

## **They Can't See the Forest for the Lack of Trees: A Problem of Cultural Diversity**

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*Canadian-Asian relations have enjoyed a period of relative harmony that is now being disturbed by the influx of new Asian immigrants. At the heart of this controversy is the clearing of old trees in established neighborhoods and the inability of Canadians and Chinese to "see the forest for the trees." Cooperation has been noticeably absent in the tree disputes. The objective of this case is to increase awareness and understanding of the role of cultural diversity in this conflict and stimulate thought about solutions for these types of issues emerging from the concept that "no man is an island".*

*Keywords: value conflicts; cultural differences; new age versus tradition; property rights versus community harmony*

### **INTRODUCTION**

After nearly a century of racism in British Columbia, the Chinese finally gained the right to vote and began to witness the repeal of other discriminatory laws and practices. According to Yee (1988), the root of this anti-Chinese legislation lay in the belief that the Chinese drove out white labor and pushed down wages because they worked at lower rates. For almost three decades, there has been a perception of relative harmony that is now disturbed by the influx of Asian immigrants, and more specifically, the Chinese from Hong Kong. Unlike the immigrants of a century ago who came from China's Guangdong province seeking 'Gold Mountain,' these Chinese newcomers are educated and bring their own mountains of gold.

Canada, and especially British Columbia actively solicit Asian trade and investment. Canada's commercial interests in Hong Kong, alone, are extensive and range from banking, accounting, legal, engineering, information technology services and retail and general trading. In 2011, Canada exported C\$3 billion in goods in base metals, machinery and agri-food to Hong Kong, making Hong Kong the Canada's 10th largest export destination for goods. Hong Kong companies have cumulative investments in Canada of \$6 billion. In addition to having a strong domestic market, Hong Kong also remains an important door to the Greater China market because sales in Hong Kong are also used to showcase Canadian products and technologies to buyers in China. Hong Kong is a logical starting point for Canadian firms interested in getting a foothold in Asia. There are about 160 Canadian companies based

here, and a third of these use Hong Kong as their regional headquarters (Canada–Hong Kong Relations, 2011).

Yet given this level of activity, British Columbians seem surprised by the results of this business relationship and their unpreparedness gives way to tensions that surface with increasing frequency. Incidents that would ordinarily be viewed as a matter between neighbors, emerge in news headlines and call for legal intervention. In particular, the clearing of old trees in established neighborhoods to erect huge dwellings termed “monster houses,” is at the heart of the controversy.

## THE ISSUE

“The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity... and some scarce see nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself (William Blake, 1789).”

“You can't see the forest for the trees” is an idiom used to describe a situation where people are so focused on the details of a problem that they don't understand the whole issue (Dictionary.com, 2019). In this case, a better idiom might be, “You can't see the forest for the downed trees.” But the meaning is the same: people living in a common environment can't see the forest for the trees because they are each fixated on their different cultural values and personal goals (i.e. "trees") that they lose sight of the overall issues concerning their common environment (i.e. "the forest").”

The well-known poem “No Man Is an Island” written by John Donne in 1624 (John Donne, 1999) advances the idea that all persons are connected to each other by common goals and obligations. The same can be said for real property: “No land exists in isolation.” If one owns land, one must deal with all the people that surround the land and who own land that gives access to one's land. This simple fact has led to a thousand years of common law followed by statutory law as to the rights and obligations of property owners whose lands abut (Stimmel, Stimmel & Smith, 2019).

The issue of tree removal from private property is not a new topic in Canada. The West Vancouver District has had ongoing dialogue between those residents who have lost their scenic views due to the growth of healthy trees and residents who don't want to cut or trim their trees to enhance their neighbors' views. In response, West Vancouver District Council hired an arborist to assess trees and to mediate tree-related disputes between property owners.

In other municipalities where the tree disputes center on the right of private property owners to cut trees on their own property, local bylaws prevail. These tree disputes are usually seen as a racial issue. Brunet (1996) writes that the “blue-blood enclave of Kerrisdale” is the most vocal in voicing their displeasure with the tree-cutting Chinese property owners.

Gadlin (1994) opines that race needs attention in two types of grievances. There are grievances where race is definitely part of the complaint and those where there is no reference at all to race (except perhaps to deny its role) but race speaks “sotto voce (sic)” conveying anger, hostility, and resentment. In the tree disputes, race is indeed speaking in the softer voice of explicit cultural differences and whispering discreetly of tacit cultural beliefs creating misunderstanding and ill will.

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCE PROBLEMS

According to Ross (Gadlin, 1994), culture is “the practices and values common to a population living in a given setting.” A primary difficulty is that people use a positive view of their own culture as the measure of other different cultures. Dubinskas (1992) proposes “the problem is that groups use their own naturalized cultural standards to appraise the actions of the other, and these are not the standards by which the others guide themselves.” He recognizes a mismatch between the interaction of cultural pattern and coherence. In a like manner, Morgan (1989) believes that cultural practices and values can be conceived of as a language replete with differences in pragmatics. He asserts “we live culture exactly as we live language: by 'speaking it' and 'reading it' - in the way we talk, act, spend our time, relate to others, and so

on." He refers to cultural preferences in 1) the language of time, 2) the language of friendships, 3) the language of agreements, 4) the language of space, and 5) the language of things. In order to understand more clearly, the incongruence between what is understood and what is done, we can use Morgan's language model of culture to frame the Chinese perspective of the tree issue and to contrast overall cultural preferences.

### **Chinese Versus North American Cultures**

First, in the language of time, the ancient Chinese concept of 'wu wei' suggests that control is out of human hands. Chu (1991) elaborates, "We should first act in harmony with nature, give our best effort, and then leave the outcome to Tao." This 'wait and see' attitude sits in strong contrast to a North American belief that 'time is money.' The Chinese are content to hang back and let the tree issue evolve. The non-Chinese neighbors not only want action now, they want stiff bylaws to take care of the future also.

Second, when it comes to friendships, the Chinese are more 'collectivists than individualists. They are interested in forming long-term relationships for mutual benefit. Chu (1991) opines "The Chinese keep a mental ledger of the obligations owed to friends and obligations owed them for past favors." As well, the Chinese are bound by ceremony whereas North Americans tend to dispose with preliminaries; often at the expense of the relationship and in favor of getting down to business. For instance, the local citizens go first to the media to publicize the tree disputes in hopes of quick action.

Third, the Chinese have developed their own way of taking care of business and agreements. Chu (1991) explains "unlike Westerners, the Chinese do not like to fight the system. When it becomes a problem for them, they would rather work around it than confront it...the Chinese circumvent authority without defying it." The collectivist nature of the Chinese, may place more weight on informal agreements than formal agreements. In addition, directness is not a sign of strength as it is for North America and is socially unacceptable. The tree disputes have resulted in outright confrontation and a loss of face.

### **Misunderstanding the Chinese Concept of Space**

The language of Chinese space is guided by 'feng shui,' a philosophy of balance in nature. Trees in front of a home can be thought to impede the flow of wealth. However, the Chinese are not indiscriminate in cutting down trees. "Feng shui considers the tree to be an outlet for positive energy from inside the earth's inner core. Without the tree, the earth would lose the ability to receive positive energies essential to overall energy balance and life" (Chen, 1994). If the Chinese are indeed guided by feng shui, it only makes sense that they would choose to leave some trees standing or replant them. Why is it then, some properties are clear cut of trees? Some realtors believe that Vancouver's home market is driven by the Western perceptions of what Asian buyers want. Executive realtor, Susie Tal exhorts "it's more a factor of the vendors trying to cater to what they think the Chinese want than it is of Chinese people actually asking for it" (Montgomery, 1996).

### **Different Chinese and Canadian Values**

The Chinese esteem different things from Westerners. Coleburn, a Penticton author on feng shui writes "North Americans value greenery, whereas the Chinese value mountains and water" (Brunet, 1996). Hence, the Chinese have no tradition of either keeping cities green or other environmental issues. For instance, in Hong Kong itself, space is precious and the harbor is the garbage dump. Coleburn further theorizes that "many of (the Chinese) came here (to Canada) to flee communism, only to be faced with having their activities in their own backyard monitored." However, Vancouver city councilor Maggie Ip calls for a bylaw that "balances the public interest and what we treasure as private property rights" (Douglas, 1996). Thus, the tree disputes are rooted in a culture spanning thousands of years and enveloped in a prevailing air of providence. Long-term reciprocal relationships punctuated by tradition, ceremony, and face-saving as well as a respect for nature not grounded in ecological principles further complicate understanding by outsiders.

## THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN CANADA

The Chinese community is a mosaic in itself. Beside the Hong Kong Chinese, there are the Chinese who have lived in Canada for generations: the ethnic Chinese from Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, and the survivors of the Tiananmen Square Massacre; to name but a few. Each of these cultural lenses of Chinese identity is somewhat different. Consequently, within the Chinese community, dissident perspectives on the tree issue must exist too.

Ignoring the role of cultural differences, Anthony Marr, a Chinese-Canadian himself, and a member of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee opines "It has mostly been Chinese people who have ordered the cutting ... not all people are so disrespectful of a community they have moved into" (Brunet, 1996). Similar sentiments are reported by the *Ming Pao*, a Richmond-based daily newspaper of the Chinese community. According to a poll of ethnic Chinese conducted by the *Ming Pao*, 77 people agreed that Chinese immigrants follow customs that contribute to racial tension and 87 respondents further indicated that Chinese people should adopt local British Columbia customs. An editorial urges "the Chinese should work on habits that annoy locals and that they should try to adopt local ways" (Collins, 1995).

Choi (1995) suggests that competencies in language expectation, cultural windows, business ethics, and negotiations are the means to reconciling cultural differences. Choi's rubric will be used to organize the description of programs initiated by the Canadians of Chinese descent and Canadians of non-Chinese origins to develop cultural competencies.

### Language Expectation

The first category, language expectation, refers not only to the sounds and structures of a language but also to the rules governing when and how a particular language should be used. The *Ming Pao* reports that "the speaking of Cantonese or Mandarin loudly in mixed settings" is perceived as an annoying habit (Collins, 1995). In order to foster the competencies of both Chinese and English speakers, the British Columbia government has launched initiatives in the area of language. The Ministry of Education has expanded the foreign language curriculum to include Mandarin. Bursaries are available to encourage teachers to learn Chinese languages and culture. Also, funds are targeted to provide English as a second language to new immigrants.

Similarly, the Chinese language media have responded to the language needs of the Chinese community. The three Chinese dailies, two Chinese television stations and two Chinese radio stations see their role as beyond merely selling newspapers and air-time. Bula (1997) relates "Chinese reporters and editors emphasize that Chinese media do not help Vancouver Chinese isolate themselves from the rest of the community. On the contrary: They act as a bridge to the new community." Consequently, not only is what the Chinese media report different from that of the English-language media, the perspective differs as well. Furthermore, Bula proclaims "While English-language media have a tendency to focus on the image of wealthy Chinese immigrants taking over the city, Chinese-language media see their readers as a group struggling to overcome language, immigration, financial, and employment problems and sometimes failing."

### Adapting to Cultural Windows

Choi (1995) designates cultural windows as being "opportunities for becoming part of the local environment most effectively." The *Ming Pao* charges that some Chinese distinguish themselves from the local setting by picking their ears and clipping their nail in public, much to the disgust of non-Chinese (Collins, 1995).

On the other hand, traditional family celebrations around Chinese New Year have become huge public and multi-ethnic gatherings acting as a conduit to cultural understanding. Vancouver city councilor, Don Lee notes "big festivals are introducing Chinese culture to the larger community." As well, other agencies expand their mandate to include non-Chinese clients. For example, Angela Kan,

executive director of the Chinese Cultural Center says that the center's own events are "an opportunity to introduce people to Chinese culture" (Clark, 1997).

### **Adhering to Local Business Ethics**

Business ethics are the awareness and appreciation of the social environment and context. According to the Ming Pao (Collins, 1995), a lack of social responsibility forms the basis of complaints around not only the monster homes in bungalow neighborhoods, but extends to poor driving habits and the failure to observe line-ups at stores, too. The assuming of social responsibility by the Chinese has not been highlighted until recently. In the past, their virtues have remained in the background.

Among those bringing social conscience to the foreground is David Lam, the first Chinese lieutenant-governor of British Columbia. Lam has always tithed 10 percent of his income to charity. Hong Kong based newspaper baroness Sally Aw Sian funds the University of British Columbia journalism school to the tune of \$1 million in the name of "goodwill" (\$1 Million, 1996). Now, with some regularity, the Weekend Sun profiles the generosity or the accomplishments of an individual of Chinese ancestry. Gary Ho, a well-known local philanthropist captured the front page of the Westcoast People Section (Stainsby, 1997). Two weeks later, the spot was held by Madam Justice Linda Loo, the first female Chinese-Canadian judge in the British Columbia Supreme Court (Wigod, 1997).

### **Negotiations**

Negotiations describes cooperation to reach mutual positive goals. Cooperation has been noticeably absent in the tree disputes. In the interests of cooperation, significant efforts on the part of both non-Chinese and Chinese have been made. The Multiculturalism and Dispute Resolution Project funded by a number of foundations "undertook the task of increasing awareness and understanding of the role of culture in conflict" (Lund, Morris, & Duryea, 1994).

Likewise, the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS), a service organization targets all Chinese in the Lower Mainland and exists to "foster and promote social awareness and community involvement through civic education, volunteer and membership development and preventive social services, and reflect the needs and issues of the Chinese-Canadians community to individuals, agencies and the public media, and to advocate for positive social changes" (Festival, 1992).

## **CANADIAN CULTURE AND INITIATIVES**

Based on the findings from the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada's 2016 National Opinion Poll (NOP 2016), Canada-China relations remain complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, relative to Canadian attitudes towards other countries in the Asia Pacific, positive feelings towards China are still relatively low. Over the years, one of the main issues that has continued to fuel apprehension amongst Canadians is Chinese investment into Canada. Survey respondents in the 2016 NOP have indicated that Chinese investment is as much an issue of economics as it is a concern over culture. There is a pervasive sense of mistrust amongst Canadians towards investment activities by the Chinese, and 46 per cent of Canadians worry that China's increasing presence in Canada is a threat to the country's values and way of life.

On the other hand, Canadians have begun warming up to Chinese and view them increasingly as an opportunity rather than a threat. Fifty per cent of NOP 2016 survey respondents have indicated that access to more information could help persuade them to support closer co-operation with Chinese. In response to this demand, APF Canada and the Jack Austin Centre for Asia Pacific Business Studies at Simon Fraser University's Beedie School of Business have co-hosted a series of dialogues between seasoned Canadian businesspeople and industry experts with newly immigrated Chinese entrepreneurs to Canada. The aim of these dialogues is to help new immigrants to Canada understand the Canadian business environment and culture, while bridging a gap in communication between new-comers and local communities (NOP 2016).

Jack Austin, an early Canada-China integrator thinks that the biggest difference between the Chinese and North American business systems is cultural. Business in North America is a matter of numbers and objectivity. In Canada, the business environment runs on the logic of making profitable transactions and

trust is built into the system through a robust set of legal, judicial, and accounting institutions. In China, there is no standardized and objective method for dispute settlement built into the Chinese system; trust was traditionally built into the system through personal relationships and notions of reciprocity (Qian, 2016).

Austin argues that differences in culture should no longer be as great a barrier to co-operation between Canadians and Chinese. Today, the Chinese business environment and practices have evolved and the Chinese are using the same business practices that have been keeping Canada's business environment afloat, and rely on the same professional and objective services that are built into the system. The evolution of China's business environment continues with investment into Canada and by the growing community of newly-immigrated Chinese entrepreneurs hoping to succeed in Canada (Qian, 2016).

Nearly half a million immigrants from China came to Canada between 2000 and 2014. Many of these newcomers are economic immigrants, meaning they have the skills, entrepreneurial spirit, and abilities to contribute to the Canadian economy. Given this potential to reinvigorate the Canadian economy, a discussion needs to be had at the public level between local communities and newly-immigrated Chinese-Canadians to facilitate the acceptance and integration of new-comers into the diverse Canadian culture (Qian, 2016).

British Columbians, for example, have established initiatives in the areas of language development, cultural events, social responsibility, and conflict resolution as basic resources to cultural competence. The question remains' as to whether or not these actions will suffice. In the tree disputes, the influence of the cultural competencies in eliciting understanding and cooperation would appear to be minimal.

Bill Rees, director of the School of Regional and Community Planning at the University of British Columbia thinks that "the tree debate is about far more than aesthetic tastes. It is about protecting a sense of place, community tradition and shared values" (Todd, 1996). If Rees is right, cultural conflicts will continue and there may be many more problems in the future.

Gadlln (1994) theorizes that dominant groups "interpret their success as a confirmation of the standards by which their accomplishments have been measured." As such, it seems that the trees do indeed signify something beyond landscaping preferences and their cutting is an affront to the dominant culture.

For example, Andy Koopal was upset when he found a freshly cut meter-wide tree trunk, where a majestic oak that it once supported had stood. "That tree was over 150 years old," he said. "It was a perfect healthy tree. There was no need for it." The tree, likely a sapling when Canada became a country, was one of eight old growth oaks that bordered Koopal's 10 hectares of farmland in Wellandport, Canada. (Benner, 2016).

Gadlln (1994) reminds us "agreement and disagreement, conflict and cooperation are all dependent upon and given meaning by the culture within which they occur." For Canadians, there may be an imperative to define what that dominant culture is, its beliefs, and its practices; for until we know that, we will be just as trees in a forest - some in groves, some appearing different and standing quite apart - seldom viewed collectively as a forest.

## **THE FUTURE**

There is value in being trees in a forest. Chinese seeds have been sown on the winds of hope for a better life. Wee Ching Loh, Marketing Director for Teo Seng Paper Products, muses "those who have made Canada home are the same as the rest of us. They want a job and good livelihood in Canada, a stable and improving lifestyle, and a government with good policies that will help stimulate and improve the economy" (Mulgrew, 1997).

We should not forget that it is the passion that we demonstrate through our small acts which leads us forward. It is a passion reflecting our common culture, those overarching universal beliefs in respect, caring, and procedural fairness that truly holds a country together. Although we cannot see the forest for the trees, it is the trees that hold the forest fast.

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## APPENDIX A

### ADJOINING LANDOWNERS RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS: THE BASICS

“No Man Is an Island” is a well-known saying that seems to advance the thought that all persons are connected to each other by common goals and obligations. The same can be said for real property: “No land exists in isolation.” If one owns land, one must deal with all the people that surround the land and who own land that gives access to one’s land. This simple fact has led to a thousand years of common law followed by statutory law as to the rights and obligations of property owners whose lands abut.

Almost all the states have common themes in their laws as to the rights and obligations of adjoining landowners, most deriving from English common law, and all sharing a basic understanding as to the underlying right of the landowner to enjoy use of the property - within certain “reasonable” limits. The balancing of the reasonable use of property with the right of adjoining owners to reasonably use their own property forms the underlying tension in this area of the law.

In general, adjoining landowners are expected to use their property reasonably without unduly interfering with the rights of the owners of contiguous land. Actions taken by a landowner that appropriate adjoining land or substantially deprive an adjoining owner of the reasonable enjoyment of his or her property is an unlawful use of one’s property.

A landowner’s use of his/her property becomes unreasonable and unlawful if it constitutes an appropriation of the adjoining land and if it deprives the reasonable enjoyment of the adjoining owner of his/her property to a material degree. Note that if the acts of a landowner are within his/her legal rights, the motives that compel him/her to do certain things on his/her own land is immaterial. At the same time, a landowner does not have the right to relieve his/her own property of an adverse condition by causing a similar condition on the land of a neighbor.

The general law of most states is that a landowner is entitled to use his/her property in a manner that maximizes his/her enjoyment. However, the enjoyment must not unreasonably interfere or disturb the rights of adjoining landholders or create a private nuisance.

**Source:** Stimmel, Stimmel & Smith (2019), “Adjoining Landowners Rights and Obligations: The Basics,” Retrieved from <https://www.stimmel-law.com/en/articles/adjoining-landowners-rights-and-obligations-basics>



## APPENDIX B

### CUTTING DOWN A TREE THAT IMPACTS TWO OWNERS' PROPERTIES

A property owner generally has the right to cut all limbs, branches and roots from a tree on the property of his or her neighbor up to the property line of that owner without permission provided that the cutting and/or pruning of the limbs, branches or roots does not harm, damage or destroy the tree. The rationale for this rule in the United States is that a property owner owns all that is on his or her property including matters that enter its space below or above ground within reasonable height and underground considerations. From a practical aspect, it is always best to advise one's neighbor that the limbs, branches, or roots of a tree or shrub that is encroaching from one property to another will be pruned or cut back in order to prevent any misunderstandings or conflicts in the future between the two property owners.

A significant problem arises when there is a tree or shrub whose trunk straddles the property lines of two separate parcels owned by two separate property owners and one property owner does not want the tree removed for some reason, realistic or not. The general consensus of the case law of various states is that one property owner cannot without the consent of the other property owner unilaterally cut down a tree whose trunk straddles the property line between properties that are owned by two separate property owners. The rationale is that each property owner owns up to his or her property line all things upon it and if a tree is growing on the property line of two parcels each property owner owns the part of the whole of the tree on each respective side of the property's boundaries. As such, in such a situation each property owner is a "tenant in common" (common owner of the tree) and cannot do anything to the tree as a whole (excepting branches or roots of the tree that grown entirely on one owner's property) so as to damage the tree.

If one property owner cuts down the tree whose trunk straddles the property line of the neighbor, the neighbor who gave no consent for the tree's removal would be entirely within his or her right to file a legal action for trespass and resulting damages against the property owner who removed the tree.

In the event there is a situation where a tree trunk straddles two separate properties and one property owner wants to remove this tree, it is best to have a signed and dated agreement with the other property owner allowing the tree's removal to prevent any misunderstandings and a possible lawsuit over the tree's removal.

**Source:** Free Advice staff (2019) Retrieved from [https://real-estate-law.freeadvice.com/real-estate-law/real-estate-law/tree\\_problems.htm](https://real-estate-law.freeadvice.com/real-estate-law/real-estate-law/tree_problems.htm)

## APPENDIX C

### CANADIAN CULTURAL VALUES AND BELIEFS

Canadians are known to be some of the most polite, tactful, and peace-loving human beings on the planet. The society greatly values tolerance, humility as well as non-violence. The following are 10 more cultural norms generally observed in Canadian society. These are what they value highly and underlie many of their behaviors. Having an idea of these may help Chinese immigrants have a deeper understanding of Canadians and guide their cultural immersion.

#### **Egalitarianism**

In an egalitarian society, people are deemed equal. This is why the hierarchy is not very evident. Everyone is deserving of equal rights and opportunities in this society regardless of gender, age, race or beliefs.

#### **Informality**

Most Canadians are casual in dress and language. You will notice that there are no strict dress codes in the workplace (unless you work in a bank or law office). Clothes are informal to casual. Generally, first-name basis is the norm. Even seniors (or superiors) are addressed by their first names. However, when meeting a person for the first time, it would be safe to address them by Mr./Mrs./Ms. (or a professional title like Dr.) and their last name. More often than not, they will tell you that you may address them by their first name especially when you become more familiar with one another.

#### **Order and Space**

Canadians value order and preserving their personal space. They also value personal privacy. It will be wise to keep away from discussions of salary, family life, weight, religion and other personal topics. It is also understood that a person has rights over his/her own property, so make sure to ask permission before using anything that is not yours. Disruptive behavior, such as cutting in line, speaking out of turn, shouting, talking loudly are definitely frowned upon. Decorum is part of keeping order and respecting other people's space.

#### **Individualistic Yet Community-oriented**

Canadians are highly aware of their responsibility to the community. Despite being individualistic in terms of personal values (such as guarding personal space), contributing to the betterment of the community is a priority. Canadians get involved by volunteering, donating, and by generally maintaining pride and affinity for their community.

#### **Punctuality**

Being on time is highly valued in Canada. Punctuality is a sign of respect. Everyone is expected to arrive on time or at least 5-10 minutes earlier. Similarly, deadlines are taken seriously. It is equivalent to honoring your commitments. It is also an indication of your integrity.

#### **Respect**

This trait often manifests itself through politeness, punctuality, tolerance and social order. It is considered harassment to talk disparagingly about a person's looks, beliefs, age, gender and status in life. Most of the time, communication is moderately indirect as an effort to be polite and diplomatic. However, Canadians may openly disagree, but tactfully. Do take note that verbal communication is also pragmatic especially in the workplace. You are expected to be clear and direct, not to "beat around the bush" and speak up for yourself.

### **Multiculturalism and Diversity**

Historically, Canada began developing into a strong nation by welcoming immigrants. Today, it continues to value the richness and diversity that various cultures contribute to society. In 1971, Canada became the first country in the world to adapt multiculturalism as an official policy. This affirmed people's rights to maintain their unique cultural identity and promoted cross-cultural understanding and harmony.

### **Political Correctness**

Political correctness is refraining from saying or doing things that exclude, insult or marginalize groups of people. And because Canada is diverse and multicultural, knowing how to be politically correct is essential in order to live harmoniously with everyone.

### **Regionalism**

Most Canadians are said to have an affinity to their province or region, sometimes more than their country. According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, "regional identities were formed after Europeans settled across the continent among distinct First Nations tribes. Today, regionalism is expressed in various provincial identities, in our economy, and in the daily textures of life in different parts of the land." These may be generalizations but it is said that the Atlantic provinces (the Maritimes and Newfoundland and Labrador) are somewhat reserved and old-fashioned; Ontario is business-like and conservative; people in Western Canada (Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan) are seen as open and friendly; British Columbia is unconventional and progressive; Quebec is distinct and autonomous; and the North (Yukon, the Northern Territories and Nunavut) has a strong pioneering spirit.

### **Love for the Environment**

Canadians bear a strong pride in their rich and bountiful resources and have deep-seated respect for the environment. You will see this in how they appreciate nature and revel in camping. They also maintain their parks and open spaces, and adopt and follow environment-friendly policies.

**Sources:** *Cultural Information-Canada* (2018). Canadian Cultures; *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (2018). Regionalism. Retrieved from <https://livelearn.ca/article/about-canada/canadian-cultural-values-and-beliefs/>

## APPENDIX D

### CHINESE CULTURE, VALUES AND BELIEFS

The traditional cultural values that influence the psyche of the Chinese people are harmony, benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, loyalty, and filial piety.

#### **Harmony**

Harmony means “balanced coordination between things” and encompasses rationale, propriety, and compatibility. Rationale refers to acting according to objective laws and truths. Propriety indicates suitability and appropriateness. The value of harmony advocates “harmony but not uniformity.” Modern Chinese society tries to maintain harmony between humankind and nature; between members of different communities; and between mind and body. This is important for social development and as a standard for people’s conduct. The value of harmony insists that non-antagonistic conflicts should be handled through consultation, coordination, and balanced means to achieve equilibrium.

#### **Benevolence**

Benevolence is based in familial ties but extends to friendships and social relationships, producing a full set of values that include justice, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, loyalty, self-discipline, and commitment.

#### **Righteousness**

This refers to justice and correctness. As Confucius said, “the gentleman understands what is moral; the small man understands what is profitable. All people should seek what benefits both the individual and the society.

#### **Courtesy**

This stresses modesty and prudence. It is about respecting laws and preventing misconduct. Confucius particularly stressed courtesy in daily life.

#### **Wisdom**

This requires that one distinguish right from wrong, place capable people in suitable positions, know oneself, have a loving heart to love others, and have wisdom to understand others.

#### **Honesty**

This refers to trustworthiness, integrity, and credibility. “People should obtain their fortunes reasonably and properly through their labor,” said Confucius, “and not through fraudulence and cheating.” He emphasized honesty in daily behavior. Honesty is greatly valued by the Chinese.

#### **Loyalty**

Loyalty also means faithfulness to family and friends.

#### **Filial piety**

Respecting and supporting the family’s senior members are duties of younger generations, and caring for the old and nurturing the young are fundamental family virtues.

**Source:** Zhang Lihua, (2013) China’s Traditional Cultural Values and National Identity. Retrieved from <https://carnegietsinghua.org/2013/11/21/china-s-traditional-cultural-values-and-national-identity-pub-53613>

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What is going on in this case? What are the main issues and why do they exist?
2. What are the primary cultural differences contributing to this controversy?
3. How does the Canadian misunderstanding of the Chinese concept of space, guided by “feng shui,” a philosophy of balance in nature, contribute to the problem? How can it be resolved?
4. How might a better understanding of Canadian cultural values and beliefs (*Appendix C*) help Chinese landowners get along better with their native Canadian neighbors?
5. How might a better understanding of Chinese cultural values and beliefs (*Appendix D*) help Canadian landowners get along better with their new Chinese neighbors?
6. How can the advice provided in *Appendix B: Cutting Down a Tree that Impacts Two Owners' Properties* help resolve this issue?
7. *Appendix A: Adjoining Landowners Rights and Obligations: The Basics*, begins with a quote that, “No land exists in isolation. If one owns land, one must deal with all the people that surround the land and who own land that gives access to one’s land.” How can the thousand years of law as to the rights and obligations of property owners whose lands abut, be applied to aid in this controversy?
8. What are your recommendations for resolving these issues? Be concrete and specific in your explanations.
9. What are your main take-a-ways for establishing productive relationships with immigrants from different cultures with different values and beliefs?