

Richard Charles Lee Chinese Canadian Archives

Vivienne Poy Fonds

Finding Aid

Reference code: CA CHKL F003

Last updated on 2025/05/12

Special Collections, John P. Robarts Library

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<https://discoverarchives.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/vivienne-poy-fonds>

Fonds Level Description

Biographical sketch

Name(s):

Poy, Vivienne

利德蕙

Lee, Vivienne May

Born May 15, 1941 (Hong Kong)

Vivienne Poy was born Vivienne May LEE on May 15, 1941 in Hong Kong, to mother Esther Yewpick WONG and father Richard Charles LEE Ming Chak, an Oxford-educated civil engineer. Her father took over the family's businesses in Hong Kong after his father's (Hysan LEE's) assassination in 1928 in the midst of a dispute with the Macao's government over the opium trade. With Vivienne as an infant, the Lee family fled to mainland China as refugees from the Japanese occupation of the British colony, returning to Hong Kong at the end of the war.

Vivienne completed schooling in Hong Kong and England before moving to Montreal in 1959 to study at McGill University, graduating with an honours Bachelor's degree in history. She later completed Master's and PhD degrees in history at the University of Toronto.

At McGill, she met Neville Poy, a fellow Hong Kong native and family friend who would become a prominent burn specialist and plastic surgeon. (His sister is Adrienne Clarkson, the former broadcaster who served as Canada's 26th Governor General from

	<p>1999 to 2005.) They wed in 1962, settling in Toronto in 1967 where they raised three children together (Ashley, Carter and Justin).</p> <p>An interest in fashion design led Vivienne to complete a diploma in fashion arts (knitwear design) at Seneca College in 1981. That same year, she embarked on a career in fashion design, manufacturing, wholesale and retail, as President of Vivienne Poy Enterprises Ltd. and Designer of Vivienne Poy Mode, until winding down the business in 1995.</p> <p>In 1998, she was named to the Senate by Prime Minister Jean Chretien, sitting with the Liberal caucus while representing Toronto as one of Ontario's 24 senators. Her appointment was significant; she was the first Canadian of Asian descent to be appointed to the Senate of Canada and the first person of Chinese ancestry to serve in the Upper House of the Canadian Parliament. Vivienne served as senator until 2012, working to advance issues related to gender equality, multiculturalism, immigration and human rights. She is best known for her work to have the month of May designated as Asian Heritage Month; sponsor the Famous Five monuments in Calgary and Ottawa commemorating the landmark Persons Case; and lay the groundwork to make the lyrics of Canada's national anthem more inclusive.</p> <p>While a senator, Vivienne completed her doctoral studies at the University of Toronto in 2003, and served as the institution's chancellor from 2003 to 2006. She is an accomplished author and publisher of histories and biographies of her father, the Lee family, and the Poy family, among other titles. In 2013, she published <i>Passage to Promise Land: Voices of Chinese Immigrant Women to Canada</i> which expanded upon her PhD dissertation and its interviews. She has served as a patron and advisor to countless charities and organizations, particularly related to academia, and holds numerous honorary degrees.</p> <p>Since 1980, Vivienne has served as chairman of the family business, Lee Tak Wai Holdings Limited, and president of the Lee Tak Wai Foundation and Calyan Publishing. She is a trustee of the Hong Kong-based Drs. Richard Charles and Esther Yewpick Lee Charitable Foundation, which funds scholarships and university research chairs in Asian studies.</p>
Dates(s) of creation	
	1866-2024
Physical description	
	<p>19 m textual records and other material</p> <p>Includes ca. 200 photographs, 28 sound recordings, and 3 medals</p>

Custodial history	
	Records were donated to University of Toronto Libraries by Vivienne Poy. Records in Series 2 were transferred in 2012 from Senator Poy's office in Ottawa upon her retirement from the Senate. Records in Series 3 and 4 were transferred in 2024 from Poy's long-time office in Scarborough, Ontario.
Scope and content	
	<p>Records in the fonds relate to Vivienne Poy's family, education, writing and publishing, entrepreneurship, business and community leadership, philanthropy, public service and public profile. Record types include business and personal correspondence, speeches, newspaper clippings, awards and photographs, and sound recordings.</p> <p>The fonds consists of four series: Family and education; Political papers; Personal, business and community; and Awards and photographs. Many of Poy's records are functionally and thematically interrelated across the four series and between files.</p>
Accruals	
	No further accrual expected.
Language(s)	
	English, Chinese, French
Restrictions	
	Series 1 contains oral history interviews, some of which contain restrictions.
Conservation Notes	
	<p>Series 1 contains oral history interviews on microcassette that have been digitized and made accessible as digital audio recordings.</p> <p>Textual records include those received by fax transmission which are degrading.</p>
Arrangement Note	
	Donor's arrangement and file names have been maintained by the archivist.
Rights	
	Copyright remains with the holders.

Terms governing use, reproduction, and publication	
	Use of records is restricted to research, private study and educational purposes. Reproduction for exhibition, publication or commercial use requires permission. Please see archivist for details.
Preferred citation	
	<p>Vivienne Poy fonds (CA CHKL F003), Richard Charles Lee Chinese Canadian Archives, University of Toronto Libraries Special Collections, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.</p> <p>Cite items or files according to APA Style and Grammar Guidelines for Archival Documents and Collections: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/archival</p>
Related materials	
	Victoria University Archives, File 2014.08V 3-11 - University of Toronto - Chancellor Vivienne Poy 2003-2006 term, U of T Chancellor's Office
Access points	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee, Richard Charles • Lee, Hysan3
Control area	
	<p>Records in Series 2 were processed previously as the Vivienne Poy Papers; an inventory list is available upon request.</p> <p>Fonds reprocessed and finding aid created by June Chow in January 2025 and updated in May 2025.</p>

Series 1	
Series Title	
	Family and education
Dates(s) of creation	
	1866-2003

Physical description	
	51 cm of textual records 31 photos : colour 28 sound recordings
Scope and content	
	<p>Records in the series relate to Poy's father, Richard Charles Lee, and his father, Hysan Lee, and the Lee family's beginnings in British Hong Kong in the early 1900s. Records relate to Poy's research of her Lee family genealogy; her research, writing and publishing of her father's biographies; and academic research towards her Master's degree and PhD dissertation on various aspects of Chinese Canadian history. Records related to her doctoral studies include oral history interviews Poy conducted of Chinese Canadian immigrant women living in Toronto, Victoria and Vancouver.</p> <p>Records related to Hysan Lee, his company and estate consist of various deeds, indentures, and other legal documents pertaining to his ownership and development of property in Hong Kong. These records are included in reproduction only.</p> <p>Major record types in this series include business correspondence, meeting minutes, newspaper clippings, photographs, and audio recordings.</p>

Series 1 - File list

Reference no.	Level	File name	Date(s) of creation	Remarks
S1-01	File	Hysan Lee		Reproductions only
S1-02	File	Hysan Lee		Reproductions only
S1-03	File	Hysan Lee		Reproductions only
S1-04	File	Hysan Lee		Reproductions only
S1-05	File	Hysan Lee		Reproductions only
S1-06	File	Hysan Lee		Reproductions only
S1-07	File	Hysan Lee		Reproductions only
S1-08	File	Hysan Lee		Reproductions only
S1-09	File	A River Named Lee	1995	
S1-10	File	Dr. R.C. Lee at the Chinese University of Hong Kong		

Reference no.	Level	File name	Date(s) of creation	Remarks
S1-11	File	Lee Gardens Hotel		
S1-12	File	Letters of gratitude: R.C. Lee	1978-1983	
S1-13	File	Lee's family tree		
S1-14	File	Book research		
S1-15	File	Book Two		
S1-16	File	Book research: Japanese		
S1-17	File	McGill University yearbooks	1960-1962	File consists of Old McGill LX (60), Old McGill '61, Old McGill '62
S1-18	File	Master's paper <i>The New Elite: The change in local leadership in Chinese emigration from the village to the Chinese communities overseas during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties</i>		
S1-19	File	Master's thesis <i>Resistance during Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, 1941-1945</i>	2000	
S1-20	File	PhD thesis: Abstract, Acknowledgements, Introduction <i>Calling Canada Home: Canadian Law and Immigrant Chinese Women from South China and Hong Kong, 1860-1990</i>	2003	Thesis available online through University of Toronto (Canada) ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2003. NQ84744.
S1-21	File	PhD thesis: Part One	2003	
S1-22	File	PhD thesis: Part Two	2003	
S1-23	File	PhD thesis: Part Three	2003	
S1-24	File	PhD thesis: Conclusion, Appendices, Bibliography	2003	

Reference no.	Level	File name	Date(s) of creation	Remarks
S1-25	File	PhD thesis: Interview consent forms	2001-2002	Some interviews contain restrictions
S1-26	File	PhD thesis: Interviews	2001-2002	Some interviews contain restrictions
S1-26-01 to S1-26-28	Item(s)	Interviews [Access as digital audio recordings through Discover Archives]	2001-2002	Some interviews are restricted
S1-26-29	Item	Transcripts [Extended notes]	2001-2002	Restricted materials have been removed and confidential materials anonymized.
S1-27	File	PhD thesis: bound and submitted	2003	

Series 2	
Series Title	
	Political papers
Dates(s) of creation	
	1999-2012
Physical description	
	5.2 m of textual records
Scope and content	
	Series consists of speeches, correspondence, subject files and photographs created and maintained by Poy in her role as senator.

Series 3	
Series title	
	Personal, business and community
Dates(s) of creation	
	1985-2024
Physical description	
	13.2 m of textual records
Scope and content	
	Series consists of correspondence, speeches and media coverage created and maintained by Poy in her business and community affairs, and in her personal life.

Series 4	
Series title	
	Awards and photographs
Dates(s) of creation	
	1994-2022 (predominant 1999-2003)
Physical description	
	122 photographs 2 cm of textual records 3 medals
Scope and content	
	Series consists of certificates of awards and recognitions received by Poy. Commemorative photographs are of events attended by Poy in the capacity of senator, chancellor, patron, or other official role.

Arrangement note	
	Records were on framed display in Poy's office in Scarborough, ON, and rehoused in chronological order by the archivist. Files correspond to boxes.

Series 4 - File list

Reference no.	Level	File name	Date(s) of creation	Remarks
S4-01	File	1994-2001	1994-2001	
S4-02	File	2001-2003	2001-2003	
S4-03	File	2003-2022	2003-2022	
S4-04	File	1998-2019	1998-2019	Oversize items