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SFU premieres film about Chinese Canadian migration

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On Monday, Nov. 29, Simon Fraser University's Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. will premiere a one-hour documentary expected to pack a 350-seat theatre at the Goldcorp Centre for the Arts.

The centre, which houses the SFU School for the Contemporary Arts, is located at 149 West Hastings in downtown Vancouver.

From C to C: Chinese Canadian Stories of Migration - a richly layered exploration of the fate of pioneer Chinese-Canadians through the eyes of their young descendants - will eventually be televised to viewers worldwide.

But anyone can book a free seat to watch the 8 p.m. premiere of the film at the Djavah Mowafaghian Cinema. Given the limited seating, filmgoers must make their booking by Fri., Nov. 26, so that they can pick up their tickets at the venue on the night of the screening.

Tickets can be booked by e-mailing full name, mailing address and number of tickets desired to tlcentre@sfu.ca.

With interviews in four languages - Cantonese, Mandarin, Taishanese and English - this film captures, on a personal level, the impact of the historical Head Tax and Exclusion Act imposed on Chinese immigrants to Canada from 1923 to 1947.

SFU-TLC video producer Jordan Paterson and his crew follow current-day young Chinese Canadians from their homes in British Columbia to their ancestral roots in China's Guangdong province. Most of Canada's Head Tax payers were from Guangdong and still spoke Taishanese, the province's original dialect during the early part of their migration to Canada from 1858 to 1923.

Through 20 interviews and the capture of young and old immigrant family members sharing stories, Paterson records current-day Chinese-Canadians reflecting on how injustice has shaped their family histories and fate.

The film also celebrates how Chinese-Canadian pioneers overcame adversity and went on to help build Canada.

'Throughout the film we explore the empty homes built by Chinese-Canadians in their ancestral villages in China as they were not permitted to own property in Canada due to government restrictions,' says Paterson.

'In these ancestral villages are the lost stories of the women left behind during exclusion who have been silent for generations. This film asks us all to come to terms with the historical injustices that still affect us today and to determine how we can prevent their recurrence.'

Among those interviewed in the film are: 102-year-old Charlie Quan, the oldest known Head Tax payer in Canada, who speaks Taishanese, local Vancouver activist Sid Chow Tan and Vancouver Police Chief Constable Jim Chu.

The film's producers will present an accompanying website and teaching guide follow the

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film's screening. TLC will distribute more than 100 learning packages, focused on providing social justice education, to Lower Mainland schools.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S., a multicultural, multiservice agency for Canadian immigrants, and TLC obtained a \$200,000 grant from the federal government's Community Historical Recognition Program to fund the film's creation, which took a year.

China's Wuyi University and Guangdong TV, which has a viewership of 50 million, helped TLC arrange on-location filming. Fairchild TV provided translation and subtitling.

B.C. historians, community organizations and activists not only lent their voices to the film but also helped Paterson sift through voluminous legal histories, private and public archives, and other documents.

CBC, Fairchild TV and Guangdong TV are slated to broadcast the documentary in the new year.

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