

Canadian Law, Intermarriage and Ethnic Relations for Chinese immigrants and Aboriginal Canadians

Presenters: Senator Vivienne Poy, Senator Lillian Dyck, Dr. Jack Leong

Our first paper focuses on the intermarriage among early Chinese immigrants and Aboriginal Canadians who both faced discriminatory laws. We argue that some of these laws may have facilitated intermarriage between the Chinese bachelors and First Nations women. We will illustrate this argument with two examples in Senator Dyck's family. The Chinese-First Nation intermarriages were similar to English-First Nation and Scottish-First Nation intermarriages in that they were second marriages with the first wife and family residing in the man's country of origin. Our research demonstrates that the history of the second families of Chinese-First Nations unions needs to be documented, so that Canadian history includes their stories and the contributions that they made to Canadian society.

The second paper discusses the life experiences of Chinese immigrant women who immigrated to Canada between the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act to 1990. We will examine the history of Canadian immigration law and regulations from these women's perspectives. The paper presents the oral histories of a number of immigrant women, whose experiences have never been recorded in historical texts before. The study shows the significant changes inherent in the points system in 1967, which enabled women to enter Canada based on their professional qualifications, skills and education, rather than as dependents of men. This paper concludes that Chinese immigrant women with education and skills have greatly contributed to Canadian society, and brought about a rise in the status of the Chinese community in Canada.

The third paper in this panel illustrates the cultural dynamics and integration of Chinese immigrations in Toronto after Canada adopted the policy of "Multiculturalism" to address issues of ethnic and cultural diversity in 1971. After almost 40 years of implementing this policy, what social effect does it have Chinese immigrants and their younger generation? We mainly draw on the data from the Ethnic Diversity Survey of Canada (2002) and the 2011 Census to investigate whether Multiculturalism enables Chinese-Canadians to embrace the identity of Chinese and Canadian at the same time? Using results of a series of individual and surveys on integration and cultural identities that my research team conducted from 2010 to 2011, we will explore the validity of the general findings and further analyze the cultural dynamic of East-Meets-West among first and second generations of Chinese in Toronto.

Individual Topics:

1. Intermarriage between the early Chinese immigrants and First Nations women

Senator Lillian Eva (Quan) Dyck, PhD, D Lit

2. Experiences of immigrant Chinese Women with Canadian Immigration and Settlement (1950-1990)

Senator Vivienne Poy, PhD, Chancellor Emerita of the University of Toronto

3. Chinese or Canadian: the Cultural Dynamic of Chinese-Canadians in Toronto

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