in 2016, the project has since promised a minimum of one-third to be offered at welfare or pension rates.¹⁶⁰ Unlike 105 Keefer, the development's rezoning application was passed in 2018, with the Vancouver Chinatown Foundation and province committing \$30-million each towards the \$109-million project. The City has evaluated the land at \$38 million and has also applied for a \$30 million

stored at regulation temperatures. In a study done by the Chinese BBQ Meat Merchants Association, they found very low levels of disease-causing pathogens from anonymous samples collected from several BBQ meat stores in Vancouver.

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.vancouversun.com/life/demise+Chinatown+meat+shops/11406805/story.html>

¹⁵⁶ I first learned about the history of the BBQ fights from my peer Christy Fong who went on to make a short film for her thesis.

<http://festival.vaff.org/2016/films/under-fire-inside-a-chinese-roasted-meats-shop-in-vancouver/>

¹⁵⁷ Page 19: <https://www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/VHF-Chinatown-Map-Guide-FINAL-web-res.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.vancouversun.com/life/demise+Chinatown+meat+shops/11406805/story.html>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.chinatownfoundation.org/58-w-hastings/>

¹⁶⁰ <https://globalnews.ca/news/5859922/work-58-west-hastings-could-begin-fall/>

CMHC grant. The final goal is to have at least half of the units to be offered at shelter rates, but it has been difficult to find the additional funding as project partners have stated the unviable profitability.¹⁶¹ The social housing units will be operated by SUCCESS and work on the site is slated to begin this fall.

4.4 UNESCO

On September 17th, 2018 Premier John Horgan and former mayor Gregor Robertson signed a memorandum of understanding solidifying their governments' commitment to work towards a UNESCO world heritage site designation for Vancouver Chinatown. The partnership between the city and province consists of a strategic 3 to 5-year application process headed by the City's newly established Chinatown Transformation Team (CTT). Although to be considered for a UNESCO designation would require explicit support from the federal government. Chinatown currently holds two historic designations awarded from senior levels of government. It was first marked as 'national historic site' by the federal government in 2011 and then as a 'historical site of significance' at the provincial level in 2014.

A UNESCO world heritage site is "cultural and/or natural site considered to be of outstanding universal value."¹⁶² The attempt to apply for application has gained a lot of leverage from the community who want to see a change in Chinatown, and understandably so. Real estate prices are rising, as is the number of homeless individuals. These factors are paired with a decrease in accessibility to affordable food as well as traditional retail. And while I think that a UNESCO designation has the potential to do a lot of good, I also think that there is an equal, if not greater possibility for harm. UNESCO can be viewed as potentially negative if its goal is purely preservation. Chinatown cannot continue to exist as it is because in many ways it is failing its marginalized communities. And so, if an emphasis is placed solely on preservation, the gaps in disparity will widen and generations will have a diminishing connection to spaces. What I mean by this is that spaces need to be planned in a resilient manner so that future generations

¹⁶¹ <https://globalnews.ca/news/5859922/work-58-west-hastings-could-begin-fall/>

¹⁶² <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/world-heritage-sites/what-is-a-world-heritage-site/>

can attach their own meaning to spaces for future placemaking. So rather than the specific UNESCO designation as a title, the application as a process is what needs to be focused on.

The UNESCO designation application requires a financial competency report outlining how the site in question will be economically viable. In a lot of instances, this relies on the crutch of making a space more accessible for tourism. This runs the risk of transforming a place into a tourist trap and therefore brings on an entirely new form of gentrification which ultimately does not help the community as a whole via an erasure of pre-existing place. That is why I emphasize a reference to some alternative forms of revitalization that are happening in the neighbourhood that I argue benefit the community more broadly with minimal adverse effects to specific groups. In comparison to Chinatown's other historic designations, the UNESCO designation has the potential to be different because there are more resources being allocated specifically for this project, the biggest being the Chinatown Transformation Team (CTT).

The CTT was formed in September of 2018 and consists of a team of nine individuals, all of whom have a pre-existing personal connection to Chinatown, speak Chinese, and/or have worked on projects related to Chinatown. One of CTT's primary goals is to create a Cultural Heritage Assessment Management Plan (CHAMP).¹⁶³ The CHAMP will outline the priority of projects, actions, and key partners, as listed by the community. The CHAMP will also be one of the principal documents used for the UNESCO designation application. These decisions are guided by the Legacy Stewardship Group (LSG). The LSG is a collection of 35 stakeholders from different Chinatown communities who steer the vision of the CHAMP, as facilitated by the CTT.¹⁶⁴ To have a dedicated team made up of people of colour doing work on a neighbourhood that is personally important to them is a rare occurrence in Vancouver's planning history.

As culturally specific and ideal as this group is, it is not without its barriers. When I interviewed several of the CTT members they stated that their work was difficult because the type of engagement that they do is not built into the system. This is where there is a disconnect between community engagement and what is culturally appropriate. For example, CTT has referred to a language access ordinance template to help guide their bilingual resources.

¹⁶³ <https://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/chinatown-transformation.aspx>

¹⁶⁴ <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/chinatown-legacy-stewardship-group-terms-of-reference.pdf>

However, there has been friction in getting things such as information on the City's website to be accessible in both English and Chinese because Chinese characters simply weren't in the symbol database. Preceding this there was a lag in the time it took to translate terminology that culturally may not have a direct translation or may be too technical for people with limited formal education. Things such as translating First Nations territory acknowledgments took a lot of mindfulness but ultimately have contributed to bridging the knowledge gap of different demographics.

Chinatown exists physically as just space, but it is the people and their interactions within it that ground it as place. There exists many different groups operating within and around Chinatown, each with their own vision for how they want to shape the future of their respective communities. In terms of community engagement, it needs to be understood that though these groups are working towards a common goal of the betterment of Chinatown, how that end goal looks or how we get there may sometimes differ or in some cases oppose each other. With the same mentality, not all condos are bad but there should be discussion on the impacts that will have on the community. In a talk with CTT members, it was noted that it's impossible to please everyone and what's important is that all opinions are respected. There must be a degree of knowledge exchange, between organizers and stakeholders, where an attempt is being made to see the other side.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

I have found it to be a privilege to be able to do research and work in the place where I spent part of my childhood, the same site that my great grandparents helped to build. Through my time in Chinatown as an adult I have been able to form connections, both personal and professional, learn more about my family's history, and witness milestones such as the Historical Discrimination Against Chinese (HDC) apology and UNESCO application.¹⁶⁵ Despite my family's history with Chinatown, no members of my family were present during these events. From an outside perspective, this may seem puzzling, but I can now understand why. My father once told me about how our family emigrated to Canada and became settlers on this unceded land. My father's grandfather told him that we had paid the head tax and that this was wrong, but at the end of the day, we had paid our dues. To him, this meant that my father and his sisters were just as Canadian as anyone else born in Canada.¹⁶⁶

Born in Saskatchewan, my father was the only Chinese boy in his hometown Val Marie. My grandparents worked hard to run a diner, a common occupation for Chinese migrants and eventually would move to Vancouver where there was a greater concentration of Chinese people. And despite being born in Canada, my family still experienced overt and micro-aggressive racisms. This put my parents in a precarious situation of feeling too oriental for Canada and too westernized to be fully Asian. Families and communities were formed in Chinatown not by choice but by necessity to provide a safe space for Chinese migrants. Just as it is no coincidence that Japantown, Hogan's Alley, and a visible Jewish, Italian, and Portuguese communities also formed in proximity.

One of the reasons Chinatown has stagnated economically is because there is a missing middle in terms of age demographics, my parents' generation. My grandparents' generation and those preceding, worked hard so that their children would have the option to move out of ethnically segregated neighbourhoods or to go onto occupations they perceived as better than

¹⁶⁵ The HDC is a 20-person advisory committee that was formed in 2017. Their research and stewardship would lead to the apology and legacy initiatives for reconciliation acknowledge by the City in 2018.

¹⁶⁶ <https://medium.com/uAlberta2017/life-in-the-hyphen-7b85e366718c>

diner workers.¹⁶⁷ The Chinatown and Japantown my parents knew have long since changed for reasons ranging from targeted racialized strategic planning, as seen with the viaducts, to economic slumps or a general lack of feeling safe. I share these anecdotes to demonstrate why an acknowledgement of historical wrongdoings is important. In the same regards, it may seem strange that my family does not come to Chinatown, apart from the occasional stop at Newtown Bakery, but there is a historic and contextual rationale for this. And this is why I stress a need for culturally appropriate community engagement. This means to acknowledge a community's narrative, one that is rooted in history but continues to change over generations and informs place as greater than just space.

5.1 Recommendations

In the following section, I would like to propose a list of tangible recommendations that are applicable to reimagining culturally appropriate community engagement. These recommendations are suggestions on how to better approach community engagement in a more culturally appropriate manner. I have formulated these recommendations on the basis of equity rather than equality. In a perfect system, one that we strive for, these recommendations would not be necessary. The reality, however, is that there are varying degrees of access and privilege. Despite some overlap, these recommendations are framed broadly so that they can be adapted contextually or ignored altogether in specific instances. Rather than so-called best practices, which may work under a degree of assumed equality, these recommendations are aimed at distributing provisions to those who have greater barriers in terms of access and engagement.

Culturally appropriate community engagement is not about thinking of locations as ethnic spaces viewed through a yellow lens. For example, rather than simply translating best practices into Chinese, we should think about the people and whether these approaches translate in terms of application. Practices should be flexible and resilient. When appropriating a style of engagement, it should be relatively low risk and pliable to specific community needs. These suggestions are not necessarily policies or by any means groundbreaking, rather they are meant

¹⁶⁷ Hui, Ann. *Chop Suey Nation: the Legion Cafe and Other Stories from Canadas Chinese Restaurants*. Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2019.

to be a means to address obvious gaps within our current community engagement rhetoric. They are an amalgam of feedback the community has asked for and real practices that I have seen demonstrated within the Chinatown community.

1. Engage individuals and groups on their own terms

Community engagement needs to occur on varying scales, from the individual to large group scale. When doing so, we as planners should be approaching and meeting communities on their terms. This may entail going to their workplaces (in a non-predatory manner) or during hours that work for their schedules. This means that we need to rethink engagement beyond surveys or long meetings. Though there is a use for these types of engagement, in some instances they may take on a positionality of privilege that does not acknowledge the capacity of those we are engaging. With the same mentality, we should understand that engagement is not a blanket term. The way we engage youth is very different from the way we should engage seniors, especially when adding a layer of cultural competency.

- *Example: Outreach is crucial because people like my grandparents could never access formal documents or even this work that I am writing. This is not uncommon for sites like Chinatown where English proficiency varies greatly by generations. As a result, we miss out on engaging an entire group of people and demographic data is skewed.*
- *Example: Perhaps, we should question not only how we can change the rigidity of public hearing processes to make them more accessible, but also whether public hearings and consultation even the right arrangements of engagement?*

2. Consider others' positionality and perspectives: mistrust, apathy, access

Community engagement should be an ongoing process. To have this we need to have robust relationships that consider the communities' perspective. The technical jargon of urban planning can be difficult to navigate for the average person, especially when taking into consideration language access and equity. So, when we propose things such as development or rezoning applications, we must consider how these things are understood without pre-existing understandings. This encapsulates approaching technical topics with a cultural lens, beyond

literal language translations. Doing this is not easy and costs additional resources. There is a lot of room for failure, but perhaps that is okay. Therefore, it is more necessary to show accountability and reflection, a genuine attempt being made for community improvement, and to demonstrate a degree of transparency.¹⁶⁸ Community members may have pre-existing notions or opinions about civil servants formed by their past experiences. Or some individuals may simply not want to be engaged but that does not mean an effort should not still be made.

- *Example: Community members should also question urban planning processes. From their perspective, why are we engaging them? Are we doing this around the time of elections? What are we going to do with this information? What is the accountability post engagement processes?*
- *Example: Trust takes time to build in comparison to urban development processes. Therefore, there needs to be an understanding of the needs and the context of a community before engagement. This was seen with the two towers at Main and Keefer setting a tone for how development projects are seen by the neighbourhood.*

3. Acknowledge community victories and failures

Consultations should bring forth the victories as well as failures to have a holistic view of the community and to demonstrate an acknowledgment of its history. Engagement should focus on community. And community organizing centres around morale and the willingness of local groups to work in cohesion for or against a particular cause. Community engagement works on the basis of perception, not facts. This may seem counterintuitive but technical details will not necessarily circulate through the community and so it is much more important to consider public views and attitudes towards large ideas. It is these immediate acknowledgements that the community will recognize and thus this helps to understand what places are being used and what spaces need activation.

¹⁶⁸ This recommendation builds off some of the proposed ideas of Darcy Rezacs 'Positively Engaged Leadership.' Specifically appropriating the concept of rethinking 'networking' as an opportunity for what can be done for the others and relationships founded upon long term trust-building. Dastmalchian, Ali, Darcy Rezac, Daniel F. Muzyka, Secil Bayraktar, Claudia Steinke, and H. Pinar Imer. 2016. "Developing a Measure for "Connectorship" as a Component of Engaged Leadership." *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 37 (3): 403.

- *Example: Both 105 Keefer and Firehall fights may be regarded as victories, with few comparable milestones. These trials contributed to a strong sense of shared identity that communities can focus on. But both were difficult and long-drawn processes, and as a result, other community groups, such as Hogan's alley, have been underwritten. There has been some pushback because by public standards there has not been an overt acknowledgment of the City's role in events such as the freeway fights and how that has orchestrated antagonism between different communities.*
- *Example: Framing is important, and what may seem to be convoluted semantics, can really shape community opinions. For instance, in a facilitation class I took through my work in environmental assessment, an indigenous speaker told us that the word 'consultation' is very loaded for some indigenous groups because there is a history of bureaucratic and manipulative practices as face value. Similarly, hyphenating Chinese (-) Canadian can be considered fragmenting, and therefore view individuals firstly through ethnicity rather than what they bring. ¹⁶⁹*

4. Quantify culturally appropriate community engagement as part of the budget

Culturally appropriate community engagement means more resources and time are needed to do the work. Thus, a restructuring is needed where culturally appropriate community engagement is considered then more than just a line in a budget and is actually worked into the system as a practice and norm. When we think about quantifiable engagement and comparable metrics, the City refers to data such as key performance indicators or quarterly stats to measure levels. But culturally appropriate community engagement does not read across these measures and therefore is not comparable to how we consider engagement processes currently. Additionally, when working in bureaucratic systems, such as public hearings, we need to further understand what works for the community, which may include reworking civic processes. So much of trust and perception is based on relationship building but it is not structurally built into the system in a way that can be tangibly addressed and so we must rethink how we approach it.

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/canada-without-hyphens/article1144702/>

- *Example: The city's online platforms were not initially set up to have Chinese characters in its text boxes. Additionally, there are no current templates that consider the time it takes to break down City documents in English and translate those words and their connotations which may not exist in other languages.*
- *Example: How do we quantify the use of the Chinatown plaza as a site of engagement where Chinese elders consider this a safe space? Or the memorial square as a location where anti-development groups hosted mahjong events as a form of occupying space and community organizing? How do we appropriately compensate the emotional labour of community work?*¹⁷⁰

5. Understand that there is no one community to engage

Community engagement by definition assumes that there is a community to engage. This takes on a process of homogenization and may gloss over the fact that communities are made up of individuals, each with their own lived experiences. It also brings in an expectation that there is a unified community voice, when obviously in practice there is not. Although there may be threads of common narratives, we should understand there is a need for different styles of engagement processes (building off recommendations 1 and 4). Engagement is an ongoing process, but when considering time and resources we need to outline who are the immediate stakeholders to consult and continue off that momentum to continue engaging the community.¹⁷¹ Whilst still ensuring that it is not the burden of the community to educate us.

- *Example: For application, consider mixed-methods for engagement processes. Data should be overlaid with narrative. Individuals should be asked what their expectations.*

¹⁷⁰ A member of the Chinatown Transformation Team mentioned in an interview that from a community perspective they may not be seen as stakeholders but many of them had joined because they had a history or ongoing tie to Chinatown. And because they are also community members they are never really 'off the clock.' Within their respective networks, they might get messages on social media or phone calls asking for favours or insight, which of course is not financially compensated, but it's still considered part of the work of community engagement and relationship building. Things such as community ties are not recognized on paper but contribute to having culturally appropriate community engagement as part of one's skillset.

¹⁷¹ One interviewee stated: "My biggest concern is not that the community is divided in terms of opinions. That's not an issue. It's the fact that some opportunists might use the divide to their advantage and the community may become more fragmented as a result."

But not all participants will have strong opinions or a clear stance. Therefore, it is equally important for planners to bring in their expertise and recommendations when warranted to steer conversations.

- *Example: A community is also a collective with governance, during engagement processes it is helpful to ask respective communities who the community leaders are, being mindful that there are many. From there you can identify what tools and spaces are needed to address what the community sees as major issues. Question is this engagement collaborative? Be mindful of how we are thinking about 'empowerment.' It should not be done with a mentality of bestowing power. In some instances, the community may not want to take a major role of responsibility. Alternatives may include drafting an initial plan and leaving room for feedback.*

5.2 Defining Culturally Appropriate Community Engagement

To address the question: What is culturally appropriate community engagement, I have compared the ways Vancouver's Chinatown is viewed as space and place, and how those perspectives are built on the foundations of a historical context. The case study of 105 Keefer, juxtaposed with the formation of Chinatown and its community organizing, demonstrates that Chinatown has been and continues to be a site of racialization. This has been done through targeted policy in a top-down manner but additionally has been demonstrated through community mobilization. By this I mean, the community has reclaimed what it means to be Chinese and Chinese Canadians and used this as a commonality to construct a shared living narrative. The fights against the freeway, the firehall, and 105 Keefer acknowledged a history that forcibly made Chinatown a Chinese place. The community is now fighting to have ownership of what that means.

I am not arguing that culture is an object to be owned. Instead, it is a sum of experiences greater than its parts coinciding along with shared narratives or values that bonds and forms community. So, in some ways, culture is inseparable from race but is not synonymous. That is why rather than appropriate community engagement, I argue for the acknowledgment of cultural appropriateness, as I believe culture is a commonality which community can grow and organize from. For the definition of what culture encapsulates, I reference the "A City for All", the

Vancouver City Planning Commissions summit report.¹⁷² Culture is an approach to engagement that is more equitable and accessible to a community as opposed to economics or politics. As I mentioned, Chinatown cannot and should not exist as a purely Chinese space. To do so would continue a cyclic course of racism that pigeonholes its sustainability. This should not be confused with gentrification and the pushing out of pre-existing marginalized groups. Therefore, culturally appropriate community engagements should aim to find a healthy medium for community growth. In similar regards to UNESCO, Chinatown must change and evolve to survive but not in a way that systemically perpetuates exclusion.

I have very intentionally excluded the understanding of racism as a systemic issue in this paper. And not that it is not one, but specifically when referring to policy, racism is a huge undertaking. Rather I have proposed some incremental changes in my 5.1 Recommendations section. In my experience when racism is conceptualized as a systemic issue, it is often thought of as too omnipresent to tackle. As a result, it is sometimes backgrounded as a context rather than foregrounded as a goal to be solved. In the same way, I have avoided using colonialism in name as a methodological lens to examine Chinatown.

Many of the asymmetric privileges and forms of ableism present in Chinatown are founded upon cyclic racist histories. For example, settler colonialism, the right to own land title, the head tax, the construction of the Georgia street viaducts, or even specific social housing entrances in mixed valued condos. These events of the not so distant past have contributed to contemporary conversations of gentrification, marginalization, and displacement. So, although the weightiness of racism is not explicitly the focus of this research, its omnipresence is unambiguously at play. And beyond this work, further questions should be raised for planning as a practice, as to how we want to address these types of systemic imbalances.

In attempting to define what culturally appropriate community engagement means, it prompts the question of who gets to define what is culture and what is appropriate? This includes sentiments of gatekeeping knowledge and ownership of intangible heritage. But opposite to how I argue multiculturalism can be insidious when claimed as having ownership or used as a tool, I

¹⁷² Page 35-36: <http://vancouverplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/VCPC-A-City-For-All-Summit-Report-20190504.pdf>

hope the ideas I propose umbrellaed under cultural appropriateness can better speak to an ideology of shared collectivism. This includes the retention of an acknowledgment of individual lived experiences. Out of an organizational necessity, this requires a degree of hierarchical categorization, whilst still considering inclusivity but with an emphasis on the larger groups who are most affected by urban planning outcomes. These processes then should be evaluated as being appropriate by one's own culture.

Though difficult in practice, the recommendations above simply mean a made effort in understanding what a community thinks in terms of governance, what they want, and what they think they need to get there. The community being a place that is accessible to all, while still acknowledging those most directly affected by outcomes. And finally, an introspective questioning of what we as planners and stakeholders are doing, why are we doing it, and how are we doing it in a way that acknowledges the response of the community in a culturally appropriate manner.

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