

## Tung Chan

Asked to tell the most legendary story in his life, Tung Chan smiles and says the real legend has yet to happen. He explains that in his current post as the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, he hopes to create a legend of all legends. In the almost forty years since Tung immigrated to Canada, he has always tried to be genuine, generous and be excellent in everything that he does, no matter which sector he is working in, be it civic, cultural, business or educational. With his vast knowledge and years of experience, he creates one legendary story after another.

Three years ago, Tung retired from the Chief Executive Officer position of S.U.C.C.E.S.S, one of the largest social services agencies in British Columbia. But there is no rest for Tung in his retirement. Soon he was given a very important task, to be the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, located in Halifax, once the entry point of over one million immigrants. It used to house historical artifacts of only European immigrants to Canada, but since it became a national museum in November 2010, its mandate has been expanded to include immigrants from the rest of the world, including Asian immigrants. In Tung's eyes, this meaningful work is the basis for another legend in the making.

In 2010, Tung was appointed as an Honorary Captain of the Royal Canadian Navy, becoming the first Canadian of Chinese heritage to be given that honour in the Navy's 100 year history. His job is like that of a goodwill ambassador, to improve relations between the Navy and the community, and strengthen recruitment among new immigrants. Since he took on this job, Tung has arranged groups of Chinese-Canadian community leaders to tour navy ships, a historical first as a 'community activity'.

I take each task very seriously and I always try my utmost to do the best I can.

Tung lists a few of his 'firsts' matter-of-factly: first Vancouver councillor who was born and educated in Hong Kong (elected to the City of Vancouver Council in 1990), first Chinese-Canadian to be appointed to the position of Vice President at the TD Bank Financial Group, the inaugural Board Chair for E-Comm Emergency Communications, an integrated emergency communication services organization for police, fire and ambulance services for the Lower Mainland of BC. He helped to establish the Centennial Toastmasters Club, the first toastmasters club focusing on Chinese-Canadians. In addition, in 1976, he and other young Chinese-Canadians, created the first and only English language radio program (Pender Guy) in Canada for and by Chinese-Canadians at the CFRO 102.7 FM radio station.

How can Tung be the first in so many things, and still be influential with business, civic, cultural and educational leaders alike, as well as the media and the community? Tung answers with his beliefs in A.G.E. (Authentic, Generous, Excellent). This is what he has learned throughout his life and what he pursues constantly.

Born in a small village in Sai Kung, an area in the New Territories of Hong Kong, where his father was the principal of a small elementary school in the village, Tung learned from his father that people needed to help each other. As a youth, he volunteered to write letters for other villagers. After graduating from high school, Tung went to Holland to work as a waiter to help supplement his father's income for the family. He returned to Hong Kong after three years, having made and saved a tidy sum of money. At that time, the

Hong Kong stock market was red hot, and Tung joined a securities firm at the Kowloon Stocks Exchange. He made a small fortune almost instantly, but lost all of it soon after when the market crashed overnight. Just at the time when he felt discouraged, a new door opened to him. He had applied to immigrate to Canada while working in Holland, and the application was now approved. So at the age of 22 in 1974, Tung landed in Canada to start anew. In the beginning, he waited tables at the Terminal City Club in downtown Vancouver in order to pay for tuition fees for his Bachelor's degree in sociology at the University of British Columbia.

The reason he chose social studies was because of his interest in the well being of the society as a whole. A few months after he arrived in Vancouver, he started volunteering at S.U.C.C.E.S.S, which had just been established the year before. He took seniors to visit other homebound seniors. This launched a lifetime of volunteer work for Tung, who gives his spare time freely to over forty different organizations and community groups. His understanding of the broader Canadian society and Chinese-Canadian community deepened, propelling him into a public and community career, culminating in 2006 when he became the CEO of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. full-time.

In this position, Tung focused his energy on making the organization more multicultural, changing it from a Chinese-Canadian community organization to a Canadian community organization with Chinese characteristics. This is because after many years of experience immersed in Canadian society, he deeply believes that becoming fully Canadian should be the target of our growth as a community. In a country that values equality, if all immigrants develop a stronger sense of belonging, then immigrants will not view others as 'mainstream' and themselves as marginalized communities.

Tung has his own views for the word 'mainstream', [If forced to differentiate between the Chinese-Canadian community and the broader community], I would rather refer to people as Chinese heritage or non Chinese heritage, because all of us are a part of the 'mainstream'. If every Chinese immigrant ceases to think of themselves merely as a guest in Canada, but to develop a sense of belonging, they can integrate into society faster. We need to recognize that once we have immigrated, we are no longer just Chinese persons, but Canadians of Chinese descent.

Tung is keen to do new things, and he wants to influence others through supporting community service organizations. He overcomes obstacles with a strong desire to seek new ventures in life.

When he first arrived in Canada, he felt that he did not have enough education and his English was inadequate, so he resolved to improve his English. He also felt he needed to understand local culture more. For four years he went to work in Kelowna, where there were very few Chinese. Initially his English was so poor that he would not only be lost in the jokes bandied around him; but also created a few jokes on himself. Determined to improve his English, he persisted in listening to and repeating after the daily news broadcaster for quite a number of years. He also got involved in many community activities to understand every level of Canadian society, slowly getting to the point that he feels comfortable in engaging in small talk with almost anyone. Before he ran for the post of city councillor, he even spent two thousand dollars to learn to reduce his Chinese accent.

Tung says that he was not naturally gregarious. In high school, he was known to be timid and shy. Upon graduation, his good friend wrote in the yearbook, Tung Chan not only does he not move; he does not

even open his mouth much, a play on his Chinese name Tung, which means to move. His eloquence has come from training through much hard work.

In 1990, Tung temporarily left his job as a TD Bank branch manager to run for a position on the city council, which he won handily. I thought I would set an example, that if someone like me who had limited English skills coming from a poor background could win an election, then everyone can do it and should do it. Tung was councillor until 1993 when he decided not to seek re-election so that he could spend more time with his family. During his term as city councillor, he took turns with other councillors to be Deputy Mayor. He was focused on civic and community affairs. I will raise my hand if no one wants to take on a challenge. I will keep my hand down if others want to do it. - This is a principle that governs how he lives his life and how he makes his decisions.

Talking about his principles, he quotes his father who handed him a page of aphorisms on the eve of his departure for Canada, Don't talk about others shortcomings. Don't boast about your own strengths..... Persevere in everything you do. Let others know you through your actions. His father also taught him to be a person round on the outside and square on the inside. In other words, stay true to your principles but be suave always. He remembers those words to this day.

Tung's successes have been well recognized. In 2002 he was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Award and in 2012 he was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award. This July he was conferred an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from University Canada West.

Following retirement Tung enjoys reading, swimming and travelling in his leisure time, taking 108 days on a world cruise several years ago. But serving the community has always been Tung's passion and lifestyle. These days, he would fly to the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 regularly for meetings. Aside from that he is also on the boards of the Vancouver Foundation, and the Rick Hansen Institute.

He has set an objective for himself: to bring about the integration of different cultural communities at an institutional level, allowing different cultural groups to flourish together. One of his tasks is to promote education for new immigrants through the Canadian Foundation of Economic Education.

On the other hand, he hopes the local media will report more of the positive aspects of the Chinese-Canadian community. He was frequently asked by the Chinese and English language media to comment on social, multicultural and immigration related issues. He used to contribute regularly to the Op-ed page of the Vancouver Sun and has a blog page there, leveraging the news media effectively to further his objectives.

For the next generation of Chinese-Canadians, he has these words, Don't differentiate between Chinese and non-Chinese. Never think Us versus Them. Don't use ethnic culture or background as a dividing line. As a Canadian, you have to live and think like a Canadian.

He also suggests young people find a mentor, stay positive, never stop learning and try to be genuine, generous and reach for a standard of excellence in everything they do. In other words, A.G.E. (Authentic, Generous, Excellent) .

With these ideals and objectives and so much to offer, how can Tung Chan stop getting involved? Indeed, he will only stop when the world is perfect.