Grade 5

Student Backgrounders

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This resource was developed for the Ministry of International Trade and Minister Responsible for Asia Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism by Open School BC, Ministry of Education in partnership with the Royal BC Museum, the Legacy Initiatives Advisory Council and BC teachers.

A full list of contributors to *Bamboo Shoots: Chinese Canadian Legacies in BC* can be found at www.openschool.bc.ca/bambooshoots.

Student Backgrounders 1858–1870s Gold Rush

1858-1870s Gold Rush

There were two big gold rushes in British Columbia. The first **gold rush** started in 1858 on the Fraser River from Hope to north of Lillooet. The second gold rush began in 1862 in the Cariboo region. There were also a number of smaller gold rushes.



Some Chinese people arrived from California, where a gold rush that had begun in 1849 was coming to an end. Others followed from Hong Kong and Guangdong, China, fleeing war and **poverty**. The Chinese named the Pacific Coast region of North America *Gum San*, meaning Gold Mountain. The name Gum San referred not only to the gold that could be found in the region, but



also to the wealth that could be made even if you did not mine for gold. This is why the name continued to be used long after the gold rushes ended.

The first group of Chinese immigrants from San Francisco arrived in Victoria in June 1858 at the start of the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush. Victoria was where miners first came to get licenses to prospect and pan for gold in BC.

Student Backgrounders 1858–1870s Gold Rush



Fort Victoria, at the time, had a population of about 500. With the discovery of gold, the population swelled to over 20,000 people. The several hundred Chinese people who remained in Victoria provided supplies to the gold fields. They also worked as small merchants, building a strong community in the city.

The first Chinatown in Canada was founded in Victoria in the 1850s.

More Chinese people came to BC in the early 1860s when news of the Cariboo Gold Rush reached China. The Chinese also helped to build the 614-kilometer Cariboo Wagon Road by digging ditches, hauling gravel, and building wooden channels for water (called flumes). They also operated grocery stores and restaurants, and grew vegetables and other crops for the gold rush communities.

After the gold rushes ended around 1870, many Chinese people found employment working as servants, mainly in Victoria. Others worked in the coal mine in Nanaimo, and in the Fraser River salmon canning industry.

Vocabulary

gold rush:

a movement of people to where gold has been discovered

poverty:

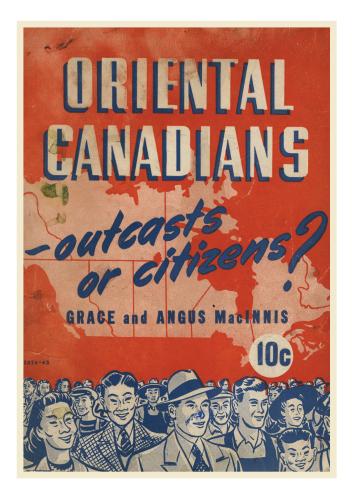
being extremely poor

1872 Chinese Disenfranchisement

In 1861, Chinese immigrants who had lived in the Colony of Vancouver Island for three years in a row had the same rights as citizens born there. This included the right to vote.

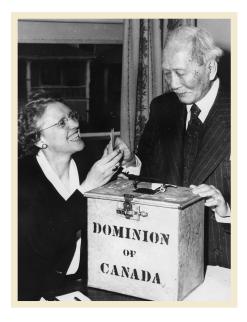
By 1865, the gold rushes were mostly over and the colony began to face difficult economic conditions. There were a limited number of jobs. **Discrimination** against Chinese workers increased.

In 1872, one year after BC entered Confederation, the Qualification and Registration of Voters Act was passed. This Act excluded Chinese and First Nations from voting in provincial elections, even though they made up nearly 62 percent of BC's population at the time.



In 1895–96, new federal legislation was passed. It stated that if a person's name was not on the provincial voters list, they could not vote in a federal election. This meant Chinese people didn't have the right to vote in Canada. Because of this, Chinese people were also prevented from entering many occupations. Professional groups such as lawyers, accountants, and pharmacists required their members to be on the voters' lists.





It was not until 1948 that the *Dominion Elections Act* was repealed. The first election Chinese Canadians in BC were able to vote in was in 1949.

Vocabulary

discrimination:

unjust treatment of people based on race, age, or sex

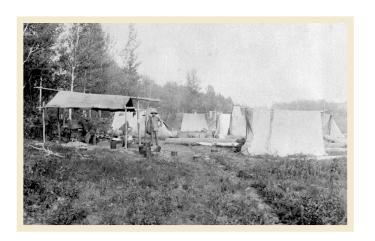
disenfranchisement: denied the right to vote

1881–1885 Canadian Pacific Railway

In 1871, BC joined Confederation, becoming one of the provinces that made up Canada. Prime Minister John A. MacDonald promised that a railroad would be built to connect BC with the rest of Canada. The railway was completed in 1885.



The western section of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was 400 kilometres long. It linked a mountainous and rocky region, from Port Moody on the BC coast to the interior of BC west of Revelstoke. The American head engineer and construction contractor on the project needed 7,000 workers to start the project. He recruited Chinese workers who were willing to work for less pay than white workers. Some Chinese workers hired for the CPR came from the United States where they had helped build the **transcontinental**



railroad. Others came from southern China. Recruiters in the Guangdong province of China arranged passage to Canada and employment. In 1882, ten ships sailed from Hong Kong to Victoria, which took several months. There was little food and water and many men died on the journey.



White workers earned \$1.50 – \$2.50 a day. Chinese workers earned as little as \$1.00 a day. Chinese workers also had to provide their own food, clothing, transportation, and equipment. In contrast, white workers were provided these items.

Chinese people working the railroad lived in camps, slept in tents or

boxcars, and cooked over open fires. They ate rice, dried salmon, and tea. In the freezing winters, many became ill and died from diseases such as smallpox and cholera. Others died from **scurvy** and starvation.

Work on the western segment of the CPR was difficult and dangerous. Chinese workers were given some of the most backbreaking and dangerous jobs. They cleared and graded the roads, and they blasted tunnels through rocks with explosives. Many workers died from fires, collapsed tunnels and bridges, landslides, and dynamite blasts. Many of these deaths were not recorded, and the families of the Chinese workers who were killed were not told of the deaths.

It has been estimated that approximately one Chinese worker died for every foot of track laid through the Fraser Canyon. Other estimates claim that a Chinese worker died for every mile of track laid. That means between 400 and 2,200 Chinese workers died during the construction of the CPR.

Vocabulary

scurvy:

a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C that results in swollen, bleeding gums

transcontinental: crossing a continent

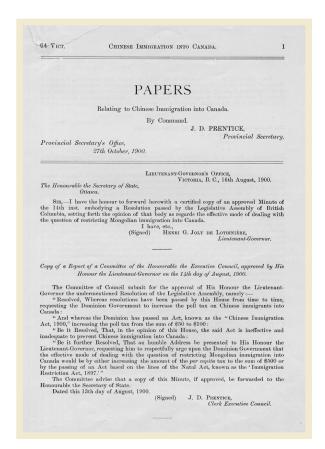
1885 Chinese Immigration Act — Head Tax

Chinese labourers on the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) worked for less pay than other workers. When the CPR was completed in 1885, politicians and the general public were afraid that Chinese people would take jobs away from white people.

In 1885, Prime Minister John A. MacDonald stated that Chinese people should be excluded from Canada. Under the *Chinese Immigration Act* (1885), the Canadian government forced Chinese workers and their families to pay a \$50 head tax to enter Canada. It was thought that Chinese people would not be able to afford this tax and would not come to Canada.

No **immigrants** from any other country had to pay such a tax to enter Canada. The head tax meant family members in China were left behind. Some families lived apart for many years. Some family members were never reunited and lived in poverty in China.





Chinese immigration dropped from 8,000 in 1882 to 124 in 1887. But newcomers from China still came to Canada. For this reason, the head tax was raised to \$100 in 1901. It was raised to \$500 in 1903—equal to about two year's pay. The head tax remained until 1923. The government changed the *Chinese Immigration Act* and excluded Chinese from immigrating to Canada

altogether. This law did not change until 1947.

Kindly do not write of more than one subject in any one letter. Immigration Branch Department of the Interior ALJ/EC. Wancouber, B.C. April 10th 1917: 19 Mr. Yip Kew Him, Care Messrs Wing Sang & Co., Vancouver.B.C. Dear Sir .-I beg to acknowledge receipt of Wing Sang & Company's cheque, value \$500.00, being head tax on Lee Dy Sing, eLeven years old Chinese girl now resident in China, who desires to come to Canada to attend school. Enclosed will be found temporary receipt No.1550 covering payment of head tax in this case. Please send the same to the girl in China, together with a copy of this letter, which is furnished in duplicate. as the Steamship Agents will comsider the same authority for issuing transportation to her upon payment for the same, and upon her arrival in this port she will be admitted if found to be physically and mentally fit.

On June 22, 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivered an apology in the House of Commons for the head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants. In addition, on May 15, 2014, BC Premier Christy Clark apologized to Chinese Canadians for the provincial government's historical wrongs against Chinese Canadians from 1872–1947

Vocabulary

immigrants:

people who come to live permanently in a foreign country

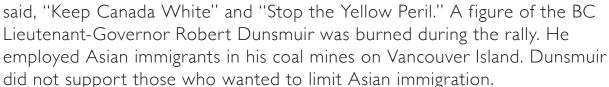
1907 Vancouver Anti-Asian Riots

From 1903 to 1907 there was a downturn in the Canadian economy. This led to increased anger towards Chinese and Japanese **immigrants** in BC. Some people feared Asians would take jobs away from white workers. Asians were willing to work for long hours doing dangerous and dirty work for little pay.



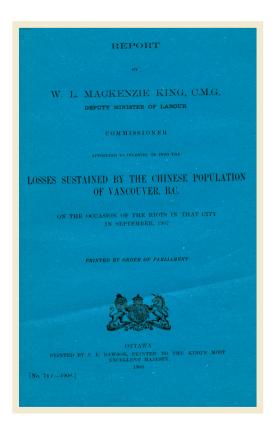
A group of people joined together to form the Asian Exclusion League (AEL). The AEL wanted to spread anti-Asian feelings, and push for limited Asian immigration.

In September 1907, the AEL organized a parade of several thousand protestors. They gathered at Vancouver City Hall carrying banners that



As part of the rally, people gave speeches that criticized the growing Asian population. At 9:00 p.m. the leaders of the rally encouraged the crowd to move towards Chinatown and Japantown. This led to hours of rioting. Windows were

broken and Asian businesses were looted. The Chinese did not fight back. The Japanese residents built **barricades**. Armed with guns, knives, and bricks, the Japanese residents managed to hold off the rioters. The rioting petered out in the early hours of September 8. Many people were injured and there was a lot of



property damage. On September 9, rioters tried to attack Japantown again, but they were dispersed by the police.

In 1908, the federal government awarded compensation to riot victims. Japanese victims received \$9,000 as a community and Chinese victims received \$26,000 as a community. It was decided that Asian immigration to Canada was the primary cause of the riot.

On July 1, 1923, the federal government passed legislation suspending Chinese immigration indefinitely. Only after World War II, in 1947, were Chinese once again

allowed to immigrate to Canada.

Vocabulary

barricades:

barriers built to block or defend oneself

immigrants:

people who come to live permanently in a foreign country

1922-1923 Victoria School Strike

In the early 1920s, George Jay was the chairman of the Victoria School Board. He decided that over 200 Chinese elementary students who attended public schools should be **segregated**. He argued that Chinese students were unclean and they held back the other students. The Chinese community described this

as Huangbai Fenxiao, which translates to "Yellow and White in Separate Schools."

In September 1922, principals of two Victoria schools called the Chinese students out of their classes and marched them over to the schools that were for only Chinese students. But three organizations—The Chinese Community Benevolent Association (CCBA), Chinese Canadian Club (Tongyuan



Association), and Chinese Commerce Association—planned a student **strike** against the Victoria school system. When students reached the segregated school, instead of entering the building, they went home.

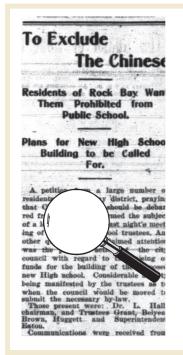
The three associations formed an Anti-Segregation Association (ASA). The ASA set up a Chinese Free School for students to attend during the strike. The strike lasted for a year as the ASA and the Victoria School Board tried to come to an agreement. In 1922–1923, fewer than six Chinese students attended public schools in Victoria. In the previous year, there were 216 Chinese students in Victoria public schools.



"Chinese pupils attending city schools vanished into thin air yesterday when principals of some of the schools attempted to carry out the Chinese segregation plans adopted by the City School Board. The Board intends to stand firm on its decision to keep Chinese and white pupils separated...

What amounts to a virtual strike against the School Board's decision has been initiated by the Orientals, instigated by the parents of the pupils."

In September 1923, the school board allowed all Chinese students to return to the schools they attended before the strike. But partial segregation continued. Chinese students from Grades I to 4 continued to be educated separately. It was only after World War II had ended in 1945 that students of Chinese origin were fully integrated into public schools in Victoria.



"A petition of residents of Rock Bay district, asking the board to withdraw the permission to Chinese children to attend the school, or to place them in a separate room of the building. Mr. Grant (Trustee) would like to see the Chinese placed in a separate school.

Mr. Belyea [Trustee] pointed out that Chinese children, under the existing law, had the same right to free education as those of any other race, and the school board had no power and no right to take action on the petition."

Vocabulary

segregated:

to set apart or divide based on race, religion, or sex

strike:

walk off the job (or leave school) in protest

1923 Chinese Immigration Act (Exclusion Act)



World War I ended in 1918. After the war, Canada faced poor economic conditions. Some people blamed these conditions on visible minorities, like the Chinese people, because they worked for less pay.

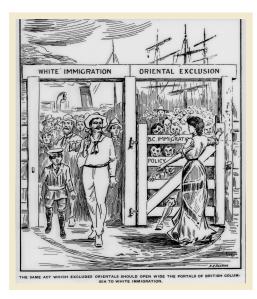
Starting in 1903, Chinese people had to pay a \$500 head tax beginning in 1903 in order to enter Canada. Some people felt this was not enough to prevent Chinese people from immigrating to Canada. There was a call from white society to ban Chinese **immigration** altogether. This request began in BC, but had support across Canada.

A new Chinese Immigration Act was **legislated** in 1923. It became known as the Chinese Exclusion

Act. This new legislation banned Chinese

immigrants from entering Canada unless they were students, **diplomats**, or **merchants**. Chinese people were the only immigrants completely barred from entering Canada.

The act was passed on July I, 1923—Canada Day. Chinese Canadians renamed this celebration, "Humiliation Day". As a protest, Chinese Canadians closed their businesses and boycotted Canada Day for years after.



The Head Tax and Chinese Exclusion Act were very hard on families. Early Chinese pioneers were not allowed to bring their families to Canada. This resulted in long periods of separation. Chinese wives were left to raise their children in China, and often experienced economic difficulties and starvation. Here is one account of the hardship:



You came here [to Canada] and if you behaved, then you could go home and meet the family again... Sometimes you came here for 30 or 40 years, 50 or 60 years, and never went back to see them... I know of one guy here, when he went back to China to get married, he lived there for a couple of months... He never saw his wife [again] for 40 years... You came in here... year after year, worked a little bit, spent a little bit, couldn't save money to see your wife... So what could you do?

From: Peter S. Li, Chinese in Canada, 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1998. P. 68. © Oxford University Press Canada 1998.

The Chinese Immigration Act was abolished in 1947.

Vocabulary

diplomats:

officials who represent another country

immigration:

coming to live permanently in a foreign country

legislated:

made into law

merchant:

a person or company who trades goods or products, or supplies goods to a particular trade

1939–1945 Chinese Participation in World War II

World War II began in 1939. Chinese-Canadians were not allowed to **enlist** in the air force or the navy. The Premier of BC strongly opposed allowing Asians into the armed forces.

At the time, Chinese Canadians were not allowed to vote in Canada. The Chinese



community was deeply divided on whether Chinese Canadians should join the war effort. Some people felt that if Chinese Canadians joined the war effort, the government would then have to allow them to vote. Others argued that the Canadian government needed to give Chinese Canadians the vote first, before they enlisted in the military.



In late 1942, Chinese Canadians were allowed to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. In 1943, the Royal Canadian Navy allowed Canadian-born Chinese and Chinese born in Hong Kong to enlist. In 1944, Chinese Canadians were recruited to work in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific in a special operation.

Even before they were allowed to enlist, Chinese Canadians contributed greatly to Canada's war effort. They joined the Red Cross, worked in war-related industries, and raised money through the purchase of war bonds. A war bond was a loan to the government. War bonds could be cashed in with interest after five, ten, or twenty years.



Over 600 Chinese Canadians contributed to the war effort during World War II.

Vocabulary

enlist: to join the military

1967 Universal Immigration Policy

From 1945 until the early 1950s, most immigrants to Canada came from Europe. In the early 1960s, many Canadian workers moved to the United States. This created a shortage of professionals like doctors and nurses, and other skilled labour. Canada's economy needed educated and skilled workers.



The federal government introduced the Canadian Bill of Rights in 1960. The Canadian Bill of Rights rejected **discrimination** based on race, colour, national origin, religion, or sex. This meant the Canadian government could no longer discriminate against people wanting to immigrate to Canada based on their race or national origin.



In 1967, the Canadian government introduced the Universal Immigration Policy. This policy gave equal opportunity to all immigrants. It did not matter what country they came from. People wanting to come to Canada were evaluated on their education, work skills, and how well they knew the English or French language.



Immigration for Chinese people had been restricted until 1967. The Universal Immigration Policy increased opportunities for educated and skilled Chinese people to enter Canada. It also helped many Chinese Canadians reunite with family members.

Vocabulary

discrimination:

unjust treatment of people based on race, age, or sex

immigrants:

people who come to live permanently in a foreign country

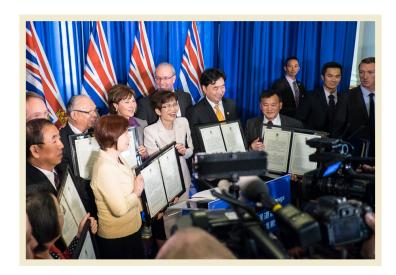
2014 British Columbia Apology to Chinese Canadians for Historical Wrongs

In May of 2014, the Province of BC apologized to Chinese Canadians for wrongs committed by past provincial governments.

These wrongs include denying Chinese immigrants the right to vote, and taking payments for the head tax. These laws and practices have long been changed. However, past wrongs continue to cause anger and



disappointment among Chinese Canadians.



A formal apology was made in an effort to fight racism in the province. The apology was also made to heal the past and create a positive future as an inclusive society. Through the apology, Premier Christy Clark made a commitment to ensure that discrimination will never be repeated, and that the province will never draft racist legislation again.

As part of this apology to the Chinese community, the BC education curriculum will include the province's rich multicultural heritage. This curriculum will also acknowledge the contributions Chinese British Columbians have made to our cultural, economic, and social fabric. The educational resource you are using now is part of this initiative.



Student Backgrounders Primary Source Images

Primary Source Images

1858-1870s Gold Rush

1872 Chinese Disenfranchisement

1881–1885 Canadian Pacific Railway

1885 Chinese Immigration Act – Head Tax

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1922-1923 Victoria School Strike

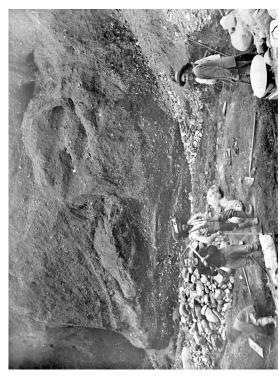
1923 Chinese Immigration Act (Exclusion Act)

1939-1945 Chinese Participation in World War II

1967 Universal Immigration Policy

2014 British Columbia Apology to Chinese Canadians for Historical Wrongs

1858-1870s Gold Rush

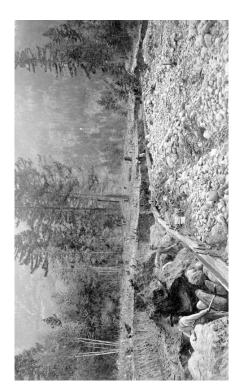


Mining for gold by hand





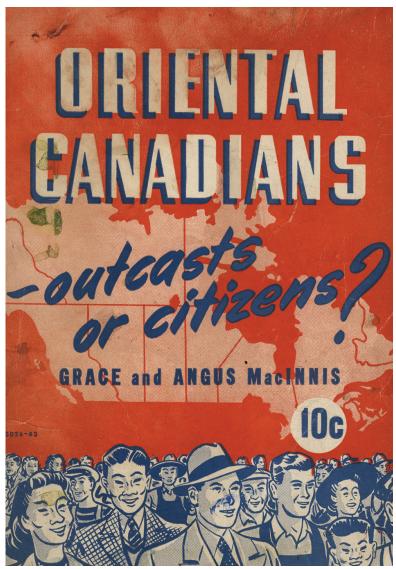
Library and Archives Canada, PA-125990



Chinese men washing for gold near North Bend, ca 1886

Image E-00382 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives

1872 Chinese Disenfranchisement



Pamphlet discussing the treatment of Asian Canadians, 1943

 $Image\ CC-EX-4.2-2-001, University\ of\ British\ Columbia\ Special\ Collections,\ Chung\ Collection$



Lim D. Lee, pharmacist, Chinatown, 1951

Image PA-112784, National Film Board of Canada. Photothèque, Library and Archives Canada.



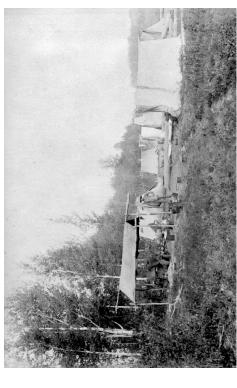
Election Day (federal). W.A. Cumyow, Age 88, casts ballot in first federal election since Asian vote ban. Seen with deputy returning officer, Mrs. Mollie Dobell.

University of British Columbia Libraries Special Collections, Won Alexander Cumyow fonds/BC 1848/9

1881-1885 Canadian Pacific Railway



Chinese workers on the Canadian Pacific Railway, ca.1884a Image D-07548 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives



Canadian Pacific Railway Chinese Workers Camp, ca. 1883 Image 1-30806 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives



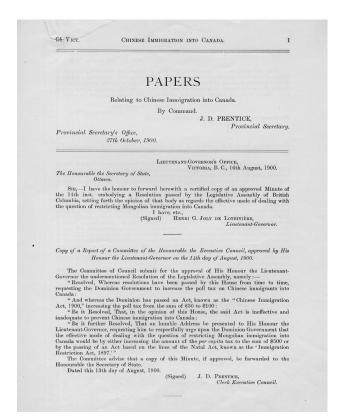
IOF CFIX CONSUTUCTION Image F-01997 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives

1885 Chinese Immigration Act – Head Tax



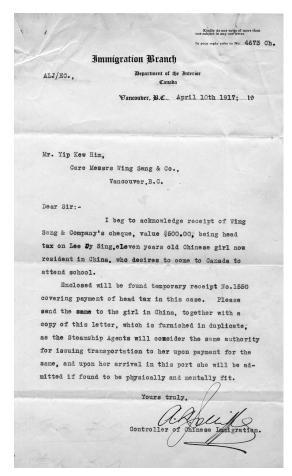
Dominion of Canada \$500 Head Tax certificate, Quan Ying Foo, 1913

Image 982-134-379 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives



Minutes concerning the BC Head Tax increase issued from the BC Provincial Secretary's Office, 1900

Image rbss-acr-1679-100-43-16, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Chung Collection



Confirmation of head tax payment, 1917

Image CC-EX-8.2-1, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Chung Collection

1907 Vancouver Anti-Asian Riots

The Daily Colonist.

VICTORIA, B. C., TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1907

VANCOUVER ORIENTALS FEAR FURTHER ATTACKS

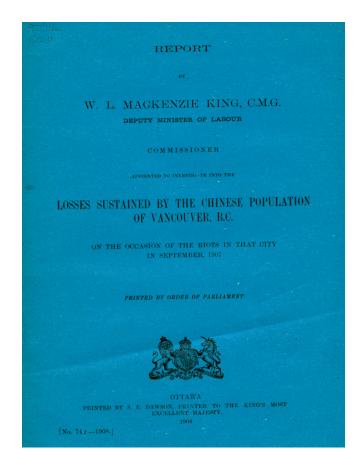
Chinese and Japanese Endeavor to Provide Themselves With Arms

ALL DESERT PLACES OF WORK

Work of Hoodiums Condemned by Labor Leaders and Citizens—Mayor Issues Statement This afternoon the Japanese held a mass meeting on the Powell street grounds, and all the sawmills in the city were closed for want of hands to run them. The Chinese have also quit work in mills, restaurants and houses, and will not go back till the trouble is over. About one-third of the restaurants in the city are closed, and those employing white labor are simply overwhelmed with business.

"Vancouver Orientals Fear Further Attacks", Victoria Daily Colonist 10 Sept 1907

"Vancouver Orientals Fear Further Attacks", Victoria Daily Colonist
10 Sept 1907: 1 Print.



Report on the property losses sustained by the Chinese population of Vancouver in the riots, 1907

Image NWp_9711Va_C211p012 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives



Chinese barber shop on East Pender Street in Vancouver, following the Oriental riots, 1907

Image PH-00229, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Chung Collection

1922–1923 Victoria School Strike



Group in front of Chinese School, Fisgard St., Victoria, ca. 1901caption line 2

Image F-07784 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives

CHINESE PUPILS START "REBELLION"

Refuse to Conform to School Board's Decision

Segregated School Issue in More Acute Form

Chinese pupils attending city schools vanished into thin air yesterday when principals of some of the schools attempted to carry out the Chinese segregation plans adopted by the City School Board. The Board intends to stand firm on its decision to keep Chinese and white pupils separated and if the young Orientals fail to attend at the schools provided for the a

"Chinese Pupils Start 'Rebellion': Refuse to Conform to School Board's Decision: Segregated School Issue in More Acute Form', Victoria Daily Times Sept 6, 1922

"Chinese Pupils Start 'Rebellion': Refuse to Conform to School Board's Decision: Segregated School Issue in More Acute Form" Victoria Daily Times 6 Sept. 1922: 2. Print.

To Exclude The Chinese Residents of Rock Bay Want Them Prohibited from Public School.

Plans for New High School Building to be Called For.

A petition from a large number of residents of flock Bay district, praying that Chinese children should be debarred from the school, formed the subject of a long discussion at last night's meeting of the board of school trustees. Another question which claimed attention was the probable action of the city council with regard to the raising of funds for the building of the proposed new High school. Considerable anxiety

"To Exclude The Chinese: Residents of Rock Bay Want Them Prohibited from Public School" Victoria Daily Colonist Feb. 14, 1901

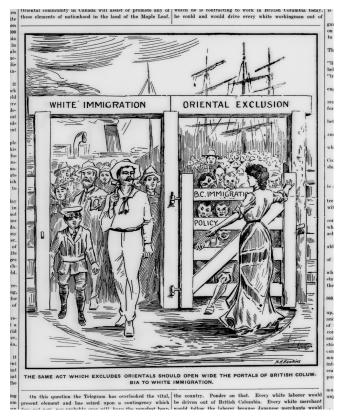
"To Exclude The Chinese: Residents of Rock Bay Want Them Prohibited from Public School" Victoria Daily Colonist 14 Feb 1901: 8 Print..

1923 Chinese Immigration Act (Exclusion Act)



Chinese Exclusion Bulletin

Image PDP03732 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives



Exclusion Act newpaper cartoon

Image 41609, Vancouver Public Library



Dominion of Canada \$500 Head Tax certificate, Quan Ying Foo, 1913

Image 982-134-379 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archive

1939-1945 Chinese Participation in World War II



Military officers and government officials gathered for an official occasion, following WWII mage CC-PH-00040, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Chung Collection



Chinese Air Raid Precautions group learning about types of bombs, 1943 Image H-05793 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives



Chinese Canadian War Veterans

Image from From C to C: Chinese Canadian Stories of Migration ® Simon Fraser University, Creative Studio

1967 Universal Immigration Policy

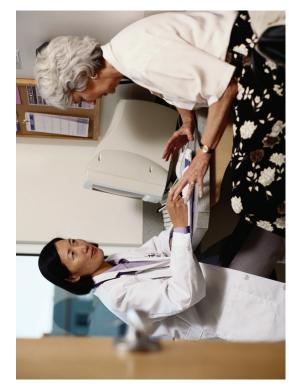


The Universal Immigration Policy gave everyone equal opportunity to immigrate to Canada, no matter what country they came from, 1967

alexskopje, Thinkstock, 119258902



Citizenship ceremony Image from From C to C: Chinese Canadian Stories of Migration ® Simon Fraser University, Creative Studio



The Universal Immigration Policy allowed educated Chinese people to enter Canada, 1967

Chad Baker, Jason Reed, Ryan McVay, Thinkstock, AA023186

2014 British Columbia Apology to Chinese Canadians for Historical Wrongs



Premier Christy Clark delivering the apology to BC's Chinese Canadians Province of British Columbia, Formal Apology to Chinese Canadians, Image 14007857328_31470b6332_o



The Formal Apology from the BC Government to BC's Chinese Canadians, 2014

Province of British Columbia, Formal Apology to Chinese Canadians, Image 14007911007_c20a330428_o



The Formal Apology from the BC Government to BC's Chinese Canadians, 2014

Province of British Columbia, Formal Apology to Chinese Canadians, Image 14194520435_4609bdcb3d_o