



Intermarriage between First Nations women
and the early Chinese male immigrants

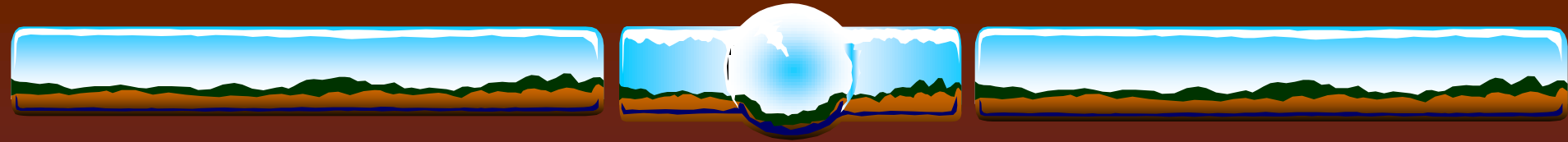
Senator Lillian Eva (Quan) Dyck, Ph. D., D. Litt.

Whitehorse, May 2011



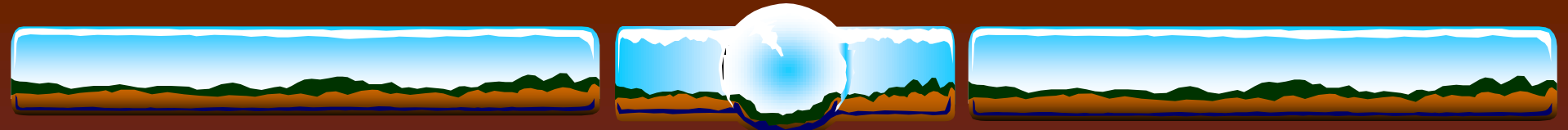
Outline

1. My family history as an example
2. The role of discriminatory legislation
3. Benefits of exploring this intermarriage history



(Please note: photos removed from all sides)

Eva McNab Quan, my brother, me, Jack Quan 1954?



My father: Yok Leen Quan,
1897-1962
Jack, Happy

- ❖ came to Canada in 1912 as a 14 yr old.
- ❖ Paid the Head Tax
- ❖ Had a wife and 2 children in China
- ❖ We were his 2nd family.

A decorative header consisting of three rounded rectangular panels. The left and right panels show a landscape with green hills and brown ground under a blue sky. The middle panel features a white globe with blue oceans and green continents, set against a similar landscape background.

Dad's 1st family: Quan Sue Hoe & children

1920 ?



Dick Quan: the # 1 son from his Chinese family

- ❖ My dad's lifelong dream – to bring his # 1 son to Canada.
- ❖ BUT – my mother opposed it in the courts.
- ❖ And – it was not possible until 1948.



Discriminatory Legislation

- ❖ The Head tax was applied specially to Chinese (1885-1923).
- ❖ The Chinese Immigration (exclusion) Act (1923-1947) stopped all Chinese from coming to Canada.



Effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act on my dad's 1st family

- ❖ They could not emigrate to Canada.
- ❖ The Japanese invaded China in the 1930's, and his family had to leave their village.
- ❖ His wife died in 1941 and his son had a hard life.
- ❖ His daughter's life story is not known.



Dad's trips to and from China

Before the Chinese Exclusion Act:

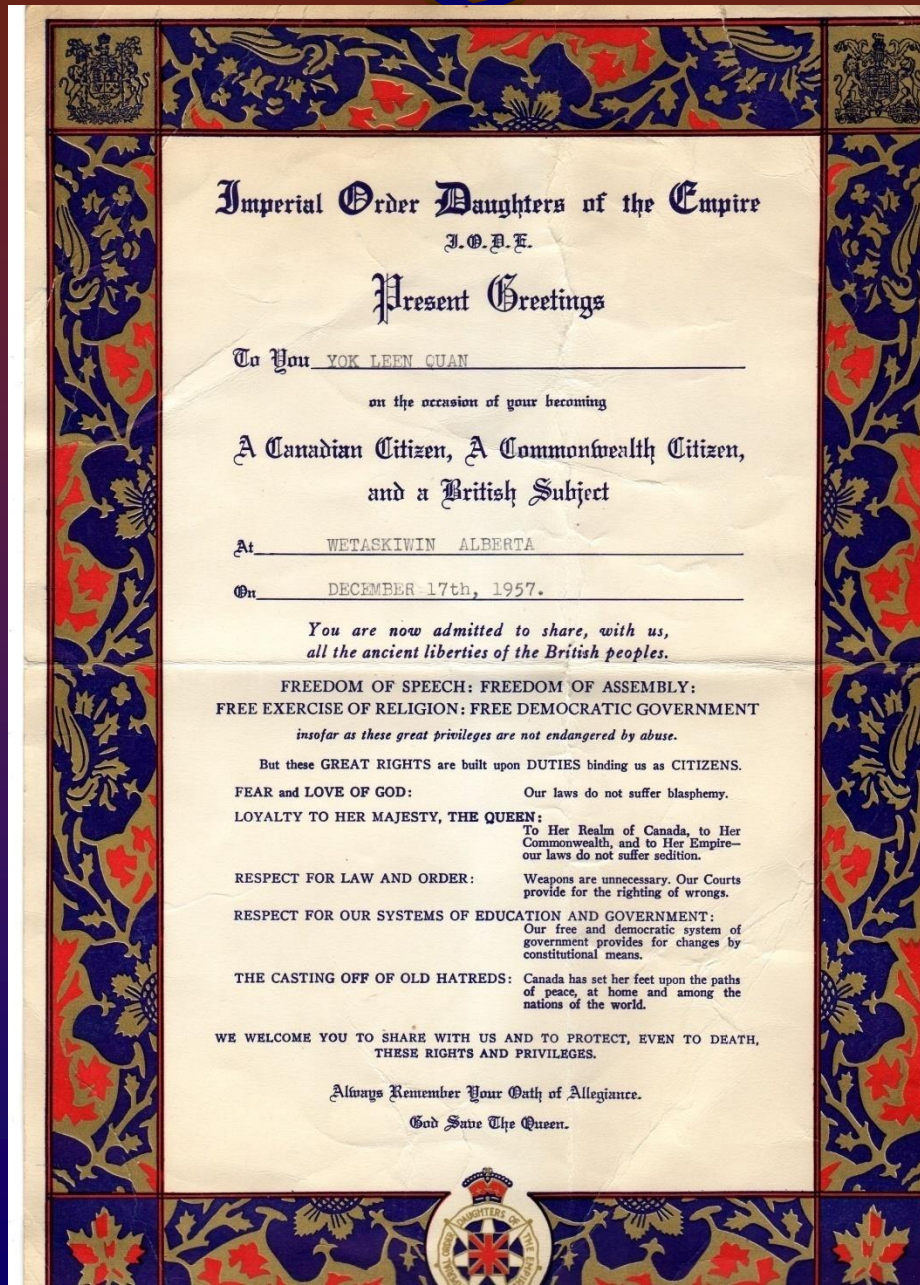
1914-1917 – back to China for 3 yrs
(got married in 1915)

After the Exclusion Act: only 2 yr absences were allowed

1924-1926 – back to China for 2 yrs

1928-1930 – back to China for 2 yrs

1957



Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire

I.O.D.E.

Present Greetings

To You YOK LEEN QUAN

on the occasion of your becoming

A Canadian Citizen, A Commonwealth Citizen,
and a British Subject

At WETASKIWIN ALBERTA

On DECEMBER 17th, 1957.

*You are now admitted to share, with us,
all the ancient liberties of the British peoples.*

FREEDOM OF SPEECH; FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY;
FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION; FREE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT
insofar as these great privileges are not endangered by abuse.

But these GREAT RIGHTS are built upon DUTIES binding us as CITIZENS.

FEAR and LOVE OF GOD:

Our laws do not suffer blasphemy.

LOYALTY TO HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN:

To Her Realm of Canada, to Her Commonwealth, and to Her Empire—our laws do not suffer sedition.

RESPECT FOR LAW AND ORDER:

Weapons are unnecessary. Our Courts provide for the righting of wrongs.

RESPECT FOR OUR SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION AND GOVERNMENT:

Our free and democratic system of government provides for changes by constitutional means.

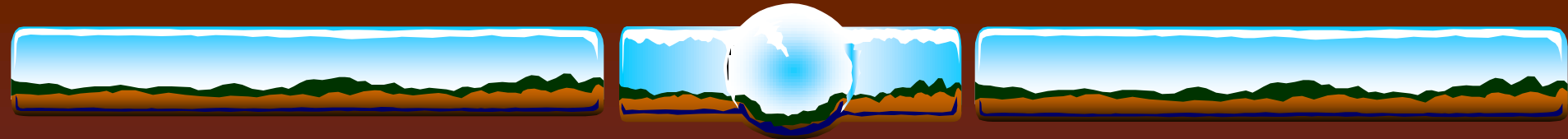
THE CASTING OFF OF OLD HATREDS: Canada has set her feet upon the paths of peace, at home and among the nations of the world.

WE WELCOME YOU TO SHARE WITH US AND TO PROTECT, EVEN TO DEATH,
THESE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES.

Always Remember Your Oath of Allegiance.

God Save The Queen.

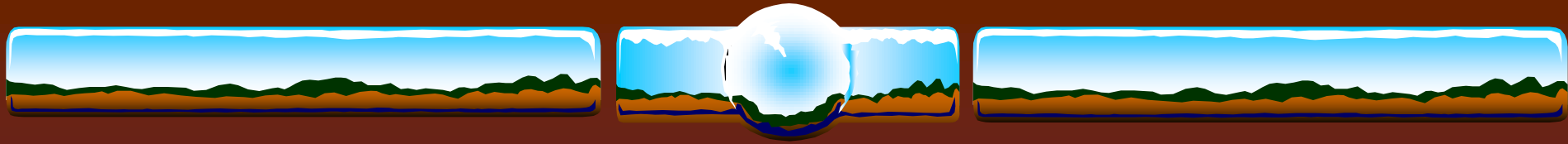




My mom: Eva (McNab) Quan, 1920-1956

- ❖ Born on the Gordon reserve, Saskatchewan
- ❖ Status Indian (Cree)
- ❖ Parents: Sam McNab and Harriet Pratt

- ❖ Her great, great, great grandfather: Dr. John McNab, born 1755, Aberdour, Scotland. Chief factor and surgeon, HBC, 1779-1810.



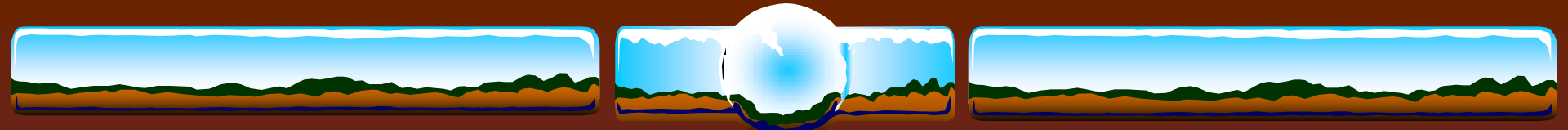
My mother lost her status when she married a non-Indian.



The Indian Act

defines the cost of being an Indian


- A repressive act that governs **all** aspects of an Indian's life.
- Has been amended numerous times since its inception in 1876.
- Defines who is and who is not a registered Indian and thus who is eligible for benefits (health, education, housing)
- Amended in 1960 to give Indians the vote.



Bills C-31 (1985) and C-3 (2010): Amendments to the Indian Act

Prior to 1985, Indian women lost their status when they married non-Indians.

- Bill C-31 restored status to these women and their children.
- Bill C-3 confers status to their grandchildren



Residential schools

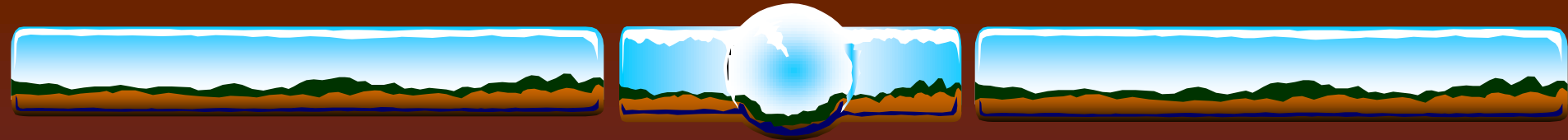
(also part of the Indian Act)

- ❖ When my mother was a child, like all Indian children, she had to attend a residential school.
- ❖ These schools were designed to kill the Indian in the child. They were forbidden to speak their own language.
- ❖ Indian children were taught to be ashamed of who they were and some were sexually or physically abused.

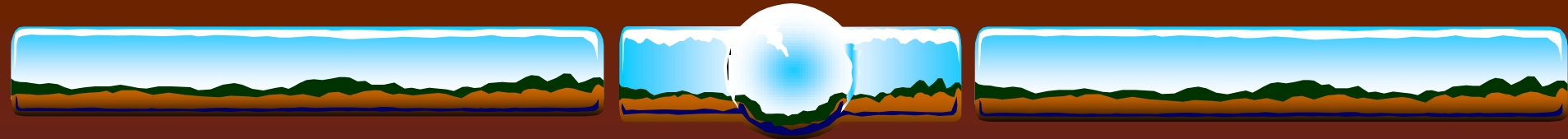
A decorative header at the top of the slide. It features a central globe with a blue and white color scheme, flanked by two rectangular panels. Each panel shows a stylized landscape with green hills, brown earth, and a blue sky. The entire header is set against a dark red background.

My mother deliberately married out in 1942

- ❖ Reserves were terrible places to live, and some still are.
- ❖ Marrying a non-Indian was a way to run away or get away from the reserve.
- ❖ Keeping us off the reserve protected us from abuse.
- ❖ Hiding her and our Indian identity was a strategy to protect us from racism.
- ❖ She pretended to be Scottish.
- ❖ We pretended to be just Chinese.



- ❖ The cost of being a status Indian outweighed the benefits.
- ❖ There was much more to gain by leaving the reserve and losing her status.



My mom's sister also married a Chinese man

- ❖ Carrie McNab married Charlie Woo (Woo Yuen, Woo Shue, Woo Chao?) who ran a café in Punnichy
- ❖ Carrie introduced my mother to Jack Quan (Yok Leen Quan)



Charlie Woo

- ❖ Also had a wife and 3 children in China
- ❖ Had 6 Canadian children
- ❖ Went to Hong Kong in ? and is buried there.
- ❖ His home village is not known.



Did legislation and discrimination promote inter-marriage?

Chinese men were not allowed to hire white women to work for them. (the Female Employment Act, SK, 1912 – 1969)

No Chinese, including families of Chinese in Canada, were allowed to emigrate to Canada from 1923 until 1948.



The effect of those laws

- ❖ The creation of a Chinese ‘bachelor’ society.
- ❖ An opportunity for Aboriginal women to be hired as waitresses in the Chinese cafes.
- ❖ And marriage to these ‘bachelors’.



Intermarriage in the context of Canadian History

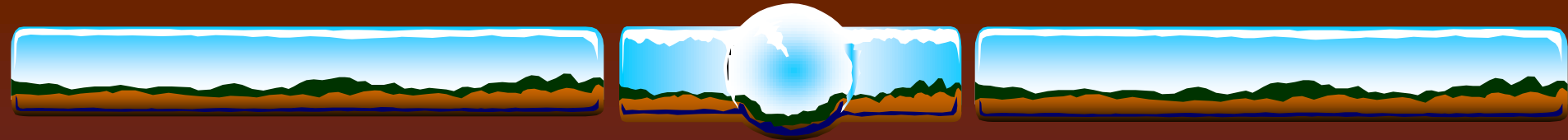
- ❖ Pre-confederation history – well documented:
- ❖ During the **fur trade era**, the English, Scottish and French ‘married’ First Nations women. Typically, the English men had “country wives” in addition to their ‘real’ wives, while the Scottish and French men stayed in Canada with their wives and families.

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- A decorative header at the top of the slide features a central globe with a blue and white color scheme, flanked by two rectangular panels. Each panel shows a stylized landscape with green hills, brown earth, and a blue sky. The entire header is set against a dark blue background.
- ❖ Post-confederation history – an area that needs more research.
 - ❖ The Gold Rush era: Lily Chow has documented First Nation-Chinese intermarriage in the B.C. interior.
 - ❖ The Clean & Feed Era: On the prairies, virtually every town had a Chinese café which was the main social hub of the community. Laundries, too.



Conclusion

- ❖ My family history provides 2 examples of the intermarriage between First Nations women and early Chinese immigrants.
- ❖ The First Nation-Chinese intermarriages is an area of our history that ought to be documented and become part of the history that is taught to Canadians.



- ❖ Educating ourselves and other Canadians about the history of intermarriage between First Nations and Chinese (and other races) will reduce racial discrimination, and make Canada a better place to live.
- ❖ Other Canadians will learn about discriminatory legislation and its unfair impact on our families, and intermarriage descendants can feel proud of their history and heritage.

Dad's Tombstone in Swift Current

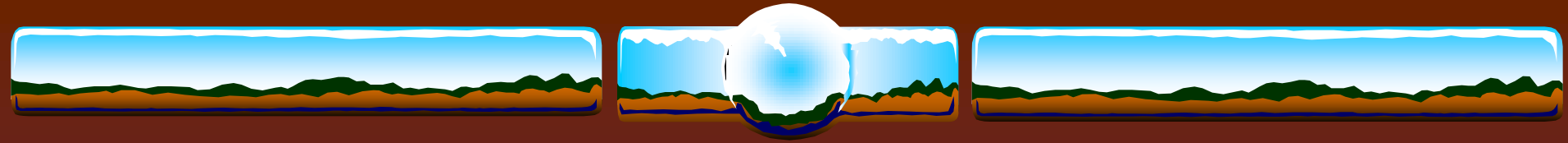


風
灣
鄉
西
盛
里

關 勳 紹

廣
東
省
閩
平
縣

YOCK CHUN QUAN
1893 — 1962



Dad's village, Xishengli, Nov 2009