Oral History: Stephen and Timothy Hsia

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| **Metadata Field** | **Description** | **Data Entry** |
| Title | Title of Document |  rebeca\_salas\_with\_stephen\_and\_timothy\_hsia\_05-04-17  |
| Accession Number | Catalogue Number of the File | (Administrator Only) |
| Interviewee | Name of Interviewee (SURNAME, given name(s), middle initial) |  Stephen and Timothy Hsia  |
| Interviewer  | Name of Interviewer (Surname, given name(s), middle initial) |  Rebeca Salas  |
| Interview Date  | YYYY/MM/DD |  2017/05/04  |
| Interview Date (non-preferred format) | Eg. November 13, 2014 or MM/DD/YY |  May 04, 2017  |
| Collection ID |  | (Administrator Only) |
| Collection |  | (Administrator Only) |
| Series ID |  | (Administrator Only) |
| Series |  | (Administrator Only) |
| Summary | Brief summary of the interview session (Copy and paste from Form 13 – Session Summary) |  Stephen and Tim begin the interview describing their childhood memories of Richmond, Vancouver, and Steveston. They recall the sights, smells, sounds, and places that stood out to them at this time. The brothers then think about their parents’ personality traits and how they impacted the people that they are today. Stephen and Tim explain their hopes and dreams when they were teenagers. They talk about their time studying at Princeton University and what it was like living in the United States at such a young age away from the comforts of their home in Richmond. The brothers then outline the beginning of their professional careers in law and medicine, and how this came about. They also add what factors influenced them to come back and settle in Richmond. Tim and Stephen then illustrate their involvement in the Royal Canadian Mint competition to design a coin for Canada’s 150th anniversary. Near the end of the interview, the brothers reflect on what they remember of their grandfather, his migration story, and the values he taught them as children. |
| Keywords | Keywords indicating interview subjects (Copy and Paste from “Keyword” section of Form 12 Interview Summary.) |  Childhood memories, Steveston, Maple Lane Elementary School, Parental Sacrifice, Education, Minoru Park, Chinese School, Sunday School, Nature, Nurture, Physician, Medicine, Princeton, St. George’s, Migration, Fine Arts, Improvisation, United States, Impressions, Law School, Faith, God, Social Capital, Brain Drain, Royal Columbian Hospital, New Westminster, Community Service, Royal Canadian Mint coins, Canada 150th anniversary, Wuhan, Farm, Grandfather, Second World War, Chinese Civil War, Displacement |
| Subject | Subject headings applicable to the Interview. The OHC uses Library of Congress Subject Headings. |  Childhood memories, Steveston, Maple Lane Elementary School, Parental Sacrifice, Education, Minoru Park, Chinese School, Sunday School, Nature, Nurture, Physician, Medicine, Princeton, St. George’s, Migration, Fine Arts, Improvisation, United States, Impressions, Law School, Faith, God, Social Capital, Brain Drain, Royal Columbian Hospital, New Westminster, Community Service, Royal Canadian Mint coins, Canada 150th anniversary, Wuhan, Farm, Grandfather, Second World War, Chinese Civil War, Displacement |
| Duration | Length of Interview Session (if applicable) hh:mm:ss |  02:02:41  |
| Interview # |  Number of the interview (interviewees according to date) |  1  |
| Session # | Session # of the recording (X of all interviews in the session) |  1  |
| Location | Where the interview was conducted |  Richmond Museum and Cultural Center  |
| Media Type | Audio or Video |  Audio  |
| Restriction Type | Open (Open access)Restricted (Interview has some restrictions detailed below in “Restrictions”)Closed (Closed/No Access) |  Open [[1]](#footnote-1) |
| Restrictions | Details regarding any restrictions on the file’s use (as outlined in Form 6 –Consent) |  N/A  |
| Rights | Release Information regarding copyright and access through the repository (as outlined in the Release Agreement) |  All rights given to the interviewer (Rebeca Salas) and the Oral History Centre  |
| Funding | Information on how the project was funded. |  N/A  |
| Equipment | Equipment used to record the session. (Brand and model number of recorder.) |  H2N Zoom Recorder  |
| Media Format | Digital format. Eg; .WAV, MP3, .doc, .pdf, .tiff, etc |  WAV  |
| Language | Language(s) of the Interview or Document |  English  |
| Type | Document Type. Eg: Oral History Interview, Conference Proceedings, Presentation, Sharing Circle, etc.  |  Oral History Interview  |
| Repository | Location where the project/collection will be stored. |  The Oral History Centre  |

**Transcription Legend:**

. . . = Ellipses used to indicate where an interviewee does not complete a thought.

[?] = Used to indicate indecipherable words or unknown spelling of words.

START OF TAPE PART ONE OF ONE

[00:00:14]

*REBECA*
Okay, so as we discussed, we’re going to start with your stories and then move forward into your family. So, Stephen, why don’t we start with you. Let’s start with, you know, where you were born, which is here, and, yeah, feel free to tell me about, maybe, your childhood first.

*STEPHEN*

Well I was born in Richmond at Richmond General Hospital at the time in February of 1986. It’s funny, we don’t really remember what our first memory is but you kind of have these flashes of, like, scenes or smells that you remember. I was born into a family where I had an older brother, Tim, who’s now sitting across from me, he’s going to give you his story soon, and two parents, my dad David and my mother [Lin-Lin?]. Both of them being immigrants they had chosen to make Richmond their home because that was where my grandfather, whom you’ll hear about later, had chosen to move to. It was just a great place to raise a family. My dad, at the time, worked in Delta in Ladner as a doctor. My mom was, at the time, working as an architect. That and then she became a realtor before it became really popular to become a realtor [laughs]. I very much enjoyed my childhood. We grew up in a house, Tim can correct me here, around Number Two Road. It’s kind of near Steveston. It was a pretty happy home. It’s very cosy. Our grandparents lived down the road and they had a swimming pool and as I was walking here I could remember, kind of, the scent of that swimming pool, but a very loving family that I had grown up in. We . . . I guess childhood was marked by education and also, kind of, activities on the side. So I’ve gone to Montessori, this is going to be a really long story, Montessori near Number Five Road or Shell Road. That, again, I could still remember the distinct smell. Richmond is so unique with its bogs and with the dikes and with the little canals. I just remember Montessori was on a little canal near a big wooded forest. I remember seeing lots of ducks, lots of frogs, lots of bulrushes, and I loved that. One of the earliest hobbies I had was to draw and I would always draw about ducks and frogs and bulrushes. I was very happy there in Montessori and then I went to kindergarten, later grade one, at Maple Lane Elementary School. Even to this day when I’m at my parents’ house and I go on little night walks to clear my head I keep walking passed Maple Lane Elementary School. What’s both nice and sad is that school really hasn’t changed a lot in thirty years. I don’t know what that says about, you know, keeping up with the times but it’s still very nostalgic when I walk passed there. At that time we had moved. I was four years old. We had moved on my fourth birthday. I got the best birthday present ever which was we moved houses to a brand new house and that was close to Maple Lane. It was near Gilbert and Number Three Road and Steveston Highway. I remember when I was really young, dad and mom taking me to the, kind of, build site there and I could smell the sawdust. There were trees, like really tall trees, it seemed to be like a forest. Now, if you go there today it’s just like suburbia. It’s kind of neat to imagine all that there. So there was that education in the household. There were lots of activities as well. I think my folks really wanted us to, kind of, have an all-around, very balanced education. So they supplemented it with sports activities, with learning music. So Tim and I both learned piano at an early age not unlike a lot of kids raised in Asian households or immigrant households. Our parents would take us out to a lot of activities around both Richmond and Vancouver. So we’d go visit the dike a lot, River Road. My dad was a member at the aquarium and so we would happily go to the aquarium a lot when we were little, back when there were orcas and lots of orca shows, something that you, probably, don’t see anymore.

[00:05:09]

We went to Science World quite a bit. We went to the North Shore. We went to a bunch of little amusement parks that don’t exist anymore. So Flintstone Park. You remember? I got a nod from Rebeca here. There was also Fantasy Gardens which was down the road on Steveston Highway. I remember we’d go there quite often. Even this past week I was driving my fiancé passed there and you could see just the one old, kind of, Dutch windmill or structure, sorry, not windmill but it’s like some remnant of it. It makes me nostalgic. Also, faith was very important to my parents as well. They raised us in the church. So we had gone to a local church. We both attended Sunday school, my brother and I. We should mention, at this time, I’m kind of hovering around 1990. I was born in 1986. Tim was born in 1984 but, kind of, going in pairs here 1988 was when our two twin sisters Grace and Lauren were born. So we had a very full household and it was quite nice, too. It was Tim and me for a while and I think my mom was expecting a third child at 1988. My brother asked my mom, “Could you please have two girls so Stephen and I can have someone to play with.” My mom kind of laughed knowingly because, at the time, at Richmond hospital there was a great physician there, Doctor Yang, and he was very good at predicting what babies are going to come out [laughs]. So he told my mom that she was going to get a . . . “Congratulations, [Lin-Lin?], you’re going to have a third son” but it turned out to be the first wrong prediction. So my mom found out on November 28, 1988 that she had twin girls. She just found out then and there. Again, a very happy household and I’m going to let Tim chime in here if there’s anything.

*TIM*

Yeah, I just wanted to mention that mom did not get an ultrasound because I think dad told her to save the government some money. So, in that respect, that was a real surprise for not only my mother and father but also for us. So we had two boys in our family and two girls as well. Yeah, as Stephen said, Stephen and I are very close. I was born in October 1984 in Richmond General Hospital and we were only fifteen months apart. Richmond has been our home. We were born here, we lived here, and the one thing that, you know, resonates with me in our childhood was the emphasis on sacrifice that our parents made for us in terms of our education, um, always putting us first whether its educating us and making sure we go to good schools here in Richmond. Eventually, later on, we also went to a school in Vancouver as well. Also, just educational opportunities whether it’s, as Stephen mentioned, for me it was definitely the aquarium, it was definitely Science World, but then for me, I don’t know, it was always the parks that always got to me. I always remember going to Minoru Park and also Fantasy Gardens. It makes me wonder, you know, one day when I’m a father will I bring my kids to the same place over and over and over again because I had so much fun and I had so many memories just going to the same place, seeing the same thing whether it was the animals at Minoru Park, underneath the same willow trees, or seeing the, I think it was the sculpture garden in Fantasy Garden where it depicted, I guess, the life of Jesus. I thought that was amazing. It’s almost like walking into a real life storybook. Those times were really fun for me. Other memorable moments when we were growing up was time spent with my father. He’s a physician so he’s very busy during the week but during the weekend he would bring us to Garry Point to fly kites. Some days we just flew kites in our backyard even though it was very narrow. For me, I always enjoyed fishing with my father off the pier in Steveston back when it was not illegal [laughs]. I think we did that a little bit later on when I was about eight or nine. I actually do remember around sunset once an officer came by and said “Hey, actually, you can’t fish off the dock here anymore.” My dad actually replied back to the officer “Hey, it’s just a kid. It’s an eight year old boy. Is it okay if he just continues?” The officer said, “Yeah, that’s okay. That’s fine. You’re just jigging.” I think it’s called jigging. You’re just, literally, holding onto your line with no rod in hand just seeing if you can catch a perch or something like that.

[00:10:02]

As you talked about the sights and smells, for me it was that Steveston fishing village which really meant a lot to me. I think I got trained not to be seasick because I loved being on the water. I loved seeing the boats. I loved seeing the boats come in and bring in their catch. I think that’s a very special time. I think if I were to think of a picture of peace and serenity and calm that Steveston village would be it for me but on the pier not on the land, on the pier. Yes, at Stephen mentioned, growing up we attended Montessori, we attended Maple Lane Elementary School, we attended a Sunday school at our church, we were born and raised in a Christian family, um, and . . . Oh, another type of school is Chinese school, believe it or not. Once again, this is something we were forced to do [laughs]. It wasn’t until later on that we actually developed some appreciation saying “You know what, I actually want to learn this.” We had Chinese school at some school here in Richmond. I think it was on a Tuesday night. At the school we would learn Chinese and learn how to write Chinese with our cousins and with other peers as well. Two things I remember from that Chinese school was that around Chinese New Year they would have drawing contests and they would encourage us to draw and submit our work. I remember drawing dragons with you or something like that, right? We would submit it and see if we can get an honourable mention or something like that [laughs]. They also had more academic contests where I think everyone had to write or memorize a Chinese poem or something like that. It was really weird for me because I actually never thought of this as a contest but, basically, whoever submitted it first with like the neatest penmanship, those were the criteria as to who would win the contest. For me, I thought the person who would win would just be the person who scribbled it the fastest but not necessarily you actually had to make sure it was neat, almost like a font. That was when I actually first realized, here in Richmond, that, you know, the Chinese writing is actually an art form. Whether it’s a pictograph or just, you know, symbolism in your work. It was very much an art form and, so, for me that was kind of a nice part of our education. I’d be remiss if I did not mention that my parents enrolled me in soccer but I was not that good. I was part of the Richmond Spikes. We wore these McDonald’s sponsored uniforms and, apparently, if you wore that jersey into a McDonald’s they would probably give you, I think it was a free ice cream or something.

*Stephen*

Yeah, the saucer.

*TIM*
The saucer but it’s too bad that I’m lactose intolerant now. That was fun growing up in Richmond. I got a lot of encouragement from my coach from that soccer team even though I wasn’t that good and, you know, time spent in the gardens whether it was our own backyard playing badminton, or flying a kite, or at Garry point, or at Steveston. One more thing, attending Maple Lane was actually pretty fun for me. I met a lot of friends there and those were the friends that lived in my neighbourhood, that Maple Lane neighbourhood that Stephen talked about, that new house that we moved in after we became a family of six. Yeah, I made a lot of friends there and it was a really neat community to attend school with your neighbours and also walk home with them and then play ball hockey with them in the cul-de-sac in the afternoon. One memory I did have from that school was of a very good teacher there named Bill [Shant?] who taught grade four. He was actually a science teacher and we would have chemistry Fridays and he always made something silly whether it’s your volcano project or whether it’s like a new type of slime, which he called it, but he was a very inspiring teacher.

[00:14:55]

For me, I actually had a lot of fun in his class there. He was also an old-boy at St. George’s School which is the school that me and Stephen went to later for high school. His dedication and his passion for teaching really resonated with me. I know he passed away many years ago but I was very touched because I actually got to see him. At one point near [Arbudist?] Mall, when we were in six or seventh grade, it was nice to see him also being very dedicated to his elderly mother, at the time, too, driving her around. So those were, for me, the, kind of, main memories from my childhood here in Richmond. Yeah, I think it’s something marked by nature and nurture, with the education that our parents provided for us.

*REBECA*
For sure. Yeah, I really get a sense both of you have a very vivid memory of senses and also how it felt to be a kid in Richmond which is really great. One thing before we, sort of, move forward in time, I was curious to hear about the different personalities perhaps your parents . . . You told me a little bit about their occupations and also that they worked very hard for you but I’d be curious just to get a little mental image about their personalities because I think it will probably give a little bit of insight into, you know, why you are the way that you are. So whoever wants to start. I always find that you get some interesting stories.

*TIM*
Sure, I’ll talk a little bit about our parents.

*REBECA*
Sure.

*TIM*
So my father, David Hsia, is a full service family practitioner and he’s very hard working, he’s very dedicated to his patients. He’s the type of father who really enjoyed helping his community and, in particular, new immigrants. I believe he was the only, I guess, immigrant doctor at his practice in Ladner at the time. He started there in his early thirties and is still there serving his community. For us as his children, we grew up in a household of health so we kind of had our own pharmacy there. We never saw a doctor. We just saw our dad if we had a headache or scraped our near or something like that. Often times people would come to our house, um, neighbours, friends, or friends of friends with their sick child, with their elderly parents, and my dad would see them in our den downstairs. Sometimes my dad would also go and make house calls many times. I remember one thing that my father told me. He’s a very humble guy, wears the same watch, wears the same shoes from back in the day. He said that he would feel very awkward or feel that it wouldn’t be appropriate for him to drive a fancy car or something like that, especially if he was going to do a house call to his patients here in Richmond. To this day he loves driving a minivan even though there’s no more kids in the house [laughs]. He still wants to drive the minivan because, you know, he wants to pick us up from the airport and we’ll have luggage. So my dad worked really hard. I remember growing up hearing the garage door open in the middle of the night because he would have to go and deliver a baby at Richmond General Hospital. Back then I had no idea what that meant. I actually thought he delivered babies like how people delivered pizza, like, he would drive the baby back to their house. In any case, after some obstetric rotations, after medical school, I realized what it meant [laughs]. That’s the type of person my father was in the workplace, a very humble, very giving person, loved everything health related, loved everything science related whether it’s biology, always quizzing us on the exceptions in the animal kingdom.

*STEPHEN*
Yeah, he always came up with pneumonics for ways to memorize things like he made a song for the periodic table, very nerdy things like that.

[00:19:41]

*TIM*

Teaching us pneumonics on how to remember world capitals and stuff like that. In a way, if I were to stereotype, I tell this a lot to my friends, my dad is very much the paranoid one in our family. He wants us to be safe. He wants to make sure that we aren’t taking risks. I think, looking back, I realize, yes, that made sense, I should have worn a lifejacket at that time or I should have worn a helmet at that time. So he was more of the kind who was very cautious. He used to bring a jacket even though it’s twenty degrees out.

*STEPHEN*
Like today.

*TIM*
Like today [laughs]. He also was, kind of, foundational in our faith as well, encouraging us to read the bible and to go to church and, you know, practice what we learned. I guess that was very hard growing up when we were chasing each other and fighting at home. He would always encourage us to be loving, to forgive each other. So that’s my dad. In terms of my mom, I would say that she’s, kind of, the opposite [laughs]. She’s a little bit more adventurous, a little less cautious, always encouraged us to try something at least once, do something new, take life a little less seriously. My mother was a realtor, as Stephen mentioned, and one memory that I had was that she would actually bring us along to her open houses on the weekends because she couldn’t find help. So we’d be actually sitting, or I’d be sitting in the foyer of some house in Richmond. I actually remember this clearly, I think I was so bored because I had no idea what was going on and so I started drawing on the floor, you know, between the tiles is like grout or whatever. Yeah. I think my mom saw me drawing with color pencils and then she freaked out so she was like “What are you doing?” So I got the eraser out and everything. I just remember that one moment because I realized that was on the weekend and I think after Grace and Lauren were born, our twin sisters, our mother realized that she wanted to spend more time with her children and have a job that didn’t involve her weekends being taken up by open houses so she switched jobs. She became a financial advisor at Canada Trust, at the time, now it’s TD Canada Trust or TD, yeah. She’s still there right now working as a financial planner. So that’s something I really appreciate. Once again, this theme of sacrifice, what my parents sacrificed by changing their careers so that they can spend more time with us on the weekend. So that meant more trips to the gardens and more trips to Science World for us [laughs]. Do you want to add anything Stephen?

*STEPHEN*
Yeah, I’ll just add a few more, kind of, fill in the gaps, details. So, actually, my mom and dad themselves, I said they were immigrants, but they came to Canada and the U.S. quite early. My dad went to university in the states and my mom actually attended Winston Churchill High School here in Vancouver. So both of them raised us up in English and they were very in tune into the culture. They’ve grown up here, it formed who they are. So when we talk about going to Chinese school and thinking “Why are we going to Chinese school” is very logical because I think our parents were quite traditional but also they spoke English at home with us and they had a very Western way of approaching parenting. Again, another kind of difference, my mom is the youngest of seven in her family and my dad is the eldest of five in his family. I’d be, kind of, remiss to say that the gap between my parents is about eleven years. So it was, yeah, as my brother said, there are some differences you see between them. My dad being more cautious and protective, my mom being more progressive in terms of giving us opportunities, letting us try different things at least once, but I very much admire my mom, as Tim says, just that they would sacrifice a lot. My mom would go from having all these career changes for the sake of her family. I also do admire the fact that she does work. A mother’s work is hard enough, raising a family. I remember when she was talking with her own father one day about whether she should stay home and raise the kids or go out and work I think my grandpa encouraged her.

[00:24:41]

“You know what, you’ve achieved a lot academically.” She graduated really well in her class. She was [indecipherable]. She told her dad she got a 4.0. Her dad thought that’s not good enough. That’s four out of ten. So he said, “If you need to go get help . . .” He just encouraged my mom to, you know, keep up her career because you never know what would happen, just with family. So I do admire the fact that she raised us up and also tried to work that way. People also say our personalities are reflective of our parents. So Tim reflects more of my mom and I reflect more of my dad. So both in terms of Tim being a very people person, Tim trying new things, or open-minded, adventurous. I tend to be a little more cautious, more conservative, a little more . . . I like my comfort zone.

*TIM*
But we also do have elements of the other parent as well.

*STEPHEN*
That’s true.

*TIM*
Yeah.

*REBECA*

Okay, well I think that’s a good place to move forward in time a little bit. I think I would be curious to hear about those formative teenage years in which you started to think about your hopes and dreams, moving forward, because I know you both ended up at Princeton, correct? So maybe we can think about that time and then move into those university years. I’m not sure who wants to go first.

*STEPHEN*
It might make more sense for you to go first, actually.

*TIM*
Sure, so I had the opportunity to enter St. George’s School in Vancouver, a private school, boys private school, in grade six. I think I wrote the entrance exam in grade two but didn’t get in so in retrospect I told my parents that I saved them a lot of money [laughs]. That school was an amazing opportunity for me to explore the arts, explore drama. Once again, even though I had so many great friends at Maple Lane, I had a new set of friends who were equally inspiring, equally fun. So that community really showed me that, really encouraged me actually. It was probably the first time it encouraged me that “Hey, you’re good at the arts, pursue it.” In grade six, when I entered, I think I won a fine arts scholarship. I think it was only like 400 bucks there. For me, I’m like “What, what is that? I got an award?” right? Yeah, so that encouraged me to continue to participate in school plays, continue to draw and paint in school, and also pick up an instrument. I picked up the flute because Stephen chose the clarinet already. My dad did not want two clarinets. I figured, “Hey, this fits in my backpack so it’s fine.” That was a wonderful community I felt. It was a very safe community. I never got bullied. Everybody knew each other. The teachers were very encouraging. I want to mention one teacher at St. George’s that was very inspirational to me. She’s actually a fellow at Richmond [laughs]. Her name is Katherine [Mourne?] and she was my Latin teacher at St. George’s. I took Latin since grade eight. For me, that was an amazing eye-opening course not only to this ancient language which is, admittedly, somewhat dead except for at the Vatican, but it actually showed me what the classical world was like and the implications and the impact it had on history after that, on Western civilization. Not only did I get a better grasp of the English language, which helped me with my SATs, but also it made me realize “Hey, this is a neat language.” When you travel around the world you see Latin roots from ages passed whether it’s the inscriptions on the sewers in Rome, the potholes in Rome, to the mosaics in the churches in Jerusalem. For me, that was an amazing opportunity. She was very inspirational and she’s still a mentor to this day. For me, I was very encouraged to pursue the classics, to pursue something which was, kind of, not super popular. I don’t think . . . There’s only, maybe, about eight of us at the very end of grade twelve who made it to Latin AP. It was due to her encouragement I applied to Princeton and was very fortunate, very lucky. I don’t know how I got in. I think everyone wanted to go to Stanford where it was really sunny. So there was a fewer amount of people applying to Princeton from my class but I was very fortunate to have gotten into Princeton. I think that was, I do want to say that was one of the happiest days of my life on April 12, 2001 when I found out the news because I was the first person in my high school of 140 students to find out where they were accepted to for university and college.

*REBECA*
Stephen, would you like to jump in?

*STEPHEN*
Yeah, if you have other things that come to your mind just throw it in there. You’ve got to follow me because our experiences are quite similar, the only difference being that I had started Saint’s when I was in grade two versus Tim in grade six. I’m what they call a ‘lifer’ and I’m probably less balanced because I had not been around girls for four years of the eleven years.

[00:31:01]

So Tim is much more balanced and is more socially cool because of that. I think a lot of people who go to St. George’s don’t really talk a lot about their time there because, one, I think it’s a decision of their parents’, just like ours to send us there but, two, I think they feel a little, just reserved, talking about how lucky they were there. It’s quite a privileged place. I absolutely loved it there, as Tim said, it’s an all-around education. You’re able to pursue many activities. We did the arts and had classes you couldn’t have in the public system like Latin which it’s pretty cool that we learned that. I didn’t really feel a whole lot of . . . I guess it was a privileged place. I felt very comfortable being someone from Richmond and who commuted from Richmond. We still lived around Steveston Highway at the time. My mom would drive us in her minivan to Saint’s every day and . . .

*TIM*

Thirty minutes in the morning.

*STEPHEN*
Yeah, so, again, talking about mom’s sacrifice, she did that a lot every day for, I think, eleven years. I do consider myself very fortunate to have made a lot of friends there. Now as someone who has returned to Vancouver, after ten years being away, it’s unbelievable to realize just what the friendships there have meant. They’ve been the glue to bind me back to Vancouver, Richmond. I would say that it was a pretty competitive place and I think that sparked something in both Tim and me because it was just a place where everyone did their best, everyone was expected to do their best, everyone wanted, when you talk about end goals everyone wanted to go to a really good university, preferably try to leave the country or try to go to the different coasts. For me and Tim, I think we found competition to be quite exhausting. We didn’t feel we needed to keep up with the Joneses and take this class and, you know, study this on the side. So the approach I think Tim and I kind of organically came up with was just to try to be unique or try to be original because I think when everyone’s handing in the same assignment, if you had approached it differently or you found something completely out of the box, that made you stand out. That was our way of not being better than anyone but just being different and unique. That’s actually, I think, something from that time in Saint’s that we’ve adopted our whole lives, like, how could we always think of things creatively. For instance, Tim and I both drew on our university application where they asked for a strict paper application. Tim and I, kind of, drew on it. I’m not sure how many applications Princeton received, for instance, that had drawings of, like, um, you know, cute little animals, cute little things about ourselves, or keepsakes, memories, favourite movies. So, you know, I always liked the fact that Tim and I always challenged and encouraged each other in that area. I did follow my brother’s footsteps to Princeton because we never really did a college tour. I think we just kind of looked at books and said “That school looks nice. We’ll give it a try.” Tim says, you know, it was a miracle he got in. I don’t think it was a miracle. I think it was he had the chops to get in. After taking Tim on his first visit to college, which was day one of college, I really loved the campus there and so I decided, two years later, to apply as well. I got in, whether you want to say it was because my brother was already there, the legacy, or I got in on my own merit, I’ll let historians or whoever decide that one.

*TIM*
I think Stephen is being too humble here. I’m very proud of Stephen. At St. George’s he graduated the top of his class, received the Governor General’s Award, and also was elected the head boy to be the school captain. Stephen’s very deserving. It’s not due to my getting in. I think we’re both very fortunate to have gotten into Princeton. As I said earlier, everyone was applying to Stanford. That is very minor but we were also very fortunate because Princeton offered financial aid.

[00:35:42]

I know for a fact Stanford, at the time in 2005 or 2002, did not offer financial aid to Canadians. So for my two working parents with four children financial aid was very important for them. That was definitely one factor that was a blessing for my parents. Another factor was we had a relative who lived in New Jersey. So at August, at the time I had no idea where New Jersey was, but now I know, so Princeton is right in between Philadelphia and New York City. We were also very fortunate because, yeah, it’s an Ivy League school but, you know what, Princeton is actually known for their undergraduate education. There was a lot of emphasis on the undergrads. So a lot of opportunities for us to grow there as well.

*REBECA*
Okay. One thing the museum is interested in is stories of migration. One of the most, I think, interesting topics that you talk about are first impressions and also surprises. So I was curious to hear about your opinions on, I realized that you came back to Richmond, but what it was like to be in the states, so young as well, and maybe some differences that you noticed. Also, we’ll revisit it but we can talk about what was it that actually pulled you back. So, maybe impressions. Stephen did you want to start?

*STEPHEN*
Sure. Growing up in Vancouver you start seeing in the paper edition of the Vancouver Sun about how Vancouver’s now ranked one of the top cities in the world. I think, recently, it made number three most liveable city in The Economist and you read all this in high school and it rains all the time here and you’re like, “What? This is the best city in the world? Like, you’ve got to be kidding me. Like this little corner of the world is the best city? I can’t believe it.” The joke is that a lot of us who’ve left Vancouver and went to Toronto or other cities just realized how much we miss Vancouver. It really was correct. Every time we’d come back on breaks, the moment you step out of the airport and you just breathe the air here you could tell that you’re back in Vancouver. You could tell it’s the best air. So that was certainly an allure but I think you asked about impressions of the United States and our time there. Before I do that I’m just going to quickly plug for Tim as Tim plugged for me but going with the arts theme and being unique, Tim was involved in an improv group in high school. It used to be called Odyssey of the Mind. Now it’s called Destination Imagination but his improv group ended up going to the world’s twice. The second time they went they ended up winning. So, again, kind of hidden talent in the room.

*TIM*
Placed second, yeah.

*STEPHEN*
Oh, to me which is just as good as first.

*TIM*
[laughs].

*STEPHEN*
In the world. Yeah, maybe we can make this more of a dialogue. You can tell me more what you think about the U.S. but I certainly always wanted to go to the U.S. We were lucky enough to go on a trip to New York when we were in grade four or five and the moment I saw sky scrapers like the Empire State Building, big city lights, I saw the subway system, I was like “Oh, boy. I can’t wait to go to the U.S. and just experience the big city, America, big sky, everything about it.” I just couldn’t wait.

*TIM*

Yeah, my first impressions of when I flew into Newark Airport in New Jersey and then trained down to Princeton, first of all, it was, I think, Princeton is unique in that it is a very beautiful campus. It’s a very beautiful school and we’re very privileged to have gone there. I know there are other schools and other parts of the U.S. with great education too, great professors, great students, but for some reason Princeton was just so idyllic, just surrounded by golf courses and squirrels that were not afraid of humans. It was a beautiful campus, the same campus that we saw in the movie ‘A Beautiful Mind.’ I just remember walking onto campus, which is very small. The undergrad population at the time was probably about 5000, but, really being encouraged to want to make a difference in this world. That’s the thing that really stuck with me, that first thought. I really wanted to make a big difference in this world. Little did I know that Princeton’s unofficial motto is “in the nation’s service and in the service of all nations.”

[00:40:35]

For me, that was very much a theme of my time at Princeton. What surprised me was that my class at Princeton has students from all walks of life, all socioeconomic backgrounds, countries, states, and life stories. Everyone brought something unique to the table. I remember my roommate was excellent in jazz music and was also an electrical engineer. I thought that was pretty cool how everyone had something unique to bring. You just feel inspired by them. Some other things that were completely a culture shock to me was, oh, I had to do my own laundry, which was free. I learned later on that laundry isn’t free at other schools. So, once again, we were very, very fortunate [laughs]. Other things, too, included being beside New York City and having the opportunity through the programs, the alumni programs at Princeton, where they would encourage undergrads to go watch plays. I remember the first play I watched there was ‘The Producers,’ Mel Brooks’ ‘The Producers,’ which I thought and still believe is the funniest Broadway show of all time where he truly found the formula for comedy. It was moments like that that are very much eye-opening and surprising for me. Besides the fact that in the winter I had to wear seven layers and in the summers the walls were literally sweating due to humidity, it’s always . . . I was grateful for that opportunity to leave home and see what a different part of North America was like but I understood full well that we were taken care of by our school, by our deans, even by our aunt who lived in New Jersey. I think we still have some boxes in our basement [laughs]. That, for me, was a pleasant surprise but on the topic of ‘there’s no place like home,’ when in retrospect, you know, looking back I remember my first break at Princeton, I think it was fall break, a lot of people decided to go back home to their hometowns or home states, but flying back to Vancouver was a little bit far so I decided to stay in New Jersey with my classmates who are also from Vancouver. We explored parts of the east coast and I think we went to, this is more winter break, but we went to Mount Snow which is in Vermont and everyone was raving about this amazing ski resort at Mount Snow in Vermont. By the time we went there it was a bunny hill and the trees had dropped their leaves. I just looked over to my friend Jackie and said “we want to go back home to Whistler. This isn’t Whistler” or something along those lines but we realized, “Oh, there’s no place like home.” So we actually wanted to go back home during our winter breaks and our other breaks but I knew a lot of other students, for some reason they really enjoyed, um, they found Princeton a pleasant escape. So a lot of people actually stayed on campus during the breaks but me and my fellow Vancouverites always wanted to head back home because we always missed home.

*STEPHEN*
Yeah, I’d say Princeton was exactly like what my brother said. It was a very privileged environment. We were very lucky to be there. It was a bit of a bubble at times. I used to joke . . . I ended up being a cartoonist on the daily paper there and one thing I said was that Princeton looks like a J. Crew catalogue, just with the very beautiful people there, maybe of a certain pedigree. So I felt, sort of, out of place I have to admit as a west coast Canadian. I did meet my best friend there. I did meet a very good group of friends. Yeah, I would say that just a very formative time there. I grew a lot of my faith there as well. I think not having your parents around you kind of have to choose for your own whether you want to follow your religion or, like, is it going to be real.

[00:45:32]

I was very blessed to have a college fellowship there and a good pastor from Texas named Blake who brought me to the faith there. When you asked about impressions about America like that was probably one segment of America even though Princeton has made huge efforts to get all social and economic diversity in the school now which is applaudable. I remember Tim and I used to begin every year at Princeton volunteering at the nearby city Trenton which is the capital city but also socioeconomically more diverse, a much lower income neighbourhood. So we’d be there and I would volunteer there as well on certain weekends but, yeah, it was just night and day both, kind of, one side of America and the other side. It made me very alive to the fact that “Wow, we’re very blessed to have grown up in Canada where I think things are a little more, equal?” Where we both recognize formal equality among people but also substantive equality that we do our best to try to reiterate the conditions of First Nations, to be very welcoming to refugees. So I felt more Canadian than ever when I was in the United States and then when I ended up working in New York the year after, and this was during the financial crisis, I probably felt even more Canadian because everyone would just always remind me that I was. They would say it was the way I talked, the way I would have the occasional eh, or just the fact that even in the office everyone has a different personality, right? Your workplace thinks of you as Rebeca or Tim but mine was always the Canadian which I always thought was not very inspiring but I wore it as a badge of honour. I was definitely missing home a lot when I was there. We were very lucky.

*REBECA*
I think that’s a really good place to move into these years where you’re establishing yourself in careers. So maybe we can start or continue with the story that you’re starting to tell of your first job.

*STEPHEN*
Sure, so, it’s actually quite interesting, seventy percent of Princeton graduates end up working on Wall Street after graduation. That year it was the spring of 2008. I was the last person in my group of friends at Princeton to get a job. A lot of my friends ended up getting jobs in Wall Street, that year leading up to the fall of 2008. I had applied to twenty jobs and couldn’t get anything in consulting, finance, couldn’t get a job. I just thought it was me but I ended up working for a public interest organization. Tim and I both worked for a public interest group after, that put us in different placements based on our passions or interests. That job was working at the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office. If you’ve watched Law and Order, that’s the office in that T.V. series. I got the job. I had no idea I wanted to do it but a few months later, September was coming, I now kind of realized why God may have closed those doors in Wall Street, banking, and finance because when the Great Recession hit, when the financial crisis hit, a lot of my friends with job offers in their hands on Wall Street couldn’t even start their jobs. It was very sad. God also used them as well. A lot of them ended up going to other fields, ended up being entrepreneurs, creating apps. It’s a good story in the end but I remember when that happened I was like “Now I understand why God opened one door for me” which was to work in this unrelated field. Although it was a field I didn’t think I wanted to be in it got suddenly really busy because at the District Attorney’s office I was investigating financial crime. When the financial crisis hit, what was the thing, it was just a flood of fingers pointing to Wall Street. I was kept pretty busy that year. To kind of speed things along here, that did pique my interest in law. I did see very happy, motivated lawyers, great bosses who took the extra step to mentor me. They were really passionate about what they did and that’s why I learned that any job you go into you’ve got to look at the people there. Are they really passionate about it? Or are they there to collect a pay check? So they inspired me, really, to apply to law school later that year and in my year off, I had a year off where I was in Taiwan. I decided to fly half way around the world to Taiwan. That’s a different story in itself but I was in Taiwan to really, kind of, check out some things before I were to start my professional career in schooling.

[00:50:26]

So I wanted to go to my mom’s home country, home nation. I wanted to brush up on my Chinese because realizing that it’s now useful. It’s a shame that my French was better than my Chinese. I also wanted to do missionary work there. I found a very cool job with a great organization there called ORTB where I got to teach English as well and teach English over the radio. So seeing this mic in front of me, kind of, harkens back to those days. A similar story with law school, very quickly, applied to twenty law schools in . . . I wasn’t a very stellar student at Princeton. I did my best and I got honours but still wasn’t the best student and law school competition, as you know, is quite fierce especially at that time when people were leaving Wall Street but, again, same story. I applied to twenty places, twenty different law schools, got rejected from all twenty but one law school accepted me or put me on the wait list actually, and that was a school called Osgoode Hall in Toronto. I ended up flying back from Taiwan about twice that year, two to three times, because we had deaths in our family. Our grandparents all died in 2010, all three of them. All three living ones, they all died within sixty-three days and then sixty-three days. So I ended up flying there for a funeral and then flying back to Taiwan, learning that one was sick, flying back. At one of those visits my brother actually encouraged me to apply, to write a letter to Osgoode because, at the time, I was on their wait list and every other school had rejected me. Tim said, “You should write a letter just telling them they’re your number one choice.” That wouldn’t be a lie because that was the only school I had a hope with. I did that and I was fortunate enough to get in three, four, five months before classes started. Again, just like how I saw how God closed doors with my first job out of university I saw why God opened just that door because that ended up being where I met my fiancé. So yeah, I’ll just maybe leave it at that right now.

*REBECA*
Sure.

*STEPHEN*
You want to talk a little bit about your career?

*TIM*
Yeah, at Princeton I studied ecology and evolutionary biology which is like plants and animals. I guess Princeton offered two types of biology: molecular biology, the size of a cell or smaller; and then ecology and evolutionary biology which is everything bigger than a cell. For me, I liked to see the things that I’m studying so I chose that field and it was a really lovely field. We did a lot of, you know, National Geographic type work. I remember one time we even went down to Panama with our professors for a semester in the field. One of our professors was actually a family doctor who spent six months in the year doing family medicine. In those six months he would fly down with the Princeton students teaching botany and teaching vertebrate zoology or coral reef biology. Naturally, I took all these science courses which also happened to be prerequisites to medical school. So I applied to medical school during my first year out of Princeton. Let me just backtrack a little bit. So that first year after Princeton I was placed in a, they pair you up . . . We have a program there at Princeton called Project 55 which paired up students with their interests. For me I was interested in the healthcare field and I was very fortunate to have gotten paired up at UCFS in San Francisco where I worked at a breast care center helping men and women with breast issues in the department of surgery there. At the time it was the number one place for breast cancer research and breast cancer surgery there. I was really inspired by a very visionary doctor there named Doctor Laura [Esterman?] who was an amazing breast surgeon but also an amazing, passionate human being when it comes to encouraging students, encouraging people to think big. So I applied to medical school during that time when I was in San Francisco and I think I applied to more than thirty schools and did not get a single invitation for an interview.

[00:55:26]

So I was very discouraged thinking, “Oh, man, this must be pretty tough” even though people tell me, you know, applying to medical school is kind of like a crap shoot. You just have to keep on applying. I guess one hurdle being a Canadian working in the United States is that you have a finite time, known as a visa, where you’re allowed to stay in the states. So after hearing that I was rejected from all these medical schools I applied to, some in Canada and the United states, I also was told I could no longer work at UCSF. I thought, for some reason, I could just work one more year there in the department of surgery helping as an intern there but I was not allowed to work there. It was at that time that a friend of mine encouraged me to look at a program in nutrition which was a one year masters at Columbia University in New York and, talk about timing, and I’m grateful for this, but I applied and I actually got into Columbia University in New York for a one year masters. So now my visa changed to a student visa. So I could stay in the states for a little longer and apply to medical school again but this time maybe by creating or repackaging my application where, you know, I was also interested in nutrition. This was genuine, too. I really did have a passion for plants and animals in college and now I have a passion for learning how to eat them. So I had that one year masters and it was during that time where I applied to medical school again. This time I casted a little wider net and I was fortunate to have gotten one interview and that was at UBC. To make a long story short, I went to the interview at UBC and it was extremely tough because I felt like I couldn’t stand out. There were a whole bunch of other extremely qualified, very genuine, very kind, positive, smiling, Asian males, too. I didn’t get into UBC. I’m not using that as an excuse but I’m just saying that I think, you know, I truly believe everything happens for a reason. So I didn’t get in and I was a little bit . . . I was excited about the fact that I got an interview but a little bit shocked that I didn’t get in. At that time I did not know what was happening but there was an opportunity around the time I found out, after the UBC interview, there was a dean of a medical school who was doing a question-answer period at Princeton. Everything in my mind was telling me, you know, “Why bother, why take the train from New York to Princeton and try again. I’m an alumnus, I’m not an undergraduate student anymore. I just went to Princeton the week before for my brother’s birthday. Why go again? Why spend the extra money to go down?” but that week there was free New Jersey transit [laughs] and through the encouragement of some family members I decided to take that train ride all the way down saying that “If you really wanted something with all your heart, you’d go and get it.” So I went down to that question and answer period at Princeton and I sat in on that session. Some students came in, asked their questions, and they left but I sat in there and, for me, I basically told the dean about my situation saying I didn’t get an interview anywhere and that I would be, you know, I asked her straight up, you know, “would it be possible to get an interview at your school, the University of Southern California, because this is where I applied to but didn’t actually get a response yet?” Two weeks later I got an invitation to interview at the Keck School of Medicine which is the medical school at the University of Southern California and three weeks later I got an invite to the new students’ reception. For me, this was very much an answered prayer but also God’s way of encouraging and showing me that there is a plan and that, you know, a lot of it has to do with trust and, you know, perhaps this was a moment where it was a lesson more for me to teach me faith, to teach me how mighty God is.

[01:00:42]

I’m very grateful for getting my acceptance into one medical school. I guess you hear this a lot but all it takes is one to get into one place and, very similar to my brother’s story, doors were closed but one was opened, somehow opened, pried open somehow by God. I was very fortunate to have now moved back to the west coast even though I was in California. It was, once again, a wonderful learning experience for me. I met a lot of good friends there. I developed a new appreciation for what it meant to do primary care knowing that the hospital there, LA County Hospital, serves almost eighty percent uninsured people, some of them from Mexico, most of them with no basic primary care. So I was very . . . It was a great experience for me. It was a wonderful place to learn medicine if I could say. If you had to do something as strenuous and tough as medicine I’m glad I was wearing t-shirts and shorts eleven months of the year. As you all know from, maybe, hearing it from your friends who are also in the medical field, a lot of it’s also kind of like a draft. You know, you have no choice as to where you’re going to go after medicine. So I applied everywhere for residency and, once again, this was another opportunity for me to say “You know what, I’m not in control here. Leave it to God.” I was actually very fortunate. I have no idea how this happened, but to get my first choice which was to come back home to Vancouver.

*REBECA*
How are you guys feeling? Are you okay in terms of a break?

*STEPHEN*
Yeah.

*REBECA*
You’re good to continue?

*STEPHEN*
Are you?

*REBECA*
I’m great. I’m just going to pop in here to see if the laughter can be quieter. The background noise is okay but I imagine it can be distracting when you’re trying to talk. So I’m just going to try and . . .

*STEPHEN*

It’s all good. We like the laughter.

*REBECA*
Okay

[Rebeca goes into a different room briefly].

[01:03:02 – 01:03:28]

*REBECA*

We’re locked. So we can speak to each other [laughs].

*STEPHEN*
Okay.

*REBECA*
Okay, well I think we’re at a good point now to, sort of, talk about where you guys are in your lives and then maybe we can talk about the coins a little bit. After the coins we can talk about your grandfather, which I know you’re itching to talk about, and so, yeah, maybe just what life is like now and then what inspired each of you to do your particular coin. So maybe we can turn it over back to Stephen.

*STEPHEN*
Sure, I would just pick up where I last left off. So I think I talked about God opening doors. It was very good that he opened one door to a law school in Canada. Law is, obviously, very different in terms of where you’re going to end up because the human body is the human body everywhere but laws are different in different places. So it was easier for me to go from learning law in Toronto to going back to Vancouver. I really liked Toronto. One thought I had when I was in Toronto was, it’s interesting a lot of the people who grew up there, their impression of Canada isn’t the Rocky Mountains, it isn’t the ocean like we have. Their impression of Canada is like Niagara Falls and, like, beautiful red foliage in the fall but I couldn’t see myself there for the rest of my life and I loved it there. I think what people think so fondly about Canada and Toronto is just that it’s a great friendly, big city, just so many young people, just such energy. You have a lot of people from small towns.

[01:05:05]

It’s just a great vibe to be there but something in me told me that my home was always in Vancouver. That was where I wanted to go settle down with someone. That’s the place where I wanted to try to attempt to buy a house and because that’s where my roots were. I studied in undergrad, public policy, and law has a good connection with public policy but very much concerned about issues publicly, issues nationally. When I kept thinking about where I wanted to practice law, where I wanted to put my roots down, where I wanted to be, all the signs pointed me back to Vancouver. At the time, this is 2013 and all my friends are saying “You’re so crazy,” even the friends who moved from Vancouver to Toronto, “You’re so crazy to go back there. It’s so expensive to live there. It’s not the same as it was when you went to school there.” I kept thinking it’s very sad that there would be an exodus of people from Vancouver, especially a lot of talent, a lot of youth, a lot of energy leaving the city to go elsewhere, a bit of a brain drain. I said, “You know what, I want to go back because if you don’t like the problems there go fix them.” I ended up moving back here in about 2014. Again, similar story, I applied to a bunch of places, only got one job. It seems to be a theme in my life but I moved back to my parents’ house in Richmond and it was nice because my brother was living there, too. You know, all these people had multiple degrees, very lucky to have multiple degrees but back living in mom and dad’s house seems to be the story of our generation. There’s no shame in that. I loved living with my mom and dad. I missed them a lot in my ten years away. You asked, kind of, my impressions of being back home, what life is like now. I’d say life is fantastic here. I definitely see why my story started here and went around the world for ten years and back here. I’m happily engaged to a wonderful girl named Christine who I met in law school, also grew up here, also has the same story I have. I do think this community has changed a lot. I think it’s changed in great ways. I think it’s changed in ways that I think we need to think seriously about improving. Tim and I, when we grew up in Richmond, there used to be a place on October 31st where all the neighbourhoods were teeming with children trick-or-treating. Now, I’m surprised on my first Halloween, back at mom and dad’s house, that only, I think, two houses in the whole neighbourhood participated and there were no trick-or-treaters. I think it’s just the natural progression of time and the kids growing up and leaving, but I just kept thinking “Man, I think we’ve lost our sense of community in some ways.” I don’t know if that has something to do with either a cultural or language divide or things just getting very expensive here but one thing I had resolve to do is, we might not be able to change or influence policy or make big macro changes, but is to try to be very neighbourly to everyone. That begins in your own neighbourhood, that begins by getting to know your neighbours even if they are from a different culture. That’s why I think this project that you’re doing, Rebeca, is fantastic because I think you are bridging divides and cultures here, getting people to be more empathetic about some of the histories people have had and the migration histories as well, but always trying to stay engaged with things here and always trying to encourage my friends to make a similar migration back to Richmond or back to Vancouver. Just telling them this is still a great place to raise a family. I think it’s a great place to start a business. If you think there are problems, yes, there are issues but come back and help us solve them and it wouldn’t hurt, you know. I think the emotional heart strings really pull them and it’s been encouraging to see, in the last couple years, Christine and my friends, just a number of them have come back in droves. They’ve started having kids and, I think they want to share with their next generation what they all, kind of, Christine, Tim, and I have all grown up with here.

*REBECA*
I think that’s a wonderful perspective. I’d like to hear Tim’s.

*TIM*
Sure, so, as I last said, the whole applying to residency is like a draft. You find out where you’re going to go by opening an envelope. It says “Congratulations, you are going to blank” Winnipeg, Miami, whatever. For me that envelope said, “Congratulations, you’ve been accepted to UBC Vancouver Fraser program.”

[01:10:01]

That was the family medicine program which was my top choice. Just to show you how, I cannot explain this myself, there were only twelve spots available at that program. Ten of those twelve spots went to UBC medical students. For some reason I got one, an American medical student who, myself, even though I promised I was Canadian, I promised I wanted to come back, I did a lot of convincing. “I know I spent the last ten years in the states but Vancouver is home for me. There is no other place I would rather practice family medicine than my own community.” I was very fortunate to get one of those last two spots in the program. I think it all comes back to the influence of my father, me growing up . . . You asked me earlier, you know, “How did you know you wanted to get into this? When did you know you wanted to start this career?” I don’t think I knew but it was from my upbringing and my father really encouraged me. You know what, I think with my personality and with my passions and interests in science and the human body and I liked to talk to patients and sometimes listen [laughs] that family medicine was a good fit for me. So I came back to Richmond, mom and dad’s house, in 2012, the summer of 2012. It was surreal for me to be back home. The city had changed a lot. I did visit from time to time during the last ten years when I was in the states. I came back for the Olympics. I came back for when my grandparents passed away but to come back home really was a homecoming for me. Not only was this truly a real sense of a calling for me to be a family physician but also a calling for me to come back home and settle back home in this place that I love. I tell this to Stephen all the time, it’s where we’re surrounded by these beautiful mountains and the boundless Pacific Ocean around us. It really is quite beautiful, just as our license plate says, and, you know, being a family doctor here in that Vancouver-Fraser program which was stationed at Royal Columbian Hospital at New Westminster. I developed a greater appreciation for the different municipalities and the different communities and the lower mainland. That really encouraged me even further to become the best family doctor that I could, primary care doctor taking care of babies to old folks whether it’s in their homes or even at the palliative stage, to be an attentive ear, to be someone that can empathize with them just like the way my father did for new immigrants during his time. That is, for me, full circle. It’s weird because now I’m a doctor just like my dad. It’s neat also that we’re both working still. Obviously, I’m starting where he started in his early thirties and, so, for me, I see this as a very symbolic part of my story to be where my father was when he started his occupation, his career here in Richmond and also in Ladner. Coming back home has been an amazing experience for me. You know, Stephen described the smells before of the bulrushes and the ditches that we have in Richmond [laughs]. I get that same sensation when I go to Steveston now. You know, residency was tough but you need those downtimes. You need those times where you can pick yourself back up. Where did I go? I went to Steveston. I still do my errands at Richmond Center.

[01:14:53]

I still enjoy getting bubble tea with my friends and family here in Richmond. These are my passions that I . . . These are my little joys that gave me a lot of refuelling, especially during residency. Thank God I survived residency and now I’m a family physician practicing in Burnaby in Vancouver and, you guessed it, Richmond. I love serving the community here. It actually gives me a lot of joy to serve new Canadians and new immigrants. I never thought in, what was it, twenty, twenty-five years, or twenty years or so when we were doing Chinese classes at Richmond that I would be using Chinese today in my practice, and some Google translate to help people. So, for me, it’s been a goal of mine to give back to my community here in Richmond. It is also a desire of mine to give back to new immigrants as they start their stories here, too.

*STEPHEN*

I guess we have to talk a bit about our coin now.

*REBECA*
Yeah, maybe . . .

*STEPHEN*
I guess I can . . . Go ahead.

*REBECA*
Can I just ask, maybe, just for the record, to first just introduce what the competition was and then we’ll go into your individual stories. Stephen, go ahead.

*STEPHEN*

Absolutely. So in 2015 the Royal Canadian Mint, in anticipation for Canada’s 150th birthday this year July 1st, 2017, held a nation-wide contest and it was, was it 2015 or 2014? Time escapes me now. I think it was 2015.

*TIM*
Mhm.

*STEPHEN*

Essentially, what they wanted to do, which is something that they minted at the 100th anniversary in 1967, was to change up the circulation coins for the year, feature designs, that would be just minted for this year and it would become collector’s coins because they’d be out there in your pocket change and tills. Canadians would find them and treasure them for generations to come. So they had a call for designs from the public and they were going to have multiple rounds of judging and ultimately a final panel of, kind of, all-star Canadians, distinguished Canadians they put it, from Adrienne Clarkson to Chris Hadfield to Rick Hansen to, um, Wab Kinew were going to critique the designs and then they were going to put it to a nation-wide online vote. I first heard about this contest when I was going to work and on my elevator there’s a little T.V. screen and the T.V. screen had an ad that said that there was this contest. I didn’t really give much thought about it at the time. Tim and I liked to draw. The common theme you can hear in our story was that we love art. We’re very artsy, always liked design challenges but didn’t really think about it that much when I saw that ad. I had a friend post on Facebook about the ad on my wall and said “You should totally, you know, try this.” I really didn’t think a whole lot about it. I had entered a lot of contests throughout my youth and I’ve always placed second in the contest, including the contest at the marine aquatic center where I had to design a t-shirt [laughs]. That was like eighth grade and I came in second out of two submissions, out of two people who entered the contest. So I never really believed in design contests and never thought that art should be put to competition. I don’t know if we want that on the record [laughs]. I was just reluctant. One day, I think it was ten days before the deadline, I actually had a dream about this contest. In the dream there was a . . . I’m going to be intentionally vague about the dream because dreams are vague. Your dreams are all vague and when you say the dream it doesn’t really come out right. Essentially, it was that, I think, the dream told me “Go enter the contest.” It kind of gave me some ideas. So what I did was I woke up that morning and then I texted my brother, he was the first person I contacted, saying “Tim, we should go enter this contest. We have ten days.” Do you want to say more about the process from that point onward?

*TIM*
Okay. So, ever since we were young I loved drawing alongside Stephen. Stephen is a true artist. He’s a genius when it comes to art. If you want him to draw the giraffe to the parliament building he can draw it from scratch. For me, I need to actually look at a picture first and get my reference point but Stephen is great with the pen. So when Stephen asked me to collaborate with him on this coin contest I obviously said “Yes, let’s do it.” I was very excitable to draw once again with him and to almost strategize and say, “Okay, well, we need to think of what will look good on the extremely small canvas of a coin whether it’s a dime to something larger.”

[01:20:02]

It was actually a fun intellectual process for us but, also, at the same time artistic, too, because we critiqued each other’s drawings. One thing Stephen does not like is me hovering over his shoulder telling him, “Hey, I think you should fix that” but that’s something we grew up with so hopefully he’s used to it by now [laughs]. This is something that we sat down in our living room in mom and dad’s house and trying to come up with unique and creative responses and art pieces that would look good on the 2D surface of a coin. For me, it was a really fun process because it was also time I could spend with my brother. Both of us, we moved back but we’re also very busy with separate careers and timetables during the day. So this was a fun opportunity for me to reconnect and, yeah, there were a few categories that we were asked to draw. One was our wonders, Canadian wonders. Another was our character as Canadians. Another was our achievements. Another was . . .

*STEPHEN*
The future and then there was, oh goodness it all escapes me . . .

*TIM*
Our passions.

*STEPHEN*
Yes, passions.

*TIM*

So we came up with a lot of, kind of, neat designs. Stephen came up with his. I came up with mine but we’d always critique each other’s and try to find ways to make it better. In our focus group of two we . . .

*STEPHEN*
It’s quite interesting because the first two designs we actually drew, we drew a bunch, but the first two were the ones who had ended up going all the way to the final round. For Tim, that was . . . Sorry for cutting you off there but Tim decided he was going to go for the category of our wonders and I’m going to let you explain . . .

*TIM*
No, you explain it and I’ll explain yours [laughs].

*STEPHEN*

It would make more sense for you to.

*TIM*
Okay, so the first thing I thought about for Canada’s wonders was our northern lights. Ever since I was young I loved to look at lists and I would read about the Seven Wonders of the World and every year they’d kind of tweak it. I think one year they had seven natural wonders of the world or the eight, you know. The northern lights, I remember, was one of them. I wanted to choose something that all Canadians could relate to from sea to sea, not something that was bound by a particular geographic location. I literally sketched it for about five minutes or so, just to sketch something. I was very shocked to find out, “Oh my goodness, this was actually chosen.” It’s a very simple design that features the northern lights at the top half of the coin and then the bottom half brings you back down to earth where there’s trees, there’s a peaceful, tranquil lake. In order for a wonder to truly be a wonder it had to be . . .

*STEPHEN*
Especially on a small coin.

*TIM*
Especially on a small coin, I knew I had to put equal emphasis on the beholder so I drew two paddlers in a vague canoe slash kayak. At the time I wasn’t quite sure which one I would choose. Yeah, I could not have imagined that that coin would be chosen as one of the finalists.

*STEPHEN*
And then just briefly about my coin design. I went for the category ‘our character’ and so I tried to design a coin that, an image that speaks to our character. I was lucky to travel across Canada quite a bit. I’ve been to Newfoundland, Quebec, and Ontario. A lot of regional diversity everywhere you go. What I always thought was cool was every province had their own provincial flower. So we’re very proud of our dogwood here. Ontario’s very proud of the trillium, um, pitcher plant in Newfoundland. So I thought, you know, for confederation, for the 150th birthday of our nation, why don’t I show Canada being united. I drew a bouquet of all the provincial flowers but the bouquet would be in the shape of a maple leaf. It showed that out of many, there’s one. I know that American but, so just more like that we are diverse in our regional traits and characteristics but we are one country.

[01:24:45]

Again, I really loved my design. I was really proud of it. I really had a lot of fun making it and, again, also pleasantly surprised it went all the way to the final round of judging. So about that final round of judging, there was one month where they put twenty-five designs to the Canadian public. So five designs in each category and it was quite an accomplishment not just for my brother and I, two brothers to make that shortlist of twenty-five, but we were quite proud that there was another Richmond boy who also made it into the category for our future and it was one for kids twelve and under. I think it goes to speak to that. It was kind of a . . . I know there’s a lot of artists in Richmond. It’s just a great, you know, breeding ground for creativity or something but very fortunate to make it that far. Tim and I, again, loved the opportunity for him to collaborate, this time on a campaign to try to get as many of our friends to vote. So we really pulled out all stops. I got all my friends in Ontario, classmates in Ontario, to vote. I got all the people that we went to school with to vote. I really tried to have a campaign that was fun. It was from sea to sea to sea. We used social media a lot. I took over the social media. My brother is better at it than I am but I was able to generate some social media buzz about it. We were lucky to have done a few interviews. We never thought we would get a chance to speak on CBC, briefly, and interview with Alan Campbell on the Richmond News. Yeah, anything else that you want to add, Tim?

*TIM*
It was just an amazing opportunity, to, out of, I think, 10,000 entries that Stephen’s design and my design both made it, um, I truly, we really like our art. We really love the designs that we came up together with and these designs, you know, you think about it “Where did this come from? Where did we get our inspiration from?” So, maybe it’s no coincidence both of our designs got chosen to be finalists because we really came from, kind of, growing up here. As I said, surrounded by the oceans, the mountains, the flora and fauna around us, and we’re very grateful that the Mint was able to choose both of our designs as finalist designs in that contest.

*REBECA*

I think this is a really good opportunity to also talk about your grandfather’s influence. This is something that we’re really interested in and that means a lot to you.

*STEPHEN*
Absolutely, I just want to honour your time here, Rebeca. It’s easy for us to talk about ourselves and for you to be such a patient listener, we’re really appreciative of it.

*REBECA*

No, I’m great.

*STEPHEN*
So, um, just for your reference I did actually try to answer every question from my grandpa’s perspective in an email which I just sent to you about an hour ago. So if there’s any gaps or if you just want to refer to, kind of, a written transcript feel free to do that.

*REBECA*

Sure.

*STEPHEN*

Our grandpa is our inspiration. He’s our hero. He’s our role model. When you want to talk about the specific context of the coin contest it was actually our grandfather who was a coin collector and it kind of harkens back to a story which comes out in his larger story which was he ran away from home. His mother encouraged him to leave the farm but gave him three small gold coins. Also, when he came to Canada decades later he would be a collector of coins, ancient coins, Royal Canadian Mint coins. He was very involved with his family life. He knew all thirteen of his grandchildren’s birthdays and on every birthday he would give his grandchild . . . It was a silver coin, was it?

*TIM*
Gold coin.

*STEPHEN*
Gold coin, gold for all Canadian Mint collectors’ edition coin. So he actually . . . With every birthday we’d get a coin and we ended up becoming coin collectors ourselves. We know our grandpa, he passed away in 2010, this year he would have been 100 years old in Canada’s 150th birthday. He never got a chance to see us in this contest but we know he’d be really proud that, for once, we were able to design a coin that he could enjoy. That’s kind of the nutshell about where my grandpa fits in in the story. In terms of, kind of, your questions I’ll do my best to condense it in, probably, the next fifteen minutes.

[01:29:47]

*REBECA*
Oh, there’s no need to rush unless you are starting to feel a little bit tired.

*TIM*
Oh, no.

*STEPHEN*
Not really. I’m good. How about yourself?

*REBECA*
I’m totally fine. I’m an oral historian [laughs]. Don’t worry [laughs].

*STEPHEN*
Okay.

*REBECA*
So, yeah, maybe we can start with the beginning of his journey, where he was born, and then we can move forward in time. Whenever you want to jump in and talk about, you know, his journey to Richmond, to Canada.

*STEPHEN*
Sure, if you don’t mind I’m just going to read from the transcript because I tried my best just to write it concisely.

*REBECA*
Yeah, no problem.

*STEPHEN*
So, my grandpa was born on a farm. The farm was outside of the city of Wuhan in Hubei province, which is in central China. There’s a saying that people from Wuhan are not quitters and my grandpa, as you’ll learn from the story, is no exception. You asked me what was life like over there. Life on the farm was extremely hard. When my grandpa was born in 1916, Central China was facing a drought, and famine and disease were very common. My grandpa was the fifth child in his family but he was the first to survive passed the age of ten.

*TIM*

I think the other siblings had passed away due to dysentery.

*STEPHEN*
My grandpa, as I said, he was a survivor there on the farm. Not only that, he was exceptionally strong. So he became very useful to his father on the farm. So he’d wake up very early in the morning to till the fields, he would water the crops, and he would tend to the water buffalo. He loved the water buffalo. The question there is: what are some of his memories from that home? It was the water buffalo [laughs] and he would sing to the water buffalo. There’s a joke that he was so good at handling the water buffalo that he could sing or tell them to pee on command [laughs]. Is that right, Tim?

*TIM*
Yeah, to irrigate the fields [laughs].

*STEPHEN*
At the age of twelve my grandpa left the farm to seek an education in the city. He did that with the encouragement of his mother but he did that against the will of his own father who really wanted him to stay on the farm. The night before my grandpa had left the farm, his mom gave him all the possessions my grandpa left with which was: three coins, a sturdy bamboo pole which has some significance, and she gave him a hug. The bamboo pole is significant becausea bamboo pole, I think, was about six feet tall or so?

*TIM*
Mhm.

*STEPHEN*

That signified the height of a fully grown man. My grandpa was twelve years old when he received that pole. So it kind of gave him a benchmark to grow up to, but also he had his adulthood come to him quite early because he had to leave when he was twelve. What were my grandpa’s reasons for leaving? What were his hopes and dreams at the time? My grandfather’s mother saw no future for my grandpa at the farm. She wanted him to make something of himself and of the family. Grandpa also, himself, dreamed of a world that was larger than his own. He dreamed of distant lands. He dreamed of opportunities far away. My grandpa deeply missed his mom and his younger siblings. He missed the water buffalo. He missed singing to them. Decades later my grandpa, one day, in Southeast Asia, I believe Malaysia, he was speaking at an industry conference. My grandpa choked up when he was giving his speech. He found out later that day that his mother had died on that day. So my grandpa would see his mother not very often since he had left the home but that emotional bond was always there. The next section, pathways, kind of talks about his life after the farm. So, honouring his mom’s wishes, my grandpa went to town near Wuhan and he sought an education at the local school. Because enrolment in the school was not free, my grandpa had to hold a number of odd jobs to pay for school. So these odd jobs included using that bamboo stick to carry water for six households. He helped travelers who were traveling along the Yangzi River, and they needed help with their luggage. That’s actually where my grandpa learned some of his English. He washed choir robes at a local church and he was also a custodian and janitor at the very school that he attended.

[01:34:34]

Grandpa was a very hard worker. He would work very hard in school. He was able to earn scholarships because he was at the top of his class. With whatever money he saved, he always felt compelled to give it back or remit it back to his parents back home. He was very frugal but quite smart. Candles were very expensive back then. If he had to study he would study under street lights. It was in that town that my grandpa met my grandma. My grandma was singing in the choir of the church where my grandpa was washing their choir robes. So grandma started picking up on the fact that grandpa had a crush on her because her choir robes always turned out to be the most sparkly white [laughs]. So they became friends and then became lover and they would marry after the war. My grandpa was not only just a good student because he needed to get a scholarship, but he was also exceptional at athletics mostly due, in part, because of his work discipline from the farm but also because he got strong legs from working in the farm. He won a number of track and field medals. He broke China’s 10,000 meter record and there was talk that he was going to be China’s favourite in the upcoming 1940 Olympic games but there were no 1940 Olympics. When Japan invaded China, my grandpa quit school and he enlisted in the army. When the commander of the Chinese forces at the time, Chiang Kai-Shek, he predicted that China wouldn’t win the war against Japan unless it had air power but China had no airplanes. But because my grandpa excelled when he was in the army, and also because he could speak some English, he was promoted to go join the air force and, as part of that, he was sent to the United States to train as a pilot with the responsibility of actually flying, leading a delegation to fly a bunch of planes, bombers, back to China for them to use. By the way, Grace said that they’re about to leave. So my grandpa ended up having another mini-migration so he ended up going to Arizona during the war where he trained as a pilot. From there, when he was ready and I have his U.S. air force certificate in my office hanging there right now, but my grandpa ended up making, if you can believe this, he was twenty-six years old. I don’t know how old you are, Rebeca, but, like, he was twenty-six, twenty-seven years old when he had to fly solo from Tennessee, to Newfoundland, to England, to Africa, to the Middle East, to India, then to where China’s wartime capital was in the Himalayas.

*TIM*

The Pacific Ocean was off limits.

*STEPHEN*

The Pacific Ocean was a no-go with Pearl Harbour and the Japanese controlling the Pacific. He had to go the other way, the long way to Asia from the States delivering a bomber to the Chinese. He did this when he was twenty-six back when there was no iPhone. I guess they had very limited radar but unbelievable that he could do that but once he was back in China, re-united with his sweetheart in the wartime capital, my grandma was there attending university, my grandpa ended up being put to work right away. So he flew a number of bombing missions in China and over Tokyo. He was a very good pilot. He ended up getting shot down at one point but he parachuted out. If he had not pulled that parachute, Tim and I wouldn’t be here to speak to you. He was so good, a decorated pilot, that it ended up that the president of China at the time, Chiang Kai-Shek, made him his personal pilot during the end of the war. That was pretty cool. Japan ended up surrendering. China ended up falling into civil war. Ultimately, the communists, as we know, won and with that the nationalist force lead by president Chiang Kai-Shek were defeated and they ended up going to Taiwan. My grandpa decided he wanted to stay in China because, one, that was his homeland, that was the homeland he fought to protect and he just hoped he would be able to return to civilian life and he would return to it undetected just so he could raise his young family. His past connections with the former regime caught up to him. People started learning that, you know, suspecting that he might have been the personal pilot for the previous president and was in the military. So with that, my grandpa and my grandma and, at the time, my two year old father pretty much packed up all their stuff and fled as refugees to the nearest British colony which was Hong Kong.

[01:39:37]

So in Hong Kong my grandpa pretty much started out with nothing again. He had to work hard. One advantage that he had was that now he was fluent in English having spent time in the United States. Again, he just had an amazing work ethic. He was also someone who was a people person, just the most gregarious guy. Tim and I, when we were growing up with my grandpa, we would go to Chinese restaurants here with him and I just couldn’t believe it. In every Chinese restaurant he would just go to other tables and start talking with other people. This was just, kind of, how extroverted my grandpa was. He loved people.

*TIM*
Before the no-smoking-ban in Richmond, he would actually go to other tables and tell them, “Do not smoke. It’s not good for your health.” This was a daily occurrence [laughs].

*STEPHEN*
Yeah, maybe he was behind the ban. I’m quite proud of my grandpa when he was in Hong Kong he had a young family there but he worked his way up. He joined an insurance company there and worked it as a clerk but was so good at selling insurance that he ended up becoming the vice president of this company AIA (American Insurance Group).

*TIM*
AIG now but AIA before.

*STEPHEN*
Yeah, and so part of that was he was so good at his job that they would fly him out to industry conferences to speak about sales. You asked a question here about how he ended up in Canada. In the ‘60s in Hong Kong the political climate was quite unstable. So my grandpa was looking to move his family elsewhere. I told you my grandpa is a pretty extroverted guy, so one day on his commute to work in Hong Kong he saw there was a hitchhiker who was stranded on the side of the road. My grandpa, obviously, was like “Come into the car. Let me drive you to where you need to go.” It turned out that that man who was stranded was the Canadian consular general. With that, in 1968 my grandpa and his family moved to British Columbia. You asked here: “Why Richmond?” My grandpa moved to Richmond in 1972. My grandpa thought Richmond would be a great place to raise his family and his new employer, which was Mutual Life of Canada, now Sun Life Canada, had its office in Richmond. You asked: “What was it like to arrive in Richmond? What was his first impressions? What surprised him?” To my grandpa, Richmond was the ideal place to raise a family. He thought Richmond had a friendly community. I remember . . . Keep in mind at this time Richmond was mostly farmland, dikes, and ditches. Where Lansdowne was there was a horse race track. So, like, you know, it started to get developed but my grandpa loved the combination of farmland and rivers. I think he was happy to have his family raised here. He was happy to have his kids, who are now adults, go on to raise their kids here, too. He was an active guy, as you know, so even in his 60s and 70s grandpa loved how his first house in Richmond had a backyard pool and with that his family, he could swim, and his grandchildren could swim in there. He also took full part in community life. He swam every day at Minoru pool, ran every day on Minoru track. He was someone who, you know, having seen, kind of, education, the experience he had as a kid having to pay for school he started giving out scholarships to students. He had hobbies. We said that he was an active coin collector. He kept in touch with some of his friends from the war. He was also a local favourite of the staff at BC’s first ever McDonald’s which was the McDonald’s on Grand Falls and Number Three Road. I didn’t know that was BC’s first McDonald’s but that’s why there’s such a big arch there and why they will never tear it down. He would always visit that McDonald’s even to his very late years before he died and would always befriend the staff there, get his McCafe.

*TIM*
And give red envelopes to them on Chinese New Year.

*STEPHEN*
It’s a very nice gesture, yeah. He’s very active in the lives of his thirteen grandchildren. I kind of shared about how he knew our birthdays and gave us a coin.

*TIM*
He also knew our heights and our weights to the sugaring of one cousin who’s a little bit bigger.

*STEPHEN*
Yeah [laughs]. Even she misses him. My fondest memories of grandpa was him driving me to basketball practice in the mornings at 6 A.M. In the car he would tell me all the same stories that I’m telling you right now. “What were some benefits and challenges for grandpa?” In the late 1990s during a particularly cold winter, I know this winter was really hard, like, people would keep talking about “Oh, the last time this happened was, like, in 1998 or something.” So I think that’s how my grandpa slipped on a sheet of black ice and he ended up breaking his hip. So a lot of people thought my grandpa wouldn’t fully recover from that fall but, as I said, my grandpa was no quitter. After surgery, he had surgery right?

*TIM*
Mhm.

[01:44:39]

*STEPHEN*Yeah, so he would keep waking up early in the morning and just tell himself “If I could get out of bed today I could live one more day.” So he would do that and then soon it would be “If I could walk to the track today, I could live another day.” That soon became “If I could do a lap around the track, if I could do multiple laps” and soon he was fully recovered. Just as he was recovered, there was some biker on Minoru track who’s like biking on the track.

*TIM*
Minoru Park.

*STEPHEN*
Oh, Minoru Park, and ran right into my grandpa and so he fell again and broke his hip again.

*TIM*
Yeah, the other side I think.

*STEPHEN*
Oh, the other side this time. My goodness. Again, he was no quitter so he repeated the same regimen until he got better again. So I always had great admiration of that in his 80s. Even if he needed the assistance of a cane he would still go to the track and walk around or go to the pool to swim. “How has live changed and evolved over the years?” Grandpa retired in 1994, in part because he refused to learn how to use a computer. His employer wanted him to do it. He was like “No, my way is to be a traditional salesman.” His grandkids ended up growing up, many of us moved away, the community changed around him. Once very active and involved in the life of his family and community, my grandpa’s health began to decline and his memories started fading. By the late 2000s my grandpa had forgotten most of his own story. My grandpa moved to an assisted living facility in Vancouver. Is that the right way to call it? Or like a hospice or . . .

*TIM*
No, it’s a . . . Actually, yeah, assisted living hospital.

*STEPHEN*
Assisted living hospital, Holy Family, to be with grandma whose health, herself, was deteriorating and needed constant care and attention. I remember the image when I first saw my grandpa in Holy Family, that hospice.

*TIM*
Hospital.

*STEPHEN*
Hospital. Sorry, there’s a big difference. He was the only guy there who was standing. I think every other patient or resident there was in a wheelchair. I think that just showed how much he loved grandma. He was no longer near Minoru track or, you know, Minoru pool. He just did it because he wanted to be close to grandma and grandma needed care. Somehow, I think over time, that place kind of got to him. Soon he would find himself in a wheelchair. My grandpa had always wished he could live to 100. Given the life story you heard so far, given his stamina, we all thought that he could live to 100 but his health continued to decline. When my grandma ended up passing away in 2010, my grandpa said, “You know what, I’m ready to go with her.” So sixty-three days after my grandma passed away and, by this point my grandpa and my grandma were married for sixty-three years, my grandpa ended up joining my grandma. So my grandpa died at the age of ninety-four. So, um, the last paragraph I have here is “A decade ago my brother asked my grandpa what was the most important lesson he learned from his life and grandpa said, “Don’t be afraid of hardship and adversity. That’s a golden opportunity for developing character. There’s no secret to success except to work hard, set goals, stay focused, and have faith in God, and when you’ve made it remember to give thanks and help others in need.””

*TIM*
And so, with that story Stephen and I are very happy to dedicate our coin, which was chosen at the very end as the winning design for Canada’s next tooney to celebrate Canada’s 150th birthday, we’d like to dedicate our coin to our grandfather, Philip Hsia.

*STEPHEN*
We’re very grateful to this project and to you, Rebeca, for, you know, sharing his story. I know it’s a volume of material here but very much the story you heard about our lives, yeah, I guess it pales in comparison to the one that my grandpa had. Also, it wouldn’t have even been possible had my grandpa not made all those decisions in his life to leave home, to go through these migrations, all for the sake of having a better life for his family, better than the one that he had on that farm, and having to scrape out on his own in that town. I’m very glad that my grandparents are buried in the lower mainland, that they made this their final resting place, they truly were able to call this home. They loved it here.

[01:49:16]

*REBECA*
Thank you so much for sharing the story of your grandpa but also your own lives and the connection between the two. If I could follow, maybe, perhaps, some selfish curiosities of the story of your grandfather I think one thing that’s often moving and also a good learning opportunity for people listening to life stories is to hear about that first bit of time settling in Canada. So what it was like to first come to Canada which, for many people, was an entirely different place, an entirely different context. So if there are any challenges there’s, again, the idea of surprise or first impressions. Were there any stories that he ever shared with you or that were passed down in your family that you can remember?

*STEPHEN*
Tim?

*TIM*

I don’t know if this answers your question directly but, I think, this might be a common thing with veterans but my grandpa, whenever he drove a car, everyone had to be really quiet. He controlled the car as if he was flying a plane. Now, this is one story I remember. I don’t know if it answers your question but adjusting from a bomber to a Volvo, I think, was a little different for him. I remember he was driving us around Richmond and we were all in the back of the car and I think he cut off a police officer. So the lights came on and, you know, he pulled over to the side. The police officer said “Hey, did you know that you cut me off too close there?” My grandfather, with his flying tigers cap, with his World War Two pins on it, told his story to the police officer. I think after that the police officer left [laughs] without any warning or ticket or anything like that. I think grandpa, when coming over to Canada, still actually brought with him his, I guess, his sense of doing things properly, you know, whether it’s in the military doing things with honesty in his work, and his work ethic, even if life was a little different because now he was driving a little, maybe driving his Volvo like a plane at times [laughs]. I think for him these were . . . He brought his stories with him and I think no matter where he was he loved sharing his stories with other people. In terms of surprise, I don’t know if grandpa was surprised. If I think about it, I feel like he felt very comfortable because the story of his life is running away, running away, constantly being forced out from somewhere whether it’s from a farm, to a school, to Hong Kong, and after the communists took over, moving the family to Richmond. So he adapted. I don’t think you . . . I don’t think grandpa would say that he felt surprised but I was surprised after he got away from that ticket [laughs].

*STEPHEN*
Yeah, I’d say he got out of his comfort zone pretty early in his life. Displacement was a constant theme in his life. He was so used to shocks both leaving home at twelve and having to fly around the world in a time when very few people had the luxury to, right? He had to. Imagine having to fly from Newfoundland all the way to China, and every pit stop, like this invention that no one’s really been in before, a plane, and having to be a refugee going to Hong Kong after the war. I think a lot of that gave him strong muscles, gave him new muscles. He had thicker skin. I like the fact that, even from an early age he always was a people person because that’s what he needed to survive. He needed odd jobs to do and through that he learned English, he learned more English in his military training in America. When he was in Hong Kong he learned more English because it was a British colony. So a lot of that language really helped as he moved to North America because, I understand a lot of the other people in this project or a number of them have that barrier. I remember my grandpa never really having a thick accent or anything because he was so used to speaking English and that ended up becoming his passport to being involved with the community here in Richmond and taking advantage of, you know, everything this community has to offer. Yeah, displacement was a constant theme in his life but I think his happiest displacement was to come to Richmond.

[01:54:35]

*REBECA*

That’s wonderful. You have a really, I think, vivid picture of your grandfather and I thank you for that. I suppose the best way to close the interview would be, um, visiting where your own hopes and dreams are moving forward and wrapping it up with some reflection on what we’ve talked about today. So, Timothy, it looks like you have a wheel turning.

*TIM*
Yeah, um, my hopes and dreams are to, well, from a personal and professional point of view, as a family physician I want to serve my community just the way that my father served his community, especially with an emphasis on new Canadians and new immigrants just like when my grandfather came over. I think in family medicine there’s a lot of talking and a lot of getting to know peoples’ stories. For me, that’s the joy of the profession. I hope to continue to be a empathetic and a joyful family physician, not being tired, jaded or cynical by the job. I’m more than just a family physician. I have other passions. I have other joys as well. One thing in particular is my sense of creativity. So I do want to continue with my passions in the arts. I would love to play the cello. That’s one of my goals for 2017. I’d like to play more music with my siblings and maybe collaborate on more art projects or designs or even publications with my brother. At the same time, I’m happy to call Richmond, Vancouver, home after leaving home for ten years from 2002 to 2012. I’d like to make an impact on this community as well and even though I was encouraged at Princeton to really make a big difference in this world I know that the way that I interpret that is to make a world of difference to individuals around you. That’s a good starting point. I hope to do that with my community in Vancouver, with my church community as well. I currently attend Westside Church in downtown which has been a very amazing place to learn and grow my faith as well. I’m excited that Stephen, my brother, is getting married this year, 2017, a big milestone for our family. Yeah, I’m excited to see my own siblings have their own families and how we’ll be role models influencing and encouraging, making memories of our own with our respective families. I think at the end of the day I do take to heart what, Stephen actually quoted my grandfather earlier when we asked him what was the secret to success, is there a secret behind all of this? A lot of it is actually to give thanks to God and also give back to others because we’ve been given so much. So that’s, kind of, my hopes and dreams for the future. It’s exciting because it’s just beginning.

*REBECA*
Thank you. Stephen?

*STEPHEN*

From our stories you can see that a lot of people have given to us and I think both Tim and I wanted to just be able to give back. A lot of people have invested in us. We’d like to invest in others in the community, not just our own children one day, God willing, but the next generation.

[01:59:06]

So places shape us and that’s a lot about what this project is about. For me, a lot of places I’ve been to, even Richmond and places I’ve been to since then, have shaped me to want to come back here. I do, kind of, echo what I said at the end about wanting more of my friends who have had migrations from Richmond or from Vancouver to look back at the place they had grown up in, the place where they breathed the air and ran the fields, you know, maybe eaten our produce and grew up here. It’s a part of them and I want to invite them to be part of the solution here. It’s not a perfect city. Every city has problems. That’s one thing you learn, is everyone complains about their city but I would like more people to be more active in their communities even if it’s in a small way, even if it’s just in the way you drive, or in the way you say hello to a neighbour. It starts on a small scale but I hope to really be able to influence positive change that way, surely but slowly. I’m worried about this community. I’m worried about whether it will continue to be a good place to raise a family and to start a business. I’m worried about the language divides that we may see, specifically in the city. Language as you can see in my grandpa’s story was his passport to not only get a living or a career but also without learning English my grandpa and his cohort weren’t able to deliver bombers to go end up saving China, for instance. So I would love us to just have that sense of community again and neighbourliness. I think that starts with understanding everyone’s backgrounds and this is a great project to that end. So, that’s my hopes and dreams for this city and my hope and dream, too. I see my own role in that not only as just, kind of, the little things I do every day but also through art and through public art. I find you see a lot of posts on Facebook, a lot of tweets, but there’s something about a good piece of art that makes people think and challenge. It’s a thousand words right there but it’s a lasting image and it gets me really excited that after this wedding I’ll get to devote more time to, kind of, thinking through opinion art or through other mediums: how can we get this message across? How can we inspire people to love the communities they love? How can we inspire people to change it? So that’s my mission.

*REBECA*
Wonderful. I’ll just ask if there’s anything else that you’d like to add that I haven’t asked or haven’t, you know, followed from the stories that you’ve told me?

*STEPHEN*

Oh, we just want to say thank you, for your time. I can’t believe you did eleven others of these interviews but you’re a very patient listener, a very good listener, and, also, the way you shepherded us and made us feel very at ease to share who we are. I feel very happy.

*REBECA*
Oh, thank you. Thank you so much.

*TIM*
No, thank you very much. Actually, this is our first time maybe doing something like this and it makes us really reflective on the rich stories that we’re surrounded by. So, for me, it’s very, it’s actually very emotional to hear the stories. So, thank you.

*REBECA*
Okay, well, thank you so much and I’ll turn the recorder off. I’m sure you guys are getting hungry [laughs].

*STEPHEN*
I’m sure you are, too [laughs].

END OF TAPE PART ONE OF ONE

[02:02:41]

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)