

# THE VICTORIA CHINESE MESSENGER

December, 2011 (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.)

Victoria, British Columbia

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**Its holiday season and Victoria Chinese Messenger wishes all a safe and happy holiday season !**



**If you celebrate Christmas we wish you all a Merry Christmas**

圣诞快乐



## **Victoria Chinese Commerce Association Celebrating 20 Years**

Victoria BC (December 2011)

The Victoria Chinese Commerce Association is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2011. It is hard to believe but it has been 20 years since a group of Chinese business people felt it was time for a new vibrant organization in the community.

A golf tournament reminiscent of the inaugural one 20 years ago was the first celebration event in September of 2011.

VCCA is inviting all of its friends and associates to join them for a spectacular 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Dinner at Don Mee Restaurant in Chinatown.

The event will be on **December 7, 2011** and start with a reception at 5:30 pm, followed with a formal start of dinner at 6:00 pm. The MC will be none other than the erstwhile Alan Lowe, former City of Victoria Mayor and served on the Association's inaugural board of directors. The keynote speaker will be Minister Ida Chong, who also served on that originating board of directors. Both of them have been stalwart supports and part of VCCA's success from the start.

The theme will be "Legacy of VCCA" and will feature the alumni of the past. VCCA will celebrate its achievements and look to the future of community.

As is traditional, there will be a charitable component to their December event, with some fundraising for Santa's Anonymous.

Special entertainment is planned relating to historical moments for the VCCA.

Join VCCA in it celebrations. Ticket price is \$ 40.00 and dinner will feature a fabulous lineup from the chefs at Don Mee Restaurant.

Tickets and reservations are available from:

Frank Low (250-953-5603) or email: frank.low@rbc.com  
Amanda Mills (250-727-0222) or email: amandamills@shaw.ca  
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## **FEATURE ARTICLE**



### **History of Victoria Chinese Commerce Association - VCCA**

Somewhere in Victoria during the dark of winter 1990-1991, a group of like-minded Chinese business persons were feeling the cold of winter setting in. Gathering near the hearth, into the pot they put their broth. As it boiled they added savory ingredients while their thinking caps warmed. With cranial juices stirring that savory broth, a stew of good ideas simmered away. It was time for a new, vibrant business organization for the Chinese community. That good idea was the formation of the "Chinese Chamber of Commerce." Starting with an originating group (Sinclair Mar, Willie Eng, Alan Yuen, Georgina Wong, and Thomas Chan), additional members readily subscribed and the larger group formed the first Victoria Chinese Chamber of Commerce. They held their first meeting in March of 1991.

While minds raced and ideas bloomed, enthusiasm grew. They immediately planned a golf tournament, a dragon boat race, a trade show, Hawaii visitation/exchange and other events. With the fabulous plans in place the "team" was soon to be met with their first hurdle. They wanted to be called the "Victoria Chinese Chamber of Commerce." However in seeking the approval of the use of the wording "Chamber of Commerce," the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce refused to permit it (as the GVCC was by legislation given authority to determine the use of that wording in the name). The purpose was to be named similar

to its expected sister organization - the Hawaii Chinese Chamber of Commerce (based in Honolulu- more on this later).

The affiliation with the Hawaii Chinese Chamber of Commerce came about because many of the first organizers had been involved in the committee that had created the Miss Victoria Chinatown Pageant. Many of you may not know about this pageant but it was successfully held in Victoria for a number of years. However, please note it was not a typical "beauty pageant" but was more of an "ambassadors pageant." Although, with persons of Asian descent as contestants, there was undeniably "beauty" in the pageant.

As a result of that pageant, there was growing contact with the Hawaii Chinese Chamber of Commerce who ran the Narcissus Queen Pageant. This was quite a prestigious event in Hawaii and brought together some very talented and beautiful contestants. Indeed this connection turned in a "sister" relationship and the original constitution of the VCCA was modeled after the Hawaii Chinese Chamber of Commerce. After incorporation, delegations from both organizations visited each other on a number of occasions.

In 1991 BC was proud to still have in office our first Chinese Lieutenant Governor in Canada and British Columbia, the Honourable David See-Chai Lam (Sept. 2, 1923-November 22, 2010). He served in that capacity from 1988 to 1995. The VCCA was honoured that he immediately accepted an invitation to be the Honourary Chairman for the new association - an honour that his office as Lt.-Gov. would normally reserve only for associations that had been in existence for at least 5 years. The VCCA is and was extremely grateful for this association and indeed, His Honour was not only the Honourary Chairman but was an instrumental influence in subsequent VCCA endeavors.

In 1992 the first VCCA golf tournament took place under the leadership of chair, Sam Chan. It was held at Prospect Lake Golf Club with more to follow in subsequent years at Uplands Golf Course.

In 1993 the VCCA, through its members' participation, raised funds to sponsor the Moffatt brothers - four brothers (including a set of triplets) who were young musicians and singers in Victoria. This Moffatt project was successful in that the VCCA (along with others in the community) helped launch their bid into the entertainment world. You can find out more about them on Wikipedia.

By 1993, President Sinclair Mar and chair Alan Yuen proceeded with ideas to bring dragon boats to Victoria, turning them into concrete plans. As luck would have it, Victoria would be hosting the 1994 Commonwealth Games. More importantly, it would be the last time Hong Kong would be participating as in 1997 Hong Kong would revert to China. The VCCA worked with the Commonwealth Games cultural committees to bring a demonstration race of dragon boats to the inner harbour for the first time. This was where the connections and influence of our Honourary Chair Dr. David Lam was of great assistance, with his involvement in the start of dragon boat races and festival in Vancouver. Together with the help of the likes of Milton Wong, the cooperation of the Vancouver festival organizations was readily given. There was also help through the sponsorship of the Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office based in Toronto and Vancouver in bringing this demonstration race about.

As a result, in 1994 during the Commonwealth Games, the VCCA was able to bring the first dragon boat races to Victoria as a demonstration in the Inner Harbour. The demonstration was viewed by half a billion people worldwide.

Commencing in 1995 the first dragon boat "festival," with 20 teams (all from out of town), were racing in Victoria's jewel - its inner harbour. The first dragon boat races held in a working harbour in Canada were born. The dragon boat project was again supported by the Vancouver side, Lt. Gov. Lam, Milton Wong, organizers of the Vancouver Dragon Boat Festival, and Vancouver Dragon Boat event management Sonny Wong and Ed Ng. Their assistance was instrumental in growing the festival for three years. At that time it was

felt that the festival was growing and would be best served by a separate festival society. That festival society was started in August 1997 and today the Victoria Dragon Boat Festival has grown into a three-day event and is one of the premiere festivals in Victoria as well as a sought-after destination for dragon boaters to compete. From its inception, as with many dragon boat festivals, it had a strong affiliation with breast cancer survivors and continues such affiliations today. The Victoria Dragon Boat Festival Society, as the child of the VCCA, now continues in presenting the festival annually since 1997 and celebrated 17 years of dragon boating in 2011. VCCA members have provided leadership and volunteered for the festival from inception to present.

The focus of the VCCA developed over the next years with more involvement in business and the presentation of talks from business leaders. Today the VCCA continues to present a business series as part of its regular meetings. Also, a tradition developed over a number of years where the BC Finance Minister addressed the association at a special meeting each year for a number of years.

It is of note that although it is a business association, the VCCA was more than just business and networking. It should be mentioned that the VCCA did not miss the allure of karaoke, and in many of its more social functions in its early years one would see many members such as Georgina Wong or Alan Yuen crooning away at the microphone.

As time marched on, the economic and immigration patterns of the world changed, and soon after 1997 China's economic power grew. Immigration and business relations with China grew, and as a result the VCCA found another role. This role was to meet and host many business and political delegations from China. This role continues to the present day and now numerous VCCA members travel back and forth to China for their own business purposes.

By 2007 it was time to start planning for the 150 year anniversary of Chinese in Canada. The VCCA struck a committee to plan events

to celebrate this milestone. This committee involved many from the community outside of VCCA and was lead by celebration Chair Sinclair Mar and Co-Chair Amanda Mills.

A plan was put in place to present an original production in the Royal Theatre that would tell the story of the Chinese in Canada over 150 years. Also the Golden Mountain Achievement Awards were introduced to recognize the achievements of Chinese Canadian leaders and supporters across Canada. These two initiatives would culminate in two events in August of 2008 - specifically 080808 (Aug. 8/08, the most auspicious night), and August 9, 2008.

Over the next year planning and preparation for the celebration took place. The VCCA received many nominations from across Canada for the Golden Mountain Achievement Awards. The "150 Years in Golden Mountain" pageant found support via presenting sponsors RBC Royal Bank of Canada and Fairway Market. In addition, the province and federal government contributed substantial funds to add to the production of the celebrations. Many other community sponsors jumped on board for both the pageant and the awards. There was great support from our then City of Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe and our provincial Minister, Ida Chong (both VCCA members).

Through the efforts of the VCCA the Provincial Government declared August 3 to 10, 2008 "Chinese Canadian Heritage Days" and later the City of Victoria presented the Mayor's Merit Award to the recipients of the Golden Mountain Achievement Awards.

Then 2 nights, 150 years in the making, came to pass. On August 8, 2008 at the most elegant gala event the Chinese community had seen for over 150 years, you could feel the emotion and love in the air at the Empress Ballroom. It was a magical night. This auspicious event was put together under the leadership of Frank Low, Gala Dinner Chair.

In attendance were the who's who of the Chinese and Western communities to celebrate

the Golden Mountain Achievement Awards and 150 years of Chinese in Canada.

The next night on August 9, 2008 the “150 Years in Golden Mountain” pageant came to life on the stage of the Royal Theatre to a packed house. This original production featured an original composition by composer Sarina Hoi (also a VCCA member). The expertise for helping the VCCA produce the pageant was found by VCCA members Joyce Kline and Peter Such. They found writer Scott Walker and director Ann Wootten (both new to Victoria at the time), who were respectively contracted to write the script for and direct the pageant. The talents of Ocean Lu were engaged to present numerous dance numbers and Dr. Xiaochuan Pan performed in the Overture. Again, the emotion in the audience was electric as the packed theatre watched the pageant unfold. The Time-Colonist described the composition of Sarina Hoi as “haunting.” VCCA member Tony Joe played the lead role as one of the early Chinese immigrants to Canada.

In addition, through the year of 2008 the VCCA created and orchestrated two media and kick-off events and participated in the tall ships festival as part of the Maritime Museum’s presentations, including performances on the cultural stage. These events were coordinated by Patricia Ing, events coordinator and VCCA member.

The VCCA found support for the 2008 celebrations from other Chinese organizations such as the Victoria Chinatown Lions Club, the Victoria Dart Coon Club and the Victoria Chinatown Lioness Club. Finally in the end the VCCA was able to make a substantial donation to the Victoria Chinatown Care Center.

More on the 150 Years in Golden Mountain Celebrations can be found at [www.150goldenmountain.ca](http://www.150goldenmountain.ca). A further yet unfinished and continuing legacy for this is the wiki site at <http://150goldenmountain.wikispaces.com>. If there are any aspiring writers or historians who would like to be part of updating and adding to this please take a look.

In 2011, under the initiative of Tony Joe, the first Chinatown Night Market was presented for 3 nights over three months. From all aspects the trial Chinatown market was a huge success and was well received by merchants and spectators. More on this can be found on the VCCA website [www.vcca.ca](http://www.vcca.ca).

The VCCA has also enjoyed the support of many community leaders. Of particular note would be Mel Cooper (Mr. Radio in Victoria for decades), John Chew (also a member), Dr. David Lai (noted for his research of Canadian Chinatowns), Ron Lou-Poy, Dan Parker and the numerous local sitting MLA’s and MP’s. Without dropping names, many of its supporters and members enjoyed designations attached to the Order of Canada and Order of British Columbia.

150 Years in Golden Mountain proceeds were just one of many donations to support the community in Victoria. Over the years the VCCA has supported the following organizations:

- Santa’s Anonymous
- Hoy Sun Benevolent Association
- Chinese Cemetery Restoration Project
- Victoria Police Historical Society
- Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria
- Greater Victoria Hospital Foundation
- Victoria Chinatown Lions Club
- United Way of Greater Victoria
- Victoria Chinatown Community Care Foundation
- Victoria Chinatown Care Center
- Camosun College School of Business

In addition, VCCA members mobilized when the need arose to raise funds for the Sichuan Earthquake Victims in China and the Tsunami Relief in Japan.

The VCCA has more recently incorporated student memberships, hoping to help and mentor business students from business programs at our local universities and college.

With 2011 marking the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the VCCA, again celebrations are in order and celebration events have been ongoing. A

celebration golf tournament took place at Prospect Lake Golf Course (as was done 20 years ago) under the chairmanship of Roderick Tang (a VCCA member). The events committee has set up a special meeting and program for the November 2011 meeting in conjunction with the AGM. And in December of 2011, Frank Low will do it again by organizing and presenting a Gala Dinner event sure to be packed as the final celebration of 20 years of VCCA achievement and community support.

### **A Little More About the Organizational History and Who Was There When It All Happened:**

The VCCA Constitution and Governance model originally followed the Hawaii model (after incorporation), except there was to be a founding president and a founding chairman. These were Sinclair Mar and William (Willie) Eng respectively, in recognition of their role prior to incorporation.

After that the presidential lineup upon incorporation was as follows: Willie Eng, Sinclair Mar, Paul Chow, Petter Lam, Alan Yuen, Maria Dominelli, Thomas Chan, Frank Low, Bob Liew, Amanda Mills, Leo Lee, and Portia Tang.

The applicants and persons signing the incorporation documents were: Sinclair Mar, Willie Eng, Samuel Chan, Hans Soderholm, Thomas Chan, Darlene Chan, Georgina Wong and Alan Yuen.

The first directors and early members in addition to the applicants above included: Larry Wong, Jack Lee (deceased), Peter Wong (deceased), John Chew, Jackie Ngai, Waining Wayne Lee, Ida Chong, Lily Yee, Alan Lowe, Petter Lam, Frank Lee, Len Gallo (deceased), Art Paulo, Frank Lee and Wilson U. Unfortunately records are not available to be entirely accurate on all members in the first years. The board members for 2010/2011 are as follows: Portia Tang (Pres.) , Sarina Hoi (1<sup>st</sup> Vice) , Renan Yin (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice), Frank Low

(Treasurer), Irene Tiampo (Secretary) , Leo Lee, Thomas Chan, Sinclair Mar, Ron Sherring and Linda Shi.

VCCA membership is not and has never been comprised only of persons of Chinese descent. Its mandate is about commerce across cultures and communities, locally and globally.

In addition to the individuals, the VCCA has enjoyed the support of the City of Victoria, Province of BC, Government of Canada, local media, local businesses and many more organizations in all of its endeavors.

The VCCA has been and is proud of its members Ida Chong and Alan Lowe. Ida was the first Canadian Born Chinese to be elected to the BC legislative assembly in 1996 and Alan Lowe was the first Chinese mayor of Victoria BC.

In addition, many members serve on community organizations inside and outside the Chinese community, all helping to make Victoria, British Columbia and Canada better place for all.

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### Victoria Chinese Commerce Association 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



Date: December 7, 2011  
 Place: Don Mee Restaurant, Fisgard St, Victoria BC

For Tickets:  
 Frank Low (250-953-5603) or email: frank.low@rbc.com  
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### Year of the Dragon 2012 – Mark your calendars !

Victoria Chinatown Lioness:  
 Annual Lioness Chinese New Years celebration

Dinner will be held on January 21, 2012.

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