

# 黎全恩教授

## Professor David Chuenyan Lai

### 皓首窮經 獻身加國華僑史

被譽為「加拿大唐人街之父」的著名學者黎全恩教授，在全加僑界幾乎無人不識；他對於加國華僑在歷史上走過的每一段路，都瞭如指掌，好比一本會走路的歷史書。過去40多年來，他在維多利亞大學任教至今成為榮休教授，一直孜孜不倦地研究華僑史，找出不少先僑遺跡，並且將重要史料加以保存。過去幾年，即使罹患肝癌要作療養，依然把握時間與精力繼續完成有關著作，這鏗而不捨的精神，及其對華人在加發展作出的貢獻和成就，又豈止於他曾獲的眾多獎項及員佐勳銜？

與77歲的黎全恩教授開始傾談不久，即被他的驚人記憶力和深厚學術功底折服，也毫不疑惑他為何會成為歷史學家。其實，黎教授原來並不是研究歷史的。他青年時代在香港大學攻讀地理地質學，因成績優異而獲得英國聯邦獎學金，前往久負盛名的英國倫敦政治經濟學院攻讀博士學位，研究中國棉紡織業發展史。

1967年獲得博士學位後，回香港大學地理地質系任講師，他無心插柳地取得加拿大移民資格，1968年6月，與新婚妻子張文玉，往愛民頓市亞省大學地理系任教暑期班，然後8月往定居維多利亞，在維多利亞大學（維大）任地理系客席講師。

他坦言，最初只想在當地停留一兩年便離開；尤其當他走進維大的圖書館，發現連一本中文書也沒有，對於從事中文研究的他來說，實在打了一大折扣。而當他最初走到華埠，也感到文化上的隔閡，例如到維市北京樓，想點名菜北京填鴨，誰料侍應說沒有，稱只有chicken chop suey（雞雜碎）…想不到，其後因為一個偶然的機遇，他從此留在維大，一直工作到2003年才退休，而且也變成「華埠通」，以至走遍北美40多個華埠的「北美華人史權威」。

### 從過客到先驅

這個「偶然」，是1971年維大地理系舉行的都市研究會議；當時系內講師及教授被指派要研究自己所居住地區的城市發展問題，黎教授是唯一華人教授，被分配的題目是維市華埠保存或改建問題。當年的華埠猶如一個「貧民窟」，然而當他走入華埠內部時，卻發現內裡倒別有洞天，裡面有小巷、天井、有人種菜、有人養白鴿；小巷四通八達，好比一個八陣圖。

從此，他對華埠的興趣油然而生，繼而展開全面研究，又翻查華埠歷史，由1858年代首批華裔淘金開始，傾注心血與感情於每一歷史章節。期間他得到中華會館批准參閱館內大批19世紀文獻，從中得悉很多華人的史實和資料。

1979年，由於維市華埠部份建築十分殘舊，維市市長就是否保留華埠諮詢民意。當時身為維市華埠重建委員會主席的黎教授決定進行民意調查，收集市民對華埠發展的意見，並加上華埠分階段發展的建議，編撰了《華埠發展報告》遞交市政府。最終，市府採納了建議，全面翻新及美化華埠，包括興建全加第一座永久性中式牌樓。當日如非他的不懈努力，這全北美最古老的唐人街以及國家傳統保留區，也許難以保留、改造、美化，並成為著名旅遊景點。

## 忠於歷史 改寫華人地位

黎教授對加國各地華埠歷史之熟悉，相信很難有人能出其右，他光是研究各地華埠的重要僑社「中華會館」，便花了20年時間蒐集資料，耗時4年訪遍全加各地的17家中華會館。

他認為華裔早年曾被加國政府排擠門外，甚至不公平對待，是與英文媒體對華裔誤解有關。例如40多年前，不少主流傳媒把華埠形容為三不管之地，由華人僑團控制華埠；僑領有如山寨王，無法無天。於是他從中華會館、法庭、舊報紙等蒐集大量有力資料，翻譯出來，在英文媒體中刊登，讓白人及其他族裔認識華人社會，廓清不少誤傳。

幾十年來，他曾走遍北美40多個唐人街，探討和研究華人聚居地的歷史、唐人街的保存和發展、早期華人僑社歷史，以及華人和其他族裔的關係，先後出版著作十多部，發表各種學術論文300多篇。他所著的《加拿大華埠發展史》是華埠研究的權威著作，曾獲不列顛哥倫比亞歷史學會1988年書籍優良獎，1989年被全美國圖書學會列入最具權威性的著作之一。另一部作品《維多利亞之紫禁城》（The forbidden City within Victoria）被列入1991年最暢銷書籍之一。另外還有《唐人街權利核心：維多利亞中華會館之今昔》、《華裔加拿大人的編年史：從分隔到融合》等。

## 畢生成就 捐獻與延伸

2010年，黎教授被證實患上肝癌，經過化療後，目前病情已經穩定，並在康復及療養。在患病後，他想到將自己的幾十年研究所積累的資料捐贈給維多利亞大學。他的心願是，希望這些材料放在圖書館，既能得到更好的保存，亦可讓更多人查閱到，有助於學術研究的推廣。

當時維大表示無力接收該批數量龐大的藏品；後來華裔參議員利德蕙聽到消息，便積極促成了由多倫多大學利銘澤典成來得到該批捐贈。他對唐人街研究的畢生心血，盡在這80箱的研究資料和著作，其中不少是珍貴文物史料，對擴大圖書館的館藏起到了十分重要的作用。經過進一步的分類整理後，圖書館更為這批捐贈舉辦專門的展覽，並提供給研究人員和社會加以利用。

黎教授一生的成就，並不止於數十年如一日的潛心研究。在教學方面，他多次被評為維多利亞大學優秀教授。此外，還積極參與公共事務，曾擔任維多利亞市中華會館顧問、卑詩省多元文化諮詢委員會委員、卑詩省長者諮詢委員會委員、維多利亞市華人耆英活動顧問等。多年來，共受到加拿大各級政府的30多項榮譽和褒獎，包括1983年被授予加國最高榮譽獎“加拿大員佐勳銜”、1998年獲加拿大傳遺基金會辦法的最高榮譽李嘉獎、1993年獲加拿大125周年紀念獎章、2002年獲伊麗沙白女皇二世金禧紀念獎章等等。2006年，他被《溫哥華太陽報》選為最具影響力的百位卑詩華人。

黎教授曾多次到中國講學訪問，並被聘為華東師範大學顧問教授、海南大學東南亞研究院顧問教授，還曾擔任過廣東華僑歷史學會和廣東華僑研究學會顧問。他說，他從事這些教學與交流活動，是希望能為中國的學術研究和繁榮盡一份心意。

此間依然退而不休的黎教授，剛剛完成另一巨著《洪門及加拿大洪門史論》，定於今年11月出版，是商務印書館為慶祝創立100週年而出版「華僑歷史系列」的首本作品。他笑言現階段先要收拾一下書房，才可以再「開工」，繼續兩個未完成的創作計劃；其一是把已出版的作品《加拿大華僑移民史》翻譯成英文；此書介紹的是從1858年到1966年的華僑華人史。而另一正在編撰中的此書的下冊；寫出從1967年到21世紀的華人現當代史，填補在這方面的研究空

白，並希望能在有生之年完成。

黎教授的名言是：「要認識一個人，先要認識他的文化。」要認識黎教授，除了從他如何獻身予華僑文化，還可從他如何珍惜人生路上的重要人物：他的太太。他曾在訪問中提到：「她伴我走過這段移民路；沒有她，研究華人移民史肯定困難許多，因她有圖書館管理，地理的學位及教育文憑，一直助我找出不少珍貴資料。」近年他罹患癌症，更因太太伴他勇抗癌魔而銘感於心。

對於仍在抗癌路上的日子，黎教授抱著平常心去面對，他表示不會想癌的問題，「既來之則安之，要來的亦難以避免。」他每一天都是工作如常；多些與朋友聯絡，可以將掛慮拋得更遠。

擁有如此寶貴的人生經驗，又懂得珍惜與保存，本就是難得的瑰寶。

## **Professor David Chuenyan Lai**

*Professor David Chuenyan Lai, called 'Father of Chinatown' by some, is a familiar name to many in the Chinese-Canadian community. Like a walking history book, he knows virtually every road that Chinese immigrants in Canada have trodden. He taught at the University of Victoria for thirty-five years and retired in 2003 as Professor Emeritus of Geography. He has studied tirelessly the history of overseas Chinese in Canada, identified many Chinese historical sites and memorabilia, and placed important Chinese historical documents in preservation. The numerous awards and honors bestowed on him could hardly begin to recognize his spirit of perseverance and contributions to the Chinese-Canadian community.*

Anyone who talks to the 77-year old Professor Lai would not fail to be utterly impressed by his amazing memory and strong academic skills. One might question why he has become a historian since he did not even study history at university. In fact, he studied at the Department of Geography and Geology at the University of Hong Kong, and graduated with First Class Honors for his Bachelor of Arts degree. After he completed his Masters degree, he was awarded the British Commonwealth Scholarship to study for a PhD degree at the prestigious London School of Economics and Political Science; his thesis was on the development of China's Cotton Spinning and Weaving Industry.

After earning a PhD degree in 1967, Professor Lai returned to teach geography at the University of Hong Kong for a year. Serendipitously his application to immigrate to Canada was approved. In June 1968 he and his new wife, Roberta Man-Yuk, went to Edmonton where he taught a geography course in summer school at the University of Alberta. In August they settled down in Victoria and Professor Lai was hired as a visiting lecturer at the Department of Geography at the University of Victoria.

He admits that initially he planned on staying in Victoria for only one or two years. When he could not find a single Chinese book on China in the university library, he realized that he could not carry out research work on China there. He also experienced cultural shock when he walked into Chinatown. One time he asked for Beijing Duck at an eatery called Beijing Restaurant, but the waiter told him to order Chicken Chop Suey instead. At that time he could not have foreseen that because of a fortuitous opportunity he would teach at the University of Victoria until his retirement, research on Chinatowns all over North America and later become a 'Chinatown Expert'.

This opportunity arose in 1971 when the Department of Geography organized a seminar on the urban development of Victoria. Each faculty member was to conduct research on the urban development of the district where he lived. As Professor Lai was the only professor of Chinese origin, he was assigned to work on a research paper on Victoria's Chinatown. In those days, Chinatown was a slum. However, when he toured the inside of the city block, he was amazed to find a different world: there were alleyways, inner courtyards, vegetable patches, and pigeon coops. The alleyways were accessible from everywhere, and doors led to more doors just like

a labyrinth.

After this visit, Professor Lai was hooked and initiated the research of Chinese migration history to Canada and the urban development of Chinatowns across Canada. He poured his heart and soul into every historical detail, beginning with the first generation of Chinese gold diggers in the 1850s. He was permitted by the President of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association to study the association's Chinese historical documents dating back to the early 19th century and was able to ascertain a lot of historical facts and information on early Chinese migration to Canada.

In 1979, prompted by the dilapidated state of many Chinatown buildings, the Mayor of Victoria expressed a wish to consult Chinese citizens whether they wanted to tear down or preserve Chinatown. As Chair of the Chinatown Redevelopment Committee, Professor Lai decided to conduct an opinion survey on the future of Chinatown in Victoria. In the end, Lai submitted a report: "The Future of Victoria's Chinatown: A Survey of Views and Opinions". Eventually, the city adopted the report's recommendations and undertook a comprehensive rehabilitation of Chinatown, including construction of the first permanent Chinese arch in Canada, beautification of streetscape, and restoration of old buildings. If not for his unremitting efforts, Canada's oldest Chinatown might have been bulldozed. After rehabilitation and beautification, Chinatown became one of Victoria's tourist attractions and was designated as a National Historic Site of Canada.

Professor Lai believes that the earlier discrimination, segregation and ill treatment of Chinese are the result of misconceptions in the English media. In the past, mainstream media described Chinatown as nowhere land controlled by Chinatown associations with their leaders acting like gang leaders. Hoping to clarify that misconception, he spent twenty years visiting "Chinese Benevolent Associations" across Canada and talked to their leaders. He gathered many records from these "Chinese Benevolent Associations" and from legal courts and published the translated version in English-language media, so that Caucasians and other ethnic groups could understand these associations and their activities. His endeavors cleared up a lot of misinformation.

There is no one who can match Professor Lai's familiarity with the history of Chinatowns across Canada. For decades, he has walked through more than forty Chinatowns in North America to explore and study the history of Chinese settlements, and the preservation and development of Chinatown. He has written about the early history of these Chinese settlers, as well as the relationship between Chinese and other ethnic groups. He has published a dozen books and more than three hundred papers. His book 'Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada', regarded as the authority on the study of Canadian Chinatown, was given the Award of Excellence by the British Columbia Historical Federation in 1988, and selected Outstanding Academic Books by American Library Association. His other book, 'The Forbidden City within Victoria' was on the best sellers list in 1991. Other books include: 'Chinese Community Leadership: Case Study of Victoria in Canada' and 'History of Chinese Migration to Canada, 1858 – 1966'.

In 2010, Professor Lai was diagnosed with liver cancer. Now after chemotherapy, he is in rehabilitation and convalescence. After he became ill, he wanted to donate the research materials accumulated over decades to the University of Victoria. His thinking was that these materials would be better preserved in a library, where more people could access it for academic research.

At that time the University of Victoria did not have the space capacity or manpower resources to handle such a large collection. When former Senator Dr. Vivienne Poy caught wind of it later, she pushed to have the Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library at the University of Toronto receive the donation. Professor Lai's lifelong research efforts on Chinatown, contained in eighty boxes of research materials and books, many of which were precious historical relics, played a very important role in the expansion of the library's collection. Special exhibitions have been held after these materials were sorted and organized for the use of researchers and the community.

Professor Lai's lifetime achievements do not end at decades of painstaking research. He has been repeatedly recognized for excellence in teaching at the University of Victoria. In addition, he actively participates in public service, and has served as Advisor of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association at Victoria since 1972. He was a member of Multicultural Advisory Council for British Columbia, Premier's Council on Aging and Senior Issues and Senior Advisory Council for the British Columbian government.

Over the years, he has been recognized with more than thirty awards and honors from the three levels of government, including Member of the Order of Canada in 1983. Professor Lai was awarded the BC and Yukon Regional Community Service Award in 1982 by Heritage Canada Foundation, and the Gabrielle Leger Award in 1998, the highest honor bestowed by that foundation. In 1992 Professor Lai was awarded the Commemorative Medal for the 125th anniversary of the Federation of Canada. In 2002 he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, and so on. In 2006, he was selected one of the 100 most influential Chinese Canadians in British Columbia by Vancouver Sun.

Professor Lai has frequently lectured in China, and was retained as Advisory Professor at East China Normal University, and Advisory Professor at Southeast Asian Research Institute at Hainan University. He also served as Advisor for Guangdong Overseas Chinese History Society and Guangdong Overseas Chinese Research Society. He says that he engaged in these teaching and exchange activities so that he could contribute a little towards China's academic research and her prosperity.

Retired, but not taking any rest, Professor Lai has just completed another masterpiece, 'Hongmen and the History of Hongmen in Canada', a book on Hongmen Society, including its role in supporting Sun Yet-sen to overthrow the Manchu government. It is scheduled for publication at the end of this year and is the first book in a series on Overseas Chinese to be published on the 100th anniversary of Commercial Press in Hong Kong. He says with a laugh that at this time he has to first clean up his private library before he can begin work on two unfinished projects. The first project is to translate his already published book "History of Chinese Migration to Canada: 1858 to 1966" (written with Dingguo and Jia Baoheng) into English. The second project is to complete the sequel to this book, which will document the modern and contemporary history of Overseas Chinese from 1967 to the 21st century. Professor Lai hopes to fill in gaps in research in this area, and complete the book in his lifetime.

One of Professor Lai's favorite sayings is: "To know a man, you must first know his culture." Aside from his dedication to overseas Chinese culture, Professor Lai also cherishes an important figure in his life: his wife Roberta Man Yuk. He mentioned in an interview: "She has walked with me my entire life since immigrating to Canada. Without her, my study of Chinese immigration history would certainly have been a lot more difficult. With her three degrees in geography, education and library science, she has helped me tremendously in my researches." He is especially grateful that his wife is by his side to help him throughout his illness.

Professor Lai faces his battle with cancer with placidity. He says he will not think too much of it - "if it comes, it comes." He carries out his work as usual every day; he spends time with friends, and throws worry to the wind.

Such valuable life experiences, like a rare piece of precious gem, are to be preserved and cherished through Professor Lai's legacy of great books.