



By and For Montréal Chinatown

PRESS RELEASE

Friday, June 5, 2026

The JIA Foundation Launches Its New Exhibition *Wing Noodles: The Heart of Chinatown*

TIOHTIÀ:KE (Montréal), June 5, 2026 — The JIA Foundation is proud to launch *Wing Noodles: The Heart of Chinatown*, a new exhibition celebrating the remarkable legacy, spanning nearly 130 years, of Wing Noodles—an iconic Montréal and Québec success story born in Chinatown. As the historic business closes its doors, the exhibition also highlights community efforts to preserve its legacy by transforming the Wing's block into a lasting cultural anchor for Chinatown.

More than a noodle factory, Wing Noodles helped shape Montréal's Chinese community and the city itself. Known in recent years as Chinatown's last remaining factory, Wing Noodles pioneered innovations ranging from Canada's first bilingual fortune cookies to kosher Chinese noodles. The company also played a vital role in supporting Chinese immigrants and families during the eras of the Chinese Head Tax and Chinese Exclusion Act, serving as a source of solidarity, opportunity, and philanthropy.

Through family artifacts, archival research, employee interviews, and rare footage captured before the factory's closure, the exhibition brings this extraordinary story to life. It also looks forward, exploring community-led efforts to reimagine the historic site and secure a vibrant future for Chinatown. Developed through months of research and documentation by the JIA Foundation, the exhibition makes this important chapter of Chinese Québécois history accessible to the public.

Wing Noodles: The Heart of Chinatown will be on view at Chinatown House (116 rue De La Gauchetière O.) from June 2026 through March 2027. Public gallery hours are Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Exhibition partners include Wing Noodles, the City of Montréal, Objets de Mémoire, the MEM—Centre des mémoires montréalaises, McGill Centre for Global Chinese Studies, Héritage Montréal and RaysideLabossière.

QUOTATIONS

"Wing Noodles stood at the heart of Montreal's Chinatown for nearly 130 years. This exhibition celebrates how a company that was founded by Chinese immigrants at the turn of the 20th century managed to insert itself into the shaping of the city, becoming a stepping stone for new immigrants, an anchor for community, and a cultural touchstone of Montreal. *Wing Noodles – The Heart of Chinatown* celebrates Wings as a site of resilience where the fragile act of holding on—to place, to history, to each other—will inspire us to re-write the next chapter for Chinatown." said **Karen Cho, film director** and **JIA Foundation** Exhibition Curator.

"The Wing's Block stands at the intersection of memory and possibility. The same spirit that sustained Wing Noodles for generations is now inspiring a community-led vision for the future: one that places culture, heritage, and community value at the heart of urban development. Through this exhibition, we invite visitors to reflect on how the lessons of the past can help shape a renewed cultural anchor for Chinatown." said **Jessica Chen**, Executive Director of the **JIA Foundation**.

"This exhibition demonstrates the impact the Chinese community has had on Montréal and Québec life as a whole. The Wing block remains an important heritage landmark of the neighbourhood. Our administration is committed to restoring the rightful glory of this once-vibrant district. We are investing in cleanliness, safety, and harmonious coexistence." said **Claude Pinard**, Ville-Marie Councillor for the **City of Montréal**.

"In 2022, a remarkable community mobilization led to the heritage designation of Wing's buildings and the historic block they occupy. These buildings are not only landmarks of Chinatown's built heritage, they embody generations of memory, work and community life. As Wing's moves out, it is essential that these heritage assets remain protected, occupied and connected to the neighbourhood that gives them meaning. " said **Taïka Baillargeon**, Assistant Director of Policy at **Héritage Montréal**.

"With the closure of Wing Noodles, we need to turn the potential crisis into an opportunity to engage all the partners to think creatively about the future of this part of Chinatown, how to reveal its potential, and how it can contribute to Chinatown as a whole and Montréal more broadly." said **Ron Rayside**, Founder and Senior Architect at **RaysideLabossière**.

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For interview requests:

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About**- JIA Foundation**

The JIA Foundation is a non-profit organization rooted in neighbourhood-based activism with a mandate to protect and promote the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Montréal's Chinatown through education, space activation, and community-driven approaches to real estate. Based in its community and exhibition space at 116 De La Gauchetière St W—right within Wing's block—since March 2025, JIA has been working across the fields of heritage conservation, urban planning, and cultural programming to envision a vibrant equitable future for Chinatown.

Website : <https://jiafoundationmtl.org/>

Instagram : [instagram.com/jiafoundationmtl/](https://www.instagram.com/jiafoundationmtl/)

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/jiafoundationmtl/>

LinkedIn : <https://ca.linkedin.com/company/jia-foundation-mtl/>

[Link](#) to photos:



MESSAGE FROM THE JIA FOUNDATION

"Chinatown is built on stories of immigration, resilience, and belonging. For generations, its residents and businesses have created opportunity in the face of exclusion, helping shape not only Chinatown but Montréal itself.

Few stories capture that legacy more powerfully than Wing Noodles. Founded in 1897 during a period of intense anti-Chinese discrimination, the company grew from a family enterprise into a Québec success story. Through periods of profound social and economic change, Wing Noodles remained rooted in the community while continuously adapting and innovating: from supporting Chinese immigrants during the era of the Head Tax and Exclusion Act to pioneering bilingual fortune cookies and kosher Asian foods.

What makes Wing Noodles remarkable is not simply its longevity, but its steadfast presence. While successive waves of urban renewal and government expropriation erased nearly two-thirds of Chinatown, Wing Noodles stayed. For generations, it stood as a symbol of continuity in a neighbourhood shaped by constant change.

When the company announced plans to leave Chinatown following the pandemic, it became clear that more than a factory was at stake. The threat of losing this historic anchor sparked an unprecedented community mobilization that helped secure heritage designation for Chinatown in 2022 and ignited a broader movement to protect and revitalize the neighbourhood.

This exhibition is not only about the history of a beloved business. It is about the values of resilience, adaptability, entrepreneurship, and community stewardship that allowed Wing Noodles to endure and now guide Chinatown's future.

Today, the JIA Foundation is bringing together residents, businesses, institutions, and community partners to imagine the future of the historic Wing's Block. Our goal is not simply to preserve an important site, but to build on its legacy by creating a place that fosters belonging, supports local enterprise, and strengthens community life.

The Wing's Block stands at the intersection of memory and possibility. The same spirit that sustained Wing Noodles for generations is now inspiring a community-led vision for the future: one that places culture, heritage, and community value at the heart of urban development. Through this exhibition, we invite visitors to reflect on how the lessons of the past can help shape a renewed cultural anchor for Chinatown."

Jessica Chen, Executive Director of the JIA Foundation

CONSERVING WING'S LEGACY IN CHINATOWN

In November 2025, Wing Noodles announced it would close its doors, leaving behind a powerful legacy of community, networks, and stories. The news stirred strong emotions among Montrealers and Chinese Canadians, from gratitude and fond memories to concern for the future of its iconic, and soon-to-be vacant, building.

To meet this unique community moment, the JIA Foundation launched the **Wing's Conservation Strategy** at a community fundraising banquet in December 2025. Bringing together more than 300 people, the event celebrated Wing Noodles and raised the funds that made this exhibition possible.

THE CONTEXT

Wing Noodles, a Legacy Enterprise

With a history going back over 125 years, Wing Noodles has played a long-standing role in supporting and providing for the Chinese community in Montréal throughout its growth as a Chinese-Canadian enterprise. In addition to providing Chinese goods and foods at a time when these were difficult to find, Wing Noodles and its owners, the Lee family, also actively helped many Chinese individuals and their families come to Canada throughout the Head Tax and Exclusion Act eras. As the small import/export business evolved into a successful manufacturing company, Wing's became a major source of fair jobs to individuals from various immigrant communities, not just the Chinese community. With their success, they also took on a philanthropic role in the community, giving back through donations to local causes including community-organized scholarships, Chinatown revitalization projects and the construction of key community buildings such as the Chinese Hospital.

Wing's Building, a Historic Building

Originally constructed as the British & Canadian School in 1826, this building is the oldest remaining purpose-built school in Montréal and one of the oldest in Quebec, notable for having offered non-sectarian education to children of the working-class and of various ethnic backgrounds. At the turn of the century, the Chinese had already begun to occupy the surrounding neighbourhood and provide services to the working class. This includes Hee Chong Lee, one of the first Chinese men to immigrate to Montréal, who established an import/export business called Wing Lung in 1897. In 1963, the former British and Canadian School would be purchased by Lee's direct descendants, now 3rd and 4th generation Chinese-Canadians, for the expansion of their family business, now known as Wing Noodles Ltd.

The building, each of its stages of life still legible through its layered architecture and ornamentation, stands as testimony to the evolution of the neighbourhood over 200 years of Montréal history and symbolizes the longstanding legacy of Wing Noodles and its roots in Montréal's

Chinatown. With this unique history and character, it offers an exciting opportunity for an adaptive reuse project which ties together heritage conservation with a future-oriented vision for Chinatown, meeting the needs of the current and future generations of Montreal's Chinese and Asian communities while honouring Wing's indelible community-oriented legacy within the building's future.

Wing's Block, the "Noyau-Institutionnel-du-Quartier-chinois"

The Wing Noodles building, while to be conserved primarily for its individual value, is also strategically positioned within the provincially designated "Noyau-Institutionnel-du-Quartier-chinois", offering strong potential for the development of community infrastructure in Chinatown's western sector. This block contains some of the oldest buildings in Chinatown which have been home to institutional and community organizations for generations. Today, the block has a high vacancy rate, but underutilized space activation and redevelopment efforts are already underway, such as JIA Foundation's Chinatown House project at Maison Yep-Riopel.

As Chinatown's oldest legacy enterprise and a key player in Chinatown's social economy, the story of Wing Noodles is an important one to tell as part of Chinese-Canadian history and in the development of Montreal's Chinatown. It is critical that we have a strong community vision to understand and celebrate Wing's intangible heritage, to develop a community project for the iconic heritage building, and to bring diverse stakeholders together to shape the "Wing's block" as the Montreal Chinatown's cultural heritage heart.

THE STRATEGY

The Wing's Conservation Strategy is an initiative proposed by the JIA Foundation to preserve, honour, and celebrate the legacy of Wing Noodles in Chinatown for generations to come. Our approach aims to seize the opportunity to understand and promote Wing's intangible heritage, connecting it with the building's adaptation and the future of the block provincially designated as the "Noyau-Institutionnel-du-Quartier-chinois".

The Strategy includes the new exhibition **"Wing Noodles: the Heart of Chinatown"** on Wing's legacy at Chinatown House and a **community vision** with a plan to establish the "Wing's Block" as Montréal Chinatown's Cultural Heritage Node.

A Collective Vision for Wing's Block

With support from the City of Montreal, the JIA Foundation partnered with RaysideLabossière and Héritage Montréal to develop a Collective Vision for Wing's Block. We have convened a Partners Table that brings together neighbours from the Wing's Block, local institutions, businesses, property owners, and space activators, to share plans, identify collaborations, and coordinate

action. The result will be a roadmap that establishes shared foundations for future work and commitments from each organization. Our goal is to reimagine Chinatown through Wing's legacy and values, and establish this heritage-designated sector as a key cultural anchor for Chinatown and the city.

We are also inviting residents and the broader public to share their ideas through an interactive program, where we will gather community stories and visions around the past, present, and future of the Wing's Block. These voices and stories, centred around Chinatown spaces, will help inform, guide, and activate the development of the Collective Vision for Wing's Block.

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