

The Lost Story of Yee Clun & Regina's "White Women's Labour Law"

Lost Stories, a project led by Concordia University in Montreal, seeks out little-known stories about the Canadian past and transforms them into works of public art. This process is documented through a series of short films.

Along the way, forgotten moments from Canadian history are brought to light, and viewers have a chance to see the choices that have to be made when a story is turned into a work of art.

Lost Stories has been selected as a Canada 150 Signature Event and has received funding to do four new episodes across Canada.

The story for the Prairie Provinces is that of Yee Clun, a Regina restaurant owner. Yee Clun came to prominence in 1924, fighting a Saskatchewan law that required him to secure a municipal license to hire "white women" as employees.



Yee Clun Family, ca. 1927. Standing, right to left: Yee Yin (Yee Clun's older brother), Jack Yee (Yee Clun's nephew, Yee Yin's son), Yee Low (Yee Clun's younger brother). Seated, right to left: Dan, Eng Shee (Yee Clun's wife), Mamie, Ruby, William, Katie, and Yee Clun.

Hearings were held that reflected both the racial prejudices of the time, but also significant support for a well-respected businessman and member of the community.

Ultimately, Yee Clun's request was rejected, but the city's actions were overturned by the Saskatchewan Court of King's Bench. In the end, this is a story of racial prejudice, but also one of the courage of Yee Clun to challenge the law and of others who stood up for his cause.

This story will be told through public art installed at Regina's Art Park, which is located around the corner from Yee Clun's home and the headquarters of the Chinese Benevolent Association.

This project was made possible with the support of an advisory committee that included members of Regina's Chinese-Canadian community, with particular assistance from the Chinese Cultural Society of Saskatchewan. Help and support was also provided by Regina's Heritage Community Association and the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society. This episode is facilitated by Ronald Rudin, Professor of History at Concordia University.

Yee Clun's restaurant and boarding house, the Exchange Café (1700 Rose Street, Regina), early 1950s.



余 坤 羨

pin yin	YU	KUN	XIAN
cantonese	YUE ⁴	KWAN ¹	SIN ⁴
Hoi Ping	YUE ⁷	KUN ¹	XIAN ²

Yee Clun's birth name (above), as pronounced in his native Hoi-Ping dialect, could be written as Yue Kun Xian. To an English-speaking immigration officer of the time, it may have sounded like Yee Quon Theen, which is how the name was spelled on various documents. It is believed the name was then shortened to Yee Clun. After his marriage, Yue Kun Xian was known in the Chinese community as Yue Yoke Giet. His wife's name can be written as Arng Woon Goke.

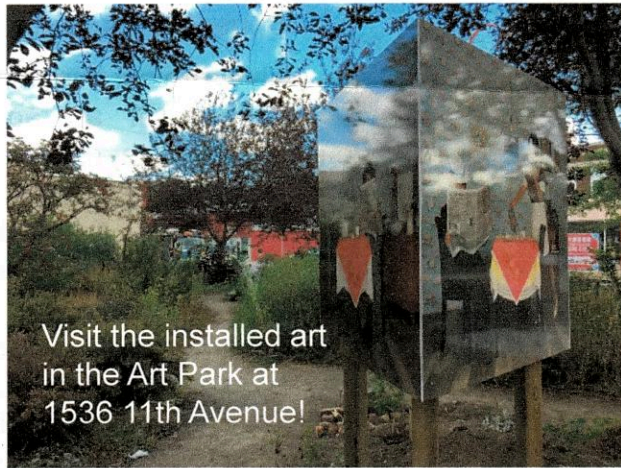
Daughter Katie with waitress from the Exchange Café, ca. 1940s.



Xiao Han, the artist chosen to commemorate Yee Clun's lost story.

Xiao Han is originally from China, moving to Canada in 2008. Xiao's artwork talks about politics, gender issues, and also explores crossing cultures between Canada and China based on her experience. She received her BFA from Thompson Rivers University in 2013 and her MFA from the University of Saskatchewan in 2016.

Kelly-Anne Riess has worked in various



Visit the installed art in the Art Park at 1536 11th Avenue!

Kelly-Anne Riess, documentary filmmaker for the project.



roles (such as producer, director, writer and researcher) on a variety of projects including Finding Al, a documentary about notorious gangster Al Capone's connections to Canada, which aired nationally on CBC in 2016, and the TV show Crime Stories, which aired on A&E Biography, Investigation Discovery and History Television.

The documentary film for this project will be posted on the Lost Stories website (<http://loststories.ca/>) later in 2017.