



THE PAPERS OF
JOSÉ BUN KEE KHU (邱文祜)
*A PROMINENT LEADER OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN
CALGARY, LATE 1970s to MID-TO-LATE 1990s*

SIGNIFICANCE OF JOSÉ KHU'S PAPERS:

- 1. They document the Chinese community in Calgary during a period when this community was beginning to emerge from its long-standing reluctance to make waves, and was starting make active efforts to make its concerns and interests known to the larger community.**
- 2. They document in detail the grassroots formation of an influential national organization for Chinese Canadians (the Chinese Canadian National Council).**
- 3. They document the changes in Calgary's Chinatown, including an extensive archive of papers documenting the efforts and plans to build the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre, the largest Chinese cultural centre in North America and a major tourist attraction in Calgary.**

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BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOSÉ KHU

José (Joe) Khu (邱文祚) was a leader in the Chinese community in Calgary from the late 1970s until the mid-to-late 1990s. Joe was born on July 10, 1920 in Manila, Philippines. He was educated at De La Salle College in Manila, a school established by the Christian Brothers. From 1940 to 1946 he studied Chinese and Western philosophies at the University of Nanking, which had temporarily relocated to Chengdu during the last Sino-Japanese War.

He returned to Manila and engaged in business there until 1972. Joe has lived in Calgary since September 1973. He is married and has seven children. He has used his native-level skills in speaking, reading, and writing both English and Chinese (Mandarin and Fukienese) to serve the Chinese community in Calgary and Canada.

RECORD OF SERVICE TO THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN CALGARY, IN ALBERTA, AND IN CANADA

SINO-CANADA CULTURE ASSOCIATION (中加文教協會)

In 1975, the Sino-Canada Culture Association and affiliated Calgary Chinese School were formed—to establish and operate a Chinese school in Calgary for the teaching of Mandarin; and to promote cultural exchanges between the Chinese and Canadian societies.

Joe acted as the Vice President of the Sino-Canada Culture Association from 1978-79 and was its President from 1979 to 1980.

CALGARY CHINESE SCHOOL (MANDARIN)

Joe served as principal of the Calgary Chinese School (Mandarin) for the 1977-78 and 1978-79 school years. He also taught a class at the school.

CALGARY CHINESE COMMITTEE FOR ALBERTA'S 75TH CELEBRATION IN 1980

Joe was the Chairman of the Calgary Chinese Committee for Alberta's 75th Celebration.

ALBERTA CULTURAL HERITAGE COUNCIL

The Alberta Cultural Heritage Council was formed in 1972 to make recommendations and provide information and advice to the Minister of Culture regarding ethno-cultural development in Alberta. All of the members of the Council are volunteers. For some years the Chinese community had no representative on the Council.

Joe was selected to serve for two years as the sole Chinese representative on the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council for 1981-1983, and again in 1987.

This post was a channel through which serious concerns of the Chinese community could be brought to the attention of the Alberta Government.

CHINESE CANADIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL (全加華人協進會), CALGARY CHAPTER

The Chinese Canadian National Council is a nation-wide association of Chinese-Canadians. The CCNC was formed in response to the popular indignation among ethnic Chinese in Canada to a program broadcast on C.T.V. in September 1979 and produced by W5 entitled "Campus Giveaway." In the program, it was implied that all students of Chinese origin are foreigners and that Chinese students are taking over Canada's universities. In reality, many of the students they showed were Canadian citizens, including Canadian-born citizens.

A group called the "Ad-hoc Committee Against W5" was formed. The participants against W5 from across Canada assembled for a conference in Toronto in 1980. At the conference, the need for a strong, national organization of Chinese Canadians was felt. "The Chinese Canadian National Council for Equality (C.C.N.C.E.) 全加華人平權協進會" was formed. The name of the organization was soon afterwards shortened to "The Chinese Canadian National Council."

Joe served as the president of the Calgary Chapter of the CCNC in 1982-83, 1986, and 1989-90.

SIGNIFICANCE OF JOE KHU'S CCNC PAPERS: Documents the grassroots formation of one of the most prominent national organizations for Chinese Canadians. The details of the formation of the Calgary chapter are particularly well documented.

UNITED CALGARY CHINESE ASSOCIATION (加拿大亞省卡城中華協會)

Founded in 1969, the UCCA is arguably the leading organization representing the Chinese community in Calgary.

In the 1984-85 term, Joe was the first vice-president of UCCA. He served as the president of the organization in 1985-86, 1986-87, and 1987-88, and as the first vice-president in 1988-89, 1989-90, and 1990-91. He remained on the Board of Directors of the UCCA in 1991-1992, and later became an advisor to the UCCA.

During his time with the UCCA, Joe was actively involved in several activities with tremendous implications for Chinatown and the ethnic Chinese residents of Calgary.

1) Chinatown Revitalization Plan

In the autumn of 1982 the city authorities began talking about a plan to redevelop Chinatown (the Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan), which would permit skyscrapers to be built in Chinatown as in other parts of the downtown core. Joe and other UCCA leaders opposed the plan. Joe gave a speech at City Council, stating that by treating Chinatown as part of the rest of the downtown area without regard to its special characteristics, the proposal would lead to the destruction of Chinatown. He argued that the attachment of the Chinese to a special area of a city in Canada where they have settled is a part of the culture of the Chinese in Canada. When that special attachment is taken away, that culture is at risk of being lost. Under Canada's policy of multiculturalism, the Chinese community in Calgary has a right to maintain its cultural identity. He emphasized that Calgary's Chinatown should remain a residential and commercial area, and that developments there should be limited to a certain height.

Joe and other UCCA leaders got together with officials of the city's planning department. Together, they came up with a plan to revitalize Chinatown, keeping it a distinct area of the city. At the time, some property owners in Chinatown, including Chinese owners, were opposed to the plan. But, in the end, the proposal to keep Chinatown a distinct part of the city was passed by City Council.

Joe also helped to tidy up the existing physical appearance of Chinatown. He suggested that the city authorities put up mudguards along the main street running through Chinatown, to keep the slush and mud from passing cars from splattering on sidewalks and storefronts. The mudguards were duly erected.

Also, in the mid-1980s, Joe played an integral role in the construction of two structures that are landmarks in Calgary's Chinatown: the Wah Ying Mansion and the Calgary Chinese Cultural Center.

2) WAH YING MANSION (華英大廈) (Seniors' Building), 122 3rd Avenue S.E.

Joe helped to obtain the funding for the sixteen-story Wah Ying Mansion, a senior's residence in Chinatown. This came about in the following way: In 1985, Peter Lougheed, the long-time premier of Alberta, retired from politics. Don Getty replaced him as head of the province's Conservative Party. In the run-up to the 1986 provincial elections, Getty attended a seniors' party held by the Chinese community. During that party, Joe sat beside him and told him that the seniors in Chinatown would like to

have a building to house them. At the time, there was a government department that helped organizations to build housing for seniors. Getty promised to help. And, indeed, when Getty was elected as the premier of Alberta, he came up with the land for the seniors' building. He also managed to get matching funds from the federal government. In the end, half of the funding for the building came from the provincial government (under the Alberta Heritage Fund) and half from the federal government (under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation).

The UCCA set up an organization to run the Wah Ying Mansion. Joe was a director of the organization from its inception until the late 1990s.

3) THE CALGARY CHINESE CULTURAL CENTRE (卡城中華文化中心)

Joe was actively involved in the negotiations to obtain the donations of land on which the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre is located, as well as in the efforts to raise funds for the building of the Cultural Centre.

The Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre had its beginnings during the talks over the land redesignation plan for Chinatown in the early 1980s. There were two blocks of land in the downtown area between 3rd and 4th Avenue, and 1st and 2nd Street West: one owned by the company Mobil Oil, and the other by the developer Eau Claire. Mobil owned the block between 1st and 2nd Street West and 2nd and 3rd Avenue. Mobil and Eau Claire did not want these plots to be designated part of Chinatown, within which they actually lay. Joe and other UCCA leaders, representatives from Eau Claire, and the director of the city planning department and his assistant, all sat down together and engaged in discussions. Joe said that the Chinese community were hoping to build a cultural centre and would appreciate getting the help of Mobil and Eau Claire in building it. The director of the planning department immediately came up with the idea of asking the two parties to each donate a piece of land for a Chinese cultural center. The two pieces of land would then be joined, and Joe suggested that the city close off the street at that point. One half of Mobil's block of land would not be subject to the new guidelines applying to Chinatown, while the other half would; and the same would apply with Eau Claire's block of land. With this free land as a donation, Joe and other leaders of the Chinese community who were on the organizing committee for the construction of the Chinese Cultural Centre (the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre Association 卡城中華文化中心協會) could begin approaching people for contributions to build this centre. The building of the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre was completed in 1992. It is the largest Chinese cultural centre in North America and one of the most distinctive buildings in Calgary.

SIGNIFICANCE OF JOE KHU'S UCCA PAPERS: They document Calgary's Chinatown during a particularly crucial stage of its evolution. The 1980s was a time when Chinatown as a distinct area of the city was in danger of disappearing. Instead, it was revitalized into one of the cleanest and (with the building of the Calgary

Chinese Cultural Centre) most architecturally distinctive Chinatowns in North America.

ALBERTA-CHINA LIAISON COMMITTEE

In 1986-87, Joe was a member of the Alberta-China Liaison Committee. This was a time when China was in the relatively early period of reaching out to the outside world.

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF CHINESE CANADIANS (全加華人聯會)

The National Congress of Chinese Canadians was founded in 1991. It is a national organization representing more than 280 Chinese Canadian organizations across the country.

Joe was the vice chairman of the Calgary Head Tax Committee of the 1991 National Congress of Chinese Canadians.

It would not be until 2006, however, that the prime minister of Canada would offer a full apology to Chinese Canadians for the imposition of a head tax on Chinese immigrants in 1885-1923, and some form of redress to survivors and their family members.

RETIREMENT FROM SERVICE

In the late 1990s, Joe's increasing deafness forced him to retire from his activities in service of the Chinese community in Calgary.