

## Archive Package: 1947–2014 (Post-World War II)

### Story Sheet: Tun Wong – Kelowna

Tun Wong was born and raised in Kelowna's Chinatown in 1941, and lived there for 27 years. He had eleven siblings. His mother was 7 years old when she entered Canada in 1918. A Chinese merchant in Vancouver offered to pay her Head Tax in exchange to have her work as a servant for his children. When she was about 19 years old, she was sent to Kelowna to marry a wealthy Chinese merchant who was 24 years older than she was. They had two daughters together, but he was murdered in Kelowna and the case remains unsolved. Later, she met Tun's father and they had 9 more children.

In the 1930s and 1940s, they were the only Chinese family in Kelowna's Chinatown, although the city had begun the century with a population of 15% Chinese. During Tun's last year of high school, his father passed away. His mother was the only Chinese female in Kelowna. She made her own tofu, and sold it throughout the Okanagan Valley.

When Tun was an adult and tried to register his birth certificate, he was told to change it to an English name to make it simple. He just looked at [the clerk] and said, "my parents gave me this name."

Today, the only artifacts that remain are those that were retrieved and preserved from Tun's home. His mother's tofu maker, along with their reconstructed home and other artifacts, can be seen in the museum in Kelowna today. No buildings remain since Tun's home was taken down in 1973, the last of the buildings in Chinatown to go. Now, only a plaque marks the place that once had a thriving Chinatown, in a city with diverse beginnings. Today, while people of Chinese origin represent the second largest ethnic grouping in Vancouver today<sup>1</sup>, just 1% of the population of Kelowna is of Chinese origin.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Vancouver#Chinese\\_origins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Vancouver#Chinese_origins)