



蕭美珍
Nancy Siew

作者：楊芮

Writer: Ray Yang

以心築橋，情繫楓國

從維多利亞港到聖羅倫斯河，她用粵語廣播為華人新移民搭起通向世界的橋；從國會山到安省議會，她用“亞裔傳統月”為華人群體的故事搭起被主流看見的橋；從《排華法案》的歷史叩問到“One Heart, One Canada”的篤然信念，她用封塵真相為誤解與隔閡搭起和解的橋。從一位普通的華裔母親，到身披法袍的公民法官與身著戎裝的榮譽上校，蕭美珍用半個世紀的時光，在加拿大這片土地上，一磚一瓦搭建起一座座連接人心、跨越文化的橋樑。她搭起東方與西方的橋，讓不同文化的人看見彼此；她搭起過去與未來的橋，讓被遺忘的歷史重見天日；她搭起弱者與希望的橋，讓老兵和新移民都能在這片土地上找到歸屬。

香江往事，加國涅槃

童年的蕭美珍生活在一個色彩斑斕的世界裡。她的香港鄰居有英國人、葡萄牙人、南亞裔人，當然還有占多數的華人。不同的膚色、語言、習俗在她眼中從未構成隔閡，反而是探索世界的視窗。作為家中的次女，蕭美珍還有一個哥哥和一個妹妹。在重男輕女風氣尚存的年代，蕭家卻是例外。她回憶道：“我父母對女兒們甚至更偏愛一些。”這份平等的愛，讓她從小就敢於擔當、樂於領導。

1976年，蕭美珍的人生被驟然改寫。她的前夫決定移民加拿大，作為“傳統的妻子”，她帶著三個孩子離開了熟悉的香港，飛越半個地球，來到陌生的安大略省。“我帶著一份樸素的心態來到這裡。我不指望得到和香港一樣的職業地位，我必須從基層開始。”蕭美珍的清醒和堅韌，讓她迅速適應了新

環境。不過，生活仍給她出了難題：香港的教師資格證書尚不能被加國承認。於是，這位曾經的英語老師開始了邊工作邊求學的日子。她同時在社區大學攻讀證書，白天還要做近兩份工作。三個十幾歲的孩子、繁重的家務都需要她親力親為。於是蕭美珍從寶貴的睡眠中擠出一小時早起，放棄午餐和休息時間來學習，最終以優異的成績完成了學業。

正是在這段時間，一位敏銳的講師看到了她身上的潛質。“他說我應該去做與人相關的工作，”蕭美珍回憶道，“他覺得我是一個人道主義者。”在講師的鼓勵下，她申請了溫莎大學（UWIn）的社工專業，並以優異成績畢業。緊接著，著名的麥吉爾大學（McGill）向她伸出了橄欖枝，提供一筆豐厚的獎學金，邀請她攻讀社會工作碩士學位，專攻老年學。

在麥吉爾讀書期間，蕭美珍的生活依然是“兩頭燒的蠟燭”。她一邊攻讀學位，一邊自費購買電臺時段，在蒙特利爾的少數族裔電臺用粵語播報新聞。“我每天要讀包括《環球郵報》、《蒙特利爾公報》以及兩份中文報紙，然後再把國際新聞和加拿大新聞整合起來，每週兩次廣播給那些不懂英語或法語的華人移民聽。”她說，“那是一份很耗時的工作，但我樂在其中。”有次電臺舉辦開放日，一位聽眾專門跑來對她說：“我每週都準時收聽你的新聞。”那一刻，蕭美珍感受到一種前所未有的滿足感。

守護英雄：與退伍軍人的不解之緣

1988年，蕭美珍帶著她的老年學專長從魁省搬回到安省，加入了加拿大退伍軍人事務部。這個選擇，將她的人生與一群

特殊的老人緊密地聯繫在了一起。他們就是曾經參加第二次世界大戰以及亞洲戰爭的老兵們。

“那時的退伍軍人大多六十多歲，但他們的身體比普通人衰老得更快，”蕭美珍解釋道，“他們在戰場上淋過雨、睡過雪，甚至經歷過戰俘營的饑餓與折磨。”她的專業知識和人生閱歷，讓她能夠深刻理解這些老兵的需求，不僅是物質上的，更是精神上的。

這份與軍隊的聯結，在她自己的家庭中有著更深的根源。蕭美珍的兩個兒子都曾在加拿大軍隊服役。1995年，一場突如其來的悲劇改變了一切。她的兒子鄭天成上尉在美國參加一項國際軍事技能競賽時，因身體不適仍堅持完成比賽，最終不幸離世。

“他是代表加拿大參賽的，”蕭美珍的聲音平靜而有力，“他們隊裡每個人都必須完成賽程，否則整個加拿大隊就會被淘汰。他為了團隊的榮譽，付出了生命的代價。”失去兒子的母親，本會被悲傷吞噬。但蕭美珍選擇了另一條路。鄭天成的戰友們紛紛來到她身邊，把她當作自己的家人。“失去一個兒子，我收穫了更多兒子，”她說，“有時候，人必須超越眼前的悲劇，才能看到自己得到了什麼。”她將對兒子的思念，轉化為對所有軍人及其家屬的無私支持。

2014年至2017年，蕭美珍被任命為加拿大公民法官。2018年至2021年，她又獲任加拿大博登軍事基地（CFB Borden）軍事員警學院的榮譽中校。這份榮譽職位通常只授予品格卓越、深孚眾望的傑出人士。

喚醒歷史：《排華法案》與尊嚴的延續

2000年前後，時任參議員利德蕙（Vivienne Poy）提出了設立“亞裔傳統月”（Asian Heritage Month）的聯邦倡議。蕭美珍從一開始就堅定地站在利德蕙身邊。“我只是一個支持者的角色，”她謙遜地說，“利德蕙參議員才是那位智慧而勇敢的推動者。”2002年，加拿大政府正式宣佈五月為亞裔傳統月。在渥太華國會山簽署儀式的現場，蕭美珍就站在利德蕙和副總理身邊，見證了這一歷史時刻。

然而，將一紙宣言變為家喻戶曉的文化盛事，需要的是腳踏實地的耕耘。蕭美珍擔起了這份責任。在沒有任何政府撥款的情況下，她憑藉自己的信念與統籌，聯合了十所教育局和五大警察局，從荷頓區（Halton）到杜林區（Durham），將亞裔傳統月的種子撒遍了大半個大多倫多地區。如今，亞裔傳統月已成為加拿大社會一個深入人心的概念，而蕭美珍正是那個在幕後默默編織網路的人。

2023年，蕭美珍將目光投向了一段鮮為人知的黑暗歷史——《1923年排華法案》頒佈一百周年。這部法案曾以近乎羞辱性的嚴苛條件，幾乎徹底關閉了華人移民加拿大的大門。那些早年為修建太平洋鐵路付出血汗乃至生命的華工，以及他們的後代，在長達四分之一世紀的時間裡，承受著系統性的歧視與排斥。

又是一次從零開始的征程。蕭美珍自籌資金，從卡爾加里到哈利法克斯，再到溫哥華，她走遍加拿大，向各地的社區、學校講述《排華法案》的故事。她發起了一個名為“早期加拿大華人移民致敬”的攝影展，收集倖存者家庭的照片和故事。

她還直接找到了安省教育廳長，請求將《排華法案》的歷史納入中小學課程。2023年5月，安省議會宣佈通過了這一決定，時任廳長萊切（Stephen Lecce）特別提到了蕭美珍的名字，感謝她為此付出的努力。

尾聲

在過往的歲月裡，蕭美珍已經收穫了無數認可：女王金禧獎章、女王鑽禧獎章、查理斯三世國王加冕獎章，以及代表安省最高平民榮譽的安省勳章（the Order of Ontario）……

她曾把自己的人生使命比做橋樑。橋，意味著連接。而每一座橋，都需要有人先彎下腰，把兩岸的泥土認真夯實。蕭美珍用她永不枯竭的能量做了那位彎腰的人。如今，楓葉之下，越來越多的人正從她親手鋪就的橋上走過——走向理解，走向尊重，走向一個膚色與鄉音不再是藩籬的新天新地。這便是蕭美珍留給華裔社群最珍貴的禮物：不是獎章，不是頭銜，而是這座橋本身，以及橋上每一個堅定而溫暖的腳步。



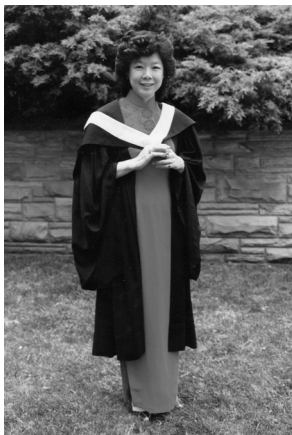
Brother and sister



Intergenerational Family -
respect and harmony



Teenage Years -
Learning the ropes



To Canada -
First University Degree



A Graduate Degree - Canada's
generosity to a hardworking
immigrant



Forbidden City



Citizenship Judge - Encourage Canadians
to give back to our country



Police and Public- Working together
for the common good.
A parade leaving Queen's Park



Celebrating the contribution of Asian
Canadians to the community



Commonwealth Day with
Lt. Governor



Hon. Lt-Colonel - Tribute to
the Military's sacrifice



Encouraging and
Promoting Virtues



Salute to Different Cultures



One Heart, One Canada
- Solidarity as Canadians

Building Bridges with Heart, Rooted in the Land of the Maple

From Victoria Harbour to the St. Lawrence River, she built bridges for Chinese newcomers to reach the wider world through Cantonese radio broadcasts. From Parliament Hill to the Ontario Legislature, she built bridges so that the stories of the Chinese community could be seen by the mainstream through Asian Heritage Month. From confronting the dark history of the Chinese Exclusion Act to her steadfast belief in “One Heart One Canada,” she built bridges of reconciliation over buried truths, misunderstanding, and division. Nancy Siew rose from an ordinary Chinese immigrant mother to a Citizenship Judge and an Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel, spending half a century raising bridges that connect hearts and span cultures across this country. She built bridges between East and West, enabling people of different cultures to truly see one another; she built bridges between past and future, bringing forgotten history back into the light; and she built bridges for the vulnerable, helping veterans and newcomers alike find a true sense of belonging on Canadian soil.

Yesterday in Hong Kong, Rebirth in the Maple Land

Nancy Siew’s childhood unfolded in a world painted with many colours. Her Hong Kong neighbours were British, Portuguese, South Asian, and, forming the majority, Chinese. Different skin colours, languages, and customs were never barriers in her eyes; rather, they were windows to explore the world. As the second child, she had one elder brother and a younger sister. In an era when sons were often still favoured over daughters, the Siew family was an

exception. She recalls, “My parents perhaps even loved the girls a little more.” This equal love nurtured in her, from a very young age, the courage to take responsibility and the willingness to lead.

In 1976, Nancy Siew’s life was abruptly upended. Her then-husband decided to immigrate to Canada, and as a “traditional wife,” she left the familiar streets of Hong Kong with her three children, crossing half the globe to arrive in an unfamiliar Ontario.

“I came with a very simple mindset. I didn’t expect to enjoy the same professional standing I had in Hong Kong; I knew I would have to start from the bottom.” Nancy Siew’s clarity and resilience allowed her to adapt swiftly. But life still had its tests: her Hong Kong teaching certificate was not recognized locally. So, this former English teacher began the gruelling journey of working and studying at the same time. She enrolled at a community college, attending classes three nights a week while working close to two jobs during the day. With three teenagers and a heavy load of household chores, she woke an hour earlier from precious sleep, gave up her lunch breaks to study, and ultimately completed the program with excellence.

It was during this time that an astute lecturer saw the potential in her. “He told me I should go into a field that was about people,” Nancy recalls. “He saw me as a humanist.” Encouraged by this lecturer, she applied to the social work program at the University of Windsor and graduated with honours. Soon after, the prestigious McGill University extended an offer, granting her a major fellowship to pursue a Master’s degree in Social Work, specializing in gerontology.

During her time at McGill, Nancy's life remained "a candle burning at both ends." While pursuing her degree, she used her own money to buy airtime on an ethnic radio station in Montreal, where she broadcast the news in Cantonese twice a week. "I had to read four newspapers every day: The Globe and Mail, The Montreal Gazette, and two local Chinese papers, and then synthesize the international, Canadian, and local news to broadcast to Chinese immigrants who spoke neither English nor French," she says. "It was a huge amount of work, but I loved it, because I felt I was doing something for a group of people who had been overlooked." At a radio station open house one day, a listener came up to her and said, "I never miss your program. I tune in every week without fail." In that moment, Nancy Siew felt a depth of fulfilment she had never experienced before.

Guardians of Heroes: An Unbreakable Bond with Veterans

In 1988, armed with her expertise in gerontology, Nancy Siew returned from Quebec to Ontario and joined Veterans Affairs Canada. This decision closely linked her life with a special group of elderly people, the veterans of the Second World War and the Korean War.

"Most of those veterans were in their sixties by then, but their bodies had aged much faster than the general population," Nancy explains. "They endured rain-soaked nights on the battlefield, slept in the snow, and even suffered the starvation and torment of prisoner-of-war camps." Her professional knowledge and life experience gave her a profound understanding of these veterans' needs, not just material, but spiritual.

This bond with the military has an even deeper root within her own

family. Both of Nancy Siew's sons served in the Canadian Armed Forces. In 1995, a sudden tragedy changed everything. Her son, Captain Cletus Cheng, lost his life while representing Canada at an international military skills competition in New Mexico, United States. He had felt unwell but insisted on completing the course.

"He was representing Canada," Nancy's voice was calm but resolute. "There were four members on his team, and every single one had to finish, or the whole Canadian team would be disqualified. For the honour of his team, he paid with his life."

A mother who lost her son could have been consumed by grief. But Nancy Siew chose a different path. Cletus's comrades came to her one after another, taking her in as their own family. "In losing one son, I gained so many more," she says. "Sometimes, one has to look beyond the immediate tragedy to see what one has gained." She transformed the longing for her son into selfless support for all military members and their families.

From 2014 to 2017, Nancy Siew was appointed a Canadian Citizenship Judge. From 2018 to 2021, she served as the Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel of the Military Police Academy at Canadian Forces Base Borden, an honorary appointment reserved only for those of outstanding character and deep respect.

Awakening History: The Chinese Exclusion Act and the Continuation of Dignity

Around the year 2000, then-Senator Vivienne Poy proposed the federal initiative to establish Asian Heritage Month. Nancy Siew stood firmly by her side from the very beginning. "I was only in

a supporting role,” she says with characteristic humility. “Senator Poy was the wise and courageous driver.” In 2002, the Canadian government officially declared May as Asian Heritage Month. At the signing ceremony on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Nancy was there alongside Senator Poy and the Deputy Prime Minister to witness that historic moment.

However, turning a declaration into a widely celebrated cultural occasion required hard, down-to-earth work. Nancy Siew took up this responsibility. With no government funding whatsoever, she relied on her own conviction and coordination skills, bringing together ten school boards and five police services across a vast area from Halton to Durham, planting the seeds of Asian Heritage Month across the Greater Toronto Area. Today, Asian Heritage Month has become a household concept across Canada, and Nancy Siew is the one who quietly wove that network from behind the scenes.

In 2023, Nancy turned her focus to a little-known dark chapter in history—the centenary of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923. This Act had all but shut the door on Chinese immigration to Canada with its humiliatingly stringent conditions. The early Chinese labourers who had sacrificed their blood, sweat, and lives to build the Canadian Pacific Railway, along with their descendants, endured systemic discrimination and exclusion for a quarter of a century.

And so began yet another journey from scratch. Nancy Siew raised her own funds and travelled across Canada, from Calgary to Halifax, and on to Vancouver, speaking to communities and schools about the Chinese Exclusion Act. She launched a photo exhibition called “Tribute to Early Chinese Immigrants to Canada,” gathering

photographs and stories from the families of survivors. She also went straight to the Ontario Minister of Education and requested that the history of the Chinese Exclusion Act be incorporated into the school curriculum. In May 2023, the Ontario Legislature announced this decision, and then-Minister Stephen Lecce made a point of naming Nancy Siew and thanking her for her efforts.

Epilogue

Over the years, Nancy Siew has received countless recognitions: the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, the King Charles III Coronation Medal, and the Order of Ontario, the province's highest civilian honour ...

She once likened her life's mission to a bridge. A bridge means connection. And every bridge requires someone to first bend down and firmly tamp the soil on both banks. Nancy Siew, with her inexhaustible energy, became that person who bent down. Today, beneath the maple leaves, more and more people are crossing the bridges she laid with her own hands—walking toward understanding, toward respect, toward a new horizon where skin colour and native accent are no longer barriers. This is the most precious gift Nancy Siew leaves to the Chinese Canadian community: not medals, not titles, but bridges.