



2025

JIA Foundation Annual Report



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Land Acknowledgement

The JIA Foundation acknowledges that Montréal's Chinatown is located on unceded Indigenous territory, and recognizes the Kanien'kehà:ka Nation as the custodians of the land on which it operates. We also acknowledge that these same colonial legacies continue to displace poor and marginalized people from the land. As Chinatowns have often been a place of belonging for marginalized groups of people, we currently operate from a perspective that aims to facilitate inclusive visions of development which foster growth and revitalization, while combating displacement and gentrification for all, including the unhoused community.

Letter from the Board Chair



As we look back on 2025, what stands out most is the exponential and cumulative nature of the JIA Foundation's growth. Our growth has been shaped by many interconnected efforts, a lot of passion, and a deep collective commitment to continue to shape the future of Montréal's Chinatown.

JIA moved into a new phase of its work. We put into action our refined vision, mission, and areas of work developed in 2024. In a David and Goliath story, Jean-Philippe Riopel bought the 116-118a rue De La Gauchetière O., and we became tenants. From the idea of activating underutilized spaces in Chinatown to actively occupying a building that we share with a long-time community advocate, we connected the intangible and tangible elements of heritage. Establishing a permanent home for Chinatown House has allowed ideas, relationships, and projects to build on one another in ways that were not previously possible. As a result, our vision and mission became clearer, our work more focused, and our impact grew while remaining anchored in community care.

2025 also demonstrated the team's ability to navigate big challenges to continue delivering a strong cultural programming that strengthens our presence in the neighbourhood. In the past year, JIA significantly contributed to the Chinatown Equitable Development Plan 2026–2031 and led the development of the Wing's Conservation Strategy. It also continued to host exceptional exhibitions, events, talks, and more, telling stories about Montréal's Chinatown and its communities, creating dialogue and opportunities for learning. This everyday work makes long-term change possible.

From the Board's perspective, this period of exponential growth has underscored the importance of strong foundations. We elected and onboarded two new board members: Cassandra Ma, a lawyer deeply committed to supporting non-profits, notably the Chinese Canadian National Council, and Howard Tan, an accountant and a veteran of Montréal's Chinatown. I thank them both for being part of this journey.

I want to acknowledge the work of the extraordinary dedication of JIA's team, collaborators, partners, and funders. I have been supporting JIA for more than three years now, and I keep continuing to be amazed by the remarkable work of the team. You are contributing to building history for and by the community.

The challenges of Chinatown remain real and on-going. Yet, 2025 confirmed that determination and collective action adds up, and when there is a challenge, there are opportunities. I look forward to seeing and contributing to the work of the team in 2026, showing that together, we can imagine and build a Chinatown that grows on its own terms.

Sonia Li Trottier



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Letter from the Executive Director

The year 2025 was an amazing year of growth and reflection for the JIA Foundation to learn and innovate in community storytelling, place-keeping, place-making and equitable development practices with our increasing number of collaborators and partners.

Chinatown House has grown as both a permanent community asset and a broader development model. A major foundation of Chinatown House's success has been the creation of Maison Yep-Riopel, through the acquisition of a heritage building by a strong community advocate, Jean-Philippe Riopel, and JIA established as an anchor non-profit tenant. This has provided JIA with a physical home in the Chinatown ecosystem, grounding our programming, exhibitions, and community work in a permanent space.

This past year, the JIA Foundation also participated in the broader Chinatown(s) ecosystem and contributed to the community dialogues and initiatives, both at the local and national levels. JIA was formed in 2022 as a result of broad citizen mobilisation for heritage designation of Montreal's Chinatown to prevent active erasure of this historic neighbourhood that was witnessing loss of community spaces, legacy businesses, and real estate speculation. As these pressing community issues remain, we engaged with many stakeholders to move forward with the Clark Street Reimagined Project and Chinatown Equitable Development Plan, in addition to applying our learnings from Chinatown House and using that space as a catalyst to build a network of community-controlled spaces that support long-term, equitable development and heritage preservation in Chinatown. At the national level, JIA participated in the dialogues at National Trust for

Canada conference and Canadian Community Land Trust Summit to share our experiences and learn from many communities across the country that are experiencing similar issues and developing creative community-driven solutions.

The journey of creating Maison Yep-Riopel has been an important learning experience that enabled us to take a big step forward and launched the Wing's Conservation Strategy. It is an honour to have the trust from the Wing Noodles family and work closely with the Objets de mémoire team that created the Wings Collection to learn about the incredible history behind this made-in-Chinatown, made-in-Montréal and made-in-Quebec success story of a legacy enterprise. It is also heart-warming and humbling to see more than 300 people of diverse backgrounds coming together at the December 5 community fundraising banquet to honour Wing Noodles' legacy and support JIA Foundation's work.

As Erica Avarami said, "preservation policy has always been about social justice, about amplifying stories and squaring history in the public realm through collective action."

Thank you for being part of our collective action in the past few years and we look forward to what the year of Fire Horse will bring in 2026.

Jessica Chen



The JIA Foundation Team

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Board

Cassandra Ma,
Secretary

Jessica Chen,
Executive Director & Board Member

Howard Tan,
Treasure

Sonia li Trottier,
Board Chair

Team

Day's Lee,
Accounting & Book-Keeper

Elizabeth Dresdner,
Researcher (*Planning & Design*)

Estelle Mi,
Researcher (*Land Trust & Legal*)

Isabel Teramura,
Researcher (*Planning*)

Jessica Chen,
Executive Director & Board Liaison

Karen Cho,
Exhibition Team Lead

Lan “Florence” Yee,
Curator & Exhibition Installation

Madeleine Wong,
Researcher (*Architectural Design*)

Melissa Lengies,
Researcher (*Heritage*)

Michelle Tatebe Larocque,
Chinatown House Coordinator

Monique Ling,
Chinatown House Coordinator

Nicholas Ng Shan Linh,
Cultural Program Coordinator

Parker Mah,
Programs and Operations Director

Sandy Yep,
Educational Program Coordinator

Serena Zhang,
Gallery Assistant

Théo Pagé-Robert,
Planning & Research Team Coordinator

Walter Chi-Yan Tom,
Community Relations Advisor

Yixin Cao,
Communications & Partnerships Coordinator



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About the JIA Foundation

Mandate

The JIA Foundation is a **community-led non-profit organisation** based in Tiohtià:ke (Montréal)'s Chinatown that aims to **protect and promote** the neighbourhood's **tangible and intangible cultural heritage**.

Vision

We envision a Montréal Chinatown where the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Asian diaspora is conserved and enabled to thrive.

What is JIA 家?

Jiā (家) means both family and home in mandarin. The words jiā rén (家人) mean “family members” while huí jiā (回家) means “to return home”. For the JIA Foundation, home is not limited to one's doorstep, but extends past boundaries of property, social class, and race. Home is where anyone can find refuge, security, and belonging.

Rooted in neighbourhood-based activism, the JIA Foundation has been working across the fields of heritage conservation, urban planning, and cultural programming to envision an equitable and community-led vision of Chinatown.

Mission

We aim to foster Chinatown's cultural heritage through **education, space activation** and **community-driven approaches to real estate**.

We do this by :



Activating underutilized Chinatown spaces through cultural programming and educational initiatives.



Guiding strategic policy, programs and initiatives to protect the history of Montreal's Chinatown and foster equitable development and community ownership solutions.



Empowering the Asian diasporic and working-class community of Montreal's Chinatown to develop expertise, capacity, and tools to map-out, secure and advocate for the neighbourhood's future.



Engaging diverse groups, organizations and governments in ways that are inclusive, culturally relevant, art or storytelling-based and intergenerational.

About the JIA Foundation

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Our mandate is carried out through three focus areas of work :

Education and Programming

- ◆ Engage people in intergenerational and intercultural dialogues.
- ◆ Build capacity and leadership within our membership and the community.
- ◆ Offer opportunities for learning exchange through varied cultural programming.

Equitable Development

- ◆ Empower community through facilitated discussions and workshops on community real estate.
- ◆ Build expertise, agency, and potential pathways to community ownership through research & engagement.

Policy Advocacy

- ◆ Guide strategic policy by participating in networks related to our work and helping to articulate shared visions for Chinatown.
- ◆ Engage and build relationships with policy makers and institutional partners.
- ◆ Ensure we (or community representatives) have a seat at the policy table.

As we continue to grow as an organization and expand our partnerships and our work, we feel it is important to maintain a groundedness and connection to the community. **The JIA Foundation commits to work within the following guiding principles and values:**

- ◆ Anti-colonial practices anchored in the history of Chinatown as a space of sanctuary and belonging for marginalized groups
- ◆ Community collaboration and commitment to grassroots and democratic participation
- ◆ Prioritizing equitable development solutions and community-minded stewardship and ownership



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2025 Key Initiatives

In 2025, our work at the JIA Foundation truly anchored itself—figuratively and literally—within the Chinatown ecosystem. Building from the stability of settling into our first semi-permanent space, we were able to pursue and grow our cultural programming work towards preserving Chinatown’s intangible heritage, all while beginning to engage more actively in community real estate and urban planning discussions, working to conserve the neighbourhood’s tangible heritage. These efforts have contributed to position JIA as a key stakeholder within the Chinatown community and cultural landscape as well as established a strong basis for organizational growth.



Chinatown Day. Photo by Parker Mah



Wing's Community Fundraising Banquet. Photo by Richard Lam



The Paper Trail Book Launch. Photo by Yixin Cao



Clark Street Collaborative Design Workshop.
Photo by Hai Nguyen

Chinatown House

at 116 rue De La Gauchetière O.

In January 2025, Chinatown House found a new and more permanent home in the historic building at 116-118a rue De La Gauchetière O. With funding support from the McConnell Foundation, JIA became the ground floor tenant after long-time resident and community advocate Jean-Philippe Riopel purchased the building at the end of 2024. The building was named Maison Yep-Riopel (MYR) to honour its past and present day owners and inhabitants. In March, JIA opened the Chinatown House space with the launch of the MYR exhibit. As a home base for Chinatown House programming and JIA's community development work, this new space is significant for many reasons. It is a street facing location, an ancestral home connecting Chinatown communities across generations, and a neighbour to the heritage Wing's building.

Throughout 2025, Chinatown House acted as an exhibition, work, storytelling, and programming space. Alongside the MYR exhibit, Chinatown House hosted artist, author, and historian talks, as well as documentary film screenings with the Miao Collective and with Canadian-Chinese filmmakers Keith Lock and Jack Gin. Collaborative events included a workshop for the Chinatown Equitable Development Plan and a panel with Brique par Brique, Concordia SHIFT, and the Montréal Chinatown Roundtable. During the week, Chinatown House expanded its use to community groups including the Chinatown Youth (CTY), the Kahéhtaien Jardin Lumb collective, and the Montréal Chinatown Roundtable for regular meetings and for events such as CTY's monthly mahjong nights. Chinatown House's multipurposed use strengthened JIA's partnerships, reinforced social bonds through culture and education, and contributed to capacity-building and a sense of collective ownership within the Chinatown community.

Over the past year, Chinatown House at 116 rue De La Gauchetière saw JIA evolve from being a space activator to an organization rooted in Chinatown and an active stakeholder in the development and protection of the Wing's block.



Exterior of 116 rue De La Gauchetière O.
Photo by Jessica Chen



MYR Catalogue Launch. Photo by Jessica Chen

Maison Yep-Riopel

A Layered History of Resistance and Belonging

Maison Yep-Riopel (MYR) was the inaugural exhibit in our new Chinatown House space. The exhibit detailed the rich history of the building and its multiple generations of residents. As a historic building constructed before 1845, Maison Yep-Riopel housed members of the Québec Patriotes movement, Chinese benevolent societies, the pioneering Yep family, and Jean-Philippe Riopel. The building's history of resistance and belonging symbolizes the ongoing work in Montréal's Chinatown bridging the past, present, and future of the neighbourhood. The exhibit provided important context to place Chinatown within Montréal and Québec's histories, and to give meaning to the physical buildings that are part of the neighbourhood's tangible heritage.

With funding support from the Borough of Ville Marie, we opened the exhibit for regular visiting hours three days a week during the summer season, and two in the fall and winter, welcoming over 1,100 visitors. Guided visits were organized for heritage groups, CEGEP and university students, Chinese seniors' groups, and other community groups interested in cross-neighbourhood solidarity. The Chinatown Youth also used the MYR exhibit as a starting point

for youth-led exploration of the neighbourhood through a social justice lens. Each month we also hosted a fireside chat to delve deeper into the history of MYR and the creation of the exhibit. These talks invited the public to ask questions and share their own experiences and learnings about Chinatown, fostering a communal sense of belonging.

MYR played a key role in introducing the JIA Foundation and the Chinatown House space to the wider Montréal community. We produced a catalogue book to document the exhibit and share the MYR's story beyond its walls. We also dedicated a section of the exhibit to a Current Projects wall to showcase JIA's planning and research work including the Chinatown Equitable Development Plan and the Clark Street Reimagined Project. This exhibit was an important learning experience for engagement and operations and helped us develop processes and policies for our new Chinatown House space and future exhibits.



Exhibition Opening. Photo by Karen Cho

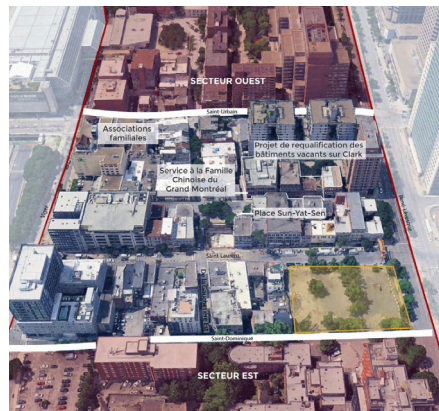
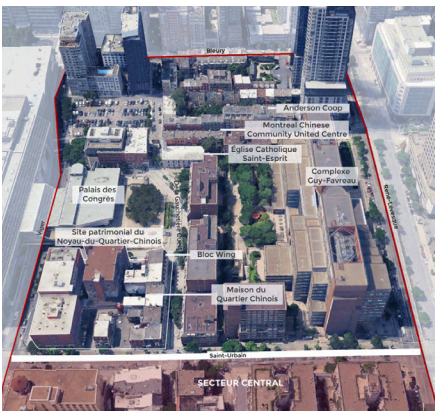


Exhibition Objects. Photo by Parker Mah

Chinatown Equitable Development Plan

With the City of Montréal’s Chinatown Action Plan being in its final year, the JIA Foundation worked with the Chinatown Roundtable, Rayside Labossière Architecture and the Table de concertation du Faubourg Saint-Laurent to articulate a global vision for the neighbourhood, building upon the City’s 2021-2026 Action Plan. This community proposal (Chinatown Equitable Development Plan) seeks to establish a more coherent framework for equitable development in Chinatown. We launched the proposal after community feedback in July 2025, reflecting community priorities and a shared vision for Chinatown’s future.

The renewed Action Plan is structured around three anchor projects, each tied to a sector of the neighbourhood.



Diagrams by Rayside Labossière

In the western sector, the **Cultural Heritage Node** focuses on Chinatown House and the Wing Noodles building, aiming to transform the provincially recognized “institutional node” into a relational hub for Chinatown’s cultural heritage.

In the central sector, **Clark Street Reimagined** advances the development of City-owned lots into a social housing proposal while addressing the strategic occupancy of vacant commercial spaces along Clark Street.

In the eastern sector, the **Viger Hub** builds on the Kahéhtaien Lumb collective garden and seeks to strengthen partnerships among community organizations to support intercultural dialogue and cohabitation. This sector also envisions new community housing projects on underused sites.

Together, these projects translate community aspirations into practical strategies, guiding the transition from the first Action Plan toward a renewed approach that supports cultural vitality, housing affordability, and community capacity. As a shared roadmap for equitable development, this new proposed plan hopes to lay the foundation for ongoing collaboration with the City and future partners to sustain equitable development in Chinatown.

Clark Street Reimagined

JIA Foundation hosted two collaborative design workshops in early 2025 to shape a future for the City-owned site at 1092-1106 Rue Clark that reflects neighbourhood needs and aspirations. We developed a Concept Plan, built on insights from residents, merchants, workers, and other local stakeholders, in partnership with Pivot: Coopérative d'Architecture, to guide the vision and design of a mixed-use social housing project on Clark Street.

Centring community priorities and flexibility, the Concept Plan proposes a stepped architectural form that maintains the human scale of the street, incorporates a mix of residential and communal spaces, and introduces a “kit of parts” model that

prioritises adaptable floor plans with varying unit sizes designed to create varying levels of shared space and social interaction.

Launched alongside the Chinatown Equitable Development Plan as a key anchor project, the Clark Street Reimagined project serves as both a blueprint and an advocacy tool for continued collaboration with the City and future development partners to ensure that new housing supports Chinatown’s cultural vitality, affordability, and diverse community needs. This project is made possible with the funding support by the Community Housing Transformation Centre and the Borough of Ville Marie.



Collaborative Design Workshop, Photo by Marie-Michèle Mondor



Collaborative Design Workshop, Photo by Marie-Michèle Mondor

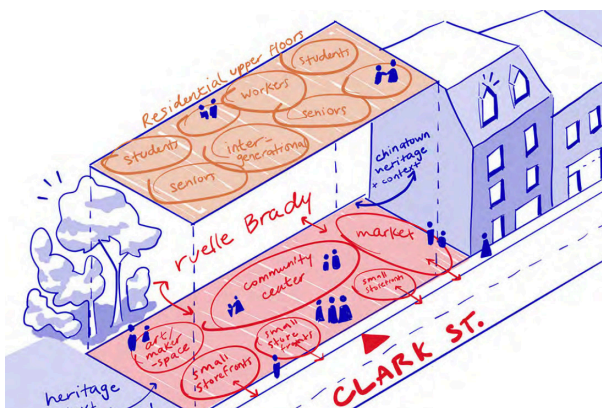


Diagram by Pivot coopérative d'architecture



Diagram by Pivot coopérative d'architecture

Wing's Conservation Strategy



Before the year end, the JIA Foundation launched a strategy to conserve the legacy of Wing Noodles in Montréal Chinatown in response to growing uncertainty surrounding the future of the two heritage buildings and the block they are in, following the announcement of Wing Noodles' closure in November 2025. The strategy aims to ensure that Wing's story, integral to the neighbourhood's community life and cultural heritage, continues to be remembered and celebrated as part of Montréal Chinatown and Chinese Québécois history as we move forward with planning of this historic neighbourhood.



Wing's Strategy Pamphlets. Photo by Madeleine Wong



Storytelling with the Lee brothers. Photo by Jessica Chen

Our small team at JIA Foundation hopes to convene a strong community vision in 2026, bringing the diverse Chinatown community together with a wide range of partners to turn this potential crisis into an opportunity. An opportunity for us to honour Wing Noodles' legacy with a concrete plan to develop a cultural anchor for Montréal Chinatown at the Wing's Block, the area that is provincially-designated as Chinatown's "institutional core" with rich cultural heritage, history and assets.

Gratitude

The generosity and support of our funders and partners allows us to advance our vision and mission, and contribute to delivering the program and activities outlined in this annual report. We deeply thank the following organizations for their trust and financial contributions as well as the partners supporting our work:

Funding Partners

Canadian Race Relations Foundation

City of Montréal

Community Housing Transformation Centre

McConnell Foundation

Ministry of Culture and Communications,
Québec Government

SHIFT Centre for Social Transformation at
Concordia

Community and Institutional Partners:

Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA)

Centre des mémoires Montréalaises (MEM)

Chinatown Roundtable of Montréal

Chinatown Youth (CTY)

Chinese Association of Montréal

Chinese Family Services of Greater Montréal

Chinese Library of Taipei Economic Cultural Office

Comité Logement Ville Marie

Héritage Montréal

McGill Centre for Global Chinese Studies

Objets de mémoire

Pivot : Coopérative d'architecture

Table de concertation du faubourg Saint-Laurent

Rayside Labossière

Wing Noodles Ltd



Fondation
canadienne des
relations raciales

Montréal



Community Housing
Transformation Centre
Centre de transformation
du logement communautaire

Fondation
McConnell
Foundation

Culture
et Communications
Québec



CCA

MEM

Table ronde
du Quartier chinois
de Montréal

Montreal
Chinatown
Round Table

滿地可
唐人街
圓桌會



HÉRITAGE
MONTRÉAL



TABLE DE CONCERTATION
DU FAUBOURG SAINT-LAURENT

RaysideLabossière
architecture
et urbanisme





JIA
FOUNDATION

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