

## Standing in the Doorway shines light on Chinese immigrant experience



### Exhibit opens January 25 at Aurora Museum & Archives

Award-winning travelling exhibition *Standing in the Doorway: Lived Histories and Experience in the Chinese Community* has made its way to Aurora, and the Aurora Museum & Archives invites the community to take it all in at a special reception on Saturday morning.

*Standing in the Doorway*, which was first curated by the Markham Museum, the York Region District School Board Museum & Archives, and students from the University of Toronto's Museum Studies Program to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, has now been placed throughout all four floors of Aurora Town Square for residents to discover.

It was curated to highlight stories of 'resilience and perseverance' in the Chinese-Canadian community before the Act, while the Act was in place, and after it was repealed.

It has brought together an array of artefacts, including those from the Aurora Collection, and even includes some examples of early Chinese-Canadian pioneers and business people who settled locally.

'We were in touch with the curators when they were developing this exhibition back in 2022. When they were in the early stages, they sent us some correspondence to see which local museums would be interested in hosting it and we thought we would definitely want to host this at Town Square once construction was over,' says Michelle Johnson of the Aurora Museum & Archives.

Johnson says the exhibition will resonate with everyone for many reasons, not the least of which is it ties into some of Aurora's earlier history.

'We have a history of some early Chinese businesses in Aurora - the first Chinese laundry dates to around 1890 in our heritage core. Also, it's a very relevant topic,' she says. 'The exhibition was developed kind of in response to the 100th year anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act that was implemented in 1923, which basically said no more Chinese immigration to Canada. This exhibition is a response to 100 years since that act was in place.'

'It talks about the effects of that discrimination specifically on York Region and those who were already in York Region of Chinese ancestry. I think it was very relevant for us to reflect at this point in time and see what type of impact did these policies have and the resilience of the Chinese community in overcoming these policies and knowing that our population is changing and becoming more diverse. I think the content of this will resonate with a lot of Aurorans and we are also fortunate to have it over Lunar New Year. Having an exhibition that celebrates this culture and the resilience over a significant holiday is also quite beneficial, I think, for the community and us.'

While the exhibition is on now for residents to take in and enjoy, a number of events and programs will be hosted through to the end of March to coincide with it.

The first is this Saturday, January 25, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon when the Centre hosts an opening reception in the Church Street School's Brevik Hall.

Following that, on February 21, the Museum will host a screening of the film, *An Evening in Oblivion*, a documentary that tells the story of a secret Second World War Special Forces unit comprised of Chinese-Canadian soldiers.

**By Brock Weir**