



# Chinatown Memory Book



## Introduction

In July 2020, Council approved a Notice of Motion to rename James Short Park and James Short Parkade, located on the boundary of Chinatown. This engagement will identify a new name(s) for the park and parkade, and gather ideas on how to acknowledge Chinatown's history, people and culture in a meaningful way.

From its founding in 1885, Calgary's Chinatown has had three locations and the Chinese community has been oppressed and discriminated against by government policies and citizen actions. Renaming the park and parkade is a way to acknowledge some of these past wrongs and recognize the contributions of the Chinatown community.

In effort to learn about life in Chinatown, we asked people to share their memories. The following pages are a combination of submissions we received online at **[engage.calgary.ca/renameJSP](https://engage.calgary.ca/renameJSP)** and from in person engagement opportunities.



## 您对在唐人街的生活有何回忆?

日常生活是什么样的? 何事让您感到开心? 何事让您感到被排挤或被歧视?

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我在唐人街工作差不多30年時間。回顧過往商業發展  
興旺。每逢星期六公眾假期。的人煙鼎沸。一眾老少  
都到唐人街飲茶購物。以前很多時每年都有例  
行。所以吸引了不少人遷來唐人街。但隨著時代的  
推移。今非昔比。好多的行業都在往外發展。  
唐人街的前景已不復從前。目前此處很多單位也減  
少了不少。興建單車道。很多好多單位都無。所以  
遷來唐人街消費的人一天少一天。這是真是也原因我  
地也是遷在唐人地為生存的人們。希望市府可以  
幫助下我們。

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希望泊車可以跟以往一樣

星期五可以~~收~~十元以後 5元一天。

六、日、公眾假期一律2元一天。

可以吸引多的唐人將來帶~~旺~~唐人街。

曾听前人讲(楊景南)这个人  
为唐街出力很大. 希望用他的  
名字命名.

Cantonese ← YOUNG, KING NING

Mandarin ← YANG, JING NAN

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我加國廿多年，住唐人街只是九年，我覺得唐人街非常的好，買餸  
菜方便，飲茶又方便，搭公共車更方便，東南西北都有車去。  
未有疫情之前，夏天每月都有一至二次大戲或音樂會表演全部免  
費的，又有社團辦的旅行團，又平又好玩，有一天團，有多天團。  
至於被排擠或被歧視，我未發現過，亦未見人談論過。

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在唐人街約三、五知己飲茶後再打麻雀，感到非常開心，黑族人叫我們回中國使我們感到無奈和受到歧視，因為加拿大是個多元文化的國家，如此說來全部都應該回到他們的家鄉才是。  
公園命名提議“中華公園”。

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大概五六年前，在中央街与第四大道交接的街口发生一宗严重交通事故，一辆越野车冲上人行道撞到建筑物墙上，一名亚裔老年妇女被撞倒在地上，伤势严重。所有在现场的人都惊呆了，这时一名白人男青年走到被撞倒的妇女身边了解情况，试图唤醒并鼓励她坚持等救护车到达。这名男青年真的很勇敢，很热心，他体现了卡尔加里市民互相关心，互相帮助的精神和跨种族的关爱。这一幕一直深深印在我的脑海中并鼓励我向他学习这种精神。

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① 唐人街 大岳将新人群绝最简单留群大厦  
 老人屋食味建省政厅全埋到宽大厦又包左  
 连荣基又食埋 常集曾漫有办法 将来将  
 唐人街老人群尽数迁省政厅没有办法  
 那里唐人街无望 我住卡加利四十多年  
 思社管理在唐人街好难 谓矣



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前人栽树，后人乘凉。我和老公住在河滨大厦，每天都会走在整洁的唐人街上，去商店买食物（具有中国风味），去银行办理业务。这里有一座卡城著名之充满中国特色的建筑，中华文化中心和胡耀邦纪念馆。还有音乐公园，两座大理石胡耀邦纪念馆的两侧，公园里有用详细铜雕记录着前辈的奋斗史。有用浮雕尖塔展示之华人为工作场景，有充满中国风味的从南到北的风味餐厅，吸引看众多华人在此回味家乡的味道。每天我仍到公园散步，和朋友聊天，晒太阳，散步。时常回忆浸泡华人前辈的气息和勇气，建设了如此美丽，没'施'齐全之唐人街。我非常享受这里的幸福，也希望唐人街发展壮大。

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很多人都知道，唐人街内东南第三大道路段是行人高危路段，因为路边经常停有车，阻挡了司机与行人视线；路面又狭窄；零一  
行人有时会冒险穿越马路在街两边觅食。我认识一名老人，她  
就是在该路段因交通意外而受伤骨折的。这完全改变了她的生活，  
她不再工作了，也很少到唐人街参加以往的社会生活，行动不便，  
体质变差，脸上很少有笑容了。政府已经采取了措施改善，但人  
们仍然担心。我只能提醒认识的人在该路段要特别小心留意  
两边车辆状况，不要违规横穿马路。这个路段有些类似商业步  
行街区或停车场内部路段，政府是否可以在该路段设  
置限速？由于该路段很短，设置限速如3公里/小时或10公里/小时  
不会花费司机很多时间。该路段也有不少老年华人居住，现在  
住宅区都限速40公里/小时了。或许我的想法并不周到，但希望  
该路段交通状况能让人更加放心，不断进步。

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Title: Double Greeting Snack House

Many Saturday mornings in the 1980s, my family would drive down to Chinatown and line up for dim sum at the Double Greeting Snack House. We would wait for what seemed, to a little kid, like hours, and then squeeze into the tiny restaurant, sharing a table with another unknown family because it was the only way to get so many people in at one time. It gave me such a strong sense of community, to gather with strangers over delicious food.

Comment on original post:

- ➔ I was infinitely impressed by the multilingual host who took everyone's order while they waited in line. It wasn't just that he spoke so many languages but more importantly, he could figure out which language to use as he approached the various diners in the queue. He always had a tough time when he reached me, couldn't guess which 😊.



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Title: My weekly dose of Chinese culture

I was enrolled in the Calgary Chinese Public School as a child, learning Chinese on Saturdays in the building where Peerless Bubble Tea currently is, and then moving to the Cultural Center shortly after it was built. Each week, I was immersed in Canadian English school and culture from Monday to Friday, but I grew to look forward to Saturdays. Well, maybe I didn't always look forward to Chinese school on Saturday mornings, but I knew I could look forward to having lunch in Chinatown after school. In those days I recall line-ups at every single restaurant at lunchtime in Chinatown. When a new food court opened up where Gong Cha is now, or when Dragon City Mall opened, I would be so excited to try out the newest restaurants, or check out the shops selling Sanrio toys or Chinese sweets while my parents bought Chinese groceries. We couldn't pass by a bakery window without catching the smell of Chinese pastries, or a meat shop with bbq pork or duck hung up in the windows. Even seeing the live fish being butchered and cleaned on the spot was so different from everywhere else in Calgary, but it was like home for me. The sights and smells of Chinatown really are what I remember most.



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Title: 我識睇 Notes on the Fridge

In the age before mobile phones, Canadian families used to leave notes on the fridge for the kids. I was rather perplexed when a woman once told me that doesn't work for her and her kids. Between the three of them, they spoke English and Cantonese at varying levels though none could communicate in a language that met the cognitive level of everyone involved and it was even more difficult to find common ground with the written languages. The kids never learnt written Chinese (different from Cantonese, a spoken language) and the mother wasn't able to express herself writing in English. Hence no notes on the fridge.

In all the years of Chinese school supplemented with parental prodding, learning to read and write in Chinese was the be-all and end-all. No one really justified why I had to go to Chinese school on the weekends while I did English and French on weekdays, and had homework seven days a week.

To this day I am still the only one amongst the siblings who can read a menu in Chinese, which is often different from the translated content offered in English. I have yet to meet another person raised on this continent who can read Chinese, it is already rare to have even a spoken heritage language.

Someone once pointed out that the hardest thing to make out is dark or light soy sauce. Though the label is clear in Chinese, it is just soy sauce in English. They would have to hold the bottle up to the light and swish the liquid around to figure out which was which.



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Title: Time flies

I grew up on the streets in Chinatown. From learning Chinese traditions, Kung Fu, Lion Dance and eating dim sum and bbq pork buns. This Calgary Chinatown shaped who I have become.





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Title: 食包包食飽 Butter Roll 2

The writer, Butter Roll Girl, grew up denying herself the layers of identities that brought hurt and shame, evading her otherness, pretending to know only the official languages and even avoided using chopsticks. Never looked back until she had a family of her own and founded a Chinese language school.

Then many years lapsed before I became involved again. It all started with a utility box.

Around 2015, the utility box located at the northeast corner of the historic Canton Block was art-wrapped with photos. The selected photos were taken at the foot of the Lions Bridge when the bridge was completed in 1916, mere paces from the Canton Block, which has been thriving since 1910 as the heart of the Chinatown community. Nearby, on the bank of the Bow River, the area was used as a Blackfoot encampment from the late 1800s until the turn of the century and at one time included the Tsúùt'ínà.

The top of the utility box reads "Chinatown 華埠" yet show only dozens of white people in the photos.

Given the significance of the area for both the Blackfoot, the Tsúùt'ínà, and the Chinatown community, why do the images selected not reflect that? Vanished and displaced, from our community living room.

Gentrified and erased. In 1916 and in the 2020s.



**My perception of identity was provoked by a utility box.**

呢個唔淨止係一個訊號箱咁簡單 —— 我要為華人爭返啖氣，為華埠佔返塊地！

我為大家隆重介紹「訊號箱嘅故事」—— 散佈喺卡加利唐人街四個重點角落(總共五個箱)，係華埠最新嘅藝文景點。

YMCA 華人基督教青年會嘅歷史圖片 (其中兩面)

以及 seth cardinal dodginghorse 嘅作品：「和解前的真相 *truth before reconciliation*」(另外兩面)

廣東樓區，獅子橋橋尾

I am reclaiming the corner at Canton Block for the community. **Erasure addressed, one footprint at a time.**

胡樂怡 Janice Wu 嘅作品：「係時候療傷、和解 *Time to Heal*」

東方廣場對面

Lo S.T. [read LOST] 嘅作品：「得閒飲茶 Duck, Hen, Yam, Cha」

呢件藝術品嘅主題係向各地唐人街嘅原始定居者同遺產語言 —— 廣東話同台山話 —— 致敬。

聯邦大樓後面，近河邊

[evelyn244.wixsite.com/dhyc](http://evelyn244.wixsite.com/dhyc)

余 Wil Yee 嘅作品：「時光與老虎 *Time and Tigers*」

銀龍酒家對面

請大家欣賞公共空間嘅藝術創作。一齊去吸收，去感受！

Comments on original post:

➔ It is no surprise there are few archival photos of Chinese people during the completion of the bridge from this period since Chinese immigrants were not seen as legitimate citizens; nor even real "people." We often forget that this is during a period of "white" Canada where municipal, provincial, and national leaders were openly hostile to Asian immigrants.

➔ What a lovely, creative way to display history! Well done!



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Title: Connecting to my heritage through good food, celebrations

As a 2nd generation Chinese Canadian, I grew up struggling between taking pride in my Chinese heritage and understanding the Western culture. Chinatown was a place where I could connect with loved ones over food. My family, cousins and grandparents would frequently meet for dim sum and Peking duck to celebrate birthdays or get together. I would also enjoy the bubble tea cafes and bakeries with my friends or visit Dragon City to check out specialty goodies, cute stationary and toys.

I've always admired how Calgary's Chinatown celebrates traditions and culture - from the lion dances to the street festivals and volunteer-driven community that organizes these events in Chinatown.

In recent times, I've noticed a lack of a cohesion in Chinatown. Many restaurants I enjoyed in the past are no longer in operation and visiting the malls often becomes a quiet time. As Calgary reopens and the community continues to support Chinatown, I hope to see the same vibrant culture I remembered growing up.

Thank you for keeping the traditions alive and helping this Chinese Canadian embrace her heritage!





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日常生活是什么样的？何事让您感到开心？何事让您感到被排挤或被歧视？

## 您對在唐人街的生活有何回憶？

日常生活是甚麼樣的？何事讓您感到開心？何事讓您感到被排擠或被歧視？

## What is your memory of life in Chinatown?

What was daily life like? What brought you joy? What made you feel excluded or discriminated against?

Title: First home away from home

As a 1.5 generation Canadian, Chinatown was my family and I's first home away from home. In a country that was full of foreignness, having familiarity (in the food, faces that we saw, and the language that we could hear) that reminded us of the country we left behind brought a little bit of comfort. My fondest memories were of living in the same apartment building as some of my childhood friends that had immigrated around the same time as us (or they would live in a build 2 min from us). We would meet to play, figure out how to best prank our poor neighbours downstairs, and our parents would get together to discuss whatever adult stuff we didn't care about at the time. Chinatown marked the beginning of a lot of Chinese immigrants' journeys trying to make it work in a new country.



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Title: Delicious baked goods

We should call the James Short parking lot the Chinatown parking lot. Would provide a good boundary for the community

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Title: Butter Roll

My Chinese school teacher was of Toisan heritage, as of almost everyone else in Chinatown. As Canto speakers who lived in the suburbs, we were the exception, from the second wave of immigration. The Toisan matriarch who taught our tiny weekend class would always ask Peter, a big hockey-playing lad, to go buy her a butter roll at the beginning of each class. He was bigger than most adults and certainly the biggest kid in any class. She would hand him some coins and place the order for a butter roll, saying the words 'butter roll' with a Toisan accent. It was the same butter roll ask, every weekend. I remember how the flaky pastry would sit around her lips and the crumbs would quiver when 雷師奶 Mrs. Louie spoke during class.

Though I've never gotten one from a bakery and still don't know what it really is to this day, I imagine it was some old-timey homey American food perhaps once made by Chinese cooks and houseboys for their employers then later popularised in Chinatown bakeries.

For the Canto speakers who can read Chinese, 師奶 (si naai) is an honourific used in Toisan to convey respect to a female teacher; unlike Canto, where 師奶 means middle-aged housewife. All the teachers in the Chinese school were called 師奶, a form that is long lost with the spread of other spoken languages such as Cantonese and Mandarin.

雷師奶 Mrs. Alice Louie was a deaconess who founded the Montréal Chinese Presbyterian Church in the 1940s, during the time of the Chinese Exclusion Act. For much of the last century, Chinatown churches doubled as schools, the only place that offered Chinese language classes for the children. Regardless of one's religious background or lack of, parents sent their children there to learn the written Chinese language.



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Title: Reminds me of my childhood

My grandfather used to take us to China Town every week for groceries and snacks. My best memories are of us downtown, either in the mall or going through shops. Working downtown as an adult brought me much joy to the reminiscence of my youth while sitting in the park. Too much of it has changed and the city doesn't put the money into its upkeep like it does other places in our city.





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My papa and sister seeing them and my papa saved my life once.



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- Daily life is easy as everything is nearby
- My walks in the many parks and by the river is very enjoyable. It's a treat to be able to go out and breath in fresh air.
- I did not feel discriminated against at any time.



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Having live in this area twice since my first arriving in Calgary, in 2008 until 2010 and again from 2014 to current I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to be immersed in the culture of Chinese Canadians. From the benefits of food, traditional dress, daily life of the residents, vendors having a place to share their way of life within ours to the pride shown to all that we Canadians were interested in being a part of a small piece of a place so far away without having to travel across the world to enjoy.



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My grandma lived in Chinatown and we would walk and get Chinese pastries and buns every Sunday. We would go to the multicultural centre for dimsum after.





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As a person of color, I have never felt more warmth going through Chinatown, but “going through” is all I can do as being a wheelchair user not much is accessible.



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My favourite memory of Chinatown was going for dim sum with my family at Dragon City Mall every Sunday.

We would then go shopping at Silver Dragon Mall!

I am glad The City of Calgary has acknowledged the discrimination that Asians here face in this city.



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I remember coming to Chinatown every Saturday or Chinese school then going to dim sum with my family at U & Me after school I always looked forward to that. Diamond Bakery was always a treat, especially the owner giving me free red bean brown sugar bowl cakes when we went for buns. Chinatown was mostly positive memories and since I am Chinese Canadian, I felt very welcome and included.



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Being essentially brought up in Chinatown, I have many memories tied to the place. In my childhood, I would accompany my grandmother to Chinatown for a whole day of errands; grocery shopping, browsing cute stationary, jade & jewels, then stopping by the bakeries for some buns and egg tarts. Even as I grew, being Chinese Canadian, I felt drawn to Chinatown, often times hanging out with friends there trying new street foods and – of course – drinking bubble tea. Honestly, I felt very included within the Chinatown community and I have mostly positive memories about it growing up and even now.





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I have lived in Calgary for 20 years. Chinatown is the first stop when I arrived. I have a very old feeling as everything seemed to in 1950

Time flies and a lot of change in Chinatown, it is not old anymore. Calgary's Chinatown is also multicultural and welcome everyone.

Since a lot of development in the North, I don't go to Chinatown as often as before. I wish Chinatown can still develop and modernize as time goes.

Unfortunately discrimination is still around but it is not because I am Chinese, it is human nature. One bad apple will continue to raise problem



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When in the summer usually I will see some serious selling vegetables and plants on the street.

Grow up in Chinatown learning things from school.

Food is pretty good and cheap in here a lot different restaurants to try.



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We used to enjoy our life in Chinatown not only for its unique culture we also enjoyed the authentic Asian foods with the expansion of bicycle path zone we have less parking space and we can hardly find a parking spot. Visiting Chinatown now has become costly and inconvenient. We feel the city is discriminating the Chinese community and does not listen to different voices. We feel frustrated.



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Title: Teaching in Chinatown

I taught a UCalgary course called "Introduction to Calgary Chinese Community" out of the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre from 1997 to 2012. It was an intensive course over one week where the class would participate in lectures and tour cultural sites in the community. After the course finished, students could volunteer in the community to receive bonus marks for their final grade.

The community was very welcoming of our visits and ten students, one-third of the class, would usually volunteer. They volunteered in the seniors' residences and activity centres, the Cultural Centre, the Avatamsaka Temple, and with the Calgary Chinese Community Services Association. Generally, reports on the students' volunteer services were highly commendable; as well the volunteers described their experiences as highly rewarding.

Personally, I found teaching in and interacting with the community very enjoyable, so I have volunteered within it since then.