

Interview Track 1

Interviewer: John Price

Interviewee: Kileasa Wong

John Price: Ok, so, Kileasa, can you tell us about yourself and your family background?

Kileasa Wong: My name, Kileasa Wong. Came to Canada in 1970 and married to my husband and we have four boys and now we have four grandsons. Anything else you need to know?

John Price: And so, can you tell us about your family's roots?

Kileasa Wong: Um... I was born in Hong Kong. My hometown is in Chaozhou, Guangdong, Guangdong province.

John Price: And what about your husband?

Kileasa Wong: My husband... My husband's hometown is Kaiping and he was born in Kaiping and we met in Hong Kong. We went to school together.

John Price: I see. So you mentioned you had been back to one of the hometowns. Yours or your husband's hometown?

Kileasa Wong: Yes, last year we went back to Kaiping, my husband's hometown.

John Price: And what did you do there?

Kileasa Wong: Oh, my husband's relative made some arrangement and we have a big banquet, about 70 people. And then have banquet in the courtyard and people like bringing the... a truck in with the tables and chairs and making food over there. And it was fun and almost like the whole village people came out and we eat together and everybody come and said hello. And we really have fun and of course my husband paid for the food. And... But we think it's really worth it and we went to visit my husband's ancestor's grave and put on flowers and incense and chicken, pig and buns, all these things. The traditional way.

John Price: And so... Um... Were they many people from the village that had travelled abroad? Were there many overseas Chinese from that village?

Kileasa Wong: Yes. Lot of them, most of them came to Canada. Some went to US but most of them came to Canada. So actually the village is only the older like the grandmother, grandfather there and then some children. Like when they are outside working in the city and then the small children bring back to the village so the grandparents look after.

John Price: I see. And what about... What dialect do they...? Which city was it again? Or the village. Oh, it's in Kaiping right?

Kileasa Wong: Kaiping. Yeah.

John Price: What was... What dialect do they speak in...

Kileasa Wong: Kaiping.

John Price: Kaiping dialect.

Kileasa Wong: Kaiping dialect.

John Price: And so can you understand that dialect?

Kileasa Wong: Yes because we live with my husband's grandmother and mother before. And I actually can understand and speak most of them. Yeah and even my children. When they were little, they're baby, and they learned from their grandmother, yes.

John Price: And so is there much difference between Kaiping dialect and Guangdong dialect?

Kileasa Wong: Yes. Very much different, yes. Yeah, it's almost like if you don't understand, you don't understand what they talking about.

John Price: So what about, for instance, at the public school here. What, in terms of spoken Chinese, what dialect do students learn?

Kileasa Wong: We learn Cantonese and in the recent 10, 15 years, we start Mandarin program. So we do have Mandarin too. And the last few year, we have some Mandarin speaking student came to the school.

John Price: Great. So is there much difference between Cantonese spoken in Hong Kong and Guangzhou dialect?

Kileasa Wong: It's the same

John Price: Same?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, same as Guangzhou.

John Price: Same as Guangzhou?

Kileasa Wong: So we call that "Guangdongwa". So it's Guangdonghua.

John Price: Guangdonghua in mandarin eh?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, in Mandarin.

John Price: Got it. Ok, and so there's a difference between Guangdonghua and Kaiping dialect, yes?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah and Hoypingwa.

John Price: Hoypingwa.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, it's different.

John Price: Ok, so can you tell us more when your family left home village and went to Hong Kong?

Kileasa Wong: My own family?

John Price: Yeah.

Kileasa Wong: Since my grandfather.

John Price: Your grandfather moved...?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, moved to Hong Kong and do business there, import and export business.

John Price: I see, and what year would that have been? That he went to Hong Kong.

Kileasa Wong: Oh, that... I think before the Communist.

John Price: Before 1949?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, before 1949, yes.

John Price: I see. So um... Then were there other members of your family who came to Canada before you?

Kileasa Wong: Uh, no.

John Price: No? You're the first from your family?

Kileasa Wong: Yes. Yeah, actually, I followed my husband came over here.

John Price: I see.

Kileasa Wong: Because his hometown, everybody come to Canada.

John Price: I see.

Kileasa Wong: His grandfather was here.

John Price: Oh, was he?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: I see. And so when... Do you know when his grandfather came here?

Kileasa Wong: Uh... Have no idea. But his grandfather came here and then went back to China marry to his grandmother and then came back and also...

John Price: So it was probably before the war?

Kileasa Wong: I think so. Yeah.

John Price: Interesting. So can you tell us how you became involved in Chinatown?

Kileasa Wong: I start teaching in the school. That's in 1988 or something like that. One of the teacher left the school and then another teacher, friend of mine, knows that I was teaching in Hong Kong before I came to Canada. So, you know, so introduce me to the principal so I came to teach here.

John Price: I see.

Kileasa Wong: And then that's how I get like... Get into the Chinatown. Yeah.

John Price: So you didn't live in Chinatown when you came to Canada. You lived in... some outside of Chinatown?

Kileasa Wong: Actually the first few months we did live in Chinatown because Maurice, my husband, his grandfather, grandparents, was live in Chinatown. His grandfather was the president of the Dart Coon Club.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, and live in Chinatown just on Fisgard and Government.

John Price: So he was the president of the...?

Kileasa Wong: Freemason.

John Price: The Freemason?

Kileasa Wong: The Dart Coon Club.

John Price: Oh yeah, Dart Coon Club. Got it. I see.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah. So we live there...

John Price: I see.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah and until we bought the store on Gorge road. Then we move... the store... we live behind the store and above the store. Yeah.

John Price: I see. And what kind of store was it? If you don't mind.

Kileasa Wong: Grocery store.

John Price: I see, it was eh? Ok and so you were teaching before you came to Canada?

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: What was the school system like? What was the experience in Hong Kong teaching?

Kileasa Wong: Oh... Hong Kong teaching is you got lots of student in the class, about 40, 40-50 students in one class. And teachers are very strict and students have to do lots of homework. It's really different than the system here in BC.

John Price: And so what grades did you teach?

Kileasa Wong: I taught kindergarten.

John Price: Kindergarten?

Kileasa Wong: And grade 1. Yeah.

John Price: And so you started teaching here at the school in 1988?

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: Around then? Yeah? And so you've been teaching ever since?

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: So this will be almost 25 years?

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: Great. So and when did you start to study the history of the school? What made you interested?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, so the more I teach and more I get involved with the school and then the Chinatown community and then a lot of people come to visit the school and then I have to know about the history right? When they come to visit. So, then... ask around and then the more I learn then I thought that "I still need to learn more". Yeah, so I'm very interesting. So I get to find out the books from basement, here and there, and then about the school. You know. Yeah.

John Price: That's great. And so you also wrote your masters paper...

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: ...on the school. Can you tell us about that?

Kileasa Wong: Uh... yes and I thought that I should let people know, people outside of Chinatown, know about our school because seems everybody's so much interest about the school history. And even myself. So that is why I wanted to write something that... keep it there and then to let people know.

John Price: So you did your master's degree at the University of Victoria?

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: Yeah?

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: And your paper is in the digital archive.

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: So we'll make that part of the interview. So people can read your paper on the school, the history of the school is very important resource.

Kileasa Wong: Yes, I hope that people find this is valuable for... to them if they want to know about the history of the school.

John Price: So do you recall in writing the history about... you know... what... the Chinese public school. What role did it fulfill? In the community.

Kileasa Wong: Yes, when that was... The school was started in 1899. So when people in Chinatown like... start like... people coming, move in Canada and live in Victoria and the Chinese community leaders and merchants that... find that "We should have a school so our children can learn Chinese language and the culture." So that is why they make fund-raising and then we have the school and I think this is important that kids came from China and they still keep to know about their culture and their language. And I think this is very important.

John Price: So did the original students... I th--... when they graduated, they were also going... were they also going to schools in the English language schools?

Kileasa Wong: Um... the first... when they first came, they came to this school and also go to the regular school like the English school. And then because they just came here, so they don't know about English at all. And also the children, their ages much older than the school... the regular school students and so they have very difficult to learn English and have difficult time in the English school too. So one time there was some bylaw that want to have English exam before that... they can enroll to the English school. So... So the Chinese school, one time it was like a full program of the English school, like everything. Teach them English, want them to learn their English and then can pass the exam and go back to the Chinese... the English school.

John Price: I see. So it almost... it played also the role of preparatory school or helping them adjust or go into the regular school system. There was also a strike because they wanted... the school board wanted to exclude Chinese students...

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: ...from the regular school.

Kileasa Wong: Uh... yes. And yes, that was sometime in about 190-... beginning of the nine... early nineteen... 1900s. Yeah. And there was... happen... one time, yeah and then there was a strike because first they put the Chinese students to another school that was built in... like sort of like... metal... something that we call the "Chicken hut". The Chinese people call it the "Chicken hut".

John Price: The “Chicken hut”?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, the “Chicken hut”. Like a hut... yeah, it’s like a very simple, basic school room, classroom. Yeah and then even like said because Chinese student doesn’t know Chinese... doesn’t know English and their age is much older so they’re not allowed to go back... go to the regular school. So put them in separate classroom.

John Price: Mhm.

Kileasa Wong: So one time like the student walk out, a strike, yeah. Walk out and... and then didn’t go back to school, to the classroom. Yeah

John Price: So they tried to segregate...

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: ...the students?

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: Yes, it’s a rich history with many challenges also eh?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: So, and can you explain a little bit more about how the school operates today?

Kileasa Wong: Ok... the school... The school is operated by the CCBA. All the funding from the CCBA and so... we have... So I was hired... I am hired by the CCBA and then we have the teacher and all the funding is from the CCBA. So we have Monday to Friday classes, the program. Children come from Monday to Friday, every day from 4-6 and then another program is Saturday from 9-11, 11-1, two different program. And some children like takes Cantonese class and Mandarin class or... and Chinese painting class. So they’ll be here all morning, like Saturday morning from 9-1. And other kids... Other program is from Monday to Friday. Cantonese class and starting... started last year or year before, we have the Mandarin class for small children, like grade 1, elementary grade 1 student. They come to class like Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. For three days, straight, just Mandarin. But then we have, even the Cantonese class, we still... the kids still have one class a week for Mandarin.

John Price: I see. And so, how many students are enrolled now? How many students come to the public school?

Kileasa Wong: For like...

John Price: For the year.

Kileasa Wong: For now, is around 150. Sometime we have less, sometime we have more. Sometime we up to over 200. Yeah, and sometime we have less than 150.

John Price: And so what sort of cultural activities does the school undertake?

Kileasa Wong: For the weekday class because we have 5 days for classes, so we have more time. So they... the kids get to learn the Chinese folk dance, lion dance, dragon dance, and also calligraphy. Yeah, and sing the Chinese songs, folk songs. Yeah.

John Price: And so... and what about... sort of public events?

Kileasa Wong: The kids involve during the year. Let's see... Starting from new year, we have performance in Chinatown celebrate Chinese new year. Or we go to the... some associations or some clubs. Sometimes we go to the television for the performance and for the new year. And then our performing group, our dance group goes to like Chinatown care hospital . Like for the old people and we go performance like... all volunteer. And then the Victoria Day parade, we go the parade. And the Chinese picnic, kids all involved. And then we join the Greater Victoria Performing Arts. Next week actually, we going... it's usually in April, May. We go do our performance. Yeah, and then the... Any, any sometime... Any of the association or an... even outside like... just the Greater Victoria, not just Chinese community. If they have some big celebration and invite us to do our performance, we'll go too. Like, you know, the Dragonboat festival, museum, we went to thebuilding, you know, for the Asian month or something.

John Price: I see.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: And what about in the fall? Is there a Autumn moon festival and...

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, the moon festival, yeah that's right. And sometime we go, the whole school will march down with the lanterns to Chinatown and walk around with the lion dance. And even Halloween, we marching down Chinatown and we send the letters to the merchants Chinatown, you know. Let them know the kids coming for Halloween.

John Price: Uh-huh. Great.

Kileasa Wong: So we do a lion dance and then, you know, if they... they'll get the candy prepare for us and then we give them our handmade lantern.

John Price: Hand made lantern, uh-huh. Great, great. Let me just check that this is on still. Yep, still going.

Kileasa Wong: It's still on, yeah.

John Price: Ok. And so, yeah... so the public school... The students pay a small fee?

Kileasa Wong: Yes. Very little. \$300 per year for the Saturday class and \$350 per year for the weekday class.

John Price: ...weekday class. And the CCBA funds the rest, is that right?

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: And so how many teachers do you have teaching?

Kileasa Wong: For now I have 10 teachers.

John Price: 10 teachers?

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: Wow. So tell me how has the... how has the... How has Chinatown changed since you've come?

Kileasa Wong: Oh... change a lot. When I first came, Chinatown, like... you know, just a little street and then quiet, very quiet. Like I mentioned, when we first came we live in Chinatown for a few months and every day I look out the window and there's no one on the street and then the evening... I cry everyday actually, homesick.

John Price: Yeah...

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, because in Hong Kong, such busy city right? And always crowd of people and then look down, no one. Yeah, very quiet.

John Price: Yeah...

Kileasa Wong: And then I think only one grocery store and then the restaurant. Only... I think only Don Mee and then the Fan Tan...

John Price: Don Mee...

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, yeah. So... and Foo Hong, yeah. Only that few store. And now you see we got more grocery store, we got more restaurant, Chinese restaurants. And we... things... built the gate, tourist come in and Chinatown really, really busy now, lot more people.

John Price: That's good. So the... There are a number of places in Chinatown that are heritage sites. Like the school is heritage site. Are there other heritage sites?

Kileasa Wong: I think the one in... I think there's a few. The one just next to us, this building, the... the... the herbal shop.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, that's Shon Yee and then is the Lee's and then the Long Gong.

John Price: Mhm.

Kileasa Wong: Then you go the other side like the Chinese Freemason. And the butcher shop, you know the Wah Lai Yuen, that building, that's the CCBA building.

John Price: Ah, right right.

Kileasa Wong: That's heritage.

John Price: And you said, I guess it's your husband Maurice's grandfather was president of Chee Kong Tong?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah. Mhm.

John Price: And so, that's interesting Chee Kong Tong played a very important role in Chinatown.

Kileasa Wong: Oh yes, yeah. The old days, everybody joined the Hongmen, Hongmen. Yeah.

John Price: Hongmen, yeah.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: And so what about today? Are the associations still active?

Kileasa Wong: You mean the Hongmen?

John Price: Yeah, the Hongmen, the Chee Kong Tong... Or else the...

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: Dart Koon club.

Kileasa Wong: The Hongmen is called the Chinese Freemason and the Dart Koon Club. They not called Chee Kong Tong anymore but still Chee Kong Tong. Yeah, mhm, yeah. They're very active.

John Price: Very active still? That's great. So what about the name Freemasons? Why did they choose that name?

Kileasa Wong: I think you have to ask them.

John Price: Yeah. Ok.

Kileasa Wong: Even I... We both... but I don't think I can say...

John Price: Ok.

Kileasa Wong: ...speak for them.

John Price: Got it.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: And so... and how about the CCBA today? So you wrote a book with Robert Amos...

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: ...on Chinatown?

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: Very important book and so would you like to share some stories from the book, writing the book and about the book?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, I... I met Robert many years ago in the early 1980's, yup. And then we worked together and do some... do Chinese painting together and then... he's very interest in Chinatown. So sometime I will take him to some of the associations, like inside the association and then take pictures and he always said: "One of these days, we should write a book together." Yeah, so... So that's in... I think we have prepare about 3 years or so, yeah. And then before that we really start writing the book, yeah. And so I took... I wrote letter in Chinese to the association and tell them about our, you know, we going to write a book about the Chinatown history and I will bring him to interview. So I... we set up some time and then I took him to the associations and I will interview in Chinese and Robert take picture and we both take picture and then when we come back, then I will translate to English to him. And then he will write it in English and then give back to me, I will translate again to... back to Chinese. Yeah, yeah, lot of back and forth.

John Price: Yeah, real collaborative effort.

Kileasa Wong: Mhm, yeah. And so the CCBA is the headquarter of all these association. So under the CCBA, there's 29 associations. So the CCBA meets once a month, every second Sundays. So we talk about the business, about what happening in Chinatown or like said... Chinese government, there's some visitor coming, when and then the CCBA will organize what day and dinner or lunch or they going to visit what association or... something like that. Or even like City Hall, something happen, like want to hang lanterns or want to do the lighting or something or want to... like said recently they want to hang couple dragons on the street. So we, we talking about this kind of thing or any association, any association that are going to have their celebration... or celebration of Chinese New Year or something like that. So we meet once a month and that's what happen. And then so after a long time and then we all finished writing about the book and...

John Price: So yeah, how long you... You worked on the book for 3 years, did you say?

Kileasa Wong: Before we really started.

John Price: I see.

Kileasa Wong: Him take pictures and all this, yeah. I think we work on really write on the book about 2 years.

John Price: I see. So altogether about 5 years?

Kileasa Wong: Yes, yes.

John Price: About 5 years...

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: Well it's an important treasure for... for Victoria.

Kileasa Wong: Oh, thank you.

John Price: So what do you think is important for people who are visiting Victoria. What is important that you would like to share about Chinatown? What do you think people should know?

Kileasa Wong: Chinatown, like said every city there... every big city in North America, there's a Chinatown. And the Chinatown keeps the Chinese culture and like the... Chinese food and for me, like when I go to visit the big city, I like to go to Chinatown, see what's going on there. And for... I think for like Caucasians or visitor to they... it's another, different culture at all for them to look at. It's totally different than the western culture. Like you know the grocery store, they put all the things outside. And the restaurant, the different kind of food and people speaking Chinese, you know. Like I think that it's very important that we... People know about another culture and we wanted to share our culture to other people too.

John Price: Mhm.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: So, what Chinatown had a difficult time. Like it got smaller because people left Chinatown and then there was restrictions on immigration. So Chinatown, you know... Do you think it's going to maintain itself and grow?

Kileasa Wong: I believe so. Yeah one time it was people move out from Chinatown and then... and then like less business... Like when I came, that was really quiet in Chinatown and now it's more business in Chinatown and also like some buildings, new buildings around Chinatown. And so... and people like it's easier to get to Chinatown now. Even if you live outside Chinatown, bus is easier too. Yeah so... and the tour, like every day you can see how many people take picture of our school. When Robert Amos... during... when we working on that dragon hanging outside by the Yen Wo building. So we... me and him and some kids were doing that everyday like outside. That was during summer. Oh, you can see it, amazing. How many people taking picture of the building. Yeah, just almost non-stop, yeah.

John Price: So that's great. So your book is an important resource. And maybe the Chinatown website will be important for visitors too.

Kileasa Wong: Oh, yes. I hope so. Yes, I like people to know about Chinatown. Yeah, mhm.

John Price: Good. So one thing is that you're also a... the secretary of the CCBA, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association.

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: Are you the first woman?

Kileasa Wong: Yes, yes. Yes I am the first woman secretary. Also the first woman principal of the school.

John Price: Well, congratulations.

Kileasa Wong: Thank you.

John Price: And what do you think about that? Has... Is that... Does that mark... Is it a symbol of change? Do you think women's role have changed?

Kileasa Wong: Yes I think so now. Yeah, I was the first one but I still think that some older people, elderly people, they still think that women can't do anything, suppose to stay home, look after the kids and cook. You know, yeah. But things have changed now and... Now I think women and men are almost equal.

John Price: Almost.

Kileasa Wong: Almost, not quite. Like in the Chinese community, yeah.

John Price: So, what was your experience? Or what have been your experiences as a woman working in... I guess are there other women representatives on the board of the CCBA?

Kileasa Wong: Yes, there are some.

John Price: So you're not alone.

Kileasa Wong: Not alone but before there was me and other elderly lady. Yeah, only two. And now still in some association, like women don't go to... you know in Qingming festival, we go to pay respect to our ancestor.

John Price: Yes.

Kileasa Wong: In here right? We go to Chinese cemetery.

John Price: Yes.

Kileasa Wong: we bring a chicken in front of them.

John Price: At Harling point.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah. And still some association that women don't go.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah and before it's not allowed but now just because get used to women just not go. Yeah.

John Price: Well there... it's... there were many male dominated clubs in Canada, right? Where women couldn't go.

Kileasa Wong: Right.

John Price: University club was just all men, so the women had to set up a separate club, University women's club.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, yeah. But not anymore is it?

John Price: Well, I think there's not... that type of discrimination isn't permitted anymore. But I think that there's still lots of challenges right?

Kileasa Wong: Right, yeah.

John Price: For women. So, and... also I think though, sometimes we... not exaggerate but women were playing an important role in Chinatown for a long time, from what I understand. Even when they formed the... Was it the Chinese Empire Reform Association, you know? Kang You Wei's Association?

Kileasa Wong: Uh-huh.

John Price: You know the one...

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: ...supported reform from China.

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: There was a women's branch of the association.

Kileasa Wong: Oh...

John Price: Way back in...

Kileasa Wong: I didn't know.

John Price: Yeah.

Kileasa Wong: Wow.

John Price: Zhongping's going to talk about that.

Kileasa Wong: Oh, wow.

John Price: Yeah, it's quite interesting.

Kileasa Wong: Yes.

John Price: So, what about... Are there any stories about women's roles in the past? In Chinatown. Are there any other famous women that you... Chinese Canadian women?

Kileasa Wong: Betsy Tang.

John Price: Betsy Tang.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: Yeah.

Kileasa Wong: Did you... Have you met?

John Price: I haven't met.

Kileasa Wong: Oh...

John Price: Tell us about her.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, she is... She was like in... very active in Chinatown and they have the... what they call... The lion's club has the... the... call Lantern festival. Yeah and she's always the one that on the stage and introduce the performance and all this and yeah, dress up in the old fashion costumes.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah and she's really involved in the fundraising and all kinds of activities in Chinatown.

John Price: I see. So was she affiliated with a specific organization?

Kileasa Wong: The lion's club.

John Price: It was the lion's club eh?

Kileasa Wong: Her husband, Jack Tang.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Kileasa Wong: Was in the lion's club and actually the lion's only the men's. But I think... I'm not the lion's club so... so I don't know but maybe the wives that helps out or something. Yeah, she's involved, yeah.

John Price: Oh, I see.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah and she always... When she like getting older, the older days, she always said to me, "Kileasa, next it's you, you are going to be the next one."

John Price: interesting.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah. Very nice lady, both her and her husband, they both pass away, yeah.

John Price: They both passed away eh?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: So and what about during the war, in the war time years? So I see lots of pictures of women doing fundraising for... to support China.

Kileasa Wong: Yes, I saw some pictures too but I'm not familiar.

John Price: You haven't heard any stories eh? Yeah... And what about today, like there are other women active in politics or in other things that... like Charlayne Thornton-Joe or...

Kileasa Wong: Ida Chong.

John Price: Ida Chong.

Kileasa Wong: And Jackie Ngai, she's now step down, she's not... She used to be the councilor or Saanich.

John Price: Saanich?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, yeah.

John Price: I see. Yeah. Ok. Let's just check the time because...

Kileasa Wong: Ok, it's quarter after.

John Price: Quarter after? Ok, let's do one or two. We don't have to finish today, we can finish up another time.

Kileasa Wong: Sure.

John Price: So... Yeah. So... What did you... What do you, you know... If you were to say something to the visitors to the website. Right?

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: What would you tell them?

Kileasa Wong: Come to visit Chinatown, there's a lot of thing to learn and lot of thing to see. It's a colourful Chinatown.

John Price: Ok. And what about... Are there many people from China, from Guangdong or Guangzhou who come to Chinatown? Visitors, are there many, you know, tourists?

Kileasa Wong: The visitors, yes they... I think it's one of the stop they come to Chinatown. Even like the regular tours like from the travel agent.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Kileasa Wong: They... they must stop Chinatown have lunch or dinner or something. And the delegation from the government or those visitors. The Chinese government officers, they came to... If they come to Victoria, they usually let the CCBA know and came to visit CCBA or Chinatown and we have a... We always have a... Walk them through Chinatown, depends on how much time or have dinner or lunch in Chinatown.Yeah.

John Price: I see. And what about... Sometimes I think the Chinese naval ships have come?

Kileasa Wong: Oh yes, been here two times. Well as I know. As far as I know, two time and oh that was very big event for us. We have three days on the road like we set up upstairs, the CCBA hall with some snacks, drinks, you know. And then we have some volunteers so when they walk in Chinatown or they came... They all know they can come here to stop by and talk to us and then they take pictures and... 3 days and if they say "Oh I want to buy something, something." Then we have volunteer take them to Costco and to drug store or something.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Kileasa Wong: That was fun and really, really busy. And we really feel like... yeah. Really close to China, like to the government, to our country, yeah.

John Price: Yeah.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: So is... Do... They've come twice. Do you know if they'll come again, do you think?

Kileasa Wong: That I don't know. But they... Yeah, they came twice and we took them to tour Chinatown and all this. That was really nice, very good experience.

John Price: And so how do you... In the past, there has been lots of, you know, different political ideas, right? In Chinatown about China right? And about the... because you had the Nationalist party, the Guomindang, the Communist party and so you also had the Chee Kong Tong right? Who were different also right? They were... So how are, you know... How about politics today in Chinatown?

Kileasa Wong: Actually, maybe Victoria's a small city, small community in Chinatown. We all seem to get along well and like the Guomindang would go to celebrate the... the Gongchandang's... their national day or the other party will go to the other celebrate, you know. We're... And then like... Not like said, we don't speak to each other, like they all say hello to each other and nothing bad. CCBA actually will have both parties under the CCBA.

John Price: Under the CCBA?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: So and how about the... the future of Chinatown in the sense of... What about in terms of development? What type of development would you think will happen in Chinatown?

Kileasa Wong: For the development, I think... You know this heritage building, you can't touch right? You can't do anything so we kind of like hope that there are like... maybe the government will let like building, new building or something. Otherwise we'll just... the building will just keep getting old and down right?

John Price: Mhm.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, so... We hope that around like the end of the Store Street, you know there's some old buildings...

John Price: Yeah. On Store Street?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, on Store Street, yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, there's the old building there and yeah if could build something, something new. And more new building around and more business. So would bring more people to Chinatown.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: And what about in terms of living space? You think there'll be more apartments built? Or... In Chinatown or would you like to see more businesses, commercial or residential?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, would like to see more new building, more residential and more business. But seems if the Chinatown, all this heritage building we cannot touch then where you got space to build right?

John Price: Mhm.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah so just hope that there are more like maybe more building like around the Chinatown, near Chinatown. Like more business...

John Price: Mhm.

Kileasa Wong: ...and more living space, yeah.

John Price: Mhm. So when... In Chinatown, the old days was a bit bigger I think, like before the war right? It was... There were more streets...

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, that's what I heard. Yeah.

John Price: Yeah. I know. But like across the street here, there's a parking lot right? The parkade.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, yeah. Here, yes.

John Price: So maybe that can be developed?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, this is belong to the government.

John Price: The city right?

Kileasa Wong: The city, yeah.

John Price: Yeah.

Kileasa Wong: So yeah, so... Don't know. If city can help develop more space, you know. And even Government Street, there's some old buildings there too right? Yeah. So if can... and Harold Street.

John Price: Harold Street?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah. There's lot of old buildings there too.

John Price: Yeah... Ok, well I see... Now what about the CCBA... Not the CCBA but I don't know if it's the public school, but you have photographs right? That both... some of them are up on your walls right?

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: But also you have other photographs like a collection?

Kileasa Wong: Not many. We have some out here and then some upstairs, yeah.

John Price: And what about... Do you have other photos like Edna Chow? Do you know Edna?

Kileasa Wong: Yes, yes.

John Price: She said that she gave to somebody some photos from her family.

Kileasa Wong: When we have our... our CCBA 100 year celebration or something, 110 years. She did have some photos. I have to think about where are they now.

John Price: Mhm.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, because we don't have much room to hang them out.

John Price: Yeah, yeah.

Kileasa Wong: So ... so yeah...

John Price: So there may be some more photos. So that could be, you know, put into the archive. You know, in the sense, not necessarily in the University of Victoria archive but we could take pictures...

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: ... of the pictures.

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: Right? And use them.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, Zhongping was asking me about some photos, said “where are they?” And some of them I borrow from somebody and took picture and then give back, you know. Yeah. So I... I’m going to email Zhongping and ask to... Which photo that he wants, you know.

John Price: Yeah.

Kileasa Wong: And then I can look for them.

John Price: Yeah.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: There’s a very famous photo of a rice bowl, big giant rice bowl.

Kileasa Wong: I have one little one.

John Price: Yeah. Where...

Kileasa Wong: Where is it...? Somebody gave it to me... Gordy Kwan gave it to me.

John Price: That’s an important photo. Because there’s many photos of it but nobody has an original.

Kileasa Wong: I don’t know his is... was a original.

John Price: Well there’s just... Yeah it’s just... Somebody took a photo...

Kileasa Wong: There was a bowl and then Gordy was either beside it or something. Yeah.

John Price: Yeah, yeah.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: We need to get that picture.

Kileasa Wong: Ok.

John Price: Right?

Kileasa Wong: Then yeah... If you... You tell me what particular picture and then I have some idea, I can look for that. But Zhongping was kind of thing like from page 38-56 or something, those photos. I... I’ve no idea. Yeah, yeah, ok. Ok, I will...

John Price: Because that was the, you know... Because Chinatown really was very active in the war right? In the... you know... To make... build support for China in the war against Japan. And many women were active and many men were active and the community got a lot of respect from the Caucasian community, from the white community, right?

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: And so... anyways those fundraising campaigns were quite important and it's... you know, because many white Canadians sympathized with China at that time. But the government didn't help China at that time, Canadian government. Right?

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: So it was, you know, we talk about the veterans. Many Chinese Canadians joined the war.

Kileasa Wong: Did you interview all the...

John Price: Some of them, yeah. Victor and yeah, yeah.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah, yeah.

John Price: We have yes.

Kileasa Wong: They... He must have some photos.

John Price: Yes, yes I did. We got some photos from him. Anyways we're looking at... But that's one photo of the rice bowl, the giant rice bowl was a fundraising...

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: ...activity.

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: From the wartime days and it's a very good picture and it's a very... Yeah it's very historic. So...

Kileasa Wong: So did you interview Gordy Kwan? Gordan Kwan.

John Price: I don't think we've interviewed him, no.

Kileasa Wong: Ok, I will ask him about the photo.

John Price: Yeah and also if we could interview him. I would like to interview him.

Kileasa Wong: Oh, ok.

John Price: I am... I will check with Zhongping on our list right?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: 'Cause I just did...

Kileasa Wong: I think our list will only have Victor.

John Price: We just had Victor?

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: Yeah, so meeting Gordy would be good.

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: Yeah, how is he?

Kileasa Wong: Very good.

John Price: Yeah?

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: Very good.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah.

John Price: Yeah. Ok that would be good. So... Ok I think that's it. Then I will see if we can have the meeting on the 22nd of May.

Kileasa Wong: Mhm.

John Price: And then we can start to look at how the website will look.

Kileasa Wong: Ok. I will check my calendar at home tonight.

John Price: Yeah.

Kileasa Wong: And then I email you.

John Price: Yeah, perfect.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah about the dates.

John Price: Good.

Kileasa Wong: Ok, mhm.

John Price: Good. And I will think of... There's probably some more questions. But we'll do a supplementary interview.

Kileasa Wong: Sure. Ok.

John Price: Thanks so much, it's wonderful to hear your stories.

Kileasa Wong: Yeah. I hope I can help you.