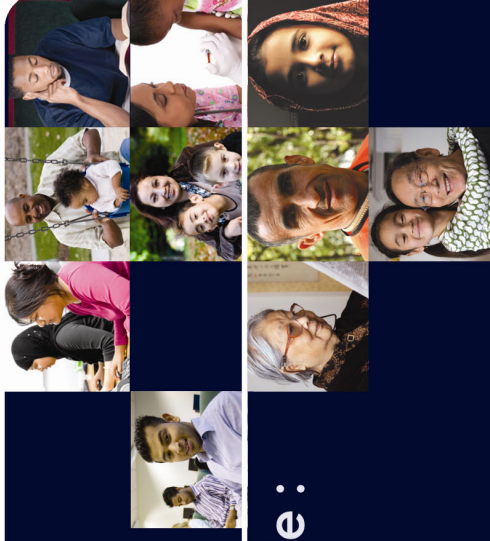


## Communities Within: Diversity and Exclusion in Ottawa

Les communautés au sein de notre ville :  
la diversité et l'exclusion à Ottawa



An initiative of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa  
Un projet du Conseil de planification sociale d'Ottawa



# Social and Economic Exclusion of Ottawa's Chinese Community

A project funded by Canadian Heritage - Immigration and Aboriginal Unit, City of Ottawa  
and United Way Ottawa with the Collaboration of Carleton University



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# Communities Within: Diversity and Exclusion in Ottawa

- The Chinese community was chosen as a case study community because
  - The Chinese community is the second largest visible minority group in Ottawa (20.2%).
  - As well, it is the largest visible minority group in Canada
  - The community has a very long history of settlement in Ottawa, dating as far back as the 1890s
  - This long history enables a examination of inclusion and exclusion over a long period, for consideration of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation issues, and for meaningful consideration of inter-generational issues
  - In recent years there has been an increase in the number of Chinese immigrants coming to Ottawa, allowing a comparison of different periods of settlement within one group
  - The community has experienced significant social mobility, particularly with the growth of high tech in Ottawa since the late 1990s
  - As well, the community experienced gross social injustices through exclusionary immigration laws (the Chinese Immigration Act and the Head Tax). The successful campaign to redress these injustices is an important milestone for all visible minority groups.

# Communities Within: Diversity and Exclusion in Ottawa, Cont'd

- The report uses the term “Chinese” and “Chinese community” to identify a group of Ottawa residents who have familial and cultural roots in China, regardless of where they were born, their citizenship, or how long they have been in Canada. The term includes 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Canadians. It also includes people from various parts of South East Asia. These individuals identify themselves with multiple identities. The statistics are based on those who self-identified as “Chinese” on the census.
- We examine social and economic exclusion as an outcome – by comparing how the community is doing in relation to other visible minority populations and in relation to all others
- We also examine social and economic exclusion as a process – by looking at the systems, policies, institutions and power relations which push community members away from effective engagement in all aspects of life

# An Overview Statistical Portrait

- Based on 2001 census data
- Chinese Canadian population in Ottawa: 27,775
- 27.8% are Canadian born. However, the Chinese Canadian population in Ottawa is predominantly first generation immigrants, setting it apart from the Chinese Canadian settlements in other major cities like Toronto and Vancouver and from the scenario at the national level
- 100% of the Chinese community would be identified as visible minority
- The majority (62.2%) indicate they do not belong to any religious group, although many practice moral philosophical beliefs such as Confucianism and Taoism. There is a growing number adhering to Christian traditions
- The Chinese community is diverse, with members coming from elsewhere in Canada, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam

# Age Group Distribution

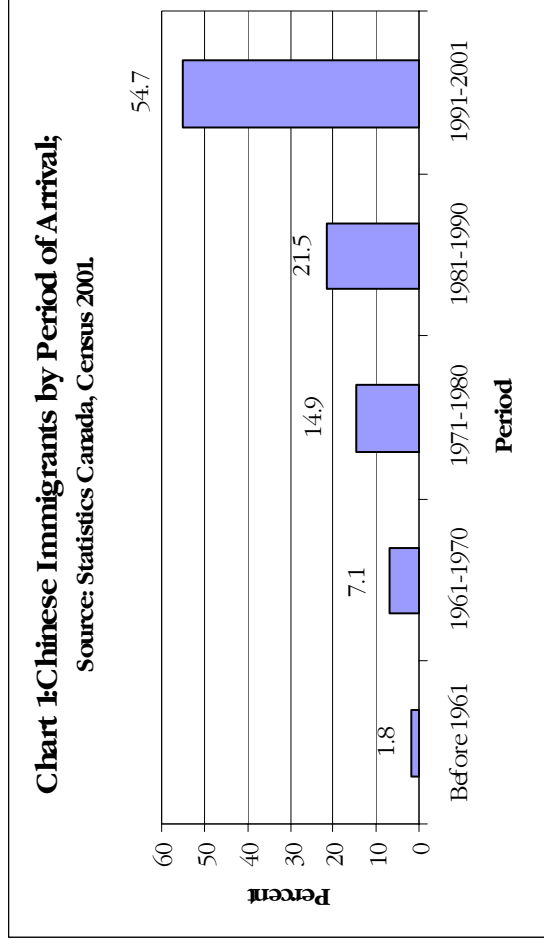
- The Chinese community in Ottawa had a high proportion of people aged between 25 and 44, considered the 'prime' working years in Canada (40%)
- The proportion of seniors aged 65 years and over was higher than it was in the all visible minority population group. This means that Chinese Canadians had larger responsibilities caring for seniors than most other visible minority groups
- 21% are children aged below 15 years.

<b>Percent of Ottawa Residents by Age Groups and Selected Characteristics, 2001</b>			
Age Group	Chinese	All Visible Minority	All Others
0 – 14 years	21.4	26.2	17.9
15 – 24 years	11.5	15.9	12.9
25 – 44 years	40.6	35.3	32.2
45 – 64 years	18.3	17.3	25.3
65 years +	8.2	5.4	11.6
Total	100.0	100.00	100.0

# A Long History of Settlements but Majority are Newcomers

- The Chinese first arrived in Ottawa in the 1890s, primarily from Western Canada. They were originally mainly originally Cantonese speakers from rural southern China and were unskilled.
- The Head Tax Act of 1885 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 restricted immigration and economic access
- Restrictions were lifted in 1947 but the Canadian government was wary of accepting immigrants from Communist China
- 54% of Chinese Canadians

in Ottawa arrived between 1991 and 2001. They were significantly from Mainland China, Mandarin speakers, and highly skilled, especially in the scientific and technical fields. Also some immigrants from Hong Kong.



# A Harsh Early Reception

- Early settlement marked by harsh immigration and economic regulations aimed at limiting the potential to achieve economic prosperity and separating family members
- Significant racism against the Chinese community historically
- Community members faced significant economic exclusion, with significant employment ghettoization in restaurants, stores, and laundries. Generational poverty has continued for some of the descendants of the early settlers
- The majority within the community have achieved significant economic mobility and inclusion. However, the effects of the historical past of oppression are still being felt, with many still feeling they are “guests” in Ottawa. Socio-economic mobility alone cannot engender a strong sense of belonging
- Newer arrivals in Ottawa, especially since 1991, have high levels of education. Do not face the same level of social exclusion, but experience labour market barriers.

# Economic Exclusion and Inclusion

- The community has made great strides in economic inclusion
- The median income was \$23,331 compared to \$19,422 for all visible minorities and \$31,437 for all others
- 26% had incomes of \$60,000 or more. This compares very well with the non-visible minorities at 27.6%

<b>Percent of Ottawa Residents by Employment and Participation Rates and Selected Characteristics, 2001</b>			
	Chinese	All Visible Minorities	All Others
Participation Rate	68.1	67.6	70.7
Employment Rate	62.2	60.0	67.0
Unemployment Rate	8.6	10.8	4.8

- However, there are economic challenges
  - Newcomers faced with significant challenges in accessing the labour market. The unemployment rate (8.6%) was almost twice the unemployment rate of all non-visible minorities (4.8%)
  - Disproportionately affected by down-turns in the high tech sector
  - Moderate incidence of low income

# Factors in Economic Inclusion

- High levels of education
  - 73% have at least some post-secondary education.
  - 48% hold at least one university degree, compared to 34.5% among all visible minorities and 27.6% among all others
- Significant specializing in technical and scientific professions. Is reflected in the fields of employment. Chinese in Ottawa have their highest concentrations in the following sectors which are generally well paid:
  - engineering and applied sciences (26.5% - far above the rate for all visible minorities and all others in Ottawa);
  - mathematics and computer & physical sciences (20.6%); and
  - commerce, management, and business administration (15.4%)
  - collectively, this is over 60% of the employment force of the Chinese community in Ottawa

# Labour Market Barriers

- Lack of recognition of foreign credentials
- Language
- Bilingualism requirements
- Volatility in the technology sectors
- Lack of focus on development of soft skills including networking and those related to communication patterns and mannerisms – may be a factor in access to higher management positions
- Cultural context of the hiring process
- *“It seems you need to know somebody in the company or organization, and then you can get a job there. If finding a job just depends on the network, how can the society reflect the equity?” (Key informant)*

# Language Seen as a Significant Barrier

- The majority of the Chinese community in Ottawa are recent immigrants from regions where neither English nor French is spoken
- A significant portion of the community (11.6%) has no knowledge of either official language
- They are significantly less likely to be bilingual
- A significant portion of the community has only English, which creates a barrier to accessing the labour market in general, particularly the public sector
- Supports to learn business / technical language area a challenge

# Language Seen as a Significant Barrier, Cont'd

- Language barriers were less a problem in fields such as accounting, but a very significant issue in access professions which deal with the public, such as medicine
- Participants were concerned about discrimination, where the presence of an accent was associated with poor communication skills

Percent of Ottawa Residents by Knowledge of Official Languages, 2001			
	Chinese	All Visible Minorities	All Others
English Only	75.8	68.1	57.4
French Only	0.4	2.6	1.6
French and English	12.2	23.1	40.7
No Official Language	11.6	6.1	0.3

# The Glass Ceiling

- Strong sense that Chinese Canadians face exclusion from management level positions, especially in the public sector
- Racism was seen as a primary factor, as the belief was institutions prefer to have a non visible minority person in top management positions, especially a Caucasian male
- Some belief that an inadequate development of soft skills in the technical education stream creates some barriers
- In some cases employees or consultants are consulted extensively, but left out of decision making
- *I meet a lot of professional people who are shut out of the management jobs. They are consultants working with the managers and their advices are sought, but the management decisions are made when they are not there. I am told a lot about that. They are paid like a technician, but they are asked to provide advice like a manager. But when it comes to make decisions, they are not involved. You pay these people less and respect their knowledge, but you don't want them to sit with you to make the decisions. Their locations are below the management. This is the case of discrimination. (Focus group participant)*

# Self Employment

- Chinese Canadians in Ottawa are less likely to be self-employed than all visible minority residents or all others (see table next)
- Historically self-employment was a response to very significant labour market exclusion, and many businesses were marginal, with poor incomes and long hours
- While there are supports within the Chinese community for those wishing to establish a business, community members saw employment at a good salary as a much better employment strategy

# Self Employment, Cont'd

- I know a lot of families are self-employed. They turn to self-employment because they don't have much education or you are shut out of the employment. That is why there are so many small businesses in Canada operated by immigrants. That is because you have no choice. No one would like to commit himself to working in the store until 11pm or 12 pm, 20 hours a day. Why you need to treat yourself like a slave to a corporation. You might be abused by customers. You just have no choices. You would like jobs in public sectors and you could leave at 5:00pm to go home with your family. (Key informant)*

Percent of Ottawa Residents by Class of Worker and Selected Characteristics, 2001					
	Employees	Self-Employed Incorporated	Self-Employed Unincorporated	Unpaid Family Workers	Total
Chinese	92.8	1.9	5.2	0.1	100.0
All Visible Minority	91.1	2.8	5.8	0.2	100.0
Non-Visible Minority	89.6	3.0	7.2	0.1	100.0

# Poverty An Issue for the Community

- The rate of low income in the community is twice that of all non-visible minority residents
- 14.1% of the community live below the low income cut off, compared to 29.1% for all visible minority residents and 7.8% for all others
- 40% within the Chinese community live on earnings of less than \$20,000 per year
- Those living in poverty include:
  - a segment of the community who are the children or grandchildren of the first immigrants. Their families experienced extreme social and economic exclusion, often working in restaurants and laundries. They have not achieved the high levels of technical education which have facilitated economic mobility of others. Research participants felt these community members were significantly isolated from the rest of the community.
  - May also include seniors who were marginalized within the workforce
  - Unemployed and under-employed workers, particularly new arrivals unable to access the labour market

# Poverty An Issue for the Community, Cont'd

- *There is a big cultural difference between the mainstream and people from rural China. "Why don't you ask for help?" These people never ask for help. They just stay silent because of different cultures. People from big cities in China know how to ask what you want, but people from villages don't. They don't ask because of religion. They think it is greed if you ask for what you need. This is their tradition. People from big cities know how to use services here. But people from small villages don't know and they never ask. This is their right, but they think it is greedy to ask. You have to break that barrier. And the second generation is still suffering, because ... they don't have the right to ask. I hope more people can understand them and focus on them. In this research it is good to understand this group. The group is really poor and isolated in the society. They are not well educated and they have huge social and language barriers. They do low-paid jobs, which are hard and difficult. Their economic status is originally quite low. They can get out from two points. They either get good jobs or they run good business. (Key informant)*

# Family Composition

- The percent of the community which is legally married is higher than in the other comparator groups

	Never married	Legally married	Separated, (but legally married)	Divorced	Widowed
Chinese	28.6	63.4	1.4	2.6	4.1
All Visible Minority	36.4	52.7	3.5	4.2	3.2
All others	33.6	50.3	3.5	7.6	5.1

- Key stresses on the family include:
  - Labour market exclusion
  - Loss of social network
  - Pressure to attain a high standard of living and social status
- There is some intergenerational conflict, primarily around:
  - Educational choices and performance
  - Parental authority and the autonomy of children and youth
  - Teenage social behaviour
  - And in some cases, between seniors and their adult children, often related to isolation or family / cultural values

# Gender Issues

- Some concern among young males about the ability to find a “suitable” marriage partner
  - higher percentage of single Chinese males aged 24 and under compared to females
  - concern accentuated by some women marrying outside the Chinese community
- Focus group participants identified that among newcomers, the men may feel a deep sense of loss of authority and social status while women are not always prepared for new responsibilities. This leads to some family disruption.
- It was felt that this same tension did not exist for older immigrants and Canadian born members of the Chinese community.

# Isolated Seniors A Concern

- 8.2% of the community are seniors, compared to 5.4 for all visible minority residents and 11.6 for all others
- Many of the seniors belong to the early immigrant group who experienced significant social and economic exclusion
- May live in poverty
- Often isolated – living alone or living with family who are all working outside the home
- Access to services a problem – many do not speak English and may have cultural traditions of not asking for help
- Seniors homes are not accessible due to language and cultural barriers
- Addressing some of these needs through partnerships (e.g. with the Glebe Centre for a seniors floor)
- Urgent need to devise ways of resolving the social exclusion of seniors in the Chinese community and providing more support and programming for families looking after elderly relatives.

# Housing

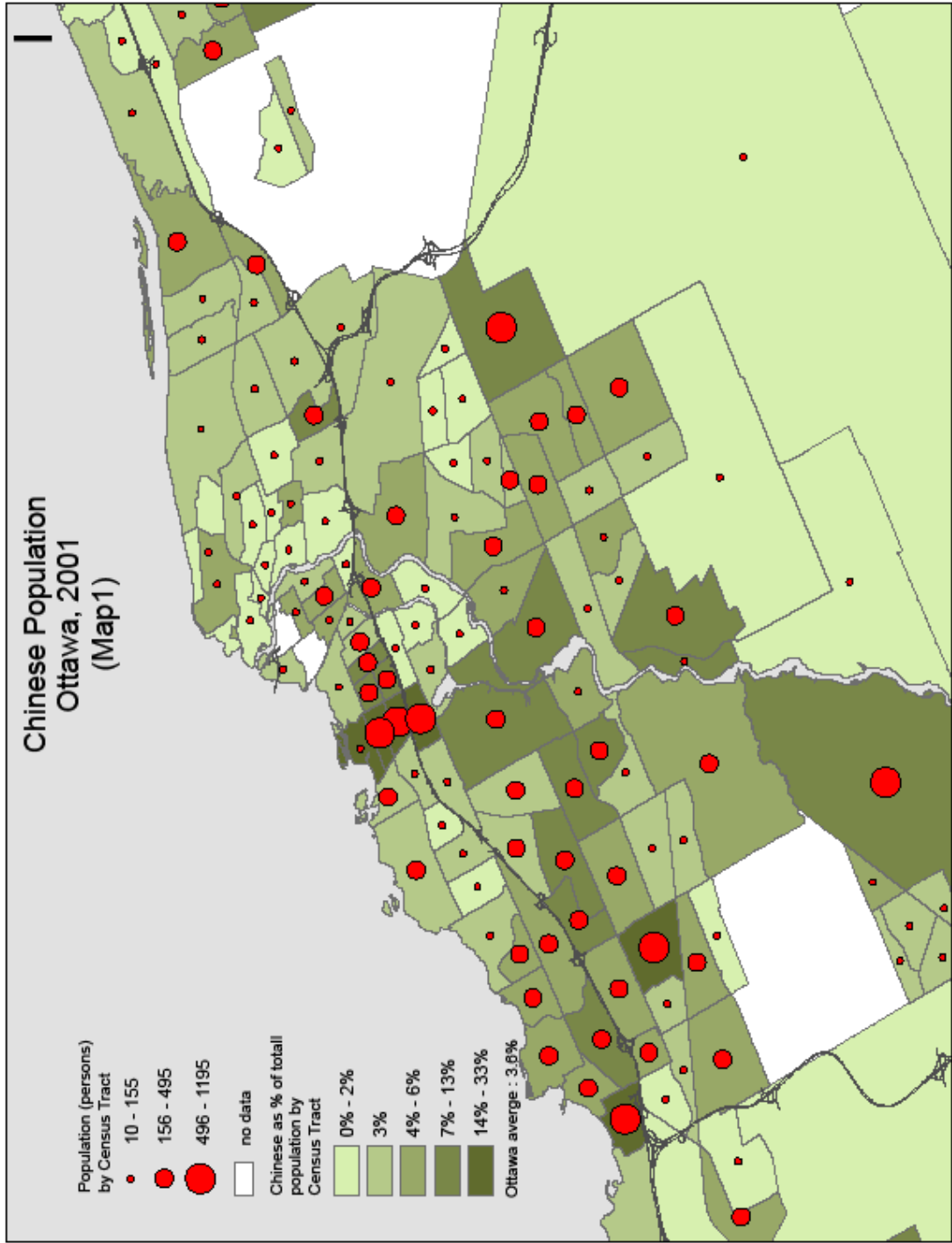
- Fewer Chinese Canadians own their own house than other visible minority groups
  - 56% of household maintainers in the Chinese community owned their own houses compared to 61 and 64 percent for the all visible minorities and non visible minorities, respectively.
  - Likely related to the higher percentage of recent immigrants within Ottawa's Chinese Canadian community.
- Some concerns with disparity in housing in Chinatown, related to age of the stock
- Challenges to accessing housing are:
  - Prospective tenants require rental history
  - Some incidents of racism from landlords

# Neighbourhoods

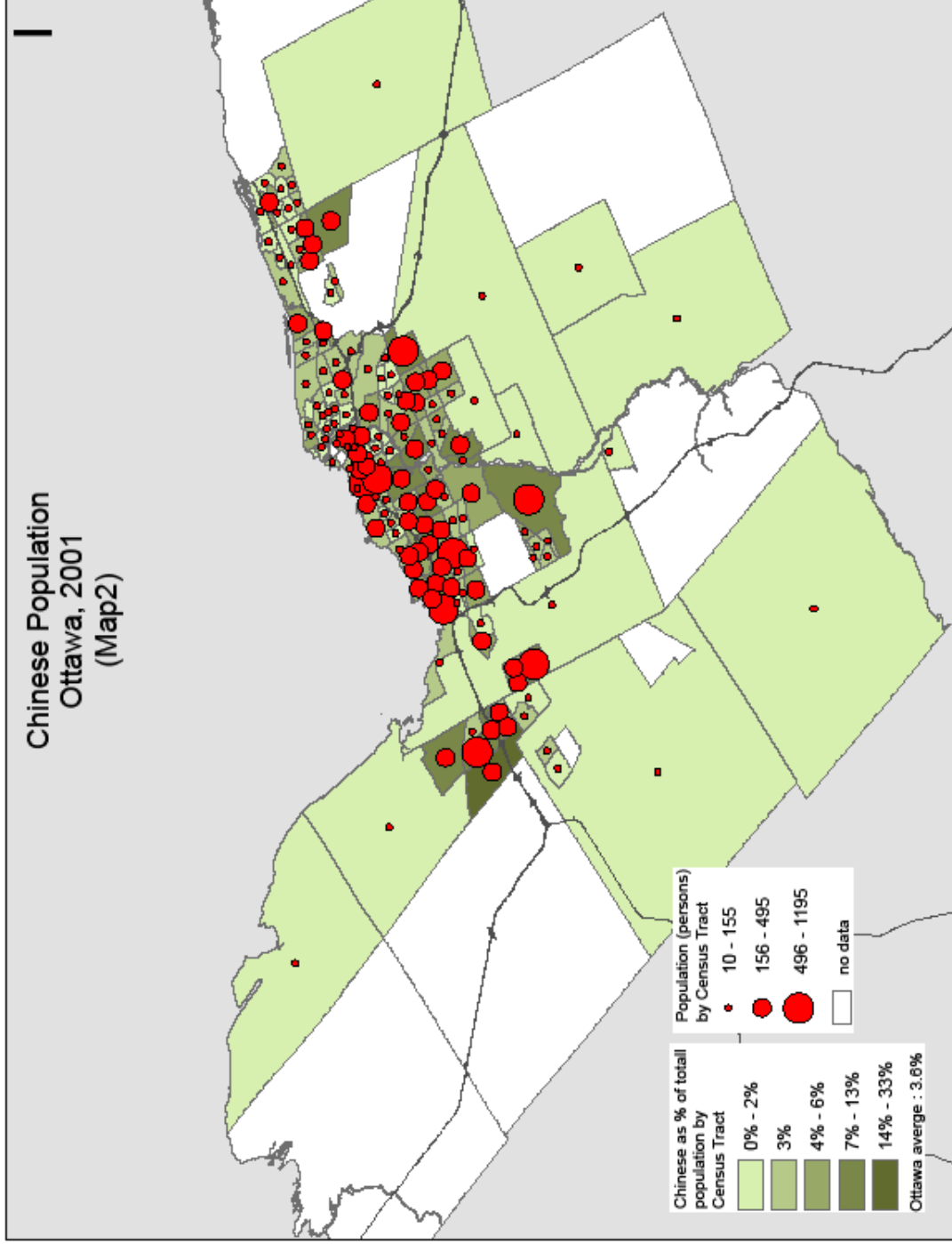
- The highest number of Chinese Canadians are found in Bay ward (10.2%), Somerset (9.7%), and Baseline (9.2%)
- The highest proportion of Chinese Canadians is found in Kanata North
- China town is no longer a Chinese enclave
- There are no specifically Chinese enclaves among Ottawa's wards (See Maps attached).
- *Actually it is not a real China Town. If you go through it, you can see lots of Vietnamese restaurants more than Chinese restaurants... The younger people didn't want to live there anymore and sold their houses to the minority, such as people from Somali, Pakistan, India etc. The problem is you can't learn English from them, because they are all immigrants. It is like an international country.*

# Chinese Population Ottawa, 2001 (Map1)

- Population (persons)  
by Census Tract
- 10 - 155
  - 156 - 495
  - 496 - 1195
  - no data
- Chinese as % of total  
population by  
Census Tract
- 0% - 2%
  - 3%
  - 4% - 6%
  - 7% - 13%
  - 14% - 33%
- Ottawa average : 3.6%



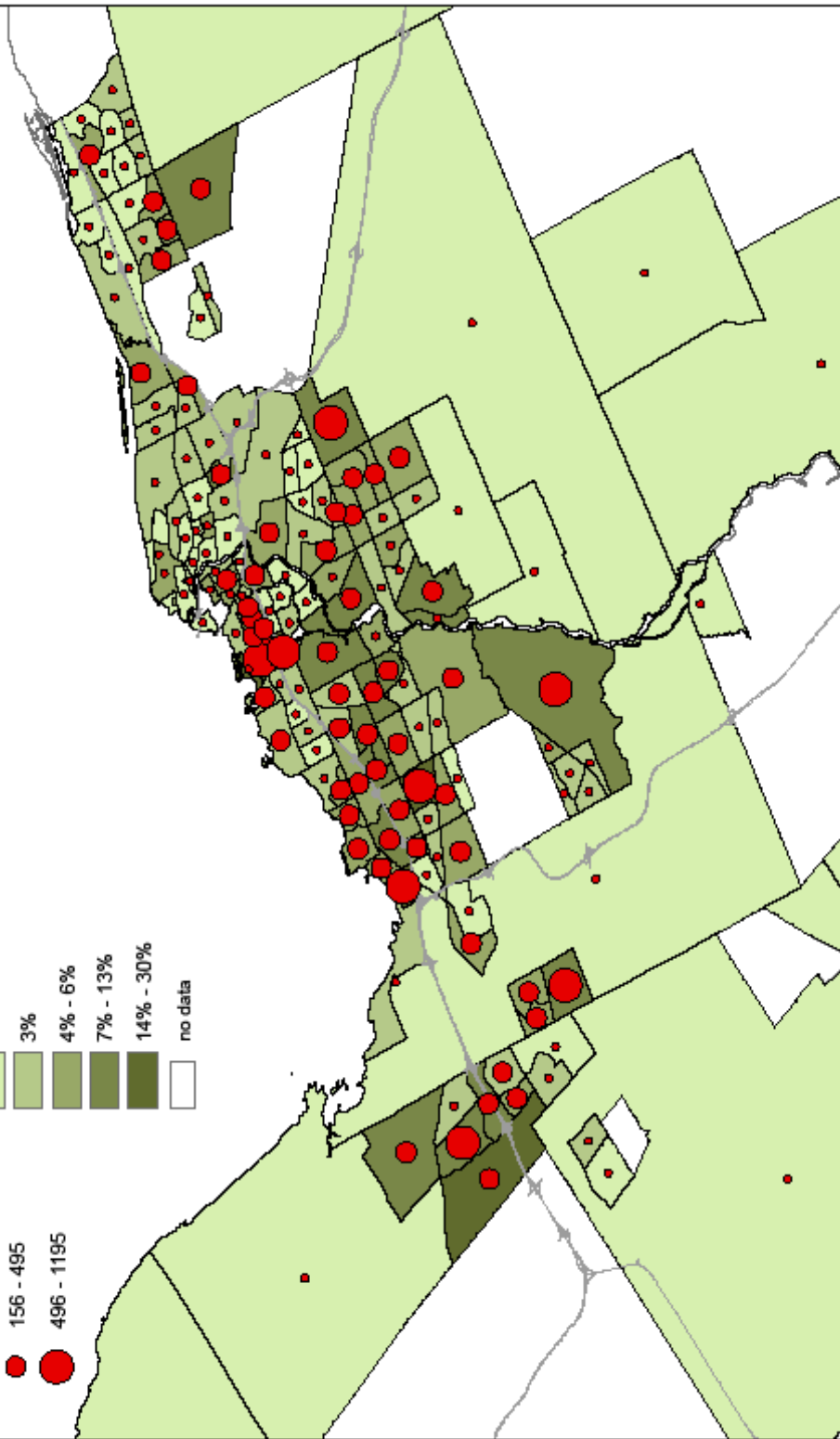
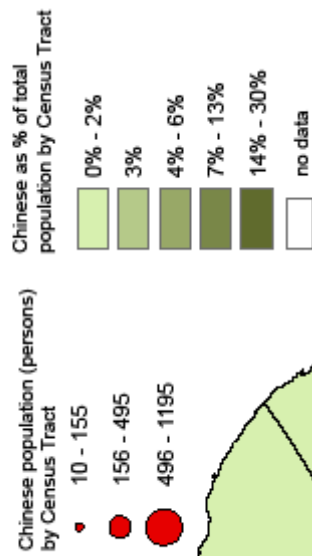
# Chinese Population Ottawa, 2001 (Map2)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, DMTI Spatial

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# Chinese Population City of Ottawa, 2001



# Identity and Belonging

- Many still feel like guests in Ottawa, significantly related to long periods of social and economic exclusion, including discrimination
- Deep seated differences between cultural practices (including family values) and the mainstream are also a distancing factor
- Participants did not see the relevance of the term “visible minority”.
  - Participants were very wary of the how the term is used in mainstream institutions as it is more of a marker than a descriptor.
  - The Chinese community in Ottawa does not see the reason why we should distinguish between them and other Canadians
  - However, the feeling of belonging to the visible minority category was ever present and community members were very aware on on-going racism.

# Identity and Belonging, Cont'd

- For many others, a strong sense of belonging to Canada is associated with socio-economic conditions. Generally speaking, people in this group are also likely to belong to the segment of the Chinese community that is more educated.
- *I find that integration is also related to their work and life. I asked this question to people who have good jobs in the government or high-tech fields. They think they consider themselves as normal Canadians. They have a stable life and they would like to spend the rest of their life here. So the sense of belonging is largely related to one's life here. (Focus group participant)*

# Civic Participation: Electoral Activity

- Participants believed electoral participation was lower, although voting was on the rise. In some areas, candidates were reaching out which was encouraging participation
- Barriers to electoral activity:
  - It is more important to achieve economic prosperity for the family before one undertakes political and voluntary duties. Civic engagement does not bring tangible benefits in the short term
  - There is a lack of trust in the mainstream institutions from a past history of discrimination
  - A pervasive sense of being a “guest”
  - Nature of their professional careers limits their interest, as their sectors are not oriented to social engagement
  - Lack of information about the system and means of participation – an access issue (not availability)
  - For newcomers, experience from a non-democratic political culture
  - The role of politician not a valued profession for many

# Civic Participation: Civic Activity

- Significant engagement in activities and organizations within the community
- Growing tendency to be involved in volunteering
- Striking that some Chinese Canadians have become very active in religious activities, in spite of their history of having no religious faith and coming from a communist country. Most Chinese Canadians have gravitated towards the mainstream Christian religion
- Parents are keen to be involved in the school activities of their children.
  - volunteer to take part in the school events
- There is some frustration with the quality of the education system, however, most Chinese Canadian parents do not take leading roles that can give them an opportunity to make the necessary improvements.

# Civic Participation: Civic Activity, Cont'd

- *Our educational system is the key to equalizing the matter or allowing people to buy homes and buy more things. If they educational system expects best for diversity, it can help our children to succeed. Why is there segregation in secondary schools? Why are some schools reported to be kind of struggling schools and good teachers don't want to go there? Why do they change the cross boundary transfers? We need to know these discriminations in reality. In the community we need to get more engaged at the local level, the school board, from the school government to school councils. We just don't have that confidence in getting more involved in the mainstream activities to have our voice heard. But the challenge is related to that kind of mentality: "We are just the guests here, and we are not the hosts of this system." So there is a psychological hurdle there. You need more representativeness in classrooms. What learning experience you should have? (Key informant)*

# Civic Participation: Political Voice

- The successful Redress Campaign which culminated into an official apology by the Prime Minister and compensation for the Head Tax and Exclusion Act have given many Chinese Canadians increased confidence to participate in civic and political activities in the future
- The Community Historical Recognition Program is another venue for the community to define itself in the public domain

# Increasing Inclusion of Chinese Canadians in Ottawa

- Enhance supports for individuals, families and communities experiencing exclusion to increase their access to resources and opportunities,
- Build inclusive environments, and
- Support the networking, social capital, planning and monitoring capacity of the community infrastructure within the Chinese community, as well as individuals and organizations active on increasing inclusion.

# Enhance supports for individuals and families

- Provide more cultural appropriate services to the low income community members, particularly concentrated in the downtown area
- Develop and implement a plan to meet the needs of seniors within the community, particularly those who are isolated
- Increase the availability of culturally appropriate seniors housing with care, including diversifying staff

# Build Inclusive Environments (Systemic Change)

- All levels of government undertake concerted action to address the numerous labour market barriers
  - Improve recognition processes for foreign acquired credentials
  - Create opportunities for skilled staff to prove their skills in a working environment under the supervision of experienced professionals
  - Use a quota allocation system to recruit visible minorities to the City of Ottawa and the public sector
  - Increase the number of annual certifications within the medical field to make it easier for foreign trained physicians
- Increase the number of language training centres in all levels of English communication, with the possibility of partnerships with institutions in China to start this before people arrive
- Advise prospective immigrants to have their credentials evaluated before coming to Canada

# Support the capacity of the Chinese community infrastructure

- Top issue:
- Expedite the Community Historical Recognition Program
- Provide political and civic information in Mandarin and Cantonese

# Implications for the Broader Community

- Recognition of foreign credentials is a priority
- Mobility within the labour market an important area of concern
- Globalization and structural changes in the economy mean even highly educated and skilled residents face economic dislocation
- Historical exclusion can result in a cycle of poverty
- Seniors are a particularly vulnerable group for whom culturally appropriate services and interventions are necessary
- The term “visible minority” is experienced as exclusionary
- The school system is an important arena for civic engagement. Parents are highly motivated. There is a need for meaningful avenues for parents to contribute to change in the school system.