HUA FOUNDATION RELEASES VANCOUVER CHINATOWN SOCIAL COHESION REPORT, HIGHLIGHTS INCREASING SOCIAL DISTANCE WITHIN COMMUNITY

Vancouver, Unceded Coast Salish Territories (January 21, 2019) — Citing recent concerns regarding rapid change in Chinatown over the last decade, hua foundation released a new report addressing social cohesion in the neighbourhood's food retail landscape, and demonstrates a growing divide within what has historically been a tight-knit community.

This has taken the form of increasing polarization between newcomers to the neighbourhood and existing residents and businesses, based on differentiations of socio-economic status.

"As community members, we were seeing the loss of an alarming number of traditional businesses in Chinatown. These businesses carry on key functions in the neighbourhood, beyond the purely transactional. For many people living and working in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside, low-barrier and culturally appropriate establishments provide spaces for social interaction and a sense of place. Conducting this research helps us to identify the important role that local-serving businesses play in organic community-building," says primary author, Christina Lee.

The report points to a lack of crossover between patrons of traditional and non-traditional businesses as one factor in the decreasing social cohesion in the neighbourhood. Based on a survey of neighbourhood consumers, the study finds that only 11 percent of respondents who eat at restaurants in Chinatown patronize both traditional and non-traditional businesses on a regular basis; one third of respondents patronized either only traditional or only non-traditional businesses regularly.

"As existing residents age out or are displaced from the neighbourhood, social division means that there will be fewer people to support the traditional businesses that provide the low-barrier and culturally appropriate goods and services that low-income community members and Chinese seniors depend on," notes Lee. "For many people in this neighbourhood, for reasons ranging from limited mobility to limited socio-economic accessibility, there are no other options."

This is of particular interest as the City of Vancouver recently identified social connection and isolation as one of its key concerns moving forward, as it develops its Resilient Vancouver Strategy. Additionally, with the upcoming bid for a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation for Vancouver's Chinatown, the report puts pressure on stakeholders including the City of Vancouver to address the loss of important traditional businesses that contribute to the intangible cultural heritage of Chinatown.

The report makes several recommendations to address these concerns, including advocating for the development of a city-wide equity framework, to better understand the needs of its existing and growing diverse populations, and to guide the application of existing policies and strategies. "We hope that this report will begin a desperately needed conversation around how

equity, inclusion, and culture - beyond understandings of 'arts & culture'- must factor into discussions about justice, not only in our local food systems, but also extended to community development and planning," says Lee. "How can we encourage the kind of inclusive community building that we want to see moving forward, not only in Chinatown, but for Vancouver as a whole?"

The Vancouver Chinatown Social Cohesion Report can be accessed in full at:
http://bit.ly/HuaSCR

About hua foundation
hua foundation is a youth-driven non-profit based in Vancouver, Canada dedicated to bringing together the worlds of cultural heritage and social change with a socio-environmental lens. Our mission is to empower youth in the Asian diaspora to fully participate in advancing social change through exploring our racialized identities and building resilience in communities. Please visit http://www.huafoundation.org/ for more information.

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