

**One World – One Family:
A Family History Conference**

Toronto

September 17, 2011

Good morning, genealogists, ladies & gentlemen, friends:

Welcome to the opening of the One World, One Family Conference. I am delighted to share this special event with you!

I would like to thank Helen Warner for inviting me to open the Conference this morning. We have met a number of times at Ontario Genealogical Society events. In my role as the OGS Patron, I encourage Ontarians to explore their family histories, and to appreciate that their personal stories form an integral part of the history of Canada.

This One World, One Family Conference gives us a chance to explore our own family histories, and to find that our ancestors are linked to countries around the world. Canada, being an immigrant country, means that our national story is that much more interesting.

Intermarriages between our First Nations peoples with the Europeans are well known - their descendants are called métis. There's recent interest and research in western Canada into intermarriages between First Nations women and the early Chinese settlers, whose descendants don't have any special designation according to the government of Canada. We will be learning more in the years to come, but don't you think this will make the Canadian gene pool that much more fascinating?

Intermarriages used to be hidden because of shame, not only in North America, but also in other parts of the world. People used to "pass" by the way they looked outwardly. You know, with human migrations over many centuries, how many of us can say, really, that we are racially pure, after we have searched through our hidden family closets?

When we are done with juggling work and raising children, we finally have the time to think about where we came from and what our lives are all about. Curiosity about our ancestors makes us ask questions and search for answers, and we become genealogists!

I started many years ago with two unanswered questions: the origin of my very unusual Chinese surname, and why my paternal grandfather was assassinated

in Hong Kong at the age of 47. The case was described as one of the most sensational crimes ever perpetrated in the colony by *The South China Morning Post*.

Now, if I had been able to get satisfactory answers from the older generation in my family, my research might never have happened. But then, none of them were as curious as I was. So, I started my search for what I believe to be the historical truth.

An English friend, Chris Draycott, a retired sleuth at Scotland Yard, asked me how I managed to trace my family history back 2,000 years. My answer was that most literary Chinese families have ancestral records, since the Chinese have had a written language for a few thousand years. Those of you in the audience of Chinese heritage would know exactly what I am talking about. So, some of us do have an advantage in this regard.

In order to do genealogical research, we have to know the history of the period, as well as the traditions of that particular geographical area, otherwise, it's not possible to understand the lives of our ancestors. So, an interest in history is the key.

Surnames are important when you try to trace your family tree. Every civilization has its own tradition. In many European cultures, names were adopted because of a person's profession. I must say I am not familiar with family names among the First Nations peoples. The ones I know have all adopted either British or French names. In some African countries, there are no surnames. A child is given a first name, followed by that of his or her father's. In this case, it may be difficult to trace one's ancestry too far back. In China, family names were designated by the Emperor. In my case, my family name was given to my ancestor, the prince of the kingdom of Zhou, during the feudal period of Chinese history.

In Canada, because many of us came here from far off lands, we have very diversified genealogies. For those of us who have been here for generations, it would be fun to find out where our ancestors were born, and what the circumstances were that made them immigrate to Canada. In the old days, they had to have come by ship to British North America.

The majority of Chinese first came to North America as labourers, but what about the other groups? The land on which our cottage stands was first cleared and cultivated by the Judd family, and for that reason, it's acquired the name of Juddhaven. Their story has a lot to do with how northern Ontario was developed.

The Judds lived in a tiny village in the south of England, between Wilts and Hants. The father, Francis said to his wife Ann one day that the gift of 100 acres of land would be given to any settler and his family who were willing to come to Ontario and work the land. In 1875, Francis, Ann, and their eight children boarded a ship in Portsmouth for Canada. When Francis Judd was assigned the land by

government officials, he found that he was given 200 acres in Muskoka instead, because half the land was rock! Today, some of the Judds are still living in the area. I will continue to research this fascinating story when I have more time.

In the back of my mind, I seem to remember that convicts were, at one time, transported to British North America. I wonder how many genealogists in Canada have looked into these convict ships? I became interested in this topic because of my research on the Poy family in Australia, and one cannot look into the history of Australia without reading about the transportation of convicts by the British government, especially to Hobart in Tasmania.

No, the Chinese who went to Australia were not convicts. My research on the Poy family covers China, Australia and Canada. In trying to trace my husband's great grandmother, Mary Ann Jones's ancestry, I have discovered that she was descended from English Catholics, and not Irish Catholics, as most of the Poy family in Australia thought she was.

While searching for the ships on which her parents went to Australia, I discovered that her mother was transported to Australia on a convict ship. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to find out what she was convicted of for her to be sentenced to transportation. In those days, one could be sentenced to transportation for stealing a loaf of bread. So, the search continues. I have already started writing the Poy story, and all I need is to have more free time.

Genealogical research is fun, and what I love the most about it is to be able to get at the truth about ourselves. We don't judge our ancestors but learn from them, so that we can use the knowledge to guide our children. Every family has a wonderful story, so I hope you will all start working on yours.

We have a very interesting line-up of speeches, seminars and workshops when I stop talking. So, do enjoy the day and make the most of this Conference!