

# BARKERVILLE IN CONTEXT:

## *Archaeology of the Chinese in British Columbia*

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### INTRODUCTION

**I**N 1882, A MINER DISCOVERED THIRTY Chinese coins along a creek in the Cassiar District of northern British Columbia, apparently strung together and recovered from sandy deposits approximately eight metres beneath the surface (Deans 1884; Keddie 1990). Although the true age and context of the find is unclear (though see Keddie 1982 for a possible interpretation), there are precedents for similar finds at least a century prior to this. Historical accounts of coastal peoples in British Columbia wearing Chinese coins as ornaments date at least as far back as the 1790s, and similar coins have been recovered from late pre-contact and early contact period Aboriginal sites in western North America (Beals 1980; Keddie 1990, 2006). In fact, Chinese labourers arrived on the west coast of Vancouver Island as early as the 1780s aboard European fur trading vessels, and Chinese coins arrived in their possession or as trade items purchased by Europeans and Americans in China. However, they may also have arrived through Aboriginal trade networks across the Bering Sea or from Asian ships wrecked off the North American coast.

Likewise, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, several barnacle-encrusted ceramic pots of uncertain age were hauled up in fishing nets off Pachena Bay near Bamfield on Vancouver Island and in nearby Clayoquot Sound near Tofino (Wood 2012a, 2012b). Speculation arose that these pots came from Asian ships wrecked off the coast of British Columbia hundreds of years ago, although the existence of such wrecks has yet to be confirmed (Keddie 2004). Chinese myths, foreign artefacts like these pots, and alleged cultural similarities between various Asian, Polynesian, and American societies have all been cited as evidence of trans-Pacific voyaging long before the arrival of Europeans on the west coast of the Americas.

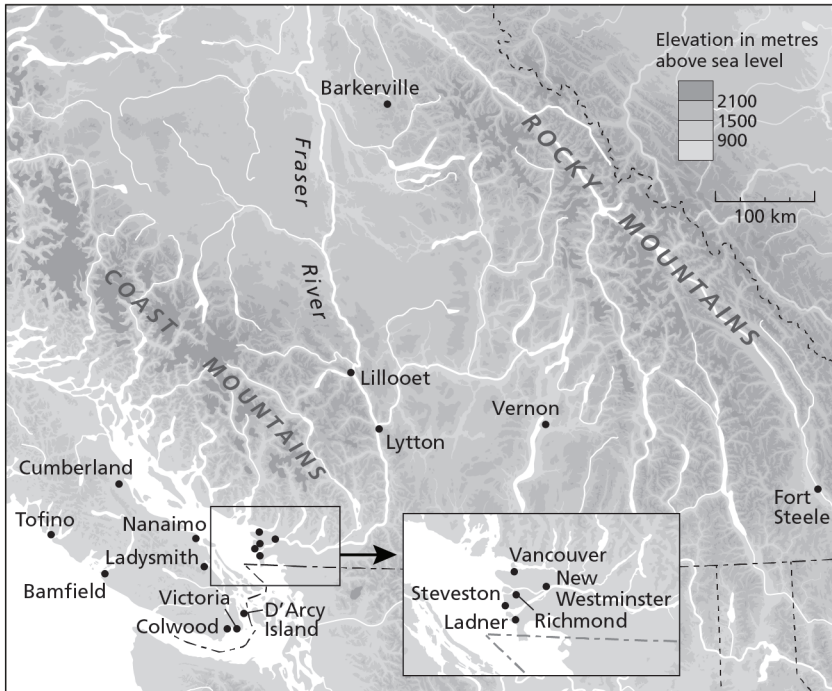


Figure 1. Sites mentioned in the text. Cartography by Eric Leinberger.

Together, these finds suggest that Chinese material culture made its way into local trade networks in British Columbia and the province's archaeological record long before the first substantial numbers of Chinese migrants arrived in 1858. However, the volume and diversity of this material paled in comparison to the quantity and range of consumer goods imported into North America by Chinese merchants from the mid-nineteenth century onward to serve the many Chinese workers who arrived annually. The supply network for their goods extended far into the interior of the province, including the gold-mining town of Barkerville in the Cariboo region, the subject of this volume of *BC Studies*.

The history of formal archaeological research on the Chinese in British Columbia starts with Barkerville but extends to sites in several other regions of the province. Despite much recent work, the volume of literature remains relatively small and the number of substantial projects comparatively few. Nevertheless, a pressing need exists to synthesize and review this growing body of literature with reference to similar research conducted elsewhere. Literature reviews and edited volumes

have been published on Chinese diaspora archaeology in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (Wegars 1993; Bell 1996; Lydon 1999; Casey and Ritchie 2003; Voss and Williams 2008; Lawrence and Davies 2011), but no single publication addresses research in Canada (virtually all of which has focused on British Columbia) in any systematic way. In our reviews of the field, Wegars (2002) and I (Ross 2013, 2014a) mention some of these Canadian studies but only very briefly. This article, then, offers a much needed summary and contextual review of Chinese diaspora archaeology in British Columbia, and I hope that it will raise the profile of such work among archaeologists and other scholars both locally and internationally.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The following discussion is intended only as a brief sketch of some of the key themes in the early history of Chinese migrants in British Columbia. For further details, including regional and temporal variation, there is a wealth of scholarly literature on the subject (e.g., Morton 1974; Wickberg 1982; Li 1998). Overseas Chinese migration in the nineteenth century was driven by a series of push-pull factors, including poor socio-economic conditions at home and strong demand for cheap labour abroad, encouraging large numbers of people to seek employment throughout Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas (Li 1998). Although there are records of Chinese present in British Columbia in the late eighteenth century, substantial Chinese migration to Canada began in 1858 in response to the Fraser River gold rush. Most arrivals came from a small number of counties in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong and worked as independent miners or contract labourers. Some Chinese continued to mine along the Fraser after the initial rush, while others followed the rush north into the Cariboo region, including Barkerville, beginning in the 1860s and later into other mining regions.

Large-scale Chinese migration to British Columbia began in the early 1880s in conjunction with construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, for which the migrants worked as contract labourers (Li 1998). Besides mining and railway construction, Chinese also worked in industries such as logging, farming, and salmon canning; operated businesses such as stores, restaurants, hotels, laundries, and opera houses; and worked as merchants, labour contractors, and domestic servants. Most migrants were men, although a small number of Chinese women were present in

British Columbia (Woon 2008). In urban and rural communities Chinese established distinct Chinatowns or Chinese quarters, which served as social and economic centres for residents and transient labourers, and where many Chinese were self-employed in Chinatown-based service industries (Lai 1988). The largest of these communities developed in Vancouver, Victoria, and New Westminster. These centres, both large and small, were the focus of a far-flung merchant network that brought imported Chinese consumer goods to the most remote labour camps.

Considered by many Euro-Canadians to be incapable of assimilating into Canadian society, Chinese suffered from severe racism and were blamed for a variety of social ills and for taking jobs from white workers (Roy 1989; Ward 2002). They also received lower wages for the same work as that performed by white employees. As part of this race-based exclusion, British Columbia passed a series of laws between the 1870s and 1920s preventing Chinese from holding certain jobs; they were also denied the right to vote and to hold political office (Ryder 1991). The Canadian government instituted a head tax on Chinese migrants in 1885 and in 1923 passed the Chinese Immigrant Act excluding most Chinese from entering the country. This act was not repealed until 1947.

Heritage legislation in British Columbia grants little protection to Chinese and other postcontact historic sites. Legislation enacted since the nineteenth century has focused almost exclusively on First Nations sites (Apland 1993). The Archaeological and Historic Sites Protection Act, 1960, includes a list of automatically protected sites (all First Nations) plus a catch-all category of “other archaeological remains” that could include historic sites but that was only applicable to provincial Crown land (Klassen 2008; Klassen et al. 2009, 204-6). The Heritage Conservation Act, 1977, which replaced the Archaeological and Historic Sites Protection Act, was expanded to include private land but eliminated the catch-all category of automatically protected sites.

In 1994, the Heritage Conservation Act was amended to grant automatic protection to all archaeological sites, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, predating 1846 on public and private land. This somewhat arbitrary cut-off date – based on the Oregon Treaty, 1846, which legitimized British sovereignty and allowed formal colonization to begin in 1849 – protects some early historic sites but effectively eliminates all post-1846 historic sites except those associated with the contact period (such as fur trade sites) from automatic protection, including all Chinese sites. Thus, unless individually designated as historic sites at the municipal, provincial, or federal levels, or located



Figure 2. Kwong Sang Wing Building, Barkerville. Photo by author.

on lands protected by other heritage legislation or policy (e.g., national parks administered by Parks Canada), all sites dating from after 1846 are open to ongoing damage or destruction by public and private development, resource extraction, artefact collecting, and other activities. Nevertheless, a substantial and growing body of literature on Chinese sites in British Columbia now exists, much of it poorly accessible outside the provincial archaeological community. I therefore summarize these studies chronologically in some detail (Table 1), discuss how they relate to international trends in the discipline, and make suggestions for future research and closer integration with related disciplines and interdisciplinary scholarship.

#### CHINESE ARCHAEOLOGY IN BARKERVILLE

The earliest Chinese-related archaeology in British Columbia was a single excavation unit placed in the rear addition of the Chee Kung Tong Chinese Freemasons Building in Barkerville in 1978, but no report exists (Irvine and Montgomery 1983). The earliest substantial research in the historic gold-mining town was conducted on the Kwong Sang Wing Building in 1982 (Laing 2009; Wright 2013). Used by the Kwong

TABLE 1  
*Archaeology of the Chinese in British Columbia*

DATE	PERIOD	LOCATION	CONTEXT	TYPE OF WORK	SOURCES
1978	unknown	Barkerville	gold-mining town	unknown	Irvine and Montgomery 1983
1982	ca. 1902-50s	Barkerville	gold-mining town	research/restoration	Irvine and Montgomery 1983
1987	1894-ca. 1930	Steveston	salmon canning	resource management	Wilson 1987
1988	ca. 1900-30s	Vancouver	market gardening	resource management	Ham 1988
c. 1990	1891-1924	D'Arcy Island	leper colony	academic	French 1995, 1996
1990	1899-1923	Ladysmith vicinity	logging	resource management/ academic	Wilson 1990
1990	ca. 1898-1930s	New Westminster	urban Chinatown	academic/salvage	Hooper 1993a
1991	ca. 1878-1929	Ladner	urban Chinatown	academic/salvage	Hooper 1993b, 1993c
1992	1867-1967	Vernon vicinity	ranching	academic	Sauer 1995
1993-94	1860s-1940s	Barkerville and North Cariboo District	gold mining	academic	Koskitalo 1995, Hobler and Chen 1996, Chen 2001
1995	1890s-1920s	Lillooet	Chinatown	resource management	Zacharias et al. 1997
1996	1880s-1980s	Vancouver	urban Chinatown	academic/avocational	Hooper 1996, Lim 2002
1996, 2001	1870s-1920s	Colwood	domestic or industrial labour	resource management	Owens et al. 1997, Vincent 2001
1998	1890s-1920s	Cumberland vicinity	cemetery	resource management	Witt 1998
1999-2000	1864-1980s	Fort Steele and Wild Horse Creek	gold-mining town, cemetery	research/training/public education	Sauer 2000, Sauer and Pasacreta 2001
2000-02	1860s-1910s	Wild Horse Creek	cemetery	academic	Pasacreta 2003, 2005
2005-06	1885-1930	Richmond	salmon canning	academic	Ross 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013
2006	19th century	Lytton vicinity	railroad or gold mining	resource management	Angelbeck and Hall 2008a, 2008b
2008	ca. 1900-30s	Vancouver	market gardening	academic	La Salle 2008
2008	1900-60	Vancouver, Victoria	cemetery	academic	Chénier 2009
2009	1850s-1950s	British Columbia	multiple	academic/avocational	Morrow 2009
2009	1846-1911	Victoria	First Nations reserve	resource management	Varsakis et al. 2010
c. 2010-12	19th century	Barkerville	gold-mining town	research/public archaeology	Quackenbush 2010
2011	1908-60	Nanaimo	urban Chinatown	academic/avocational	Cowie 2005, Parsley 2011
2013	1885-1930	Richmond	salmon canning	academic	Ross 2014b
2014	1858-ca. 1910	Fraser Canyon	gold mining	academic	Ross et al. 2014



Sang Wing Company and others as a store for Chinese merchandise from at least 1902 until shortly before it was abandoned in the 1950s, it was left untouched until the 1970s when it was stabilized by the BC Parks Branch. In 1982, the Barkerville Restoration Committee sought to restore this structure and felt that an archaeological investigation would help produce a more accurate reconstruction. Furthermore, temporary removal of the building was considered a great opportunity to study its structural evolution and the functional and cultural history of the site through an examination of the artefacts buried underneath.

Work extended over six weeks and consisted of hand excavation and backhoe trenching to reach deep deposits (Irvine and Montgomery 1983). Fieldwork also involved ongoing engagement with visitors, including making interpretive signs and integrating the project into guided tours. Excavation produced a variety of Chinese and non-Chinese artefacts and structural remains from a series of definable occupation layers. Researchers drew tentative conclusions about the sequence of historical events and periods of construction activity on the site, and they used the presence of Chinese artefacts throughout the depositional sequence to confirm long-term Chinese occupation. The bulk of reporting, however, comprises detailed descriptions and drawings of artefacts as an inventory for comparative study and future research. Overall, discussion of ethnicity is limited to confirming Chinese occupation of the building with no attempt to explore the significance of the non-Chinese material recovered from the site.

In 1993 and 1994, Simon Fraser University (SFU) conducted an archival and archaeological survey of Chinese mining settlements in the North Cariboo District near Barkerville as part of an SFU archaeological field school (Hobler and Chen 1996; Chen 2001). The goal was to identify the regional distribution of Chinese communities and to chart the chronological rise and fall of settlements in each area. Hobler and Chen identified thirty-four Chinese sites on seventeen creeks and rivers primarily in the Barkerville-Stanley area. Their team recorded each site for size, surviving structures, features, roads, and artefacts, with close to 100 percent surface coverage. They collected diagnostic surface artefacts from each site, and, at one site, all surface artefacts were collected. Results revealed a settlement hierarchy of Chinese mining sites in each area, comprising four categories of site according to size, structure, and features: (1) large Chinatowns, (2) Chinese quarters in small towns, (3) mining camps, and (4) cabins.



Figure 3. Chee Kung Tong Building, Barkerville. Photo by author.

Part of the 1993 field program involved more substantial excavations beneath the Chee Kung Tong Building in Barkerville (Hobler and Chen 1996; Chen 2001). This structure, which had a ceremonial hall upstairs, was used between the 1870s and the 1940s as a hostel by the Hong-men Chinese Society (Laing 2009; Wright 2013). Hobler and Chen hoped to provide evidence of construction sequences, ethnicity, and site function. Upon temporary removal of the building, work consisted of surface collection, hand excavation, and backhoe work, much the same as at Kwong Sang Wing in 1982. In 1991, Chen had refined the sequence of construction and occupation through a structural survey of the building and analysis of layers of wallpaper, including dated newspapers. In 2001, Chen removed, analyzed, and conserved this wallpaper. Excavations revealed three sequential sets of building footings spanning the 1870s to 1980s, plus over six thousand artefacts, fauna, and botanical remains. Artefacts included large numbers of Chinese and non-Chinese objects dating mostly from the 1870s to 1930s, confirming Chinese occupation throughout the structure's history. The majority of artefacts were categorized as domestic in nature, indicating residential use, although many of them were actually related to alcohol, opium, and tobacco, suggesting recreational rather than domestic activities. The overall artefact pattern





Figure 4. Excavations on the Chinese terraced gardens, Barkerville. Photo by author.

was interpreted as reflecting a predominantly male population, with the volume of material suggesting both permanent residents and visitors from outlying settlements.

In related work, in 1995 SFU undergraduate Michelle Koskitalo analyzed faunal remains recovered from the Chee Kung Tong Building, her focus being on economic status, ethnicity, and culture change (Koskitalo 1995). Domestic animals were dominant, especially pigs, which is characteristic of other Chinese sites. Interestingly, pig was the predominant meat in the southern Chinese diet during the nineteenth century. Chen (2001) also used data from the North Cariboo Project as part of her doctoral work at SFU. She examined the history of Chinese communities in the North Cariboo region during the gold rush and afterwards, spanning the 1860s to 1940s, with a combination of archaeological, archival, and oral history data. Her emphasis was on how Chinese immigrants resisted acculturation and actively maintained and reinforced their Chinese identities through material culture and isolated settlement patterns. She examined reasons for immigration, cultural principles affecting Chinese communities and settlement patterns, and the role of these principles in maintenance of communities over time. She compared broad categories of artefacts from the two

building excavations in Barkerville with surface collections from a rural Chinese cabin site and found, among other results, that opium-related objects made up less than 10 percent of artefacts from the urban sites but 25 percent from the cabin. She suggested that isolation may have influenced this greater prevalence of opium smoking. However, she conducted no detailed analysis on artefacts from other mining sites, and none of the surveyed sites has yet undergone in-depth archaeological study.

Since Chen's work, archaeological testing on Chinese sites has continued at Barkerville, primarily in a resource management and public archaeology context, although to date none of it has been formally reported. This work includes Mike Will's public excavations on terraced gardens in the community's Chinatown, which have produced evidence of a rock cistern irrigation system, a previously unknown nineteenth-century building, plus thousands of artefacts (Quackenbush 2010; Wright 2013).

#### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SALVAGE ARCHAEOLOGY

Beyond Barkerville, a number of resource management and salvage projects have been conducted on Chinese sites in British Columbia since the 1980s. In 1987, Parks Canada undertook an archaeological resource assessment of the Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site in Steveston, which operated as a salmon and herring cannery between 1894 and 1979, in support of management planning and development of the site as a tourist attraction (Wilson 1987). A series of small test units in the location of former Asian worker housing yielded Chinese and Japanese ceramics dating to the pre-1930 period, although detailed identification and quantification were not conducted.

In 1988, Leonard Ham (1988) identified a Chinese site on the University Endowment Lands adjacent to the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus in Vancouver in an area of proposed development. It was identified as an undisturbed kitchen midden associated with Chinese market gardeners who lived on the nearby Musqueam Reserve in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with diagnostic artefacts dating circa 1900 to 1934 observed during fieldwork. Twenty years later, in 2008, the UBC archaeological field school, a joint research project between the Department of Anthropology and the Musqueam Indian Band Council, relocated this site and made surface collections of

diagnostic artefacts (La Salle 2008). According to Musqueam elders, the all-male Chinese farming community was established on Musqueam land around the turn of the twentieth century (and survived into the 1960s) as an attempt by the federal government to encourage Aboriginal people to support themselves through agriculture. These Chinese entrepreneurs cultivated fruits and vegetables, which they transported to markets in the city, and some Chinese men and Musqueam women started families whose surviving children are now elders in the community, a practice also seen elsewhere in the province (Barman 2013).

Near Ladysmith on Vancouver Island, in 1990, Ian Wilson identified two possible early twentieth-century Chinese logging camps with limited evidence of disturbance as part of a historic site survey to identify, record, and evaluate logging sites for a possible archaeological field school organized by Malaspina College (now Vancouver Island University) in Nanaimo (Wilson 1990). Although the field school never went ahead, this project produced useful information on the age, condition, nature of deposits, cultural affiliation, and significance of identified sites.

Also in 1990, students from the SFU Department of Archaeology salvaged a small collection of artefacts left behind by collectors, primarily Chinese, Japanese, and Euro-Canadian ceramics, from a construction site in the location of New Westminster's historic Chinatown (Hooper 1993a). The following year, Robin Hooper salvaged a number of historic artefacts, many of them Chinese, from beneath a warehouse during demolition of an oil storage facility in the village of Ladner (Hooper 1993b, 1993c). This material was fragmented and in disturbed context but included remains of Chinese and Japanese ceramic and glass vessels plus artefacts of Euro-Canadian origin. It is possible that artefact-bearing deposits were moved on site as fill after a 1929 fire that destroyed parts of the adjacent Chinatown dating to the late 1870s. Hooper hoped to provide evidence of lifeways and degree of acculturation ("cultural dilution") of local Chinese immigrants, but both his Ladner and New Westminster reports serve mainly as descriptive catalogues.

During the Lillooet Main Street Revitalization Project in 1995, which involved excavations for sewers and utilities, a possible *in situ* Chinese burial was exposed during archaeological monitoring (Zacharias et al. 1997). Cultural affiliation is suggested by the presence of Chinese ceramics nearby, but this association is not clear and the identification remains tentative. Chinese artefacts were also recovered from ravines

along a creek at the south end of town, in deposits disturbed by earlier road construction, and elsewhere during the project.

In 1996, Millennia Research employed surface survey and subsurface testing to produce an inventory of sites at Royal Roads Military College National Historic Site in Colwood, near Victoria (Owens et al. 1997). A tannery was established here in the 1870s that employed Chinese workers, and in 1902 the property was purchased by wealthy industrialist and former premier James Dunsmuir, who employed more than one hundred Chinese labourers. The survey revealed an isolated refuse dump, damaged by looters, that may be associated with Chinese labourers who worked at the tannery or were employed by the Dunsmuir family. Its contents were dominated by Euro-Canadian glass bottles (plus several Japanese beer bottles) and Chinese brown stoneware food containers, with a smaller quantity of Chinese and Euro-Canadian ceramic tableware. In 2001, it was completely excavated (Vincent 2001). The high proportion of Chinese (70 percent) versus Euro-Canadian (30 percent) ceramics suggests strong cultural links with the homeland, while the greater number of Euro-Canadian beverage bottles may be a product of cost and availability.

In 1998, an archaeological impact assessment near Courtenay and Cumberland prior to highway construction revealed two unregistered Chinese and Japanese cemeteries located adjacent to the right-of-way (Witt 1998). Established in the late nineteenth century after construction of the first mining camp at Cumberland in 1888, these conjoined cemeteries were used until the 1920s, although some Chinese graves date as late as the 1980s. Their boundaries were confirmed to ensure that highway construction would not cause any disturbance. The Chinese cemetery exhibited a series of shallow pits with only a couple of wooden head posts remaining, while the Japanese cemetery contained more permanent headstones inscribed in Japanese, the earliest dating to 1901. These headstones were disturbed following Japanese evacuation during the Second World War and were rearranged around a cenotaph in 1967.

An archaeological impact assessment for a hydroelectric project in 2006 included remains of a Chinese railway or mining camp on a terrace at the mouth of Kwoiek Creek near Lytton containing eleven oval rock-walled structures (Angelbeck and Hall 2008a, 2008b). Surface finds included Chinese and Euro-Canadian artefacts alongside a scatter of lithic material associated with earlier First Nations camps, plus a single pre-contact pit house within one hundred metres of the Chinese structures. Nearby were remains of two non-Chinese log cabins.

The Chinese structures were low (one metre or less) and rectangular (five to seven metres on a side), made of tightly packed boulders, and appeared to be oriented around an open plaza. Built around depressions and presumably roofed over with timber or a canvas tent, they resemble similar structures found elsewhere in British Columbia and neighbouring Idaho. Future research on this site, as the authors note, should attempt to identify the camp's function and date and its relationship with nearby historic structures.

In 2009, during an archaeological impact assessment for a proposed bridge replacement in Victoria, nearly five hundred historic artefacts were found in a site previously associated with the Old Songhees Reserve occupied between 1846 and 1911 (Varsakis et al. 2010). Most artefacts were collected during machine trenching and auger testing, and a small proportion were of Chinese and Japanese origin. The report's authors suggest that, given the proximity of the reserve to the city's Chinatown, these artefacts may reflect interaction between the Songhees and Chinese and Japanese immigrants in Victoria, or they may simply indicate that the Songhees purchased Asian consumer goods.

#### ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Most of the preceding studies were compliance-based or otherwise limited in scope and analysis. More robust from an interpretive standpoint are a series of academically oriented studies, many of them graduate theses, conducted by students and faculty at SFU, UBC, and Vancouver Island University.

In the early 1990s, for her PhD in anthropology at UBC, Diana French, using the socio-political circumstances surrounding the creation of the D'Arcy Island Leper Colony (1891-1924) in the Gulf Islands as a case study, explored how racist ideology is manifest in the material world (French 1995, 1996). She compared architecture and portable material culture associated with Chinese lepers with those associated with Euro-Canadian caretakers as evidence of status differences rooted in racism. French claims that her work is the first archaeological investigation of a leprosarium in North America and the first archaeological study of the Chinese in British Columbia to occur within an academic context. Unfortunately, French found few artefacts and little evidence linked directly to the Chinese occupants. However, the caretaker's residence, reflecting his elevated status, was more substantial and produced a wider range of artefacts than did the lepers' dwellings. French attributes the

paucity of artefacts associated with the lepers to their poverty, low status, and austere government-imposed lifestyle.

In 1992, Sandra Sauer conducted excavations at the O'Keefe Ranch (now an open-air museum) on the north end of Okanagan Lake near Vernon as part of her master's degree in archaeology at SFU (Sauer 1995). Her object was to explore everyday life at the ranch during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including evidence of trade, ethnicity, and use of consumer goods by the Irish-Canadian owners and their employees. Relatively few Chinese artefacts were recovered, although historical evidence indicates that the ranch had Chinese employees. Most of Sauer's findings relate to the non-Chinese settlement of the ranch.

In 1999 and 2000, Sauer initiated fieldwork at Fort Steele Heritage Town, a provincial historic site near Cranbrook that originated in the 1860s as a gold-mining town, in order to uncover new details on the history of the site and its structures (Sauer 2000). A small quantity of Chinese ceramics was recovered from a hotel cellar, which may be associated with Chinese who worked there, along with a few Chinese items found elsewhere on-site. Several Chinese ceramic fragments were also recovered near remains of a log cabin that may have been a Chinese store. Overall, Sauer interprets this material only as evidence of a Chinese presence in the community.

Work in 2000 extended to the nearby gold-mining settlement at Wild Horse Creek, now a provincial historic site, which included a Chinatown and Chinese cemetery (Sauer and Pasacreta 2001). A primary goal was to assess disturbance caused by looters, which turned out to be extensive. A concentration of Chinese ceramics, found near the cabin of a European miner, may have been associated with his historically known Chinese servants and labourers. The location of the Chinatown and cemetery, both subject to surface survey and mapping (plus some test excavations in Chinatown), appear to have been situated with reference to feng shui. Sauer and Pasacreta also found evidence of Chinese mining in the area, including ditches and cobble tailings piles. Despite the looting, fragmentary surface artefacts and landscape features, including foundations and cellars, remain in the Chinatown locale, and Sauer and Pasacreta interviewed local informants with knowledge about, and in possession of artefact collections from, this Chinatown.

A field supervisor at Fort Steele in 2000, Laura Pasacreta went on to study the Chinese cemetery at Wild Horse Creek for her master's degree in archaeology at SFU (Pasacreta 2003, 2005). Her research had



three main goals: (1) explore Chinese burial practices in China and western Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, (2) use this information to interpret the remains at Wild Horse Creek, and (3) draw comparisons with contemporary Chinese cemeteries elsewhere. Pasacreta notes that, worldwide, overseas Chinese expressed their cultural heritage in the spatial layout and ritual practices associated with cemeteries, particularly the pattern of disinterring bones after seven to ten years for return to the homeland. However, they often combined these traditions with funerary practices from the adopted country.

Pasacreta's research questions at Wild Horse Creek centred on site selection and evidence for feng shui, signs of funerary rites and associated material culture, evidence for disinterment, and overall cemetery design. She employed surface survey, tree coring, metal detecting, and magnetometry to identify artefacts and features associated with the cemetery, date the exhumations, and locate possible intact burials. Results produced surface artefacts (including Chinese ceramics), wooden fencing and grave markers, evidence of a former altar, and locations of both empty and intact graves. Landscape analysis confirmed that feng shui may have been used in determining the location and layout of the cemetery. The ceramics and altar were interpreted as evidence of the Chinese ritual of feeding the ancestors. However, the presence of at least two intact graves plus remains of unadorned markers, fencing, and wooden crosses hint that Chinese traditions were combined with influences from Victorian settler cemeteries. Comparison with other cemeteries revealed that feng shui, altars and feeding of ancestors, plus disinterment were common overseas practices, with a tendency to adopt stylistic elements of local cemeteries. Overall, the pattern at Wild Horse Creek was to maintain simplified versions of homeland rituals while incorporating elements from the host culture.

In 1996, Imogene Lim of Vancouver Island University and Stan Copp of Langara College conducted an archaeological field school on two vacant lots in Vancouver's historic Chinatown with volunteers from the Archaeological Society of BC (Hooper 1996; Lim 2002). The first urban historical archaeology ever conducted in Vancouver, the project focused on two locations containing remains of a warehouse and Chinese stores. Given its position in the heart of Chinatown, this work garnered considerable public and media attention. However, no detailed analysis or reporting has been completed on material collected from these sites.

Based on this experience, Lim (2002) argues that archaeology has a role to play for descendant communities in recovering and reclaiming

aspects of their history and creating memories of a community. She found that the process of conducting archaeology in Chinatown revealed a range of ingrained stereotypes held by site visitors, including the myth of underground tunnels, while media personnel were interested in presenting tabloid-style exposés of Chinese life. For example, the local media spun a woman's high-top boot found during excavations as evidence of Chinese prostitutes, despite the likelihood that it belonged to a Euro-Canadian woman. Nevertheless, one older visitor of Chinese descent emphasized that research showed recent immigrants that life had been different, in many ways more difficult, for earlier generations.

Lim was also involved with archaeological research on the Chinese in Nanaimo. In 2011, the Archaeological Society of British Columbia, in collaboration with students from Vancouver Island University under Lim's direction, conducted archival research, surface survey, and limited subsurface testing on the remains of Nanaimo's third Chinatown, built in 1908 and destroyed by fire in the 1960s (Cowie 2005; Parsley 2011). Work was conducted in response to ongoing looting and proposed development in the area. Preliminary results indicate the presence of intact deposits associated with the Chinatown, but additional research has not yet been undertaken. In 2005, the Archaeological Society had initiated a proposal to build a heritage park on the site to preserve the archaeological remains, but this proposal was turned down by the city and development has gone ahead on part of the former Chinatown.

Between 2005 and 2006, I excavated the remains of the Chinese bunkhouse and a Japanese fishing settlement associated with the Ewen Salmon Cannery (1885-1930) on Don Island and Lion Island in Richmond as part of my doctoral research in archaeology at SFU (Ross 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013). I compared the everyday lives and consumer habits of first-generation Chinese and Japanese migrants to identify factors at the local, regional, and international levels, including both choices and constraints, affecting patterns of cultural persistence and change. I also sought to reveal how migrant communities used material goods and practices to create and maintain a sense of collective identity following physical displacement from their homelands and associated cultural transformations. I situated these questions within a theoretical approach rooted in the related concepts of transnationalism and diaspora. In this first systematic comparison of assemblages from Chinese and Japanese sites, I hoped to develop a broader transnational and diasporic archaeological framework for interpreting and comparing the lives of Asian and other displaced populations.



Figure 5. Chinese bamboo pattern bowl recovered from the Chinese bunkhouse site on Lion Island. Photo by author.

I found that both communities relied heavily on imported ceramic tableware and prepared meals typical of those consumed in the homeland but that they also adopted some Euro-Canadian foods and dining habits. Adoption of local practices was more apparent among the Japanese, which may be a product of state-sanctioned Westernization in Japan as much as a response to cultural influences in Canada. In contrast, both camps exhibited an equal diversity of Asian and Western-style recreational beverages and pharmaceuticals, demonstrating cultural influence from home and host societies. Overall, cultural continuity was most evident in dining and recreational beverage consumption, both highly social activities, and least evident in clothing, tools, and everyday household objects. I concluded that this pattern reflects the importance of social drinking and dining in the construction and maintenance of collective diasporic identities among groups of Asian migrants. I conducted additional survey and excavation on Don and Lion islands in 2013 as part of an undergraduate field school in archaeology at SFU that focused on a second Japanese settlement and two bunkhouses of as yet undetermined ethnic affiliation (Ross 2014b).

In his 2009 master's thesis at UBC, Trelle Morrow seeks to interpret nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Chinese utilitarian stoneware food containers found in British Columbia in a social context and to develop a synthesis of social, economic, and technological factors

involved in their production, distribution, and use. He focuses on the role of the Chinese merchant elite in provisioning Chinese migrants in North America as the principal influence on these wares, but he also addresses intensification of production, merchant-labour relations, ethnic subsistence habits, and the symbolic role of pottery in persistence of ethnic identity. He argues, for example, that cultural factors in China encouraged continuity rather than change in stoneware styles, that the merchant elite exploited Chinese communities abroad as captive markets for these wares, and that the continued use of these traditional ceramic forms in North America facilitated persistence of Chinese ethnic identity.

Morrow's (2009) principal source of data is a database of stoneware vessels held in private collections, including his own, plus a small number of archival documents such as shipping invoices. An important source of stoneware vessels in the province was the Johnson Street ravine in Victoria, part of the historic Chinatown, where artefacts were salvaged by collectors during redevelopment in the 1980s in the absence of opportunity for systematic documentation by professionals. Overall, Morrow presents useful information on stoneware manufacture, technological and design attributes, and overseas trade, although his study is at times methodologically and theoretically unfocused, relying on data that are selective in composition and that lack contextual association with particular times, places, and people.

For her 2009 master's thesis at McMaster University in Ontario, Ani Chénier examines mortuary material culture and archival records from twentieth-century Chinese-Canadian cemeteries in Vancouver and Victoria for evidence of changing conceptions of community identity as expressed via commemorative practices. Her analysis draws on recent trends in Chinese-Canadian history, including intra-community variability among individuals regarding expressions of identity at a local scale and on viewing Chinese Canadians as participants in an international diasporic network. Influenced by an increasing scholarly focus on transnational communities and identities, on first-person narratives and the lived experience of individuals, and on the concepts of transnationalism and diaspora, she shows that identity is fluid and socially constructed rather than static and essentialized. However, she does not fully integrate these approaches into her cemetery analysis.

Chénier (2009) argues that mortuary practices and material culture can help reconcile individual and diasporic scales of analysis by showing how commemoration was influenced by both individual decision making

and community-wide patterns of representation. Using data on burial site, marker style, epitaph texts, and rates of commemoration within the Chinese-Canadian community, Chénier identifies two simultaneous patterns of commemorative practices in Victoria and Vancouver: a dominant one emphasizing commonalities among Chinese Canadians and a less common but more varied one deviating from this norm and expressing different aspects and scales of individual and community identity. She also notes a shift over time from repatriation of bones to China towards permanent burial in Canada after the 1930s. Overall, her work is important because it demonstrates diversity within the Chinese-Canadian community and shows that representations of individual and collective identity are flexible and change over time.

#### THE WIDER WORLD OF CHINESE DIASPORA ARCHAEOLOGY

While the earliest substantial archaeological research on a Chinese site in British Columbia was conducted at Barkerville in the early 1980s, interest in Chinese sites in the province did not become sustained until the 1990s with the first serious problem-oriented research, notably French's work on the D'Arcy Island Leper Colony and Koskitalo's study of the fauna from Barkerville's Chee Kung Tong Building. Nevertheless, sophisticated, theoretically informed research, drawing on interdisciplinary literature and international comparative data, was rare until the work of Chen, Pasacreta, Chénier, Morrow, and myself in the 2000s. Significantly, all of these important projects from the past twenty years were completed as student theses but were by and large one-off studies rather than part of ongoing research programs. Most other studies on Chinese sites since the 1980s are under-theorized and largely descriptive, often limited in scope and conducted by researchers with little background in historical archaeology, commonly ignore relevant comparative data, and are largely inaccessible outside the BC archaeological community.

According to Voss and Allen (2008, 17-18), outside the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, little archaeological research has been conducted on Chinese diaspora communities, including those in South Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and Canada. Inclusion of Canada in this list suggests that, even among experts in Chinese diaspora archaeology, most research in British Columbia remains relatively unknown and has had negligible influence on scholarly discourse in the field. A similar problem of scholarly visibility and acces-

sibility has long existed in the United States (Voss 2005), but the large collection of unpublished reports in the Asian American Comparative Collection at the University of Idaho (established in 1982) and the increasing number of widely available published works since the 1990s have made American studies more accessible. A similar trend is evident in Australia and New Zealand.

Provincial heritage legislation helps explain why the most substantial work on Chinese sites has taken place in an academic rather than in a resource management context and within protected parks or historic sites rather than on private or provincial Crown land. As discussed above, lack of legal protection for most post-1846 historic sites means that such sites are rarely the subject of the kinds of resource management projects that provide much of the archaeological data on the Chinese diaspora in the United States. The terms of our distinctive heritage legislation explains the relatively low volume of research on historic sites in British Columbia and the shortage of researchers trained in historical archaeology, which, in turn, affects the quality of the few resource management and academic studies that have been done. There has simply not been either the legal mandate or the research interest or expertise to support ongoing local research or resource management projects. The fact that few of these studies have been formally published or peer reviewed has also permitted errors and inconsistencies in method and interpretation to persist within local literature.

Despite differences in heritage legislation north and south of the border, the history of Chinese diaspora archaeology in British Columbia mirrors international trends. Substantial research on Chinese sites in the western United States began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but it did not coalesce as a coherent field of study until the 1980s and 1990s (Voss and Allen 2008, 5, 17). Much early work was conducted in a resource management context, often in conjunction with urban redevelopment, with more substantial research-based studies becoming increasingly common in the 1980s, although few have been part of an ongoing research agenda. Chinese diaspora archaeology in Australia and New Zealand began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, much of it focused on the mining industry (Lawrence and Davies 2011).

Since then, a number of monographs and edited volumes have been published in the United States and Australasia, alongside a growing number of graduate theses and resource management reports. As in British Columbia, most work is primarily descriptive, focused on identifying age and ethnic affiliation of sites and developing typologies



of diagnostic artefact types – much of it still is, although quality and theoretical sophistication has increased in recent decades. For example, thanks to pioneering work by Praetzelis et al. (1987) and Lydon (1999), the long-standing view of Chinese identity and culture as static, bounded, insular, and slavishly traditional is being replaced by models emphasizing cultural interaction and exchange and of multiple competing identities that are fluid, situational, and context-dependent.

More specific parallels exist thematically and topically, demonstrating that isolated studies in British Columbia are often accompanied by similar studies elsewhere. While some local publications acknowledge international scholarship, research on both sides of the border would benefit from increased dialogue and comparison. For example, research on standing Chinese buildings at Barkerville has parallels in Nevada, Arizona, and California (Hattori et al. 1979; Costello 1989; Lister and Lister 1989; Greenwood and Slawson 2008). Likewise, Koskitalo's study of fauna from Barkerville is just one of many publications using animal bones to study Chinese food preparation and dining practices (e.g., Piper 1988; Gust 1993; Longenecker and Stapp 1993; Diehl et al. 1998). Examples of local studies that draw on comparative literature include Koskitalo and Angelbeck and Hall, who acknowledge that similar rock-walled structures to the ones they document near Lytton have been found elsewhere in the western United States.

Similarly, Chen's settlement pattern study of Chinese mining sites in the Cariboo region parallels work in Australia, where Smith (2006) identified a settlement hierarchy ranging from small isolated mining camps to large central places (Lawrence and Davies 2011). In fact, archaeology of Chinese mining is one of the most heavily researched topics in Chinese diaspora archaeology, in both the United States and Australasia, and many of these studies can be found in Schulz and Allen's 2008 bibliography. Furthermore, Chen's interdisciplinary approach, drawing on multiple data sources to develop an in-depth history of a particular community, has counterparts in the western United States (Stapp 1990; Wegars 1991; Merritt 2010), although her substantial use of Chinese-language sources is rare among archaeologists. Few historical archaeologists have the training to conduct research in Chinese-language archives (Voss and Allen 2008, 17), highlighting the innovative significance of Chen's use of Chinese society account books to reconstruct Chinese demography in the Cariboo region. However, Chen's acculturation-based interpretive framework, emphasizing resistance and isolation, is now somewhat out of step with scholarly

understandings of inter-ethnic interaction and patterns of cultural persistence and change, noted above, which entered the archaeological literature in the United States in the 1980s and were becoming prevalent by the late 1990s.

Compared to mining, relatively few archaeological studies have been done on Chinese fisheries or cannery labour, although the literature is growing (e.g., Fagan 1993; Berryman 1995; Schulz 1996; Braje et al. 2007; Williams 2011; Bowen 2012). In this context my own work on Asian cannery workers represents, I hope, a useful contribution to a burgeoning but underdeveloped literature. Likewise, while a few Chinese sites in British Columbia have been encountered in the context of urban redevelopment, very little urban historical archaeology has been undertaken in the province. This contrasts sharply with the United States, where urban sites have been a focal point of Chinese diaspora archaeology since the 1970s (Voss and Allen 2008; Ross 2014a). In contrast, the research of Pasacreta and Chénier on Chinese cemeteries is part of a growing emphasis on Chinese cemeteries and mortuary behaviour in overseas contexts (e.g., Chung and Wegars 2005; Kraus-Friedberg 2008; Smits 2008; Hunter 2010; Schmidt et al. 2011; Harrod et al. 2012).

Truly collaborative research on Asian sites in the province is rare, though my own cannery research was inspired by commemoration of the Don Island settlement by the local Japanese-Canadian community, with whom I maintained a productive relationship. Another exception is the joint Musqueam/UBC field school that documented remains of Chinese market gardeners with close ties to the Musqueam community. Beyond Barkerville, community-oriented public archaeology is also rare, although studies on Vancouver and Nanaimo Chinatowns incorporated a public component and included avocational archaeologists. This pattern is also true in the United States and Australasia, although the Market Street Chinatown project in California is a prominent exception that is both community-based and collaborative (Voss et al. 2013).

Cultural persistence and change is a dominant theme in Chinese diaspora archaeology and is either explicit or implicit in most studies discussed here, notably in my work on the Ewen Cannery and Chénier's and Pasacreta's research on Chinese cemeteries. A related theme emerging subtly from the BC literature is inter-ethnic interaction, a subject of growing importance in Chinese diaspora archaeology (e.g., Praetzellis 1998, 1999; Barna 2013), although it has not been the focus of many targeted studies. Alongside this emerging trend is an increasing emphasis on the transnational and diasporic character of

Chinese migrants (Kraus-Friedberg 2008; González-Tennant 2011; Williams 2011; Fong 2013) only just materializing in British Columbia in my research and Chénier's. Another dominant focus internationally has been an emphasis on Chinese material culture, although few studies have moved beyond functional-typological approaches to topics like regional origins, merchant networks, and social relations linked to the manufacture and merchandizing of particular goods (e.g., Choy 2014). Morrow's study of Chinese stoneware makes an important move in this direction, from which other scholars might benefit.

Chinese archaeology in British Columbia has not been entirely divorced from international scholarship. Fong (2007, 115), in her study of stereotypes in Chinese-American archaeology, sympathizes with Lim's assertion that historical archaeology has the potential to challenge stereotypes, myths, and false assumptions about the Chinese, but she argues that archaeology itself is subject to stereotypes and interpretive bias. Self-reflexive approaches are not common in Chinese diaspora archaeology, but Fong's efforts are echoed by Mullins (2008). One key point Fong makes is that the predominance of resource management archaeology means that Chinese sites are often interpreted by non-specialists, resulting in incorrect artefact identifications and limited interpretations, a challenge also faced in British Columbia. Fong and Mullins emphasize the effects of structural racism on diasporic Chinese communities, a theme that French examines in her leper colony study and that I touch on in my cannery work but that is otherwise under-represented for BC sites.

These are only some of the connections and comparisons between British Columbia and the wider world of Chinese diaspora archaeology. Moving further outward, in a recent review of the field of historical archaeology in the American West, Dixon (2014) identifies four general themes in current scholarship: colonialism and postcolonialism, landscape transformation, migration and diaspora, and industrial capitalism. Related subthemes include transnationalism, identity, ethnogenesis, labour and industry, transportation, and communication, accompanied by more specific topics, among them the lives of Asian Americans. The Chinese diaspora has received the bulk of attention, but a growing emphasis on comparative studies of Asian diasporas includes my work on Chinese and Japanese cannery workers in British Columbia and Kraus-Friedberg's work on Chinese and Japanese plantation cemeteries in Hawaii. This focus on Asian communities is part of a broader emphasis on cultural groups under-documented or misrep-

resented in mainstream histories. Dixon notes the growing relevance of transnational and diasporic approaches to archaeological studies of the American West, as researchers explore changing lives, cultures, and identities of groups dispersed from their homelands and the global flows and associated connections of people, objects, and ideas. Archaeological studies in British Columbia are beginning to address such themes, but by and large the literature remains predominantly descriptive and out of touch with the international analytical literature.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

While archaeologists in British Columbia have made a number of positive contributions to Chinese diaspora archaeology, much more work needs to be done. Barkerville is important because it has been subject to the most extensive, sustained, and publicly visible work on Chinese sites in the province, producing large volumes of data and becoming closely integrated with the town's interpretive program, although much of it remains unreported and poorly accessible to outside scholars. Existing archaeological collections represent a valuable source of comparative data and they should be made widely available, ideally online, and both completed and ongoing field projects should be written up. The large volume of archaeological data collected from in and around Barkerville offers considerable potential for more in-depth research, including material reported by Chen and Irvine and Montgomery. This includes detailed studies of material culture and reconsideration of material patterns in light of recent theoretical developments in the field. For example, while Chen provides an excellent regional context for mining communities in the Cariboo, renewed research could target the internal dynamics of individual Chinatowns and mining camps in greater detail. Also, more work is needed on relationships between Chinese and non-Chinese residents of the Barkerville area and on non-Chinese artefacts recovered from Chinese contexts.

Beyond Barkerville, we need more detailed reporting on Chinese sites encountered in academic and resource management settings, including analysis by trained historical archaeologists and archival research by historians fluent in the Chinese language. Local studies would also benefit from greater consideration of results from outside the province and publication of findings in peer-reviewed venues. Research-wise, a range of activities and site types associated with the Chinese diaspora in both urban and rural settings has been explored in the United States

and Australasia but has had little or no attention in Canada. This range takes in isolated mining and railway camps as well as urban residences and businesses, and it includes a particular need for research in urban Chinatowns. As in Barkerville, we need to pay greater attention to interdisciplinary theoretical literature and to promote studies that compare the lives of Chinese and non-Chinese residents of British Columbia and that explore the nature and scope of the relationships and interactions between them. We also need long-term interdisciplinary studies that examine individual industries or communities in detail and that draw on data and expertise from archaeology, history, geography, Asian American Studies, and other allied disciplines. Ideally, such studies would involve local communities and descendant groups along with relevant institutions and government agencies. A central goal should be to demonstrate the value of historic sites and landscapes to policy makers and the general public as a step towards revising current BC legislation to include post-1846 heritage resources.

One such endeavour is the Fraser Corridor Heritage Landscape Project, begun in 2014, which focuses on Chinese placer gold-mining sites and landscapes along the Fraser River in the province's interior and involves an interdisciplinary group of historians, geographers, and archaeologists at SFU, UBC, and Vancouver Island University. This team, which includes Henry Yu, Michael Kennedy, Sarah Ling, Imogene Lim, and myself, conducted a preliminary field survey of three historic placer mines in the summer of 2014 funded by the BC Heritage Branch, including two Chinese camps (Ross et al. 2014). This work is based on earlier mapping by Kennedy and colleagues (Kennedy 2009; Nelson and Kennedy 2012) and is geared towards identifying the research potential of these sites and developing a framework for evaluating their heritage significance. We are hoping to expand our archaeological, archival, and other avenues of investigations in the years to come.

Finally, not only should we increase our use of interdisciplinary literature but we should also make greater efforts to demonstrate how our research addresses broader anthropological questions and engages scholarship in related disciplines. Archaeology offers a source of data that can complement, contradict, or contextualize narratives based on archival sources and oral histories and that can flesh out the lives of marginalized groups like the Chinese, who often left few written records of their own. Its strength lies in its focus on the material culture of everyday activities, which is often neglected in other sources but that can tell us about how migrant groups adapted to life abroad. It can suggest

which habits they maintained from the homeland, which they adopted from the host society, the nature of relationships with neighbouring groups, the role of social rituals and consumer habits in maintenance of collective identities, the effects of structural racism and gender imbalances on consumer choices and domestic routines, material evidence for citizenship aspirations and resistance to racist exclusion, the creation of ethnically distinct architecture and landscapes, and so on. It can also suggest to us how these things varied over time, between generations, and within a range of urban and rural contexts. For example, in my own work on the Ewen Cannery discussed above, I seek to address several of these questions and frame them in the language of interdisciplinary literature on transnationalism, diaspora, ethnic identity, and material consumption in the hope that this will resonate with scholars in other fields and other branches of archaeology concerned with the social dynamics of long-distance population movements.

Overall, my goal is to summarize the archaeological literature on the Chinese diaspora in British Columbia and to situate it within the broader context of similar research being done in the United States, Australasia, and elsewhere. I seek to produce a greater awareness of local research in British Columbia as a source of comparative data internationally, while at the same time encouraging local scholars to develop more robust studies, both methodologically and theoretically, that contribute more fully to international dialogues on the material dimensions of the diasporic Chinese experience.

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