

# NAVIGATING IDENTITY

## FROM HONG KONG TO CANADA



EDITED BY: MITCHELL MA



Richard Charles Lee  
Canada-Hong Kong Library  
利銘澤典成

With support from:



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# NAVIGATING IDENTITY

FROM HONG KONG TO CANADA

Edited by: Mitchell Ma

University of Toronto

School of Cities

Graduate Fellows Knowledge Mobilization Project

2023-24

Navigating Identity: From Hong Kong to Canada

Mitchell Ma

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# The Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library



The *Navigating Identity Project: From Hong Kong to Canada* features a short anthology by immigrants from Hong Kong and their descendants in Canada. It is a collaborative effort between the editor and the Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library.

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# PREFACE

It is with pride and pleasure that I introduce "Navigating Identity: From Hong Kong to Canada," a collection of stories that intricately weave together the diverse experiences of Chinese Canadians. This anthology, born out of a public call for submissions in Fall 2023, delves into the multifaceted journey of the diasporic experience in Canada, with a specific focus on Hong Kong Canadian Identity.

Toronto, with its significant Hong Kong diaspora, provides an ideal setting for this exploration. The Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library at the University of Toronto, which currently houses the largest research collection dedicated to Hong Kong and Canada-Hong Kong studies outside of Hong Kong itself, plays an important role in enriching knowledge and understanding about Hong Kong and its connections with Canada.

In recent years, research on Hong Kong diaspora identity has garnered increasing attention, reflecting its growing importance within academic discourse. The Canada-Hong Kong Library is dedicated to supporting and nurturing such research endeavors, recognizing



their profound impact on our understanding of cultural identity, and belonging.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mitchell Ma, whose dedication has brought this project to fruition. It has been a privilege to witness the evolution of his endeavor, from its inception to its realization as a remarkable achievement.

To all who have contributed to this anthology, I offer my sincere gratitude. Your stories not only enrich our understanding of the Chinese Canadian experience but also serve as a testament to the resilience and diversity of our community.

As we embark on this journey together, may "Navigating Identity: From Hong Kong to Canada" inspire dialogue, foster understanding, and celebrate the richness of our shared heritage.

Warm regards,

Maria Lai Che LAU 劉麗芝

Director, Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library

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# INTRODUCTION

MITCHELL MA



Hong Kong Canadians as a cultural identity is arguably a recent invention. Canadian census only recognized and included “Hongkongers” as a distinct identity for the first time in 2021 (Lee 2021). Prior to this recognition, “Hongkongers” was categorized under the Chinese umbrella (Xu 2021). Despite the appearance of the “Hongkongers” identity in the Canadian census, some Canadian immigrants from Hong Kong continue to identify themselves as Chinese Canadians (Yan *et al.* 2023).

The process of identifying oneself as Hongkongers, Chinese Canadians, or Hong Kong Canadians is convoluted and hybrid. Cultural identity refers to the shared customs, beliefs, and practices that shape a group. From an anthropological standpoint, cultural identities are socially constructed and mediated. Scholars from social sciences argue that cultural identity is not static; but rather, an ongoing process shaped by individual and collective memories and choices (Bhabha 1994; Clifford 1994; Weinrich 2009). Cultural identities not only impact how individuals position themselves but also influence how others react to them, and these responses can vary depending on the specific contexts in which individuals find themselves.

My colleague and I conducted a pilot research study on social identity among a small group of Hong Kong international students at a Canadian university (Cheung and Ma 2022). What we found was that students remained hesitant in identifying as Hong Kong Canadians, despite residence in Canada and a lack of intention on returning to Hong Kong. One recurring reason cited by interviewed students was that they had not lived in Canada long enough to consider themselves Canadians.

They also disapproved of terms such as "Chinese", "Chinese Canadian", and "Hong Kong Chinese", as they associated "Chinese" as residents of mainland China. As former residents of Hong Kong, they considered the city as culturally and historically distinctive Mainland China, thus the identities of "Hongkonger" and "Chinese" should be separately evaluated.

The identity of a Hong Kong Canadian is highly diverse and varied. Being born to Hong Kong immigrants and raised in Toronto, my interactions with interviewees led me to reflect on questions about Canadian identity and the integration of Hong Kong immigrants into Canada. It became essential to inquire how long it takes for someone who immigrated from Hong Kong to perceive themselves as Canadian. Is there a time frame? What do the terms "Hongkonger" and "Hong Kong Canadian" mean, and are there any differences between them?

## **The Making of Cultural Identities**

The purpose of this booklet is not to provide any definitive statement on what constitutes a Hong Kong Canadian. Many

individuals identified as Hong Kong Canadians long before any legal association of this identity was established. To understand this phenomenon, we must deconstruct what cultural identity is.

Cultural (or social) identity is a collective representation of many personal identities. According to social theorist Stuart Hall (1990), personal identity is entirely self-constructed. It is based on how one perceives oneself in the present, based on one's recollection of the past and how this information is utilized to shape one's future. Cultural identity expands upon this by emphasizing a "collective" of personal identities. Hall (1990) set two criteria on his definition for cultural identity: (1) shared culture, where people with shared history and ancestry reflect upon common experiences and cultural codes; and (2) distinctiveness or crucial historical moments that set a group apart from others. He underscores what cultural groups share is precisely the experience of discontinuity with an outgroup. His definition also highlights that identities originate from historical contexts but undergo constant transformation.

In accordance with the previous definition by Hall (1990), our recollection of the past — what we remember, forget, and recall — plays a fundamental role in shaping our understanding of cultural identity. There is a social aspect to memory acquisition; individuals acquire memories within society, which means it is impossible to recall, recognize, or localize memories outside the group context (Halbwachs 1992[1952]). The social shaping of memory also involves a performance aspect, where normalizing the significance of a shared past becomes pivotal in defining membership to a particular cultural identity (Connerton 1989).

When delving into the forces that shape cultural identity, it becomes crucial to differentiate between memory and history. Unlike memories, which are personal experiences, history often surpasses an individual's lifespan and may not be experienced by those who are aware of it. History possesses a political dimension: individuals or groups select the events they consider to be important to be remembered. These selected events are subsequently reconstructed to be conveyed through a medium, such as language or pictures,



facilitating communication among individuals within a society. Crafting history is intentional, as it aims to shape certain behavior by controlling the narrative and ultimately influencing perception around historical events. For example, advocacy groups might highlight the actions of one group while overlooking those of another to justify their cause. Authorities could also use specific terms to influence perception, such as employing the term "incident" rather than "massacre" (Ko 2022).

The phenomenon poses an intriguing situation for identity formation in the diaspora. Homi Bhabha (1994) defines the diaspora as a 'third space,' an in-between realm where cultural identities are formed and negotiated. Bhabha (1994) emphasizes the hybridity of diasporic identity as a product through interactions and negotiations between the home country and the host country. Migrants and their offspring frequently assimilate elements of various available cultural manifestations. Power dynamics come into play in influencing what is remembered among diasporic communities. This influence may stem from authorities, academics, or other community leaders, whether originating from

their home country or host country. Considering that diaspora often arrive in different time periods, the source of influence in memory formation could vary across generations. The process of identity and maintenance and loss is also a crucial aspect to consider in these contexts.



What does it mean to be Hong Kong Canadian? Obviously, it varies based on individual experiences. Using Hong Kong migrant communities in Canada as an example, this booklet presents diverse experiences of how individuals navigate their sense of self within Canada's multicultural society through personal storytelling. I want to thank all contributors for making this project possible.

We hope this booklet will encourage a more nuanced understandings of diasporic experiences, prompting readers to engage in open discussions about the complexity of diasporic identities and to recognize their fluid nature.

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# WINTER SOLSTICE

JESSICA CHENG

Before leaving Hong Kong, my family presented me with a watch. It had a brown-colored strap paired with a light gold watch frame, showcasing a narrow and elegant face with two clocks. This dual functionality was particularly convenient for frequent travelers, allowing them to easily track time in two distinct locations. When my younger brother handed me the watch, somewhat sheepishly, he admitted he didn't realize Hong Kong and Toronto had a twelve-hour time difference, perfectly opposite each other. It was only when the watch store staff adjusted the time that he realized the two places were exactly twelve hours apart. I reassured him, saying when daylight saving set in during winter, the two locations would be thirteen hours apart. I put on the watch with a smile tinged with tears, looked around, and saw my mother still busy shuttling between the kitchen and the dining table, creating a sumptuous feast. My usually silent father repeatedly inquired about the details of my luggage and tickets, fearing any mishaps in my

travel. My brother animatedly shared the story of how they found this vintage watch at the store, bringing laughter to the atmosphere. I buried my face in the bowl and tried to savor the familiar flavors.

It was my last night in Hong Kong, and the two clocks on the watch synchronized.

Upon arriving in Toronto, I was greeted by the warmth of summer – bright sunshine, lush green grass, and bustling parks filled with people savoring the fleeting season. Occasionally, I would prepare dinner, bring a picnic blanket, and head to the nearby park. There, I would enjoy my meal while observing children chasing dogs, people playing frisbee, and leaves slowly transitioning into their autumn colors. As September arrived, the cooling temperatures signaled the gradual shift into winter. Daylight hours shortened, and the once lively streets gradually quieted down. I vividly recall the day we transitioned into wintertime. Upon waking up, I noticed my phone displaying a time different from the large clock in the living room. It felt as if time had momentarily frozen, granting me an extra hour. However, borrowed time always has its limits, and when summer returned, it needed to be

repaid. With a yawn, I adjusted the top clock on my watch backward by an hour, and just like that, the synchronization of the two locations was lost.

My workplace was on the other side of the city, and I had to leave my house at the break of dawn. In the midst of winter, I bundled myself in thick down, shielding against the biting cold wind that seeped through the gaps in my hat, causing my exposed skin to tingle. While standing at the bus stop, my breath transformed into vapor, and it was then that I noticed certain stops were adorned with warm lights. Upon pressing the button, a comforting glow, tinged with red and a touch of yellow, would radiate in a circular pattern above the bus stop, resembling a small sun. However, this warmth occasionally waned, and after





approximately ten minutes, it would extinguish. Pressing the button again was necessary to make the warm light operate once more. I looked down at my watch, capturing the sunset in Hong Kong and the sunrise here. I adjusted the top clock to Toronto time and the bottom to Hong Kong time, reminiscent of when I peered down from an airplane above the clouds, seeking the familiar contours of Hong Kong below.

My father was also an immigrant. In his youth, he embarked on a journey across the ocean and arrived in a city that had evolved from a humble fishing village. During those early days, youths lacking special skills often found themselves immersed in physical labor, and my father was no exception. For numerous years, he toiled as a chef, his days marked by the rhythmic sweat at the stove – a tiring but stable existence. My father was reserved; at home, he wore a serious expression, rarely smiling. In a corner of the sofa, he would don gold-rimmed glasses, carefully reading the newspaper or watching old TV series. His favorite genre was martial arts dramas, particularly those adapted from Jin Yong's novels. He would frequently revisit the same series, leading me to speculate that his interest went beyond mere

entertainment; rather, he seemed to be reliving a tapestry of memories, finding solace in the familiar and comforting narratives.

As a child, flipping through photo albums and seeing my father's young self-startled me. In the pictures, he was in his early twenties, wearing a shirt, riding a bicycle with a radiant smile that exuded lightness and optimism for the future. In my naive youth, it dawned on me that my parents weren't always the embodiment of "parents." This realization etched his youthful smile firmly into my memory. Sometimes, looking at the white hair beside his gold-rimmed glasses, I couldn't connect the lively him from the past with the stoic demeanor before me. I couldn't help but wonder what storms he had weathered to bring about the silent solitude between his brows.

Being the eldest daughter in my family, my mother always claimed that my father spoiled me. They were not well-off when I was born, yet my father spared no expense in providing for me when I was an infant. Each time she recounted this; a trace of bitterness lingered in her words. Perhaps their circumstances were challenging, and the journey of raising a child wasn't always

illuminated by the brighter aspects of life. Unfortunately, I have no memories of the laughter from my infancy. As far as I can remember, my father was a quiet and reserved presence. In recent years, the only time I glimpsed my father's quick and uninhibited smile was when we took a family trip to Kyoto, where, freed from the mundane and ordinary, indulging in delightful cuisines, he erupted into hearty laughter, his eyes shining a blend of satisfaction and curiosity, akin to a child in joy at an amusement park.



Residing in a foreign land introduces its share of highs and lows. At the end of a tiring day, I found myself on the subway, gazing numbly out the window. The sun was setting. Its rays flashed between the spaces in the tunnels,

casting a twilight glow, and in the reflection of the train window I sensed a presence, a loneliness in the periphery of my eye, one that felt familiar. When everything was stripped away, I arrived at a profound realization: the comfort I once took for granted was the result of my parents quietly sweeping away the debris of life, eroding their own unique edges in the process. In assuming I had outgrown the need for protection, naively thinking that having weathered a storm or two I could take a few hits, I failed to recognize that they were storm shelters, silent and steadfast support, shielding me from the tempests so I would not stumble and drown. Only when I moved away did I see how my life ran parallel to my father's at the same age – both young and alone, away from home – and it dawned on me how challenging it must have been for them to nurture three young children in a foreign land.

Sometimes, I want to ask my father, if given the choice again, would he embark on the same journey.

I started to cook, attempting to recreate the flavors of my childhood. Although my father toiled as a chef for many years, he rarely stepped into the kitchen at home. Perhaps

rarity adds value. I vividly recall the dishes he prepared, and they always had a distinct flavour. What stands out the most is Sunday mornings; while everyone still lingered in the realm of dreams, he would prepare plain congee with side dishes. Starting by thoroughly washing the rice, he'd add coarse salt and oil, knead it, and let it sit for thirty minutes. Boiling water would then be poured over the rice, with two slices of ginger added. Occasionally, he'd stir the bottom of the pot in circles to prevent sticking, allowing the rice to dance with the water and blossom into rice flowers. Simmering on low heat, it transformed into plain congee, ready for the accompanying side dishes. Without fail, these three dishes were always on the table: garlic-stir-fried string beans, fermented black bean mackerel, and shredded cabbage stir-fried with eggs. All indispensable. Sometimes, the aroma of garlic and eggs would drift into my dreams, letting me know it was congee morning.

In this foreign land, mackerel with fermented black beans may be easily accessible, but string beans and shredded cabbage are hard to come by. Even so, when winter arrives, I follow in my father's footsteps, simmering a pot of plain congee. As a light mist envelope the room, I am instantly transported

back to a small, distant island, and it feels as if I never left.

*This submission was translated into English from Chinese. The following is the original script.*

## 冬令時間

### 鄭華珠

離開香港之前，家人送了一隻手錶給我，啡色皮帶配上淡金色錶框，錶面窄長，款色典雅，錶上有兩個時鐘，方便經常旅行的人士可隨時查看兩地時間。弟弟把手錶拿給我的時候，帶點不好意思地說，他不知道香港跟多倫多相差十二小時，剛好一個對倒，當錶行職員幫他調教時間時，他才赫然發現兩地剛好差了一個白晝。我說不用擔心，等到冬天，過了冬令時間後，兩地相差十三小時，這手錶來得剛好。我笑中帶淚地把手錶戴上，環看四周，媽媽依舊忙碌的來回廚房與飯桌，變出一桌豐盛；平日沉默的父親，來來回回詢問行李與機票的細節，就怕我們有何閃失；弟弟生動地說他們在錶行找到這舊式手錶的故事，

讓這驪歌帶笑；我把臉埋在碗筷之中，拼命把熟悉的味道擠進身體。

那是我在香港的最後一夜，錶上的兩個時鐘同步。

剛來到多倫多的時候，正值夏天，陽光燦爛，草地畝畝，大家也珍惜轉眼即逝的夏季，公園草地滿是人潮。有時我會準備好晚飯，帶一張野餐墊，到附近的公園，邊吃邊看，看小孩追逐小狗，看人們玩飛碟，看樹葉漸漸泛黃。九月開始轉涼，緩緩步入冬季，日照時間趨短，街上慢慢變得肅條。我還記得踏入冬令時間的那天，一覺醒來，發現手機顯示的時間跟客廳的大鐘不符，就似時間凝結了，感覺便似賺多了一小時。但借來的總有限時，待夏令時間，便作歸還。我打著呵欠，把手錶的上方的時候調慢一小時，兩地不再同步。

工作的地方在城市的另一端，天剛破曉，便要出門。正值隆冬，我把自己埋藏在厚厚的羽絨之中，風從冷帽的縫隙中襲來，頭顱一陣寒顫，露出的皮膚冷得刺痛。等待巴士的時候，呵氣成煙，然後才發現某些巴士站裝有暖燈，按下暖燈的按鈕，巴士站上方便散發一圈暖光，紅中帶黃，仿如一顆小太陽，但暖光有時盡，十來分鐘後便會熄滅，要再次按下按鈕，才能讓暖燈再次運作。低頭看着手錶，是香港的日落，又是這

兒的日出。我把手錶上方的時鐘調教成多倫多的時間；下方則是香港的時間，就像我在乘搭飛機時，在雲層之上凝看下方，尋找香港的形狀。

我的父親也是移民，他年輕的時候橫越大海，來到曾是漁村的城市。那時候沒有一技之長的年輕人，大多從事體力勞動的工作，他亦不例外，當了多年廚師，每日在火爐旁揮灑汗水，是勞累卻踏實的生活。父親寡言，平常在家，一臉嚴肅，鮮有談笑，在沙發一角架上金絲眼鏡，細細看報，或是在看老舊的電視劇集，他最常看武俠世界的電視劇，特別是把金庸的小說改編而成的，總是把同一套劇一看再看，我猜他看的不只是恩怨情仇，而是看一串回憶，熟悉而心安。

小時候翻閱相簿，看見父親年輕的樣子，我內心嚇了一跳，照片中的他只有廿來歲，穿著恤衫，騎著單車，燦笑而來，笑得一臉輕快，眼中有著對未來的期盼。那時無知的我，才赫然發現，原來父母也曾年輕過，並非生下來便是「父母」的模樣。自此，我在腦中便刻上他年輕時的笑容，有時看著他金絲眼鏡旁的白髮，不能把當年朝氣勃勃的他，跟眼前的他連繫上，忍不住猜想他經歷了什麼風雨，才換來他眉眼間的木然死寂。

我是家中長女，母親總嚷著父親溺愛著我，當年他們並不餘裕，父親卻為嬰孩的我，添



置種種，毫不手軟。她每次說起，也帶一絲苦澀，也許當時他們的日子太難過，養育小孩不只是有光鮮的一面。可惜的是我對嬰孩時期的歡笑沒有回憶，記憶所及，父親便是寡言沉默的存在。近年唯一一次我窺見父親的輕快笑容，是我們一家在京都旅行，人在遠遊，脫離了日常，嘗到美食，他笑得開懷，眼中帶著滿足與好奇，如同小孩到了遊樂場般雀躍。

人在異地，日子總有起有伏，勞累的一天過後，我乘地鐵回家，發呆看著窗外，日落時分，晚霞在地下隧道間穿插，在鏡面的反射中，看見自己眼角有似曾相識的死寂。當把一切抽走，才發現原來以往的舒適，是父母默默替我掃走生活碎石，磨走自身稜角所換來的。以為自身早已不是小孩，縱有風雨，也可抵擋一二；卻不知以往的一切挫折，也有他們相伴，潤物無聲，讓我不致失足遇溺。當我也離開了家鄉，跟年輕的父親身影重疊，才知道那時年輕的他們，在異地獨力照顧三個小孩，是多麼的磨人。

有時我想問他，假如你可以再選，你會否到他鄉闖蕩。

我開始下廚，嘗試復刻兒時味道。縱然父親當了多年廚師，卻不愛走進家中廚房，也許是物以罕為貴，我特別記得他煮過的菜式，嚐起來就是帶點不一樣。最記得的是週日早上，大家還

在睡夢之中，有時他便會準備白粥小菜。把米淘洗乾淨，添上粗鹽與油，揉搓後靜待三十分鐘，水滾下米，放兩片薑，偶爾拿湯勺往鍋底打圈以防沾黏，米隨水流翻滾，爆成米花，小火熬成白粥，便可準備小菜。每次必然是這三款：蒜蓉炒豆角、豆豉鯪魚及菜甫炒蛋，缺一不可。有時蒜蓉及蛋香在睡夢中襲來，便知是這是白粥小菜的清晨。

在他鄉，豆豉鯪魚易得，豆角菜甫難求。然而，在冬日，跟父親的步驟，熬一鍋小粥，看室內裹了一抹輕煙，瞬間把我拉回遠方小島，仿似未曾離開。

# SHARED LANGUAGES

VENUS CHEUNG



My immigration journey started on December 27, 2022, when I applied for an Open Work Permit (OWP). There were only 2 months left until the end of the Open Work Permit scheme, before Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced the extension of the policy on February 3, 2023. Many Hongkongers seized the “last chance” and applied for the OWP. The Visa Medical Examination was consistently fully booked. I sat in front of my computer and refreshed the online appointment system every midnight to secure a spot. With the completion of a body check,

biometrics, and background check, I finally received my OWP on March 2, 2023.

I spent weeks contemplating the optimal timing for my move to Canada. I was particularly concerned about the educational requirements for Hongkongers seeking permanent residency in Canada. Stream B applicants were initially required to have obtained their educational qualifications within five years to be eligible for permanent residency. Considering factors such as job search, settling time, and required work hours, I decided to leave in June 2023.

I was unsure about how to open up to my parents about my future lying in Canada. Fortunately, my mother was supportive and asked her friends in Toronto if they could lend their place for my settling. My mom's close friend confirmed to host me, so I became determined to book my flight on June 1, 2023—this would be the big day.

On March 20, 2023, I resigned my job as a Design Strategist, an ideal position I had nothing to complain about. I enjoyed my work co-creating spatial design with schools, community centres, NGOs and more, alongside a creative and compassionate team. From April to May, I tried to create the most family

memories: arranging family trips to Taiwan and Japan, having weekend brunch dates with my mom, and going on biking day trips with my dad. However, these joyful times were blanketed with anxiousness, sadness, and conflict about my departure. Though I had studied and worked abroad before, this time felt different. It seemed like I was preparing for a permanent goodbye to my family and friends, this land, and my identity as a Hongkonger.

My first home is a basement unit Airbnb located in Kensington Market. It appealed to me because of the cheaper rent and proximity to downtown Toronto. I wanted to be more exposed to Toronto's diverse culture, compared to living with my family friends in Markham, the new Chinatown in Toronto. My first impression of Toronto was shaped by the vibrant murals, floor graphics and hipster shops in the Kensington Market neighbourhood, along with "the downtown smell" - a mix of cannabis, urine, and trash. Observing the "Chinese bottle ladies" collecting recyclables from the house, nearby dessert shops 許留山 (Hui Lau Shan) and 香港滿記甜品 (Honeymoon Dessert), and hearing Cantonese in T&T Supermarket bought back memories of Hong Kong.

I accumulated my geographic knowledge about Toronto day by day. During my long-term accommodation search, I expanded my territory to Line 4. I heard that Hongkongers often give Toronto places nicknames based on Hong Kong locations: for example, Don Mills is referred to as Lohas Park. On July 1, 2023, I moved from the Kensington Market Airbnb to Don Mills. In Canada, July 1 is best known as Canada Day, and this particular July 1 also marks the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Immigration Act. For most of my life, July 1 has been Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day, and this year it carried multiple meanings.

Don Mills is popular among Hong Kong newcomers because most daily necessities and services, such as work, shopping, education, healthcare, and leisure, are accessible within a 15-minute walk or bike from their homes — ideal for newcomers without cars or driving licences.

My career in Canada began six weeks after my arrival. I secured a junior architectural assistant job in Markham. Monday to Friday, I encountered the same Chinese bus driver and passengers on the bus. While in Hong Kong, my focus in the architectural field and academia

centered around public spaces, institutional and commercial projects, in Canada, I designed single detached houses and converted a house into a Hindu temple. Designing floor plans allowed me to peek into the Canadian lifestyle, with features like mudrooms, family rooms, walk-in closets, and serving areas for kitchens—luxuries not commonly found in most Hong Kong homes...



During the weekends, I explored my neighbourhood for inspiration in facade designs of my projects. While I was excited about learning new aspects of residential designs and zoning laws, the company's hierarchical culture and unorganized working styles conflicted with my core principles. In September 2023, I

started my second job as a bilingual credit card advisor. Ready to explore a new industry, I aimed to learn about the Canadian bank system and polish my communication skills. By October 2023, I decided to apply to graduate school, seeing it as a better strategy to connect with the right jobs and continue my urban research profession.

In November, stress from my graduate school application and negative self-talk about my bumpy career path in Canada triggered a relapse of my eating disorder. I found myself in a vicious cycle of binge eating, fasting, overexercising, and purging. All I could do was tell myself to hold on, that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

My dad's voice sprang to my mind "Whenever there is a problem you cannot solve, remember to come home." So, I booked my flight to Hong Kong for a Christmas break. On my way to Toronto Pearson Airport, I listened to 當我迷失時聽著的歌 (When I'm Lost) by Panther Chan (陳蕾)— "如若迷失請謹記回家，迷路不要驚怕，前路難關都給你招架。如像孩子那樣靠著我不怕，好好的放一假，重整理內心積壓再出發。" (If you get lost, please remember to go home. Don't be afraid. I will help you to handle



the difficulties ahead. Just rely on me like a child. Take a good rest, decompress, and start again.) After a 3-week reunion with family and friends, I felt recharged and ready to have a fresh start for 2024.

I am currently working with the Health, Access + Planning (HAP) Lab in the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) for the Care and Dementia in the Suburbs Project, focusing on the study of immigrants living with dementia in Scarborough. Additionally, I serve as a local facilitator with Urban Minds for Chinatown Tomorrow, an initiative led by the City of Toronto, aimed at gathering the community's perspective to shape the future of Chinatown. Both projects have deepened my understanding of my role as an architectural designer and urban researcher from Hong Kong. I can leverage my bilingual ability and research skills to contribute to making inclusive cities.

While I previously worked on tactical urbanism in Hong Kong, I discovered that the climate there is not conducive to bottom-up research. By participating in conferences, such as the 11th International Public Markets

Conference hosted by Project for Public Spaces, St. Lawrence Market, and market city TO, and Placemaking Canada Toronto Gathering, I expanded my professional network and gained a deeper understanding about policies and current challenges at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. One speaker I met in the conference encouraged me with his kind words: "If you climb a mountain, start slowly. You are enjoying the most freedom during a career break, so do whatever you are interested in!"



I viewed emigrating as an opportunity to uproot myself, reverse and find a new origin to start. Since emigrating, I have been back in Hong Kong with a new lens.



For example, in December 2023, I went to search for documentation of my family house at the Antiquities and Monuments Office. I discovered that my ancestor worked on salt making during the Ming Dynasty. Originally, I did not feel a strong connection to my identity as an indigenous, and Walled Village girl, in the Cheung clan in Hong Kong. However, during my Chinatown engagement research, I was inspired by the hardship faced by migrants in previous generations and reflected on my own ancestors' efforts in securing the legacies I enjoy today. This sparked my interests in preserving culture through decolonising and indigenous cultural preservation practices in Canada. Let me borrow words from the Heritage Toronto guide I encountered during the Chinatown Tour. "If you don't know where

you come from, you don't know where you are going."

Reflecting on community engagement's role in cultural identity, I believe it plays a crucial role in preserving Hongkonger identity as well as developing my new identity as Torontonians. I joined CFSO to volunteer at the Global Medic food bank in Oakville, where I connected with people of a similar age from Hong Kong, sharing our stories of adapting to Canada. Through this experience, I gained insights about food security issues and learned about the 40-hour volunteer requirement for high school students in Ontario. Additionally, I volunteered for Building Roots, a food bank in Moss Park, where I realised my multilingual ability is valuable to community services, particularly in facilitating interpretation between social workers and ethnic users.

When my friend was granted Canadian citizenship, he drew to commemorate this milestone. I asked if he designed a Toronto flag, what would it look like? He chose the CN Tower. I preferred a more abstract and simpler design — two equally sized horizontal pales of green and blue, inspired by "Tkaronto" meaning "where there are trees standing in the water".

Many of my memories in Toronto are related to water. I enjoy running and biking in the leisure spaces developed around Don River like Betty Sutherland Trail Park, Sunnybrook Park, and Evergreen Brick Works. I also appreciate the harbourfront of Lake Ontario, featuring Trillium Park, Tommy Thompson Park, Humber Bay Park, etc. The St. Lawrence River connects me to my brother in Montreal. My first hike was a guided walk in Rouge National Urban Park, where I was surprised to learn that the Rouge River extends northwards into Markham, Pickering and Richmond Hill. The spectacular fall foliage reminded me of nature's magic. These elements make up the water and tree elements in my Toronto flag.

One time, I was discussing what I like about Toronto with a stranger (small talk is common in Canadian culture). "I like the diverse mix of communities and the cultural ethos that values inclusion and diversity," I said. "Multicultural Languages" are used every day. For example, in a conversation with a 2nd-generation Chinese immigrant, there would be a mix of English, some Mandarin, Taiwanese and Cantonese. Sometimes, new vocabulary and slang are invented because of mixing these languages. The stranger agreed and added that

there is similar “mixed language use” in different ethnic groups. It is common for Torontonians to have multi-ethnic, racial, and cultural dimensions in their families. Multiculturalism is part of the City of Toronto's brand, but it also embedded in our everyday life.



The Toronto city council voted to rename Yonge-Dundas Square to Sankofa Square in 2024. The new name originates in Ghana and means “reclaiming past teachings that enable us to move forward together” How do we apply lessons from history to our day-to-day practice in our own roles? It is aspirational to make the square become a shared heritage that transcends territorial boundary, ethnic backgrounds, and time by adopting this

language from Ghana for everyone to use. It is not only for the black community but for all.

One day, we will find our own languages and our shared languages will continue to evolve.

# A DIASPORIC HONGKONGER, A SOCIAL WORKER, AND SOMEONE WHO PERSISTS

ALEX FONG

My name is Alex, and I moved to Canada in 2022. I consider myself a new immigrant in Canada. While I need a bit more time to settle down, I eagerly look forward to becoming a true Canadian in the near future. Despite understanding that people might be having a hard time after COVID and may not be satisfied with the current economy and some policies dealing with it, I greatly appreciate Canada as a place with beautiful nature, friendly people, systems that are people-focused, and of course, the presence of Blue Jays and Raptors in Toronto!

Nevertheless, the most important thing to me is the realization that the people of



Canada enjoy a lot of freedoms that my homeland used to have, such as freedom of speech and assembly, together with the freedom from fear that is outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). It is very true that a lot of beautiful things can be found here in Canada, and I am truly grateful that this country has opened its door to me. "It is nice to be a Canadian, isn't it?", many of you might ask. As much as I want to become a Canadian, I don't consider myself a Canadian, yet. If you ask me who I am, my answer is: that I am a Hong Konger – even though I am no longer living in the city.

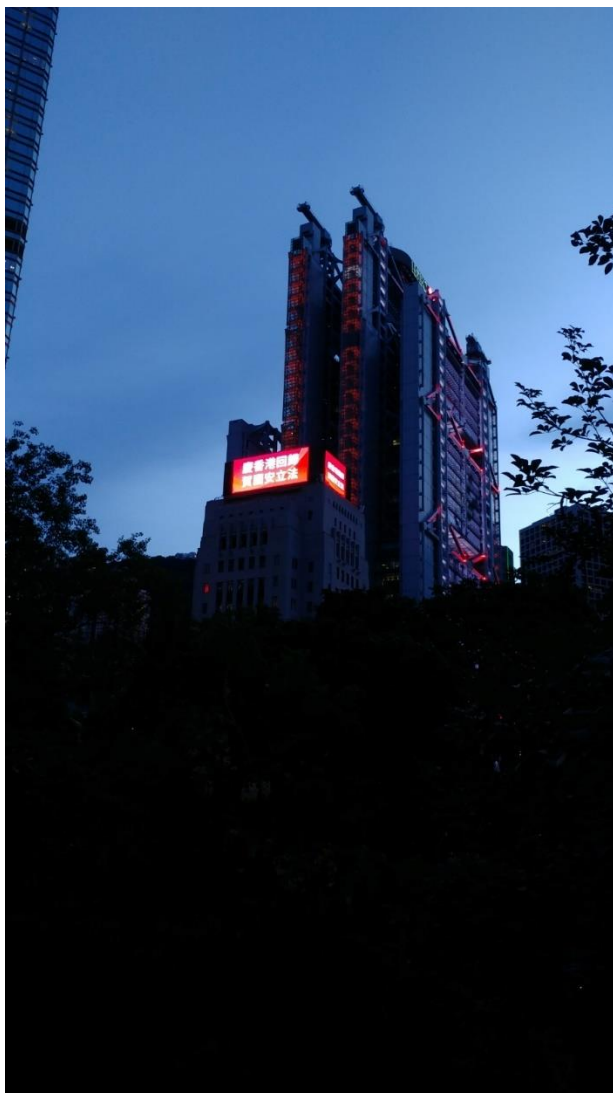
Yes, you are right, I came from Hong Kong. I became a member of the Hong Kong diaspora when I unwillingly left my hometown where I have spent more than 30 years of my life because of the political turmoil and the consequential threats to human rights.

As you might know already, Hong Kong has a colonial history. Although we did not have direct democracy under the governance of the British, out of political and economic consideration (Rabushka, 1997), the colonial government granted various freedoms to the people. Hongkongers were so used to enjoying

them to such an extent that Hong Kong was once dubbed as the “City of Protests” in the past (Garrett, 2013) due to the frequency of protests happened in the city. Nevertheless, all these freedoms have strengthened our identity as a Hongkonger compared to other Chinese living in mainland China. In fact, Fung and Chan (2017) conducted a study indicating that the favoring of civil liberties, which included freedoms such as press freedom and freedom of speech, culturally distinguished Hongkongers from their mainland counterparts.

All what we have taken for granted have changed after the outbreak of the 2019 Hong Kong protests and the enforcement of National Security Law (NSL). In its latest release of the World Report 2024, Human Rights Watch (2024) depicted Hong Kong as a city with “no independent civil society” due to the absence of major public assemblies since the imposition of the NSL. The law was designed to suppress any anti-government movement by criminalizing activities that are seen by the government as secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign forces. As a result, pro-democratic media were forced to shut down, journalists were arrested, not to mention protestors. It is very heartbreaking to

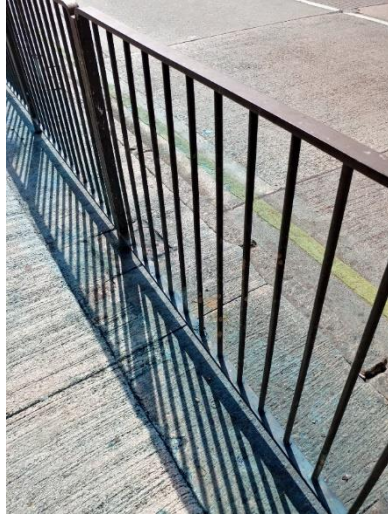
witness the fall of Hong Kong and the vaporization of those essential elements that have comprised my Hongkonger identity.



Identities are fluid and flexible (Mlotshwa et al., 2015). In addition to being a Hongkonger, I have been a registered social worker in Hong Kong for almost a decade. According to the definition approved by International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (2014), “advocating and upholding human rights and social justice is the motivation and justification for social work” (IFSW, 2014, para. 8). However, as the NSL is considered “dangerously vague and broad” (Amnesty International, 2020), I was worried that social workers in Hong Kong may find it increasingly challenging to advocate for their clients, especially if their advocacy is related to the government policy, given the remarkably wide range of prosecution under the NSL. Police involvement would probably become the new normal. Unfortunately, the recent request for police investigation by the Environment Protection Department of Hong Kong on suspected “fake news” regarding a video widely spread online, which critiqued the qualities of government-approved trash bags planned for use in the city’s newly introduced waste charging scheme, casts a doubt on how much the government can tolerate criticism

from the people.  
The situation makes it very difficult for social workers to work as advocates for social justice.

While Hong Kong is no longer the city it used to be, I used to ponder if



Canada could be a place for Hong Kong diasporic communities to advocate for those who are voiceless back home. To my frustration, I now realized the answer is NO. On paper, Canada is a place where people ought to be able to live a liberated life. However, the ubiquitous NSL is a sovereignty-violating set of laws not only targeting those perceived to be committing crimes within the jurisdiction of Hong Kong but also those residing outside of the city. For example, you are subject to being accused of violating the NSL when you criticize or participate in any activities, even in Canada, that would be deemed to be subversive or inciting.

Because of its intimidating effect, many overseas Hongkongers simply refrain from openly criticizing the authority or publicly attending any activities that would be recognized as anti-government (Kwan, 2020; Shum, 2023; Yiu, 2023). This significantly impacts the Hong Kong diasporic communities residing in Canada. As a newcomer here in Canada, I have been actively connecting with various online groups that provide help to new immigrants from Hong Kong in Canada. Normally, people in the group are active and helpful, except the time when a topic related to Hong Kong politics comes up. It is a sharp contrast to how people are so eager to help their fellow Hongkongers with questions related to job hunting in Canada, but very few of them reply to, let's say, a share of news that criticizes the Hong Kong government; they even avoid giving any emoji to the message, even they know they are, indeed, in Canada!



As a social worker committed to pursuing social justice, it is very challenging for anyone to

connect with people and organize advocacy for their fellow Hongkongers back home. At the time of writing this reflection, overseas Hongkongers are still struggling against the NSL. However, it would be too pessimistic to assume that the battle fighting for justice has failed. Although people might not openly discuss it even if they are aboard, it would be hard to believe that I and many like-minded Hongkongers would ever forget where we come from and why we have to move to Canada to start a new life. Foucault (1978/1972) reminded us that "Where there is power, there is resistance" (p.95). The more the oppression, the more I remember I am a Hong Konger. The more the repression, the more I remind myself of the job of a social worker.

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# FULL OF FRUSTRATION

YING FUNG



It's Monday... Time to go back to work after the holiday. Thinking back when I was still in Hong Kong last year, Mondays were also a source of discomfort. When the alarm clock rang on Monday mornings, my immediate reaction was always to press the "snooze" button, as if doing so multiple times would somehow mentally prepare me. Dragging myself out of bed to confront reality, feeling lifeless at the breakfast table, I could sense my forehead aching, possibly because I was always unconsciously frowning.

But the type of discomfort I am experiencing now appears somewhat different.

The earlier discomfort originated from transitioning without a choice, from 100% leisure during holidays to 200% workload intensity. Under the blazing fluorescent illumination, my fingers rapidly tapped on the keyboard. With the noise “tack, tack, tack” confined between my desk and my colleagues,’ my breath unconsciously synchronized with the busy mechanical thump.

I usually work from home these days. All I need to do is turn on my laptop to start working. There are no senior colleagues reminiscing about the good old days, no intense debates on whether to buy a newly released jacket that is bound to be a fashion hit, and no forum for colleagues to share details of their romantic lives or seek advice from various “experts.” When I lift my eyes from the computer screen, all I am met with is the blank wall. Making friends in a new place no doubt takes time, but my social anxiety coupled with a slight language barrier makes me keenly aware of the dampness under my armpits every single time I participate in social activities. My mind always cuts me off mid conversations: the client

speaks English so rapidly, what do they really need? Did they just tell a joke, why is everyone laughing so heartily? Should I rehearse in my mind how to respond to them beforehand?

If the thoughts in my mind were a melancholic pop song, even though the lead singer's voice is at the forefront, the background music would continue to play tirelessly without interruption. They seize every opportunity to weave between the lyrics, filling every space in the song with rises and falls, persisting even when the lead singer finally rests. Although its volume is not as prominent as the lead singer's, the various musical elements intertwine to form a cacophony of positive and negative emotions, making it impossible for one to ignore.



Before leaving Hong Kong, many family members and friends reminded me that job hunting wouldn't be easy, companies in Canada might not recognize my qualifications from Hong Kong, and I would need to be strong to endure repeated rejections. They advised me to maintain confidence in my abilities, especially since I had been out of school for some time. I needed to learn to set aside my pride, accept lower-level positions, and even consider switching careers or leaving the comfort of an office for a retail cashier job. Perhaps I don't have the right to complain. As I watch other friends struggling as they adapt to a new place, I find solace in using the knowledge and experience I accumulated in Hong Kong to secure a stable income.

But some thoughts are sedimenting in my mind—be careful not to stir things up, lest I start a storm.

From time to time, I ask myself why I wanted to leave Hong Kong. One of the reasons is that I need "a bit of space." Ever since I graduated from university, I have been in constant competition with my classmates, relatives, and even internet celebrities. I am always mindful of how much I earn in terms of

salary and how much time I have to spend in order to get promoted. It was a never-ending rat race; someone will always be better than me. It seems that we can never remember what we do better than others, and what we don't do well is habitually examined under the microscope.

Of course, we rarely give ourselves a break; therefore, the term "a bit of space" refers to creating a mental white space that enables us to follow our heart.

After changing my environment, I anticipated greater happiness and ease, but the same problems persist. I often feel frustrated and don't know where to vent. This suggests that the issue lies not in the environment but within me. Before leaving Hong Kong, I made a commitment to allocate time for my "dreams" in this new place, promising to pick up the brush and create! Despite considering myself an artist at heart, and despite having moved to this new environment for several months now with a stable income, I am disappointed to say that my first piece of artwork is still nowhere to be found.

My present self lacks a sense of security, possibly because English is my second

language, and grasping the Canadian market pulse requires time. Unconsciously, I spend more time than needed to equip myself, essentially overcompensating. Once again, as I dedicate extra time to work, my “dreams” take a back seat.

My negative thoughts having drifted here, I don’t dare to share them with anyone because I don’t want to seem dramatic. Since when did work and life become synonymous with pain? As an adult, one should understand and learn to accept this. Venting negativity is immature—then what does it mean to be mature? Should I learn to be numb: no matter how painful it feels, it’s just a job, even if I spend at least eight hours on it a day?

Having just arrived in a new place, I don’t have many friends, and not being particularly outgoing or charismatic, I hesitate to burden others with my negative thoughts. Fearing that one outburst of bad mood will drive people away instantly, I put on a facade of “doing well” when facing my friends, often talking about nothing important, food, shopping, and gossip about our common friends.

Productivity is notably low whenever I feel frustrated, as if there’s a witch brewing a



toxic potion in my mind, stirring intermittently. My fingers unconsciously tap on the keyboard; sentences on the screen expand and contract, appearing and disappearing, seemingly following the erratic rhythm in my mind, unable to settle down. What should have taken only half an hour to complete ends up taking several times longer due to a lost soul. Staring hollowly at the monitor for a long time, I can feel the back of my eyeballs stinging and dry, my gaze vacant.



Is working overtime something I'll have to deal with for the rest of my life? Finally, it's 7pm, the muscles in my hands can take a break. Lunch breaks in Canada are typically short, only thirty minutes, whereas in Hong Kong, it's common to spend up to two hours eating. To

scramble for some personal time, many of my colleagues choose to start work earlier, sometimes even one or two hours before the official start time. It's settled then, there's no escaping working overtime. Why is there an expectation to work extra without corresponding extra pay?

The immediate task after work is to cook dinner. In hindsight, it was such a luxury to have our parents cooking for us at home. Now, I have to spend at least an hour cooking, and after eating, there's another half hour to clean. After taking shower, I look at the clock, it's already past nine. All my energy for the day has been depleted. Let's not talk about chasing dreams now, I think I desperately need a glass of wine.

*This submission was translated into English from Chinese. The following is the original script.*

一肚子悶氣

馮盈

今天是星期一，假期過後便需要上班。回想起去年還在香港時，星期一也是痛苦的。星期一早上鬧鐘響起必定第一時間按下「延遲」，彷彿要按個幾遍才有足夠的心理準備，拖着四肢離開睡床去面對現實。吃早餐時臉如死灰，眉心輕微鎖着，間中感到前額陣陣冤痛。

但這種痛苦好像有點不一樣。

以往的痛苦是來自百分百假期過度至百分之二百工作的無所適從。在灰白熾熱的辦公室光管照明下，手指頭快速地敲打着鍵盤，「撻撻撻」的聲響困在我和同事們的書桌之間，呼吸也不自覺地趕上那忙碌的節奏。

而現在我在家工作，只要打開手提電腦就可以辦公，耳邊沒有前輩同事教路他們讀書時期的偶像、潮語，也沒有購物研討會大家就着應否購入某潮牌的新款外套而展開激烈的討論，更沒有感情台可讓同事之間分享戀愛近況、諮詢各方專家意見。眼睛從電腦屏幕抬起，只看見白色的牆身。來到一個新地方，需要花點時間結識朋友是意料中事，但社交恐懼加上些少語言障礙令我充份察覺到每一次參與社交活動時腋下總是潮濕。每次談話腦內總是想東想西的：客戶英文講得真快，到底他需要什麼？他剛剛是否講了個笑話，為什麼大家都咧嘴露齒呢？我要不要先在腦內預習一遍如何回應他？

如果腦袋裏裝載的思緒是一首悲情流行曲，即使主唱的聲音站得最前，但背景音樂在幕後一直無間斷忙碌地奏着，連歌詞之間喘息位置它也不放過，帶着高低起跌地充斥了歌曲的所有空間，主唱最終休止時它還得堅持一會。雖然它的音量不及主唱大，但多種樂音在交錯夾雜各種正面、負面的情緒，讓你無法視而不見。

我離開香港前，不少家人和朋友都提醒我求職不易，本地公司未必承認自己的學歷，需要有強大的心臟忍受一次又一次的拒絕、對自己的能力保持信心，特別自己已經離開校園一段時間，需要學懂放下身段接受較低級的職位，甚至轉行、離開舒適的辦公室做零售收銀。所以我也許沒有資格抱怨，看着其他同樣在適應着一個新地方的朋友們掙扎時，我能夠運用自己在港積累的知識和經驗找到一份穩定的收入已不俗。

心底卻沉澱着一些情緒——務必留神，不要胡亂攪拌，免得掀起一輪風浪。

思緒不時會迴盪至自己為什麼希望離開香港，其中一個原因是需要「一點空間」。大學畢業至今，腦袋總是有個天坪拿自己跟身邊的同學、親戚們的子女、網絡紅人等比較，使自己總在介意薪水賺多少、花多少時間才能夠進升。這樣的競賽永無休止，天外有天、人外有人，自己

比他人優秀的地方好像總是記不起，而自己不足之處則會習慣性放到顯微鏡下審視。

自己首先不會放過自己；所以所謂「一點空間」，其實就是自己的腦袋要適當地留白，讓自己可以追隨心意。

轉換了環境，本以為自己會快樂自在一點，但同樣的問題依舊存在，常常一肚子悶氣不知往那裏宣洩。這表示問題並不在於環境，而是在於自己。在香港出發前跟自己約定過，在這地方生活歸生活，必需要分配時間給予自己的「夢想」——一定要執起畫筆創作！自命藝術才是本命，但轉換到這個新環境經已幾個月了，所謂穩定的收入也找到了，奈何第一幅畫作還遲遲未有呢？

現在的自己缺乏安全感，可能因為英語是自己的第二語言，而加拿大的市場脈搏和趨勢還需要時間去學習，總會不自覺地花上額外工餘時間去裝備自己，說白了是一種自我補償。自願花額外時間於工作上，「夢想」又再一次讓步了。

負面的思想飄到這裏，我不敢跟任何人說，因為不想煽情。不知道從何時開始，工作與生活的根本就是痛苦。身為一個成年人就應該明白這點，學懂看開。慣性負能量是一種不成熟的表現。那甚麼是成熟？是否該學會麻木：不論再

怎樣痛苦，終歸只是工作，縱使每天自己總會花上最少八小時去工作。

再者，剛去到一個新地方，朋友已經不算多，自己又不算外向、不是萬人迷，不敢輕易放負；生怕一次發了個臭脾氣，人家馬上掉頭走。面對着朋友，自己養成了擺出一副「過得很好」的樣子，每每討論着飲食、購物和共同朋友的八掛。

生悶氣的時候生產力特別低。腦內就像有個巫婆在煮毒湯般，斷斷續續地攪拌着，手指無意識地敲打着鍵盤，眼見螢幕上句子伸縮着，出現了又消失、消失了又出現，彷彿也跟隨了腦內的思緒來來回回，不能安定下來。本應只需半小時就完成的簡單工作，皆因魂魄走失了，結果花上幾倍時間才完成。空洞的眼睛瞪着電腦大半天，瞪得眼球後方刺痛乾澀，眼神空洞。

是否打工一輩子都逃不過超時工作的問題？終於可以停下雙手了，看看時鐘經已是晚上七時。加拿大一般午飯時間較短，只有三十分鐘，而在香港動不動就吃上兩小時。為了儲積些少個人時間，不少同事都會自願早些上班，比正式開工時間早一兩小時，所以過勞是全球通病吧。為什麼只有額外工作，而沒有額外工資呢？

下班後馬上緊接着的任務是煮晚飯。以往在家有爸媽煮，是多麼的幸福。現在還得忙個一小時煮飯，吃完還得清洗。洗完澡再看看時鐘已經九時多，一天所有的動力已經消耗盡了，還是先不要說追夢，我需要一杯酒。

# MY "THREE IN ONE" LIFE – PAINTING, WRITING, MUSIC

MICHAEL BING CHIU LAI



I was born in the 1940s and started working to support my family when I was in my teens. Following my passion, I founded 凱沙畫廊 (Elsa Art House) and fully immersed myself in children's art education in Hong Kong. During this time, for promotional purposes, I frequently created art courses and slice of life essays for



major newspapers. I was also invited to present in radio and television programs, where I led groups of children in sketching and filming activities. In 1973, I founded 香港兒美術教育協會 (Hong Kong Children Art Association), organizing numerous public drawing competitions to advocate for the importance of children's art education, including exhibitions featuring artworks from children with special needs. As a result, children's art gained significant attention in the 1970s and 1980s, and my art studios expanded from 太子道 (Prince Edward Road) to 跑馬地 (Happy Valley), 太古城 (Taikoo Shing), 美孚新邨 (Mei Foo Sun Chuen), and 錦綉花園 (Fairview Park) – a total of five locations, all personally managed by me and my wife.

My work in children's art education has been growing roots in Hong Kong for over thirty years, flourishing until the most vibrant times. However, due to the handover in 1997 and concerns for the education and future of my five children, coupled with the toll on my health from excessive fatigue leading to "three highs" (hypertension, hyperglycemia, and hyperlipidemia), I made a resolute decision to immigrate with my entire family to Canada and

handed over my art studios to others to manage.



In April 1992, we first settled in Montreal. However, my children, aged 10 to 19, found it difficult to adjust to the French-speaking curriculum. For their sake, my family relocated again, this time to Toronto. In Toronto, they enrolled in Catholic schools. We found an ideal residence in Richmond Hill on Spadina Road, with a spacious house boasting seven rooms and front and back gardens adorned. I originally planned to take a good rest in Toronto, enjoying the scenic beauty and leisurely sketching. However, shortly after arriving in Toronto, I was interviewed by 星島日報 (Sing Tao Daily), followed by several other local Chinese news



outlets and media personalities. Their extensive coverage sparked significant attention in the local Chinese community, and students, beginning with a mother-son duo, started coming to my doorstep and enrolled in my art classes. As someone with a deep passion for

children's art education, I was thrilled. Despite my initial plans, I found a unit on West Beaver Creek Road in Richmond Hill and renovated it into a 2,000 square feet studio and gallery. With great joy, I embraced the role of being a children's art teacher again! As the number of students gradually increased, some residing in Scarborough requested me to open another studio for their convenience. Without hesitation, I established the second 黎炳昭藝術中心 (Lai Bing Chiu Arts Centre) at 第一廣場 (First Commercial Place). For a time, I managed both art studios simultaneously in Scarborough and Richmond Hill.

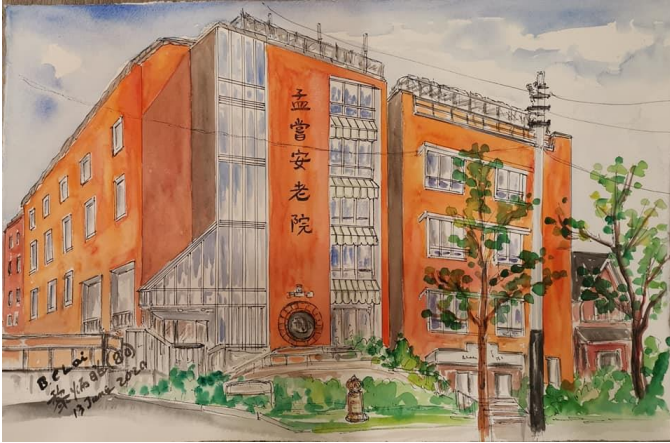
On January 1, 1998, the inaugural issue of Toronto Season Magazine 多倫多文藝季 was published. Thanks to the support and advocacy of 梁楓 (Ms. Fung Leung), editor of 華僑日報 (Wah Kiu Yat Po), professors, writers, and writing enthusiasts in Toronto gathered every three months to publish an issue. I am also grateful to my friends for their enthusiastic support in advertising, allowing us to maintain the magazine for a total of 18 years with 72 issues distributed for free. With the goal of passing on the torch and promoting Chinese culture, we

have been dedicated to the principle of "A real life is an artistic life, an artistic life is a real life."

In March 1999, we established 多倫多文藝季合唱團 (Toronto Season Choir), hiring experienced music teachers as conductors. Centered around Chinese and Western folk songs, we use our voices to sing out the vibrant colors of life! Since its establishment, the choir has been in existence for 25 years, organizing eight concerts, with all proceeds donated to various charitable organizations. These include the 中華文化中心 (Chinese Cultural Centre), 頤康基金會 (Yee Hong Foundation), 史維會 (Canadian Association for Learning and Preserving the History of WWII in Asia), 華人家庭專業輔導中心 (Chinese Family Services of Ontario), 烈治文山耆英會 (Richmond Hill Chinese Seniors Association), and 燃動青年 (Across U-hub).

Throughout my life, I have been dedicated to art education. Creating and collaborating with local creators, and practicing the concept of connecting through literature and bonding through music has allowed me to realize my lifelong goal of the "Three-In-One" approach—integrating painting, writing, and music into my life. I have composed a beautiful

symphony, enriched my own life and illuminated the lives of others.



*This submission was translated into English from Chinese. The following is the original script.*

## 我的「三合一」人生——繪畫、寫作、音樂

黎炳昭

我生於四十年代，十多歲便出來工作養家。隨着自己的興趣創立了「凱沙畫廊」Elsa Art House 便全程投入兒童美術教育工作；在此其間為了宣傳，我經常撰寫美術課程或生活散文於各大報章，亦受邀於電台、電視帶着一班小朋友作實地

寫生和錄影……。我在一九七三年成立了「香港兒美術教育協會」Hong Kong Children Art Association，舉辦多次公開繪畫比賽，鼓吹兒童美育的重要性，同時也舉辦逾三屆國際兒童繪畫比賽並包括弱能兒童的作品展……。因此兒童畫在七、八十年代深受重視，我的畫室也由太子道、跑馬地、太古城、美孚新邨、錦綉花園延至五間之多（全由我和內子教授）。

我的兒童美術教育工作扎根在香港三十多年至最蓬勃時因為「九七」，也為了五個孩子的學習和前途，而我的身體因為太勞累而得了「三高」……毅然舉家移民至加拿大，畫室也轉移他人經營了。

一九九二年四月落藉於滿地可，孩子們當時由 19 歲至 10 歲因不懂法語也隨着他們的意願移居多倫多。在多倫多他們很快地進入了天主教學校；我們也在烈治文山 Spadina Road 找到理想居所，偌大的房子共有七個房間，前後園種有各種名花和樹木，在那裏我們享受着美滿的家庭生活。

在我抵達多倫多不久便受「星島日報」訪問，以全版圖文並茂印刷，引起了很大迴響；先是美加華語楊沛欣小姐，繼有黎寶蓮小姐；「明報」也有報導……。我原本打算在多倫多好好休息享受遊山玩水四出寫生過着悠閒的生活的；出

乎意料之外竟然有學生報名一來便是倆母子，其他朋友也帶他們的孩子來畫畫。令我好興奮（我是一個不能停下來的人，教小朋友畫畫更是我喜歡的）。我不顧一切在 West Beaver Creek Rd 找到一個單位，大肆裝修成二千呎的畫室和畫廊。我滿懷喜悅再作馮婦！學生漸漸多了，有些住在士嘉堡的要求我多開一個畫室方便他們，我也毫不猶豫的在「第一廣場」First Commercial Place 開設了第二個「黎炳昭藝術中心」Lai Bing Chiu Arts Centre 實行教畫兩邊走。

在一九九八年一月一日「多倫多文藝季」創刊號出版了，Toronto Season Magazine 多得梁楓女士（華僑日報編輯）鼓吹協助之下與多市的教授、作家、熱愛寫作的的朋友聚在一起每三個月出版一期；也多謝我的朋友熱心地支持刊登廣告一直維持了十八年共 72 期免費派送。我們抱着薪火相傳、弘揚中華文化，實行「藝術生活化，生活藝術化」為宗旨而努力。

一九九九年三月我們又創辦了「多倫多文藝季合唱團」Toronto Season Choir，聘請有經驗的音樂老師擔任指揮，以中西民歌為主幹，用歌聲唱出豐采人生！自成立至今已有 25 年歷史了，共辦了八屆演唱會，每次的演出都把收入所得全數捐贈各慈善機構。計有中華文化中心、頤



康基金會、史維會、華人家庭專業輔導中心、烈治文山耆英會及燃動青年等。

我一生都是以美術教育為本，來到多倫多再和本地作家和音樂人合作出版「多倫多文藝季刊」和成立「多倫多文藝季合唱團」實行以文會友，以歌結緣……。實現我以「三合一」繪畫、寫作、音樂為我的人生目標。譜出美麗的樂章——豐富了自己的人生，也照亮了他人的生活。

# OTHER, BUT NOT TOO OTHER

HARMONY LAU



Growing up, I was never particularly conscious of my racial identity. Part of it can be attributed to the carefree bliss and innocent ignorance of childhood, but mostly it was due to the fact that I was lucky enough to grow up in a heavily populated immigrant area in Scarborough where most of my neighbours were of East Asian descent. The world I grew up in consisted of hearing more Cantonese spoken than English, dim sum restaurants constantly appearing in my peripheral vision, and fellow classmates that mostly shared in my decidedly ethnic features.

It was only when I was older that I realized what a blessing it was to grow up surrounded by such familiarity, not having to grow up in a predominantly white community and feeling “othered” at such a young age. However, that blessing was also somewhat of a curse, leaving me ill-equipped once I left my safe bubble and stepped into the rest of Canada, where I truly was part of the minority.

I moved to Ottawa in September of 2015 to attend the University of Ottawa as a fresh-faced undergrad majoring in English Literature and Classical Studies. It was here that my racial identity - something I had never even bothered to think about with any real depth and breadth - suddenly became a pressing topic —not just for me, but those around me.

I was suddenly bombarded with questions that ranged from innocuous to clear microaggressions: “Where are you from?” followed by a “No, where are you really from?” when I would answer with a blasé, “GTA.”

“Don’t you find this class hard?” A perhaps well-meaning classmate asked me in my Introduction to American Literature class. At one point, he even turned towards me to

continue his questioning: "Do you actually understand what we're talking about?"

"Oh, you're Chinese. So do you speak Japanese?" A girl from my first-year dorm floor once asked while we were washing our faces next to each other in the shared bathroom.

And perhaps my favourite comment I've ever received from anyone ever:

"You know, your eyes are pretty small." This comment was presented to me while I was sitting in one of the communal spaces on campus, furiously typing on my laptop to churn out a paper for my Great Philosophers class. A shadow fell over me, I looked up to meet the eyes of a nondescript Caucasian man (one I had never met before, mind you) who proceeded to say those words to me. I was left gaping when - having clearly said his piece - he just turned around and walked away.

My racial identity as a Chinese Canadian suddenly became the most significant part of my person. It was a strange shift from growing up in my Scarborough community, where my ethnic features and my Hong Kong-born parents were nothing special, to finding myself in Ottawa, where a significant majority of my classmates, particularly those studying English

Literature and Classical Studies, saw me and immediately placed me in the “Other” category in their minds.

There was something quite belittling about being designated as an “Other” that really rankled me. In elementary school, we were taught that Canada is a country built on the idea of immigration and the cultural mosaic; so if our country is founded on the very concept of multiculturalism, why did I keep encountering these microaggressions? Why did I feel so exposed whenever I walked into a classroom and realized that I was the only person of East Asian descent there?

As a result, I found myself almost wanting to separate myself from my Chinese identity. I desired to further Westernize myself, as if acting a certain way could somehow make my clear ethnic features melt away, allowing me to seamlessly blend into the Canadian majority. I convinced myself that I could make others believe “I’m Other, but not Too Other!”

It never worked, obviously.

People continued asking me where I came from. When my usual insistence of “I’m from the GTA” didn’t work, I changed tactics and

began saying, "My parents are from Hong Kong."



In my mind, this was a good balance between being 'Other', but not 'Too Other'. My parents are from Hong Kong; this isn't a lie. It was fortunate that Hong Kong is one of the more Westernized points of Asia due to the 150 years of British colonization.

This was the justification in my mind: I might be of Chinese-descent, but my family is from a people who have been colonized by the West, the very people that I wanted to emulate. I was already a step closer to un-Otherizing myself.

This mindset persisted for a good while: I continued reading William Shakespeare and John Milton for my classes, thinking about how great it was that I was studying all these great English authors, and even better that I couldn't name a single Chinese writer; I went to my nearby Loblaws and marveled at how I filled my shopping cart with fettuccine and hummus, not a bag of rice or chicken feet in sight; I would call my mom at night and speak to her in broken Cantonese, punctuated by English phrases and words when my mind couldn't conjure up the Chinese equivalent, and thought of how great it was that my English is so much more superior than my Cantonese.



People would clarify if I'm Chinese, and I would emphasize the fact that I was from Hong Kong. It probably didn't make anyone look at me differently - in all honesty, if they perceived you as "Other", then you would be "Other" to them regardless of whether you were from Easternized China or Westernized Hong Kong — but it made me feel superior for some reason, as if I were better than their microaggressions would suggest.

In my third year of university, there was a sudden spike in the Chinese population on campus and the surrounding areas of downtown Ottawa. Many international students from East Asia began filtering into the University of Ottawa, bringing with them a new status quo. New restaurants opened up in the downtown core: a Korean restaurant run by an elderly couple popped up on Rideau Street, and bubble tea places and Taiwanese dessert restaurants began springing up like weeds around the blocks, and a 拉麵 La Mian place opened up right in the center of the Byward Market.

Suddenly, I wasn't so alone, and my face wasn't so unfamiliar anymore. It became more commonplace to hear Mandarin and Cantonese



being spoken as I hustled down Rideau. Another East Asian girl joined my third-year short story course. The international section in my local grocery store suddenly expanded as the demand rose. Most importantly, there was suddenly less external focus on my racial identity.

For a while, I was still very aware of my racial identity. My walls remained up, and the knee-jerk reaction to emphasize the differences between being of Hong Kong-descent versus mainland China-descent persisted. Years after the fact, particularly after the rise of Asian-American hate crimes due to COVID, I came to understand that a lot of it was internalized Sinophobia, fueled by general anti-Chinese sentiment in the West and further compounded by the microaggressions I faced in university.

Even though it wasn't a constant barrage, the few cases of microaggressions I faced brought about a sense of shame and embarrassment in me. For the first time in my life, I was "othered" and made to feel strange for my differences. Growing up, I felt no shame in the foods I ate, no embarrassment in listening to my parents speak in accented English (and in most cases, they could get away with just

speaking Cantonese considering the area I grew up in), and I never had to be truly aware of my status as a Chinese Canadian. It was a blessing I took for granted, and, when faced with that sudden shame and embarrassment within me, it translated into a need to shame and embarrass another group of people, to put them down to elevate myself.



“I’m Other, but not Too Other.”

I am proud that my family is from Hong Kong, but that pride should not be built on the misguided foundation of Sinophobia or the misplaced sense of superiority because my people were the ones who had been “lucky enough” to be colonized by the West.

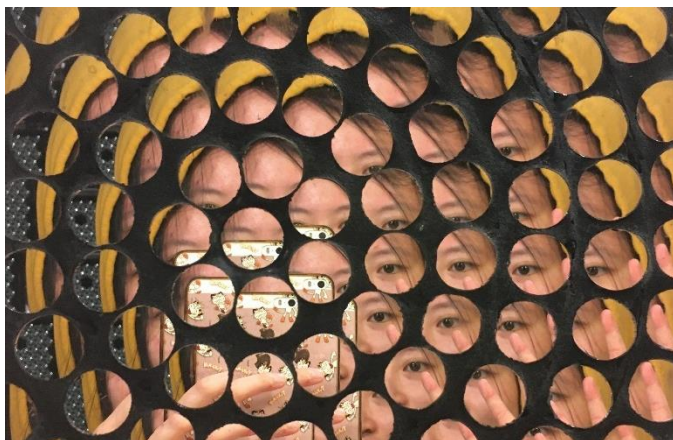
If Canada truly is a cultural mosaic, then we need to hold onto our cultural and ethnic roots and nourish them. We need to be proud of who we are and recognize the beauty we can add to the country by bringing our own traditions and values to it. I realize that untangling our own prejudices (internalized or otherwise) is a constant battle, especially when you're a minority and you're made to feel like a part of the minority, but it's a battle worth having and a conversation worth exploring within yourself.

You may end up surprising yourself with how much love and pride you actually have for your own cultural background and the fierce protectiveness you can feel over your racial identity.



ON TWO BOATS  
LOOKING THROUGH  
TWO WELLS  
LISTENING TO THE  
GOLDEN AGE OF  
CANTOPOP AND  
MITSKI

CASEY LUN



This is what the background music of my household sounds like on any given day: from the kitchen is a mix of old Cantonese operas (whose tunes inspire the infamous parody 落街冇錢買面包 (no money to buy bread when going out; OGs know what I'm saying), concert clips from 朱咪咪 (Mimi Chu) and 梅艷芳 (Anita Mui), TVB recordings of 新馬師曾 (Sun Ma Sze Tsang), and music from the Golden Age of Cantopop (the 1980s). From the living room TV comes kdrama sounds and Chinese Wechat shorts sharing the most insane "life hacks". Upstairs is my brother watching – whatever it is he watches, some commentary video on twitch or whatever – and in various rooms throughout the day is me playing whatever it is I'm playing (sometimes it's Mitski, other times it's the Pokémon Black White soundtrack, all bangers. Often, it's an hour-long video essay. One time it was 10-hour loop of Wii Channel background music, but the title of this chapter is long enough). The incongruent harmony results in something that is more cacophony than symphony, but nonetheless noise is what we are used to, as if this household of five is single-householdedly attempting to emulate the discordance of Hong Kong city living in the midst of Canadian suburbia. Subconsciously

perhaps we all find true silence unerring, unused as we are to the sound of more than 100 sq. ft per person. But this is all external.

I am not in an identity crisis even as others – I have been told often – are thrown for a loop. I do not, apparently, give the *vibe* of one raised in Hong Kong, nor do I *beam* the **aura** of a Canadian born Chinese, and the enigma of whatever I am was perplexing to them but a point of pride for me, as I thrive off being unknowable. In reality, I think I can be summed up pretty easily: Hong Kong international student. That is to say, I went to an English-speaking international school right in my own hometown, despite being “local”. International in my own backyard. Doomed from the start.



Sometimes, however, it feels like having two identities of any place is to be permanently displaced. I am straddling two boats, one foot on each, and I use my utmost lower body strength (none) to balance and keep them together, to exert my presence and ownership – and sure I may have more boats but sometimes I watch those who only have one and see how they get to sit down. They get to rest on their boat, fully content and wholly belong to one cozy space. If I sit then either most of me is on one boat and the other boat I will need to clamp with my legs, or I am sat on the rims of both boats where they slip and slide against each other, one foot on either boat – which surely that’s just uncomfortable. Those fully on their boat don’t seem to feel the panic of losing a boat or being judged for losing grip on them, and of course they are not being torn between two floating surfaces on currents beyond one’s control. If any of this sounds confusing, I’d like to reiterate my origins as an International Student, and gratuitous, overflowing, loquacious and meandering exposition of metaphors is part of the breeding. This is the diplomatic, verbal equivalent of walking through the park and smelling all the flowers way of saying we bullshit. That is the only lesson one

retains from an upbringing I increasingly realize I am mythicizing. Never take me seriously.

My boats sometimes only know me from being in the other boat. In Hong Kong I am known for being Canadian, and in Canada I am known for being a Hong Konger. In Hong Kong my Canadian traits are more accentuated; they say I will catch a cold wearing a t-shirt in December, that I'm eccentric, and my thoughts are so white but wow you can speak Cantonese? Vice versa, in Canada I turn the heat up too high, I'm eccentric, and my actions are so yellow but wow your English is so good! What am I supposed to speak then? French? Ne vois-tu pas que je suis différent pour les mêmes raisons?





My grandma knows all the relationship titles on the family tree, regardless of what position you're in and who that person is in relation to you. She knows that my mother's father's sister's daughter is my 表姨媽 (biu yee maa) but my father's father's sister's daughter is my 表姑媽 (biu gu maa) (easy), and my mother's father's father's father's brother's son is my 太叔公 (tai sook gong), and my mother's mother's mother's mother's sister's daughter is my 表姨婆太 (biu yee paw tai)(I woke her up at 11:58pm to ask this question and she stared at me for three seconds before saying "yes", which you might scoff and say she is bluffing to get me to leave but I reverently believe she is just *that* good)(she came down six minutes later to graph it out with me because it was keeping her up) because she is and has always been the master, a matriarchal spider treading the threads of a vast multi-generational web. Growing up I would stand beside her during large family gatherings, and she would decipher the correct relationship title for me to call the other person introduced, traversing linguistic threads and decoding it out loud in real time, and we waited patiently because we all knew the process was exactly that – our Chinese Da Vinci code. It takes time, knowledge, and the

lifelong experience of being embedded within interconnected webs. This is why I often wonder how my grandmother feels about being here, knocked off her prime position on the web like a queen stripped of title and station. She has family and friends back in a place where she is free to roam everywhere with the aid of a robust public transportation system, unlike here where connections are limited to phone calls and mobility restricted by a car-based society, unwalkable six-lane crosswalks and miles of suburbia. No longer is she centered on her web, but relegated to the periphery, drinking up tea through Chinese Whispers.

(She once weaved me a story about her jade bracelet. It exists permanently on her wrist. She started with where she got it – some shop in Kowloon – and ended, in her endearingly meandering way, with the death of her parents. In this story that stretched time it stayed more or less in the same space, and when we grazed beyond the confines of Hong Kong it was with some apprehension, for she knew that in the place we are now she would not be able to get another jade bracelet of the same ilk. Of course, the Hong Kong where she bought the bracelet from is not the same Hong Kong now, so it will

never be the same regardless. The shop is not there anymore; time makes foreigners of us all.)

What she told me is that anywhere with family is home. I hope her boats are truly well moored.

When I asked my mother about the difference between a Hong Kong and a Canadian identity, she went on a spiel about the politics of Hong Kong. Somewhere along the way, I learned we shared the same experience: having left Hong Kong at eighteen and spending most of her time since overseas, when she returned years later her colleagues spoke English to her, because they didn't think she could speak Cantonese. Over time she gained their linguistic trust but, in her mind, she described a rigidity in staying true to herself, noting where she deviated from a common mindset amongst her peers – she opted for slowness where Hong Kong was fast, and relaxation when many Hongkongers believed one must maximize their gains. Her friends badgered her for letting things go and people off hooks too easily; I did as well. Her sincerity paid off in the long run, I suppose, because it seemed to have built a protective wall of people who vouched for her and got angry on her

behalf. Whether this all occurred because she lacked “Hong Kong-ness” is up for debate, and she said she doesn’t know what that means anyway. Sometimes Hong Kong is a mix of collectivist and individualist traits that can’t stand in for Eastern values. Filial piety and a personal chequebook. But then, so is Canada – neighbourly kindness and self-expression. “What does it matter anyway?” my mother said. “We’re here now.” Pragmatism to my quixotic self, she doesn’t worry about the philosophy behind boats and currents, only on the act of rowing.



When I first arrived in Canada after an extensive childhood in Hong Kong, as I was driven down one of the country’s many and forever highways, my very first thought was, wow. The sky is so big. Intellectually I knew the

sky was big, being one unending blanket that stretched the surface of the Earth, but I never saw it as big. I only ever saw it framed by Hong Kong's sweeping skyscrapers and mountains, much like a frog at the bottom of a well. And Canadians are nice. That's the stereotype. They hugged me for what I initially thought was no reason; they held doors open even though they were well ahead of me; they did a little jog when they cross the street and see a driver waiting to pass. But they also left passive aggressive sticky notes ending in smiley faces. In a way, the sky may be big, but a large well was still a well.

I am not estranged from either identity – neither boat feels distant to me. A little difficult to straddle, sometimes, but never far from reach. The oft discussed Asian American experience of tiger moms and losing touch with home passed me by like ships in the night; the Hong Kong grindset missed me by so many miles I didn't even run (I barely even walked); ideas of eastern "conformity" were vague philosophies in a book (and to be fair, Hong Kong doesn't strike me as a very conforming society anyway). Perhaps it comes from the privilege of growing up for significant swaths of time in both places in an intergenerational household, but the Hong Kong Canadian

identity was never a tug-of-war between binary states. Though I do not have a firm idea of home, that only means I can make one anywhere. The two boats each provide tools from which I could pick and choose – a little community oriented “it takes a village” attitude here, a little “I am my own person and will insist my opinion” there, and yes bagged milk makes sense and of course I should be given red packet money by my elders every new year, birthday, and holiday; that’s just rational. 雞蛋仔 (egg waffles) taste kind of great with maple syrup. Through two wells I see a more complete sky. On two boats I can travel further. With two metaphors I hammer out a point. In one mind 我 am what 我 am.

(probably pretentious)



*Photos were taken during a community-oriented photography workshop called PS: Scarborough, run by Next Generation Arts, a not-for-profit charitable arts organization supporting the next generation of youth artists in the Greater Toronto Area.*

# (UN)SETTLING WITH (IN)SECURITY

TIN YUET (TIFFANY) TAM



The westbound TTC subway finally arrives. Like a magnet, a gust of wind pulls me a step closer to the track. I stand still on the narrow platform, resisting the force. The dynamics of push and pull symbolize the emotions and narrative of many diaspora communities: drifting away from the homeland and navigating life in a new city, uncertain of belonging and the duration of their stay. Choices of staying or leaving gradually fade amidst packed daily schedules, settlement challenges, and adjustments to new working



and living environments, as well as forming new friendships and relationships. As time passes from the departure hall, the image of home diminishes with the arrival of new challenges.

Looking back, Hongkongers like me may find themselves in the liminal space between departure and settlement in cities. Accepting the reality that I am now part of the Hong Kong diaspora community; I strive to strike a balance between my roots and my current residence. Both my personal and professional identities stand on shaky ground, navigating the complexities of criticisms in various forms.

Having taught English in Hong Kong upon university graduation, my teaching and language skills have matured day in and day out. Despite growing confidence in embracing my identity as an English teacher, moving to Toronto, Canada has brought insecurities, making me question: "Is it worth continuing to be an English teacher in a dominantly English-speaking country?"

Upon stepping into Toronto and exploring teaching jobs (with the hope of gaining future teaching experience), the unspoken requirement of "Canadian Experience" and a locally dominated teacher

population left me appalled. Despite my background as an English teacher, being a Hongkonger, an outsider and an internationally educated teacher in Canada's context implies that I must work harder to have my credentials recognized.



Without getting this country's recognition, my past experiences may not be taken seriously. Moreover, the idea of teaching English in Canada sometimes discourages me. My ethnicity and appearance might overshadow my proficient language and teaching skills. Whether in public schools or adult classes, I am hesitant to try, fearing rejection due to not resembling a local anglophone.

Although I cherish my identities as a diaspora community member, a newcomer, or even an immigrant teacher, there is an unnamed space between feeling qualified on paper and being mentally prepared. For many newcomers and individuals in the diaspora communities, the issue of microaggression submerges and resurfaces from time to time. Our skin tones, accents, ways of expression attach us to the labels of “non-local speakers”. The sense of being “non-local” has caught the attention of many multilingual English teachers before their immigration to English-dominant countries. Some colleagues and friends have expressed concerns about feeling unprepared to teach in these countries. Even I have had the thoughts of not trying because I know foreign-educated English teachers like me might be discriminated for being “non-local”. There is a mix of hesitation and fear of imagining myself entering mainstream classrooms: fear of being rejected during the application process when my name implies my ethnicity, concerns about prospective teenager students mocking my accents, or worry about adult learners’ disappointment for not getting the “de-facto English speaking” teachers they seek.

The self-belittlement and avoidance of embarrassment place my personal and professional identities in the lens of double consciousness. When I see myself, I witness a shifting teacher identity from a growing “expert” to a “novice” in understanding a new curriculum. This shift has stirred a feeling of uncertainty. Viewing myself through others’ eyes shakes my teacher identity, making me feel anxious about using a language that I have been using and teaching proficiently. The double consciousness exemplifies many multilingual English teachers’ inner fear: the rejections they face are not because of their teaching performance or aptitude, but because of our immigrant background, and us not sounding and acting like local English speakers.

To know the source of that double consciousness, I have been investigating the issue of linguistic insecurity among multilingual English teachers. While linguistic insecurity, especially among multilingual English learners, has been extensively researched, there have been insufficient studies examining linguistic insecurity among multilingual English teachers. There must be a reason that interlocks their multilingual identities with the implications of language deficiency and inability. By default,

one may associate “non-local speaker” with “local speaker”. These are relative concepts formed on a false premise. What makes them false is that the former is created to distinguish the Other (a term suggested by Holliday (2006)) from the “native speaker”.

For a long time, multilingual English teachers in English-speaking countries like Canada have grappled with the negative impact the above phenomenon brings. Anya (2018) criticized, “Racism and ethnic bias in TESOL are naturalized through English teacher education programs, which promote approaches to instruction and assessment that uphold the primacy of the core country native speaker” (p. 4). Therefore, it does multilingual English teachers injustice because the bias against their ethnicities begins during teacher education. This problem extends to the employment stage, denigrating many multilingual English teachers and making them feel second-class or subordinated. It saddens me to find evidence that a large number of employers prioritize the “native speaker” with their “legitimacy” and “authenticity” in using the English Language (Anya, 2018). Multilingual English teachers’ fear of rejection is

substantiated because their English levels have been perceived as “deficient”.



The feeling of insecurity marginalizes many teachers with diaspora, immigrant and refugee backgrounds who wish to continue their teaching in the new places. Like what many fellow teachers are doing, I have been working hard to fend for myself and our community that we are capable of teaching English language to learners at all levels. While we may not have gained enough Canadian experience at this stage, we are doing our best because we do not want linguistic insecurity to continue looming. It is an exhausting process when dealing with everything new as a member of the diaspora. When starting over in a new country, there are so many things to handle, and linguistic insecurity should not be one of them.

However, I believe that unless insecurity is recognized and addressed, multilingual English teachers who share similar migration backgrounds cannot be rest assured to feel grounded and settled.

At the end of the day, I want my fellow immigrant teachers to know: you have something to bring to the table. Our multilingual identities are not burdens but our assets, and our linguistic competence has been nurtured and testified through our journeys from place to place. We are humble learners on the diaspora journey who are also competent language teachers. While we may have been pushed and pulled by the unknown trajectory ahead of us, it is crucial to find a connection between our personal and professional identities. We carry a part of our homeland with us during the immigration journey, and we will put that part in the fertile land to grow roots that will not be easily shaken.

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# FROM HONG KONG TO TORONTO: A JOURNEY OF COMMUNITY, ADVOCACY, AND BELONGING

SHUN HANG TO

I am Shun Hang To, and I work as a community organizer in downtown Toronto. Moving from bustling Hong Kong to diverse Toronto has been an eye-opening experience. I've been lucky and fortunate to immerse myself in community work and advocacy, which has been more than just a change of scenery; it's been a journey of learning and contributing to the neighbourhoods I now call home.



In Hong Kong, I assisted Councillor Ng Kin Wai in Yuen Long District, in riding Kingswood North. We were part of a dedicated group working to strengthen our community. One project we're proud of is our community newsletter. It was more than just a newsletter; it was a way to shine a light on local heroes. We featured stories of local farmers bringing fresh produce to our tables and advocates fighting for residents' rights. One standout project was cleaning a neglected tunnel all night, turning it into a canvas for local artists. These efforts showed the power of community and what we can achieve together.

Arriving in Toronto felt like entering a different world compared to Hong Kong. The city's multicultural vibe was vibrant and inviting. Carrying my hopes and memories in my heart, I embraced this new chapter. While the change was stark, with a different pace of life and colder weather, I quickly learned the importance of understanding and adapting to new environments. Challenges like navigating public transit and getting used to life in Toronto became opportunities for growth. Each day was a chance to learn, grow, and become part of Toronto's cultural tapestry. This experience taught me the value of resilience, adaptability,

and the endless possibilities of embracing new experiences.

My experience at York University was a pivotal chapter in my life, sparking significant personal growth and a rewarding educational journey. I immersed myself in a broad spectrum of subjects, but it was the (PPAS2110) Canadian Government course that truly stood out. Beyond merely unpacking Canada's political framework, this course prompted a deep self-reflection about my societal role. It encouraged me to navigate the complexities of governance and multiculturalism, fostering a critical mindset and an appreciation for the influences of diverse cultural perspectives on public policy and social norms.

This period of academic discovery coincided with the challenges of 2021, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The strict health measures, including vaccination mandates and reduced social interactions, intensified a sense of isolation, creating a stark contrast to the inclusive and dynamic discussions in my classes. This dichotomy highlighted the importance of connection and community, especially as I struggled to bridge the gap between my life in Hong Kong and my new

surroundings in Toronto. The vibrant debates and multicultural engagement in my coursework clashed with the pandemic-induced solitude, underscoring the critical role of community in navigating complex social landscapes.



The turning point in bridging these contrasting experiences came through my volunteer work at the Yonge Street Mission food bank. Initially, my role seemed simple—helping clients, stocking shelves, and maintaining operations. However, this experience quickly evolved into a means of deeper integration within the community. Each personal interaction, whether it was empathizing with a struggling single parent or engaging with an

elderly resident's stories, gradually transformed my outsider's perspective into that of an active community participant. This evolution was not merely about adjusting to a new city but recognizing the transformative power of community involvement in fostering inclusivity and belonging. The resilience, hope, and collective spirit I encountered at the food bank not only bridged the gap between my academic insights and the realities of community life but also reshaped my understanding of my place within Toronto's diverse and vibrant social fabric.

Later, I encountered a group of like-minded immigrants from Hong Kong. We shared the belief that volunteering offers an excellent avenue for new immigrants to forge friendships and acquaint themselves with the local community. Together, we founded "V Hongkongers" to facilitate opportunities for new immigrants to engage in volunteering to weave local social networks. By partaking in various activities, such as sharing cultural food items at nonprofit food markets, supporting local art organizations, and participating in tree planting and community farming, V Hongkongers connected over 30 participants with numerous grassroots organizations across

the city. Our recent participation in the Yonge Street Mission Winter Walk event, aimed at generating support for community members experiencing generational poverty, reflects our collective journey towards integration and fostering a sense of belonging within the Toronto community.

Adjusting to Canada's political customs, like canvassing, was surprising for me. In my background, this kind of direct community involvement wasn't as common. I found Torontonians' active participation in public discussions both unexpected and inspiring. Getting involved in canvassing not only let me contribute to the community but also allowed me to fully immerse myself in the city's cultural exchange.

Through these experiences, I've learned the importance of being open to new things and the value of adaptability in a diverse society. This journey has shown me that embracing different perspectives leads to a more inclusive and understanding community. Each new experience and the willingness to learn from them has helped me see the beauty of cultural exchange, where every step forward enriches our shared experience.

As I look ahead, my ambitions are deeply meaningful to me. I aim to offer strong support to my fellow Hongkongers and the wider immigrant community in Toronto. I want to create an environment where leadership, civic engagement, and active participation are encouraged in our shared community life. I believe that by consistently taking small actions and being open to learning and growing together, we can make a real difference. This approach is not just about providing assistance; it's about building connections, promoting mutual understanding, and empowering newcomers. Through advocating for inclusivity and giving voice to all, I hope to help create a community where everyone feels valued and has the chance to thrive.

My story, set in the vibrant and diverse landscape of Toronto Downtown East. It's a story of exploration, adaptation, and an ongoing effort to contribute in whatever way I can to enrich our community life. This journey has taught me valuable lessons about resilience, the strength found in diversity, and the power of collective action. Every interaction, every piece of advice, and every moment of unity has moved me forward in this ongoing journey of integration and contribution. I'm incredibly

grateful for the lessons I've learned, the connections I've made, and the countless opportunities to give back to this vibrant community that I'm proud to call home. As I reflect on my experiences and look to the future, I'm committed to being an active member of this community, always seeking ways to contribute to its growth and the well-being of its members.



I would like to express my gratitude to the numerous individuals who have supported me throughout my immigration journey. While there are too many to mention individually, I want to acknowledge everyone who has played a role in helping me understand Canadian democracy, advocacy in Toronto, and providing



opportunities for me to share my voice in diverse communities. Your support has been invaluable, and I am deeply appreciative.

# NEW, LIFE, MIGRATION

KA WAI WONG, HIU-FUNG CHUNG, AND  
CHI-YAU CHUNG



Narrating the tales of migrants is never a solo performance; it's an intricate weave of perspectives from both you and me, knitting together the voices of those on a quest for a home. The three of us set out for Canada, not with grandiose visions, but with the weight of life's challenges slowly building upon us. Woven amidst our personal narratives and the "supertranslation" of the toddler voice, we become the sustenance for our family's future memories. Here, in this journey, we hope to add

our own chapter to the rich tapestry of the stories of the Hong Kong Diaspora.

### **"New" — Mom's Perspective**

When it comes to the new, it's a blend of love and hate. With age, there's a growing fear of the unknown. Yet, at times, there's a yearning for freshness, while at other moments, a desire for the familiar. Immigrating to a new place inevitably involves this complex interplay of emotions.

Our plans weren't overly detailed. After experiencing a few years of political turmoil and navigating through the pandemic, our primary desire was to "take a break" from Hong Kong. The idea was to live in a different place, inhale air that was either new or refreshing, even if just for a bit. My partner, with ambitions for a Ph.D. abroad, had always considered the UK or the US, never Canada. It was only upon a professor's suggestion that he applied to Canadian institutions. During the waiting period for Ph.D. offers, the news consistently featured "offers" to Hong Kong residents from various countries, including Canada's lifeboat scheme.

Fortunately, my partner received several promising offers from American universities. The sole Canadian institution he applied to, the University of Toronto, also extended an offer. When we received this news, I was five months pregnant and felt that this was the decision we should make, aiming to provide our son with more opportunities. Be it relocation or childbirth, we refrained from extensive planning. Perhaps it should be acknowledged that in this era, meticulous planning is challenging. Uncertainty may be disconcerting, but a future that is too predictable — be it in life or in a city — stifles curiosity, creativity, and potential.

And so, we welcomed a new life, and amid both astonishment and joy, ventured into a “New” country (Canada), offering a fresh start for the three of us.

### **"Birth" — Dad's Perspective**

On that eventful night in the delivery room at Queen Mary Hospital in Hong Kong, our newborn son made a spirited entrance into the tumultuous realm we call life. Nestled on his mother’s warm belly, he emitted a poignant cry, marking his presence with a dash of urine as he

welcomed the imperfect world around him. In the delivery room, a son who had yet to learn how to be a father became the newborn's "daddy". In the process of comprehending my newfound role as a father, I soon found myself having to leave my child's side.

During this period, the pandemic in Hong Kong hadn't subsided, casting a cloud of uncertainty over the prospect of my entire family undertaking the journey to Canada together. That evening in early September, I embarked on a red taxi ride to Hong Kong International Airport, traversing a parallel time and space spanning 12,542 kilometers to Toronto alone for seven months. Although the internet provided a semblance of shared temporal existence, it failed to convey the warmth and emotion palpable in physical proximity. Later, I came to grasp the immense challenges my wife faced, challenges that eluded the confines of a phone screen.

Come July 2023, the three of us alighted in Toronto, temporarily finding residence in North York before settling in the University of Toronto's family housing in the city center. Navigating the intricacies of the new city proved to be a manageable feat, with Toronto's

lifestyle rhythm mirroring that of Hong Kong. However, the real challenge lay in embracing the role of parents in unfamiliar territory.

In contrast to the Hongkongers' adage, "Giving birth requires passing a test," parenting unfolded before us as a form of Zen meditation—feeding spoonfuls of rice, occasionally with food scattered everywhere; changing diapers, with pants sometimes unevenly worn. As caregivers, we found ourselves needing to be wholly present, devoid of distractions—an ostensibly simple concept that proved challenging to put into practice. The caregiver's daily routine demanded a blend of intellect, physical prowess, execution, and emotional labor repeated day after day. Despite how this builds a wealth of life experiences, workplace culture often overlooks the realm of "parenting," with female caregivers bearing the brunt of the oversight.

I recollect a poignant moment in a doctoral professional development workshop, where a fourth-year student and mother queried, "Can childbirth and parenting find a place in an academic resume?" She candidly shared her struggle, citing almost negligible academic productivity for two years due to

caring for her child, potentially leading to a delayed Ph.D. completion. The workshop's professor, herself a mother of two, recounted her own experience, advising the student to candidly detail her pregnancy and parenting journey in her application for a tenured position. This, she suggested, would afford evaluators the discretion to appreciate the unique challenges faced.

Although Canada emphasizes EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion), the concept of a "parenting resume" is not yet mainstream. However, the academic field is generally more understanding towards parents. Here, there are no domestic helpers who work six days a week, 24/7 to help us support our child. Even with childcare services, parents often find themselves taking a hands-on approach. In Canada, male involvement in parenting is not an anomaly, and the community displays relative tolerance toward the clamor of children. On a policy level, nurturing the care economy stands as a pivotal component of the country's domestic and foreign affairs, recognizing the social and economic value of caregiving labor encompassing parenting, healthcare, and elderly care. These notions may seem alien to Hong Kong residents accustomed to

outsourcing various aspects of life, including the care of the elderly. These ideas are unfamiliar to Hongkongers accustomed to outsourcing everything.

Residing in a new country, life predominantly unfolds as a journey of "hard work," yet within this struggle, we encounter opportunities to reboot our lives. Restarting doesn't necessarily mean a complete overhaul but rather resurrecting the dormant sensibility, turning on our emotional "switch," allowing our lives to rediscover curiosity.

### **"Migration" – the Child's perspective**

Adapting to migration is likely the easiest for the child. Let us "translate" the big world he sees through those little eyes!

*"Dada, Gonggong, Porpor, YehYeh, Mama?" (Daddy, Grandpa, Grandma, Grandpa, Grandma?)*

*Migration is just the people around me turning into what I see on a rectangular frame.*

*"Dad" showed up on the screen when I was a little over two months old, then he came out when I came to Canada. Not long after,*



*Grandpas and Grandmas moved into the screen. It's not inconvenient at all. Sometimes, their heads squeeze into the frame and become very small. Sometimes the screen turns black, and I can only hear them shouting, "Oops, wrong button," or asking me for a kiss; kissing them through the screen feels icy. They just become characters on that little screen.*

*"Yu. Shu ... Yuyu, yuyu ... Shushu ..." (Rain, snow... rain, rain... snow, snow...)*

*Another feature of migration is that I now have snow in addition to rain.*

*The rain here is similar to the rain in Hong Kong. However, it turns out there's something else that falls from the sky called snow in Canada. When there's snow, Dad and Mom become very excited. Yet, for me, since the day I was born, there's been something new to discover every day—cars, cats, squirrels, and now snow. They are all just new friends.*

Looking at it from a different perspective, whether to migrate or not, there probably isn't a significant difference for the son. Every moment is his happy time. Learning from a child provides us with our daily lesson in adaptation.

## **Also "Migration" - Drifting and Changing Thoughts**

No place is perfect, and thoughts evolve with changing circumstances. As a sojourner, it is crucial to embrace the humility of being a guest.

Toronto stands out as a city of immigrants, attracting individuals and families with varied reasons and beliefs behind their migration. The city's strength lies in its diversity, fostering a common language of "tolerance." Here, one can preserve their roots, openly proclaim a new identity, or pursue personal growth. This essence is not rooted in self-centeredness but rather in the aspiration to make everyone the center of their world.

Attaining such "tolerance" may be challenging for individuals from Hong Kong, who are accustomed to competition, efficiency, and a strong belief in meritocracy. For instance, at the opening exhibition of an art museum in Toronto, everyone is required to wear masks to protect a guest with a compromised immune system, a practice that deviates from strict "cost-effectiveness," but is common in Toronto. In terms of job opportunities, success may not

always be determined solely by merit, as job advertisements often give priority to applicants of diverse genders, indigenous backgrounds, and people of color. The focus shifts from “you” and “I” to “we”, and our communal values.

Amidst the sense of being a stranger and the perpetual longing for a "comfort zone," it becomes crucial to foster tolerance towards oneself and others. Embracing change, whether in the social environment, interpersonal networks, or personal growth, is integral to navigating the experience of drifting away. The three of us are still on the journey of changing perspectives.

*This submission was translated from Chinese to English. The following is the original script.*

## 新 . 生 . 移

黃嘉慧、鍾曉烽、鍾志悠

說移居者的故事，難有一言堂，總是由你我的視角交織，拼湊成尋家者的絮語。我們仨移居加國，沒有宏大理念，只是一點一滴累積生活掙

扎，夾雜自述與「超譯」，成為一家人未來回憶的養分，但願能構成為香港人移民故事的一角。

## 關於「新」——媽的視角

對於新，我們又愛又恨，人越大，越怕新事物，有時愛新鮮感，又想擁抱熟悉感。移居一個新地方，恐怕就由這種愛恨感覺交纏。

一切都沒有計劃太多，經過幾年的政治低壓與疫情，心裡想的是純粹想「離開一下」，在異地生活一下，一下下就好，呼吸一些或新或鮮的空氣。外子一直有計劃出國讀博，為了學術仕途，不是英，便是美，但從沒想過加。就在他一位老師提議下，申請了加拿大，等 PhD offer 期間，新聞不斷出現的是各國給港人的「offer」——包括加國港人避風港計劃。

幸運地，外子得到數個不錯的美國大學 offer，而唯一有交申請的加拿大院校——多倫多大學，亦給了最後一個 offer。收到消息，當時懷胎五個月了，覺得這是我們該作的選擇，希望能讓兒子有更多的選擇。不論是移居，還是生育，我們一切也沒有計劃太多。或許應該說，活在這個年代，一切也計劃不了太多。不確定讓人不安，但過於確定的未來——人生也好，城市也好，扼殺好奇心、創意，還有可能性。

就這樣，迎接著新生命，在驚與喜之間，邁向一個新的「加」，就是我們仨新的家。

## 關於「生」——爸的視角

那夜凌晨在瑪麗醫院產房，新生兒呱呱墜地，在剛分娩的媽媽的肚子上，嚎哭一聲，灑了一泡尿，向這個壞世界問好。在產房內，仍未學懂成為父親的兒子，我就成了他嚷著的「爹爹」；仍未學懂成為「爹爹」的父親，就要離開他的身邊。

那陣子香港的疫情還未完結，舉家飛行存在太多不確定因素——就這樣，我獨個兒登上開往赤臘角機場的「紅的」，走了七個月相距 12,542 公里的平行時空。縱然互聯網讓我們可「活」在同一個時區，卻都無法傳遞溫度和情感。後來才知道，太太渡過了多艱難時光，那是手機屏幕無法倒照的。

2023 年的 7 月，三口子到埗多倫多，期間從北約克暫借居，搬到多倫多大學在市中心的家庭宿舍。適應新城市不難，特別是多城的生活節奏，遠比想像中接近香港，大概最吃力的，還是在陌生國度裡學做爸媽。

相較「生仔要考牌」，育兒於我倆更貼近禪修——餵一口飯，偶爾食物滿地可；抹一次屁

股，褲管穿了一邊就通處跑。當照顧者，要心無罣礙，專注當下，知易行難。照顧者的日常，集結智力體力執行力，還有日復日的情感勞動，人生履歷豐富了，但職場文化往往無視「親職」這項條目，而受苦的多是女性照顧者。

記得在博士生的專業發展工作坊中，有位四年級生——也是一位媽媽問道：「究竟可否將生育、育兒寫進學術履歷？」她補充說，她因照顧嬰兒，兩年幾乎沒有學術生產，博士畢業年期延後，如果不加說明，會否讓評委覺得她「不事生產」？主持工作坊的教授也是一位兩孩之母。她說在呈交終身教席申請文件時，同事建議她交代懷孕和育兒首兩年的情況，好讓審批時能酌情處理。

當然，即使加拿大強調 EDI (Equity、Diversity、Inclusion)，這種「親職履歷」的概念仍未見得是主流，但（學界）職場對父母還是比較體諒。這裡沒有一周工作六天 24/7 的工人姐姐，就算有托兒服務，父母很多時都要親力親為。在加國，男性參與親職並不十分罕見，社區對於小孩的吵鬧也相對寬容。在政策層面上，發展關懷經濟 (Care Economy) 更是國家內政和外交的重要一環，從制度上承認照顧勞動——包括育兒、保健、以及照料年長者等——具有社會

和經濟價值。這些觀念，對習慣將一切外判的香港人來說，卻是相當陌生。

居住在新的國度，生活雖然多半是「辛活」，卻偶遇重啟人生的機會。重啟，並不意味必定「砍掉重練」，反而更像是將關了機的感性「撻翻起」，讓我們的生命重拾好奇。

### 關於「移」——兒的視角？

對於移居，最易適應必然是兒子。讓我們「超譯」他那雙小眼睛看的大世界吧！

「爹爹、貢公、婆棵、爺耶、嫲麻？」

移，就是身邊圍繞著的人，變了正方框而已。

「爹爹」在我兩個多月大時走入了正方框，又從正方框走了出來，過了不久，貢公、婆棵、爺耶、嫲麻又走入了正方框，也沒有什麼不方便，只是有時他們幾個頭擠入一個正方框，變得很小，有時畫面變黑只聽到他們嚷著「死啦，擦錯添」，或是要我錫錫，錫下去凍冰冰的。他們，變了正方框而已。

「雨雪…雨雨…雪雪……」

移，就是除了雨雨，多了雪雪而已。

這邊的雨雨，跟那邊的雨雨也差不多，原來還有一樣東西也從上面下來，叫雪雪。剛有雪雪時，爸爸媽媽好像很興奮，但對我來說，出生起每天都有新事物認識，車車、貓貓、(松)鼠鼠，還有雪雪，都是新朋友而已。

換位思考，移或不移，在兒子看來，大概沒有太大的區別，每一刻都是他的快樂時代。向孩子學習，是我倆每天的移民課業。

### 也關於「移」——漂泊與轉念

沒有一處地方是十全十美。念隨境遷，作客，要有作客者的謙卑。

多倫多是移民之都。每位尋家者，每個家庭，遷移流散背後，原因信念各異，也正因如此，「包容」成為這座混雜城市的共同語言。你可以保有你的根，自由宣示你的新身份，或追尋想成為甚麼人——這不是自我中心，而是盡量讓人人都能成為世界中心。

要成就這種「包容」，或許對於慣於競爭、效率至上、深信唯才主義 (meritocracy)



的香港人而言，可能難以接受。譬如，藝術館開幕展覽要求所有賓客和員工戴口罩，以保護一位免疫力較弱的訪客，這種不乎「成本效益」的舉動，在多城俯拾即是。就業機會來說，有時亦未必「有能者居之」，招聘廣告中優先考慮多元性別、原住民、有色人種的申請者也並不罕見——重要的不是「你」或「我」有能力做什麼，而是「我們」這個社群在乎什麼。

漂泊在外，無時無刻與陌生感共存，心裡多少總渴望留在「舒適圈」。亦因漂泊在外，不妨對人對己寬容一點，接受改變——不論是社會環境、人際網絡，還是自己。我們仨，仍在轉念途上。

2024年1月

寫於多倫多

# THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Jessica CHENG 鄭華珠** is a writer from Hong Kong who is interested in portraying the stories of different families, the changes in the city, and the definition of home/homeland. She was awarded the Champion in the House of Literature Hong Kong—Fiction Competition and published *Two Nest - love from both*.

She is also the founder of Two Nests Creation, which focuses on promoting child-focused co-parenting in the Asian community. In the past years, she has produced a variety of cultural events to share the stories of separated families.

**Venus CHEUNG** graduated from The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2019 with a Bachelor of Architecture. From 2019-2023, she worked on participatory design and age-friendly design with architecture studios in Hong Kong and served as a research assistant at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is a creative facilitator who always seeks opportunities to collaborate with communities. Currently, she holds the position of Research Assistant at

Toronto Metropolitan University, where she explores co-creative strategies to enable dementia-friendly cities. She is also actively involved in community engagement for Chinatown redevelopment and expresses a keen interest in multicultural planning and diaspora studies.

**Alex FONG 房澄邦** is currently a PhD student studying social work at York University. Due to political turmoil in his hometown, he moved to Canada in 2022. As a new immigrant to Canada, he is interested in areas such as identity negotiation of migrants, transnational social movements, and Hong Kong diaspora studies.

Before relocating to Canada, he gained experience working as a research assistant for the social work department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, participating in a project that studied youth's mental distress stemming from the 2019 Hong Kong social movements. Alex is a registered social worker in both Ontario and Hong Kong and has over 10 years of expertise working mainly with children and youths in non-profit organizations.

**Ying FUNG 馮盈** was born in Hong Kong and spent her early years under the care of her grandmother. During her time in kindergarten in Guangdong, China, she frequently played in rural fields. Subsequently, she returned to Hong Kong with her father and continued to reside there until she finished her studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, graduating after six years.

In 2023, Fung Ying moved to Canada and has since been employed in local marketing. Navigating the complexities of modern business society, she actively engages in the exploration of balancing survival with self-preservation while pursuing her beliefs and interests.

**Michael Bing Chiu LAI 黎炳昭** was born in 1942 in Guangdong Province, China. Coming from a family of artists, he established himself as a renowned artist and children's art educator in Hong Kong at a young age. In 1966, he founded Elsa Art House and managed several locations in Hong Kong. In 1974, Michael was selected as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Persons (TYOP) in Hong Kong.

In the early 1990s, Michael made the decision to immigrate to Canada with his family. Settling in Toronto, he once again dedicated himself to teaching painting for children and young people. He established the "Lai Bing Chiu Art Centre," where he recruited students and integrated into the local community.

Michael is not only a skilled artist but also a prolific writer. In 1998, he founded the Toronto Season Magazine and has authored over 39 art booklets from 1964 to the present.

**Harmony LAU 劉心** was born and raised in Scarborough to two immigrant parents from Hong Kong. She graduated from the University of Ottawa in 2019 with an Honours Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Classical Studies. Currently residing in Markham, she spends her days entertaining her dog and adding more books to her ever-growing collection of unread novels.

**Casey LUN (倫)** is somewhere in the middle of everything and likes to lie down. She (probably) graduated from a University with a Masters in [redacted]. Her dog's name is Cat. One time she

licked an apple that sat in the garden for days, and it was mostly to satisfy a curiosity, but she argued it was to strengthen her immune system. She prefers the Canadian/British spelling that includes the “u” in words like “humour”, even if it doesn’t belong, but the American spelling when it comes to using “z” instead of “s” like “idealize” because she thinks the “z” deserves more love. She likes to go, but often has no idea where she is going, which is fine, and likely as a result she is a deeply unserious person. Space is really cool.

**Tin Yuet (Tiffany) TAM 譚天悅** is a Hongkonger, educator, art lover, and city enthusiast. She has been teaching English at secondary schools in Hong Kong. Apart from her professional commitments, she dedicates her time to writing poetry, reviews, critiques, and essays in both English and Chinese. Her work has been featured in Voice & Verse Poetry Magazine, Hong Kong Repertory Theatre’s Repazine, and the Art & Literature Zine of the Cantonese Diaspora Canto Cutie. She currently resides in Toronto, Canada and is pursuing a Master of Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of

Toronto. Tiffany's research interests include language and identity, literacy education, multilingualism, and how space influences refugee, immigrant, and diaspora communities in shaping their identities.

**Shun Hang TO 杜信行** is a passionate individual committed to social justice and civic engagement. Originally from Hong Kong, he moved to Toronto in 2021 and graduated in Fall 2023 with a degree in public policy and administration from York University. Shun Hang is a local activist focusing on promoting public transit and multiculturalism in Toronto. He is a dedicated board member of TTCRiders and co-founded the volunteer organization "V Hongkongers," which connects Hong Kong new immigrants with the local community. Shun Hang advocates for the Toronto Downtown East community, working to improve accessibility, affordability, and inclusiveness.

**Ka-wai WONG 黃嘉慧** is a new mom balancing part-time work at an art museum, parenting, and household chores. Her "full-time" job? Questioning the meaning of life.

兼職藝術館勞動者，親職育兒、家務不等，正職懷疑人生。

**Hiu-fung CHUNG 鍾曉烽** is a dad-in-training, tackling his PhD at University of Toronto. Born and raised in a Hong Kong vendor family.

一孩之父，香港人夫，街市婆兒子，多倫多大學博士生。

**Chi-yau CHUNG 鍾志悠** is a toddler born in the Year of the Tiger in Hong Kong and a recent immigrant to Canada. As a typical Gemini, he has already showcased his expertise in emotional manipulation.

產地香港，虎年出生，移居加國的 Toddler，典型雙子座，情感勒索專家。



# THE EDITOR

**Mitchell Ma** 馬頌揚 is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. He specializes in anthropological archaeology and has conducted fieldwork in sites in both China and Canada. His research focuses on understanding how the natural and social environment shapes the development of human societies, both in the past and the present.

Aside from his archaeological work, he has also written about cultural heritage, conducted ethnographic research, and published pedagogical studies on university student learning experience.

Having immigrated to Canada during his childhood with his parents from Hong Kong, Mitchell grew up in Scarborough and Markham. This background has deeply influenced his interest in studying the Chinese Canadian community, as it enables him to explore questions about himself.

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With heartfelt appreciation,

Mitchell Ma

