

Grade 5
Grade 9

Historical Backgrounders



Bamboo Shoots
CHINESE CANADIAN LEGACIES IN BC

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Chinese Immigration to Canada

Summary

- Chinese workers landed in Nuu-chah-nulth territory in 1788 as part of Capt. John Meares' expedition to build the first year-round, non-indigenous settlement in the place the British named "Nootka Sound."
- Chinese migrants came to the colony of British Columbia right after gold was discovered in 1858.
- Between 1881 and 1884, an estimated 15,000 Chinese labourers were brought to Canada to build the Canadian Pacific Railway.
- The Chinese Head Tax was passed in 1885, charging each Chinese who arrived in Canada \$50. In 1900, the head tax was increased to \$100 and then again to \$500 per person in 1903. Still over 97,000 Chinese immigrated to Canada between 1885 and 1923.
- The Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 excluded all Chinese from entering Canada except for diplomats, foreign students, and those permitted under special circumstance.
- After the repeal of the Exclusion Act in 1947, it was still difficult for Chinese to enter Canada due to poor diplomatic relations between Canada and China, and strict immigration policies of the Peoples Republic of China.
- Racial preferences were removed from Canadian immigration policy in 1967.
- The 1967 "points system" assessed potential immigrants according to the overall need for their profession in Canada, and gave more points for higher education level as well as for the reunification with existing family members in Canada.
- Political unrest in Hong Kong in the late 1960s led many Hong Kong Chinese to immigrate to Canada in the 1970s.
- Between 1999 and 2009, the largest number of immigrants to Canada originated from the People's Republic of China.

Backgrounder

Chinese migrants have been coming to the traditional First Nations territories that are now known as British Columbia for as long as European migrants have. During the period when expeditions led by Capt. James Cook and Capt. George Vancouver surveyed—and claimed for the British crown—the coastline of modern-day British Columbia, Chinese workers landed in Nuuchahnulth territory. In 1788, they came as part of Capt. John Meares' expedition to build the first year-round, non-indigenous settlement in the place the British named “Nootka Sound.” Indeed, Chinese workers were the carpenters that built the fort, grew food, and performed much of the essential labour in this settlement.

“Gold rushes” in the mid-19th century drew migrants from around the world to alluvial deposits of gold around the edges of the Pacific basin: the territory of California, the Australian colonies, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and what the British crown claimed—right after gold was discovered in 1858—as the Colony of British Columbia. Chinese migrants were a significant element in all of these gold rushes. They often performed necessary functions such as growing food and building infrastructure, as well as importing goods drawn from their extensive trans-Pacific trade networks. Known for creating businesses that provided important services to miners and other migrants, the Chinese were entrepreneurial and able to make money in ways that extended well beyond finding gold. Indeed, in the Cantonese language that these migrants spoke, all of these locations came to be known as “*Gum San* 金山” (Gold Mountain) not just because of the iconic presence of gold, but also metaphorically for the tremendous wealth that could be created by young ambitious men crossing the seas to work in these places, a mythic name for trans-Pacific migration in search of opportunity that long outlasted the gold rushes themselves.

A dream of wealth and a better life created a sustained process of migration—generation after generation. They came from a small number of villages in just eight counties in Guangdong province, on the south coast of China. Often working alongside, and sometimes marrying into First Nations communities up the Fraser River and throughout British Columbia, the migrants, who were mainly men, sought a better livelihood through building early industries. These included market farming, logging, fishing, ranching, and mining, as well as providing services through businesses such as general stores, cafés, and laundries.

The history of outmigration from southern China had existed for centuries. Since the 16th century, migrants who travelled by sea throughout Southeast Asia had connected the coastal regions of Guangdong and Fujian provinces. For centuries, these migrants left rural villages and became labourers, merchants, traders, and small shopkeepers. Millions of these migrants and their descendants lived across Southeast Asia. The main ports through which these migrants travelled back and forth were Guangzhou, Amoy (now known as Xiamen), Swatow (now known as Shantou), and Macau. During the same time, many Europeans came to trade for Chinese goods such as porcelain, silk, and tea at the port of Guangzhou, as Europeans created colonies in southeast Asia in the Philippines, the East Indies (now known as Indonesia), the Malay peninsula (now known as Malaysia), and India. Migrants from southern China travelled the same trade routes as Europeans and others in the region (such as Muslim traders), trading for Chinese manufacturers and for spice, sugar, silver, and other goods.

By the time of the Opium War between Britain and China, from 1840–1842, the trade that went through Guangzhou and Southeast Asia to Europe was at the center of the global economy. After the British acquired Hong Kong, near Guangzhou, as part of the settlement of the Opium War in 1842, it became the main port through which Chinese migrants went across the Pacific to the Australian colonies and to North America.

Most Chinese immigrants to Canada between 1858 and 1923 came from just eight small counties in Guangdong province in southern China. Although migrants to Southeast Asia and to other parts of the world such as the Caribbean and Latin America also came from other counties in Guangdong and Fujian province, 99% of those who went to Canada came from just these eight counties.

Gold Rush

The 1849 gold rush to California was the most important event that connected the new port of Hong Kong to North America. Many Chinese came to San Francisco to join others from all around the world to seek their fortune in the goldfields. In 1858, gold would be discovered in Nlaka'pamux Territory in the mid-Fraser Canyon. Chinese first migrated in large numbers from California to the newly created colony

of British Columbia, followed by others who came directly from China. During this gold rush period, Chinese settlements emerged in New Westminster, Victoria, Barkerville and other towns in BC's Interior, remaining after the gold rush waned.

Building the Canadian Pacific Railway

Between 1881 and 1884, an estimated 15,000 Chinese labourers were brought to Canada to build the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). Connecting the colony of British Columbia to the colonies of eastern Canada by railway was a crucial condition for the new province entering Confederation in 1871. As with transcontinental railroads built in California in the previous decades, it was more efficient to bring Chinese workers across the Pacific by ship to work on the western portions of the railroad while European—many of them Irish—workers who had come across the Atlantic by ship built the eastern portions. Because the western portions featured much more difficult terrain, with the deep Fraser Canyon and the mountains of both the Coastal range and the Rockies, the work was dangerous. Hundreds of Chinese workers died. The nitroglycerin used to blow up rocks was very unstable and could explode accidentally. Rock slides and avalanches were common. Chinese workers did the most dangerous work, and often would go on strike when the danger to their lives was not being taken seriously. Because the Chinese work teams were often well organized, they could provide their own food and work for less than other workers, and Chinese labour organizers could bid lower for contracts to supply railroad workers. They were usually paid a third less than white workers. When the CPR was finished, mass immigration by railway across Canada could begin, and European settlers could now cross easily and cheaply to British Columbia in large numbers.

The Head Tax 1885–1923

Unfortunately, many of those arriving in British Columbia on the new railroad also became convinced by anti-Chinese agitators that the Chinese did not belong in Canada. The Chinese Head Tax was passed in 1885, charging each Chinese who arrived in Canada \$50. In 1900, the head tax was increased to \$100 and then again to \$500 per person in 1903. The Canadian government collected \$23 million from Chinese immigrants through the Head Tax (worth over \$1.5 billion at the time that the Federal government apologized in 2006 for the Head Tax and other anti-Chinese

legislation). This racially discriminatory law, however, did not stop over 97,000 Chinese from immigrating to Canada between 1885 and 1923. Chinese Canadians migrated along the same railroad that they helped build and established a presence across Canada all the way to the Maritimes. They operated general stores, cafés and restaurants, laundries, and other small businesses, living alongside other Canadians as well as First Nations in almost every small town. The map in Figure I shows where the 38,410 Chinese who entered Canada between 1910 and 1923 were heading.

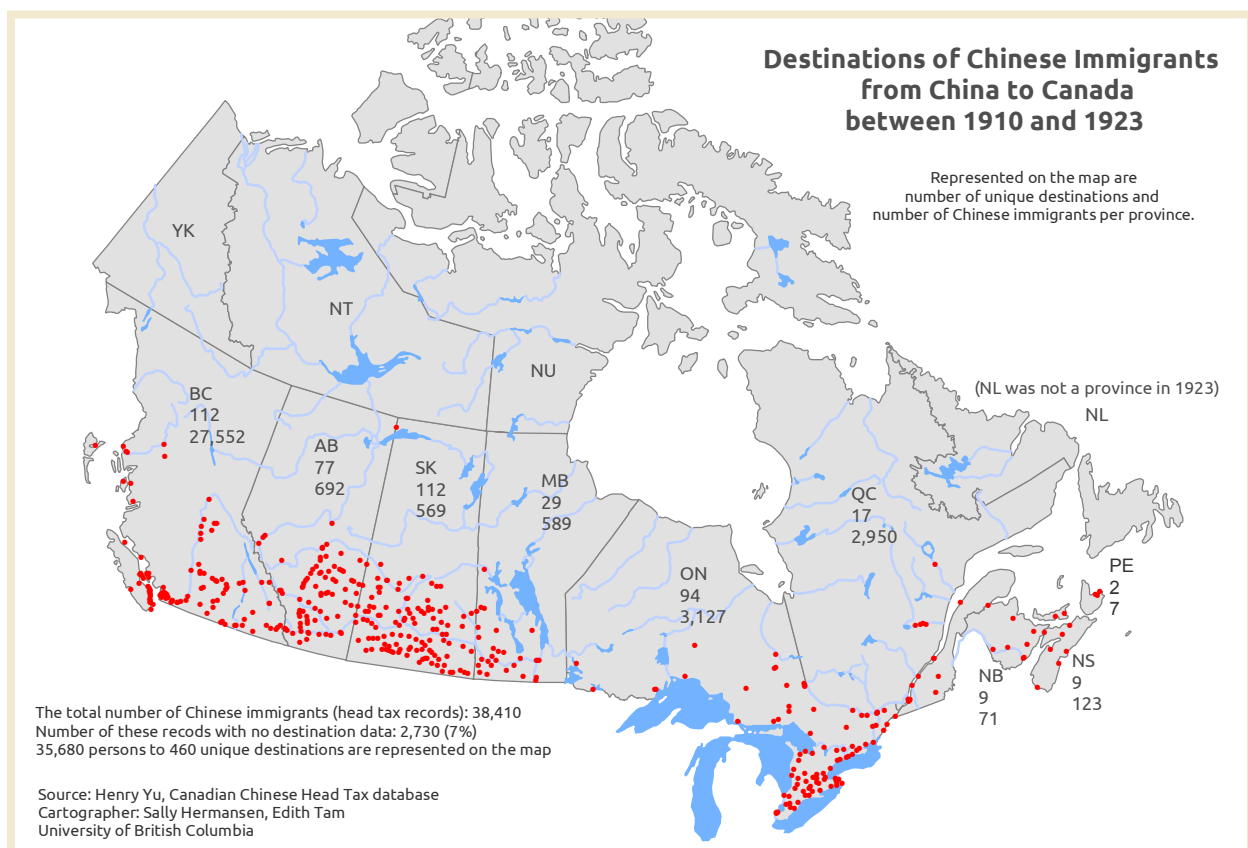
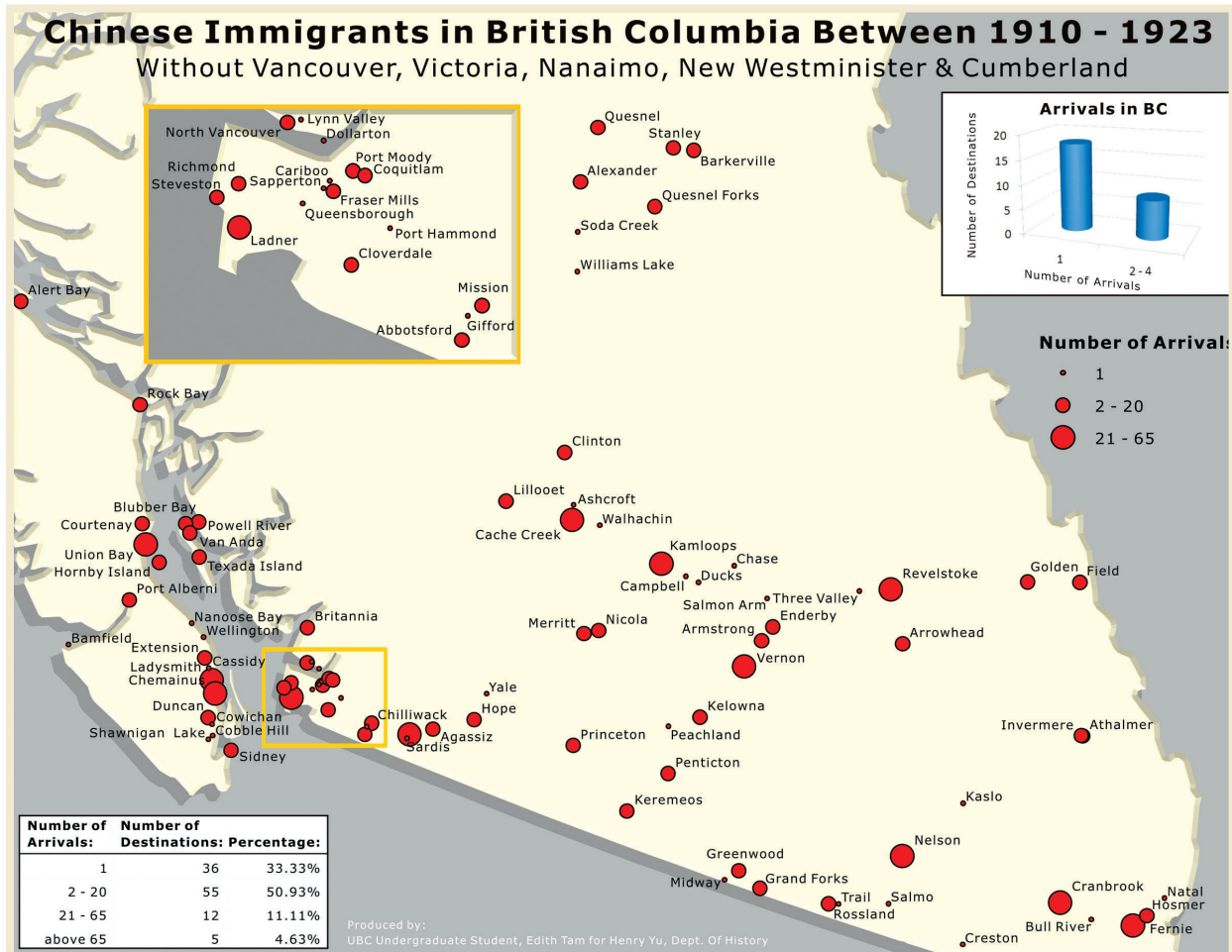


Figure I—Destinations of Chinese immigrants from China to Canada between 1910 and 1923

The map in Figure 2 shows where Chinese immigrants settled in BC between 1910 and 1923.



**Figure 2—Destinations of Chinese immigrants in British Columbia between 1910 and 1923
(without the top 5 destinations of Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, New Westminster, and Cumberland)**

Anti-Chinese political agitation was a characteristic not just of British Columbia but also the west coast of the United States as well as Australia and New Zealand. Colonies in Australia, such as Victoria in 1855 and South Australia in 1857, had passed “poll taxes” which were akin to the Canadian “head tax.” New Zealand had passed a similar Chinese poll tax in 1881. Anti-Chinese organizers in each of these countries, who wanted to create white settler societies that removed indigenous peoples and

excluded Chinese and Asians, shared ideas about how to scapegoat Chinese and what kinds of anti-Chinese laws worked best.

The *Chinese Immigration Act of 1923*, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, cut off further Chinese immigration, excluding all Chinese from entering Canada except for diplomats, foreign students, and those permitted under special circumstance. It was modeled on the Chinese Exclusion Act passed in the United States in 1882. In the 25 years before the Exclusion Act was finally repealed on May 14, 1947, less than 100 Chinese were able to enter Canada. The United States repealed its Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, several years before Canada.

Even after the repeal of the Exclusion Act and the return of voting rights to Chinese Canadians after 1947, it was still difficult for Chinese to enter Canada. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Cold War and lack of formal diplomatic relations between Canada and the Peoples Republic of China restricted immigration directly from Mainland China, but even migration from Hong Kong (still a British colony) and the Republic of China in Taiwan, a Cold War ally, was difficult. In 1957, after Douglas Jung, the first Chinese Canadian Member of Parliament, was elected, he and other Chinese and non-Chinese Canadians appealed to the Canadian government for changes that would allow family members of Chinese Canadians to come to Canada.

The real change occurred in 1967, when racial preferences were finally removed from Canadian immigration policy. The implementation of the so-called “points system” that assessed potential immigrants according to the overall need for their profession in Canada, and gave more points for higher education level as well as for the reunification with existing family members in Canada, created new waves of migrants from Hong Kong and ethnic Chinese from southeast Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America, and the United States. The diverse origins of these migrants were reflected in their great diversity in languages, skills, and education. These new migrants were often very different from those who had come in the late 19th and early 20th century. Some migrants who came from Taiwan spoke different forms of Chinese than the Cantonese migrants who had come earlier, and many highly educated migrants in the 1970s had little in common with those who had come earlier.

Many new migrants saw Canada as a safer and more stable place than where they were already. In particular, political unrest in Hong Kong in the late 1960s led many Hong Kong Chinese to emigrate to Canada in the 1970s. Unlike the earlier migrants to Canada who had come mainly from rural villages, these urbane new migrants came from the densely populated city of Hong Kong, and reflected the rapid economic and social changes that the city had experienced in the previous decades.

Other new ethnic Chinese migrants to Canada in the late 1970s and 1980s were more explicitly political refugees, such as the mostly Sino-Vietnamese who were labeled the “Boat People” because of the small and dangerous boats that they took to escape persecution in Vietnam. Often resettled through church networks and other community organizations that sponsored refugees, the thousands of Vietnamese refugees added yet another very distinct variation to a category of “Chinese Canadian” that only encompassed all of these different communities in the broadest way. Some of the Vietnamese migrants had been educated in French and went to Quebec, others could speak Cantonese and opened restaurants and businesses in the heart of existing Chinatowns.

In the decade leading up to 1997, many Hong Kong Chinese became concerned about what would happen after Hong Kong was transferred from the United Kingdom to the People’s Republic of China, especially after the violent Tiananmen incident on June 4, 1989, in Beijing. During this period, hundreds of thousands of migrants from Hong Kong came to Canada, especially to the larger urban centres of Vancouver and Toronto. New immigration policies such as the Business Migrant and Immigrant Entrepreneur programs targeted Chinese investors as preferred migrants, seemingly a wholesale change from the anti-Chinese discrimination and exclusion of the previous century. However, anti-Chinese sentiments still flared in the 1990s, as observers called Vancouver “Hongcouver” and Chinese were accused of building “monster houses” and cutting down old trees in neighborhoods such as Shaughnessy, which had not allowed Chinese homeowners for most of its history.

Although most Hong Kong Chinese migrants were not particularly wealthy in Hong Kong, where housing was extremely expensive, their ability to buy houses in neighborhoods that previously had not welcomed Chinese transformed the city of Vancouver, and outlying areas such as Richmond went from sparsely populated

agricultural and light industrial land to densely populated suburban developments and strip malls, full of businesses catering to the majority of residents who were now Chinese Canadian.

Between 1999 and 2009, the largest number of immigrants to Canada originated from the People's Republic of China. Often speaking Putonghua (also known in English as Mandarin), a different form of Chinese than the Cantonese often spoken by earlier Chinese migrants from Guangdong province and the city of Hong Kong, these recent migrants are broadening the already wide spectrum of what it means to be Chinese Canadian. Originating from areas all around China, they have come to Canada seeking a better education for their children, or to escape the pollution and environmental damage that China's rapid economic growth has caused. Many have benefited from China's growing economy, bringing newly earned wealth, whereas others have struggled to earn a living in Canada, just as earlier generations of Chinese immigrants did.

BC Gold Rushes – 1858 to 1870s

Summary

- There were two big gold rushes in British Columbia: one in 1858 on the Fraser River, and the other in 1862 in the Cariboo district.
- Chinese arrived in Victoria in large numbers from California where there had been a gold rush beginning in 1849, and others followed from Hong Kong and Guangdong, China.
- The Chinese named the gold rushes *Gum San*, which meant “Gold Mountain” in Cantonese.
- Victoria was the port of entry for miners to obtain licenses to prospect and pan for gold in BC.
- Many Chinese remained in Victoria, supplying provisions to the gold fields and acting as labour contractors for the developing industries of farming, fishing and logging.
- After the gold rushes in 1870, many Chinese Canadians stayed on in the communities growing fresh produce for local markets, opening laundries, becoming cooks, and helping develop the agriculture, mining, logging, and fishing industries in BC.

Backgrounder

There were two big gold rushes in British Columbia: one in 1858 on the Fraser River from Hope to north of Lillooet, in the territories of the Sto:lo, the Stl'atl'imc, and the Nlaka'pamux, and the other in 1862 in the Cariboo in the territories of the Secwepemc, the Tsilhqot'in, and the Dakelh. There were also a number of smaller gold rushes. The Chinese arrived in large numbers, sailing north from California where there had been a gold rush beginning in 1849, and others followed from Hong Kong and Guangdong, China, to seek their fortune. The Chinese named the places they went during the gold rushes in North America and Australia *Gum San*,

which meant “Gold Mountain” in the Cantonese language that they spoke. The name *Gum San* referred to the gold that could be found, but also to the wealth that could be made even if you did not mine for gold, and so 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 the port of entry for miners to obtain licenses to prospect and pan for gold in BC. Fort Victoria at the time had a population of about 500; most were Hudson’s Bay Company employees and farmers. With the discovery of gold the population swelled to over 20,000. Several hundred Chinese remained in Victoria supplying provisions to the gold fields, providing services to the swollen population of Victoria, or acting as labour contractors for the developing industries of farming, fishing and logging. They also started import businesses and worked as small merchants, building a strong community in the city and up the Fraser River in towns such as Hope, Yale, Lillooet, Quesnel, and Barkerville. By the end of the 1860s there were approximately 7,000 Chinese living in British Columbia.

A second wave of Chinese migration occurred in the early 1860s as news of the Cariboo Gold Rush went around the world. Chinese often mined areas that others had bypassed or given up on where the gold was not easily accessible. Because of their experience in other gold fields in California and Australia, Chinese knew many mining techniques, including how to divert water from streams many kilometres away to help extract more gold. They often worked in large organized groups that shared costs and profits, and would return year after year, remaining at a location and growing food so that they could stay longer.

The Chinese were also employed as labourers to build the 614 kilometer Cariboo Wagon Road; digging ditches, hauling gravel and building the road into the steep sides of the Fraser Canyon. Chinese labourers were heavily involved in irrigation, creating channels to divert water for drinking, farming, and mining. They also operated grocery stores and restaurants, and grew fresh vegetables and other crops, so there was less reliance on expensive imported food.

After the gold rushes ended around 1870, most people left the territory, but many Chinese stayed to continue mining and operate businesses that served other immigrants and local First Nations communities. In 1885, a gold mine near Lillooet earned \$7 million. Chinese Canadians also created many industries such as “market gardens” growing fresh produce for local markets, and they helped develop the agriculture, mining, logging, and fishing industries in BC. Chinese Canadians also opened laundries and became cooks, because the overwhelming number of gold rush miners were men who paid dearly for their clothes to be washed and food to be cooked. These were all businesses from which Chinese Canadians continued to find gold in *Gum San*, long after there was no more gold to be found in the ground.

Victoria – An Early History

Summary

- The Coast Salish people, including the Songhees, had established settlements on the southern tip of Vancouver Island for thousands of years before the first non-indigenous peoples arrived in the late 1700s.
- In 1841, James Douglas established a fur trading post next to a Songhees village in the area of present-day Victoria.
- In 1843, Fort Camosun was built using local First Nations labourers who were paid with Hudson's Bay blankets.
- In 1846, the settlement was renamed Fort Victoria in honour of the Queen.
- In 1849, the crown established the Colony of Vancouver Island and granted the Hudson's Bay Company exclusive rights over the island.
- In 1851, James Douglas was appointed Governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island.
- In 1858, the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush brought new immigrants to British Columbia from California, including many Chinese.
- In 1859, the government moved the Songhees village that existed long before the first trading post was established, to the far side of Victoria harbour.
- In 1862, Victoria was incorporated as a city.
- In 1866, the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia united. Victoria became the new provincial capital in 1871, when British Columbia joined Confederation.
- Chinese immigrants settled into a densely populated neighbourhood in the north end of downtown Victoria, which is Canada's oldest Chinatown.

Backgrounder

The southern tip of what is now Vancouver Island is the traditional homeland of several communities of the Coast Salish First Nation, including the Songhees people. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Coast Salish people had established settlements in the area thousands of years before the first non-indigenous peoples, including Europeans and Chinese, arrived in the late 1700s.

In 1841, James Douglas established a fur trading post next to a Songhees village in the area of present-day Victoria. In 1843, Fort Camosun was built using local First Nations labourers who were paid with Hudson's Bay blankets. In 1846, the settlement was renamed Fort Victoria in honour of the Queen.

In 1849, the crown established the Colony of Vancouver Island and granted the Hudson's Bay Company exclusive rights over the island, with the condition that a settlement be established within five years. The new town, which would become the capital of the new colony, was laid out on the site. In 1851, James Douglas was appointed Governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island.

In 1858, the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush brought new immigrants to British Columbia from California, including many Chinese. Victoria quickly became the new supply centre for miners on their way to the Fraser Canyon gold fields, resulting in a population explosion. That same year, James Douglas' role as Governor was extended to include the newly declared Colony of British Columbia.

In 1859, the government moved the Songhees village that existed long before the first trading post was established, to the far side of Victoria harbour. The Songhees village was subsequently moved to a reserve far outside the city.

Victoria was incorporated as a city in 1862. In 1866, an Act of the British Parliament united the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. Victoria became the new provincial capital in 1871, when British Columbia joined Confederation.

Upon joining Confederation, the federal government promised to extend the Canadian Pacific Railway to British Columbia. Demand for labourers to help build the Canadian Pacific Railway encouraged more Chinese to immigrate. Victoria had been the major entry port of Chinese immigration into British North America since the gold rush.

Chinese immigrants settled into a densely populated neighbourhood in the north end of downtown Victoria, which is Canada's oldest Chinatown and the second oldest in North America after San Francisco's. Then as now, Chinatown was a thriving centre of commerce, and home to theatres, schools, churches and temples.

Physical Segregation of Chinese Canadians – Chinatowns

Summary

- 1850s to 1870s, Chinese-Canadians built stores and businesses in Nanaimo and Victoria on Vancouver Island, and in New Westminster, Barkerville, and other gold mining towns on BC's mainland.
- Some racist laws restricted where Chinese Canadians could own land or build, and others restricted where they could work or whom Chinese Canadian businesses could hire.
- Affordable rooming houses for Chinese labourers catered to workers in towns and cities who moved around the province working in logging, mining, fish canneries, and agriculture. Many services grew to support these workers.
- Initially a collection of wooden huts, Chinatowns in Victoria and Vancouver rapidly evolved into dense clusters of businesses, theatres, schools, churches, temples and associations.
- Many small towns in BC and across Canada had at least one or more businesses run by Chinese Canadians, usually small cafés, restaurants, laundries, or general stores.

Background

Chinese labourers were an essential part of fur trade forts all along the west coast of North America during the early 1800s. Along with migrants from around the world, Chinese arrived in Victoria in 1858 for the Fraser Gold Rush, and later for the Cariboo Gold Rush in 1862. From the late 1850s to 1870s, Chinese built stores and other businesses in Nanaimo and Victoria on Vancouver Island, and in New Westminster, Barkerville, Yale, Lytton and other gold mining towns on BC's mainland. They also helped build Vancouver before it became incorporated as a city in 1886.

Although Chinese Canadians lived and worked in every city and small town in British Columbia, they often faced racism, especially in the larger cities of Vancouver, Victoria, New Westminster, and Nanaimo where the municipal governments often passed anti-Chinese laws. Some laws restricted where Chinese Canadians could own land or build, and others restricted where they could work or whom Chinese Canadian businesses could hire. In mining towns such as Nanaimo, mining companies leased or built wooden shacks for labourers that separated Chinese and Japanese from other workers.

Many Chinese immigrants came to Canada as labourers and were often sponsored by Chinese Canadian merchants and contractors already in Canada. These new arrivals usually worked for earlier immigrants who had already established businesses. Affordable rooming houses in cities and towns catered to workers who moved around the province working in logging, mining, fish canneries, and agriculture. Because they moved around so much, they needed temporary housing at different times of the year when they were between jobs, and many other services also grew in cities to support these workers and help those in need. These clusters of businesses, restaurants, musical societies, and mutual aid associations came to be known in Canada and the United States by the English term “Chinatowns.” Initially a collection of wooden huts, Chinatowns in Victoria and Vancouver rapidly evolved into dense clusters of businesses, theatres, schools, churches, temples and associations. After 1910, Vancouver’s Chinatown surpassed Victoria’s to become the largest in the province.

Non-Chinese outsiders often saw Chinatowns as exotic and strange, even though they had existed right from the time when cities such as Victoria and Vancouver were built. People who did not like the Chinese would accuse Chinatowns of being “dirty” and “dangerous.” Many anti-Chinese political organizers pushed the government to pass laws that would make life difficult for Chinese Canadians, and many laws targeted the businesses and buildings in Chinatowns. When there was a large anti-Asian riot in 1907, vandals and rioters broke windows and took and destroyed property in Vancouver’s Chinatown and the nearby Japanese Canadian neighborhood on Powell Street.

Even though Chinatowns became well known, however, most Chinese Canadians did not live or work in the large Chinatowns of Vancouver and Victoria. In small towns across Canada and the United States, Chinese Canadians were often integral parts of the local community and their lives were less shaped by racism than in larger cities. Almost every small town in BC and across Canada had at least one or more businesses run by Chinese Canadians, usually small cafés, restaurants, laundries, or general stores. The owners and their families were often accepted and respected as members of the community. In Barkerville, the Chinese Canadian businesses and buildings were actually in a better location in town than the non-Chinese buildings and they were less affected by the annual flooding. Although sometimes people have referred to these businesses in small towns run by Chinese Canadians as “Chinatowns” this is not an accurate term, since many times these businesses were not located together in one place, and the families who ran the businesses lived and worked alongside everyone else in town.

Chinese Disenfranchisement – 1872

Summary

- Under the *Alien Labour Act* (1861), Chinese who had taken the oaths of residence and allegiance, were entitled to all the 'rights and capacities' of a natural born subject.
- In 1872, the first Legislative Assembly passed the *Qualification and Registration of Voters Act*, which excluded "Chinese and Indians" (First Nations) from the provincial electoral franchise.
- In 1879, a provincial government committee drafted a letter demanding the federal government take measures to prevent Chinese immigration to BC.
- In 1885, the federal government imposed a Head Tax of \$50 on Chinese immigrants. Only Chinese were required to pay a Head Tax, which was designed to discourage Chinese immigration to Canada.
- In 1895–96, new legislation again denied Chinese of the right to vote provincially and federally.
- In 1920, the *Dominion Elections Act* confirmed that Asians would not be granted the franchise (the right to vote).
- The 1948 *Dominion Elections Act* was repealed and the right to vote was extended to Canadians of Asian origin.

Backgrounder

The first groups of Chinese to migrate to the west coast came as workers in fur trade posts, beginning with the John Meares expedition to Nuu-chah-nulth territory (Nootka Sound) in 1788. Along with French Canadians, Native Hawaiians, and Scots, Chinese were a common part of early fur trade posts up and down the west coast all the way to northern California. During the Fraser Gold Rush in 1858, many Chinese sailed from San Francisco to Victoria, and as non-indigenous settlement in British Columbia grew, Chinese made up a large proportion of the non-indigenous population.

The *Alien Labour Act* (1861) stated that persons belonging to a foreign country who complete three years of continuous residence in The Colony of Vancouver Island, and who had taken the oaths of residence and allegiance, were entitled to all the 'rights and capacities' of a natural born subject. Chinese were able to "naturalize" along with other migrants to Vancouver Island and British Columbia from around the world. However, some migrants began to organize politically around the label "white," defining themselves as being superior or more deserving than those who did not have European ancestry.

In 1872, one year after British Columbia entered Confederation, the first Legislative Assembly passed the *Qualification and Registration of Voters Act*, which specifically excluded "Chinese and Indians" (First Nations) from the provincial electoral franchise even though they represented nearly 62 percent of BC's population at the time.

The people who wanted to organize British Columbia to be a "white man's province" (a phrase used by BC Premier Richard McBride) wanted to clear indigenous peoples from their lands onto reserves, and to deprive Chinese of the right to vote, the ability to work in desirable jobs, or to own land. In 1879, a provincial government committee drafted a letter demanding the federal government take measures to prevent Chinese immigration to BC. In 1884, new legislation prohibited Chinese from acquiring crown land, and required every Chinese over the age of 14 to purchase an annual residential license. In 1885, following completion of the CP Railway, the federal government imposed a Head Tax of \$50 on Chinese immigrants. Only Chinese were required to pay a Head Tax, which was designed to discourage Chinese immigration.

to Canada as well as to raise revenues that were split between the BC and federal government.

In 1895–96, new legislation again denied Chinese of the right to vote in BC, and made the federal voters' lists dependent on who appeared on the provincial voters' lists. This meant that Chinese-Canadians lost the federal vote. Chinese Canadians were also prevented from entering many occupations when the professional bodies representing lawyers, accountants, pharmacists, and other professions, passed regulations making it a requirement that their members appear on the voters' lists.

In 1920, the *Dominion Elections Act* confirmed that Asians would not be granted the franchise (the right to vote). Then in 1923, the federal government passed the *Chinese Immigration Act*, otherwise known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. This new legislation banned almost all immigration of Chinese into Canada, except for diplomats, foreign students, and those who were granted special permission. The Chinese Exclusion Act remained in effect until 1947.

It was not until 1948 that the *Dominion Elections Act* was repealed and the right to vote was extended to Canadians of Asian origin.

Building of the Canadian Pacific Railway – 1880 to 1885

Summary

- In 1871, the federal government promised that, within 10 years, a transcontinental railroad would connect BC with the rest of Canada. Construction was delayed until 1880.
- In 1880, Chinese labour recruiters in San Francisco were contracted to bring in Chinese railway workers who were experienced from building the second transcontinental railroad in the United States.
- Chinese labour was also recruited in Guangdong province. In 1882, ten ships sailed from Hong Kong to Victoria.
- While white workers earned \$1.50 - \$2.50 a day, Chinese workers earned as little as \$1.00 a day— and provided their own food, clothing, transportation to the worksite and equipment, which was not required of white workers.
- Chinese workers lived in camps, sleeping in tents or boxcars and cooked over open fires. Many died from diseases such as smallpox and cholera, and others from scurvy and starvation.
- Chinese workers died in worksite accidents, fires, collapsed tunnels and bridges, landslides and dynamite blasts. Many of these deaths were not recorded, and families of the Chinese workers killed were neither notified of the deaths nor compensated.
- Between 400 and 2,200 Chinese workers died during the construction of the CPR.

Backgrounder

One condition of British Columbia joining Confederation in 1871 was a promise by the federal government that a transcontinental railroad would connect BC with the rest of Canada. The railway was to be started within two years and completed within 10 years of BC joining Confederation, but politics, finances and scandal delayed construction until 1880.

The 600-kilometres long western section of the railway would link a mountainous and rocky region, from Port Moody on the coast to the interior of BC west of Revelstoke. Andrew Onderdonk, the American head engineer and construction contractor on the project, promised upon signing the contracts in 1879 that he would only use Aboriginal and Chinese workers if he could not find enough white workers. He advertised for 3000 workers in California, with the restriction that they must be white men. The first load of 238 arrived in March 1881, and the *Daily Colonist* reported that when their ship arrived in Yale from San Francisco, “they got hold of liquor and made Yale howl. On the first night three or four fights occurred and twelve of the rowdies were sent to jail.” Many of the workers soon left the construction, and Onderdonk later referred to them as the “most useless lot of broken down gamblers, bar keepers, clerks, etc.” (Lily Chow, *Blood and Sweat over the Railway Tracks: Chinese Labourers Constructing the Canadian Pacific Railway, 1880–1885*, page 37). Even after raising his wage offer to \$2.00 per day, he still could not recruit enough workers. In 1880, Onderdonk contracted with Chinese labour recruiters in San Francisco to bring in Chinese railway workers. The Chinese were able to negotiate low prices for the labour because they were experienced from building the second trans-continental railroad in the United States. They brought in teams of workers efficiently and at low cost by ship both from California and from southern China. Many of the workers from California had experience building railroads through similar mountainous terrain. Recruiters in Guangdong province arranged passage to Canada and employment contracts, in return for 2.2% of the individual’s wages. In 1882, ten ships sailed from Hong Kong to Victoria, which took several months. Food and water were limited and many men died on the journey.

Compared to their white counterparts who earned \$1.50 - \$2.50 a day, Chinese workers earned as little as \$1.00 a day— and provided their own food, clothing, transportation to the worksite and equipment, which was not required of white workers. Their diet consisted of rice, dried salmon and tea. At the time, the wages in British Columbia were among the highest for labourers in North America, and much higher than for labour in Guangdong, and so Chinese workers continued to come to Canada.

Living conditions for Chinese working the railroad were challenging. They lived in camps, sleeping in tents or boxcars and cooked over open fires. In the freezing winters, many became ill. Many died from diseases such as smallpox and cholera, and others 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: clearing and grading the roadbed and blasting tunnels through rocks with explosives. Worksite accidents, fires, collapsed tunnels and bridges, landslides and dynamite blasts killed many workers. Many of these deaths were not recorded, and families of the Chinese workers killed were neither notified of the deaths nor compensated.

It has been estimated that approximately one Chinese worker died for every foot of track laid through the Fraser Canyon by the time it was completed in 1885. Other estimates claim that a Chinese worker died for every mile (2.2 kilometres) of track laid in BC (385 miles or 619 kilometres). This means between 400 and 2,200 Chinese workers died during the construction of the CPR. It is difficult to verify how many workers died, since many were left buried in unmarked graves along the tracks or the bodies were not recovered after being buried by landslides or dynamite blasts. We know, however, that the work was dangerous and many were killed.

Yip Sang and the Wing Sang Company

Summary

- Yip Sang was born in 1845 in Guangdong, China.
- In 1864, he emigrated to the gold fields of San Francisco.
- In 1881, Yip Sang came to seek his fortune in BC's gold rush.
- He was hired by the Kwong On Wo Company as a foreman on the CPR.
- In 1888, after the CPR was completed, he settled in Vancouver and started the Wing Sang Company importing and exporting goods.
- Yip Sang helped found Vancouver's first Chinese school, the first Chinese hospital, the Chinese Benevolent Association, and the Chinese Empire Reform Association.
- Yip Sang died in 1927 as a respected citizen of Vancouver and the "unofficial mayor" of Chinatown.

Backgrounder

Yip Sang (葉春田), a renowned community leader and philanthropist, was born in Guangdong, China in 1845. In 1864, at the age of nineteen, he sailed for several months across the Pacific aboard a three-mast sailing ship to San Francisco, California hoping to strike it rich in the gold fields. He was unsuccessful panning for gold, so instead he washed dishes, cooked, and rolled cigars.

In 1881, at the age of 36, he came to British Columbia hoping once again he would discover gold and become rich. But by the time he arrived, most of the gold was gone. Instead, Yip Sang sold dusty sacks of coal door to door in Vancouver, which Chinese people called "Saltwater City". Yip Sang's luck would finally change when he gained employment with the Kwong On Wo Company as a Chinese foreman on the

Canadian Pacific Railway line. Eventually he would start his own business with the CPR and manage over 3,000 Chinese men working in the Fraser Canyon.

After the CPR was completed, Yip Sang settled in Vancouver. In 1888 he started the Wing San Company (the name was changed, after his death, to the Yip Sang Company) importing and exporting goods. His store on Pender Street, in Vancouver's Chinatown, became a meeting place for the Chinese community to buy goods, reserve tickets for a steamship back to China, to mail and receive letters from China, and deposit money in the Wing Sang Company branch of a Hong Kong-based trust company.

Yip Sang became most well known for his charity work. He helped start Vancouver's first Chinese school, the first Chinese hospital and the Chinese Benevolent Association. He also helped found the Chinese Empire Reform Association that supported political reform of the Qing government in China. He married four times, had 23 children and 67 grandchildren. Yip Sang died in 1927 as a respected citizen of Vancouver and the "unofficial mayor" of Chinatown.

Chinese Immigration Act (Head Tax) – 1885

Summary

- Under the 1885 *Chinese Immigration Act*, the Canadian government imposed a \$50 Head Tax on Chinese workers and family members wanting to enter Canada. No immigrants from any other country were ever required to pay such a tax to enter Canada.
- The Head Tax meant family members in China were left behind, and either never reunited or lived apart in poverty in China for many years.
- The Head Tax was raised to \$100 in 1901, and \$500 in 1903.
- The Head Tax remained until 1923, when the government amended the *Chinese Immigration Act* and excluded Chinese from immigrating to Canada until 1947.

Background

When the CPR was completed in 1885, and the labour of Chinese railroad workers was no longer needed, anti-Chinese organizers convinced workers of European heritage to organize around racism. Excluding non-whites from newly organizing unions, labour leaders and politicians used anti-Chinese slogans to rally “white” workers and voters (the franchise had been taken away from Chinese in 1871 right after BC joined Confederation and so they could not vote against racist laws that targeted them). Arguments were made that white workers would receive higher pay and access to all of the jobs if Chinese were excluded.

Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, in a speech in the House of Commons on May 4th, 1885, argued for the exclusion of Chinese from Canada, even though he earlier supported Chinese labourers during the building of the CPR. After a [Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration](#), the federal government tried to discourage Chinese immigration while at the same time raising revenue for public spending. Under the *Chinese Immigration Act* (1885), the Canadian government imposed a \$50 Head Tax on Chinese workers and family members wanting to enter Canada.

Section included in the *Chinese Immigration Act* (1885):

s. 4 “...every person of Chinese origin shall pay into the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Canada, on entering Canada, at the port or other place of entry, the sum of fifty dollars, except the following persons who shall be exempt from such payment, that is to say, first: the members of the Diplomatic Corps, or other Government representatives and their suite and their servants, consuls and consular agents; and second: tourists, merchants, men of science and students...”

No immigrants from any other country were ever required to pay such a tax to enter Canada. The Head Tax meant family members in China were left behind, and either never reunited or lived apart in poverty in China for many years.

Although the Head Tax was a significant financial burden for Chinese immigrants, who needed many years to pay off the loans that they required to pay for their passage and the Head Tax, over 97,000 Chinese still came to Canada between 1885 and 1923. Chinese immigration did drop from 8,000 in 1882 to 124 in 1887. However, the following decade saw an increase in newcomers from China. Consequently, the Head Tax was raised to \$100 in 1901, and \$500 in 1903—which was the equivalent to about two years pay. The Head Tax remained until 1923, when the government amended the *Chinese Immigration Act* and excluded Chinese from immigrating to Canada until 1947.

On June 22nd, 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivered an apology on behalf of Canada, in the House of Commons, for the Head Tax and other anti-Chinese legislation imposed on Chinese immigrants. And on May 15, 2014, BC Premier Christy Clark apologized on behalf of the Province of British Columbia to Chinese Canadians for the provincial government’s historical wrongs against the Chinese from 1872 to 1947.

The federal government and the British Columbia provincial government split, almost evenly, the \$23 million collected between 1885-1923, worth nearly \$1.5 billion in value in 2006 at the time of the Federal government apology.

Chinese Canadian Community Associations and Organizations

Summary

- In BC's history, organized associations were formed with the explicit purpose of combating the racism against Chinese.
- The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, one of the oldest Chinese Canadian organizations, was officially formed in 1884.
- These organizations raised funds, lobbied governments and politicians and challenged racist legislation.
- In 1920s Victoria, The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Victoria, the Chinese Canadian Club (Tongyuan Association), and the Chinese Commerce Association (The Chinese Chamber of Commerce), contested the segregation of Chinese students in the school system.

Background

Because of the long history of anti-Chinese legislation and racial discrimination that dominated much of the life of Chinese Canadians through most of the history of British Columbia, the community often organized associations with the explicit purpose of combating the racism against Chinese. For instance, three organizations in Victoria came together in the 1920s to contest the segregation of Chinese students in the school system. The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Victoria, the Chinese Canadian Club (Tongyuan Association), and the Chinese Commerce Association (The Chinese Chamber of Commerce), worked together to raise funds, lobbied government officials and politicians, and communicated information about what was going on to the broader community, both Chinese and non-Chinese.

The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), one of the oldest Chinese Canadian organizations in Canada, is a good example of how Chinese Canadians worked together to struggle against racial discrimination. Officially formed

in 1884 in Victoria, the CCBA was an umbrella organization that brought together representatives from many existing associations: for instance family associations such as the Wong Association and the Lee Association that were made up of people with the same family lineage names, or associations such as the Hoy Sun Ning Yung Benevolent Association of Victoria that represented people from the same district (台山 Taishan county) in China. As an “umbrella” organization, Chinese Benevolent Associations became a feature of many North American cities such as San Francisco, Vancouver, and Victoria as a response to anti-Chinese legislation. By organizing many separate associations, the CBAs could speak with one voice for the whole community, as well as work together to raise funds to hire the best lawyers in town to challenge legislation in court and/or to defend those targeted by racist legislation. These associations also performed other tasks that the whole community needed, such as arranging and paying for bodies to be returned to home villages in China after death, or providing support for those in need, or operating hospitals and schools.

Chinese Canadians also worked with non-Chinese organizations or in alliance with other communities to combat racism. In Vancouver, for instance, one of the leaders of the Chinese Benevolent Association, Foon Sien Wong, was also active in the Vancouver Civic Association, the forerunner of the BC Human Rights Council, and was a member of the Vancouver Citizenship Council and the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews. Both of these were broad-based organizations that brought together Canadians of many communities to work together against discrimination and for human rights, and equal rights, for citizens of every background.

Perhaps the best examples of how Chinese Canadian associations and organizations worked together and with others are events such as the “freeway fight” in the 1960s and 1970s when Vancouver city planners began demolishing the areas around Chinatown in order to build a new freeway. Chinese Canadians organized together with many others in Vancouver to protest and eventually they stopped the freeway, which helped make Vancouver a very different city compared to others in North America and which benefited all of the residents of the city.

Anti-Asian Riots in Vancouver – 1907

Summary

- September 4, 1907, a mob of 400-500 men, organized by the Asiatic Exclusion League, began an anti-Asian riot against Punjabi Sikhs working in a lumber mill in Bellingham, Washington.
- September 7, 1907, leaders of the Asiatic Exclusion League convinced the Vancouver District Trades Council to begin their own anti-Asian riot.
- Leaders of the anti-Asian movement gave speeches that blamed Asians for economic problems faced by “white” workers.
- Rioters marched through Vancouver’s Chinatown, destroying property and assaulting people. Rioters then moved on to the Japanese Canadian community.
- Federal Minister of Labour, Mackenzie King, conducted a commission to investigate the riots. The commission ended up financially compensating Chinese Canadian and Japanese Canadian businesses that had been damaged in the riot.
- The aftermath of the anti-Asian riot of 1907 shaped how politicians appealed to voters and how unions organized around white supremacy and Asian exclusion.

Backgrounder

On September 4, 1907, a mob of 400-500 men, organized by the Asiatic Exclusion League, began a riot in Bellingham, Washington, that targeted the South Asian workers at a local lumber mill. Most of the workers were Punjabi Sikhs who had come to Bellingham from India through British Columbia. The police and local authorities did not stop the rioters as they used physical violence to beat up the workers and drove them from the town. In fact, the authorities supported the rioters, and by the next day hundreds of Indian workers had been rounded up in the local jail, with the clear message that they were not wanted in town and should leave for their own “protection.” Many of the victims of the riot returned to Vancouver,

while others kept searching for work in other parts of the west coast all the way down to California.

Three days later, leaders of the Asiatic Exclusion League who had traveled to Vancouver had convinced the Vancouver District Trades Council, representing a number of local unions, to begin their own anti-Asian riot. Beginning at the City Hall at the time, near the corner of what is now Main and Hastings, leaders of the anti-Asian movement gave speeches that blamed Asians for economic problems faced by “white” workers, ignoring the fact that most of the industries such as logging, fishing, canning, and mining employed both Asian and “white” workers, and that they faced similar challenges as labourers. Instead, the anti-Asian organizers chose to scapegoat Asian workers as “cheap” labour, arguing that “white” workers should be paid more and that Asian workers should be removed both from their jobs and from British Columbia. After the speeches, rioters marched through the Chinatown on Pender Street, destroying property and assaulting anyone who stood in their way. By the time rioters had finished with Chinatown and had moved towards the Japanese Canadian community on Powell Street, the residents had enough warning to be prepared and to arm themselves. Japanese Canadians from as far away as Steveston came to defend their community, fighting back against the rioters with the result that the property damage was much less than in Chinatown.

The riots of 1907 were an important historical moment. The lesson that violence and racial discrimination could be used to organize European migrants to think of themselves as “white” was reinforced. In the wake of the riots, the Minister of Labour in the Canadian government, Mackenzie King, conducted a commission to investigate the riot. Although the commission ended up financially compensating Chinese Canadian and Japanese Canadian businesses that had been damaged in the riot, the Federal Government also responded the following year with the Continuous Journey regulation of 1908 that cut off further immigration from India, and the Hayashi-Lemieux Agreement between Japan and Canada (the so-called “Gentlemen’s Agreement” because it avoided humiliating the Japanese government which at that time was a diplomatic ally of Great Britain) that forced Japan to voluntarily restrict the number of migrants to Canada from Japan.

The King Commission also recommended the passing of the first anti-drug law in Canada, outlawing the manufacturing of opium. Missionaries and reformers who had been arguing for a ban of opium effectively used the discovery by the King Commission that several of the businesses damaged during the riot and asking for compensation were involved in the processing and manufacture of opium. Amidst the broader anti-Chinese and anti-Asian rhetoric that followed the 1907 riot, the argument that opium use threatened white women at the same time that male Asian workers threatened male white workers was used to pressure Federal politicians to pass anti-Asian exclusion policies, as well as banning opium.

In the decades that followed the anti-Asian riot of 1907, anti-Asian politics became the norm. It shaped how politicians appealed to voters, and how unions organized around white supremacy and Asian exclusion. Mackenzie King would later serve as Prime Minister, when Japanese Canadian removal and the liquidation of their property was implemented. This supported the goals of anti-Asian organizers, including the complete removal and exclusion of Japanese Canadians from British Columbia to be largely fulfilled through the policies of the Securities Commission that was set up by the federal government to oversee their removal.

By the late 20th century, the importance of the 1907 riots as a catalyst for anti-Asian exclusion and racism had largely been forgotten or ignored. But in 2007 a wide spectrum of Chinese Canadian, Japanese Canadian, and South Asian Canadian community organizations, along with the Vancouver District Labour Council—which had originally helped organize the anti-Asian riot in Vancouver—marked the 100th anniversary of the riots with a series of events, culminating in a Reconciliation Dinner and a walk along the original route of the rioters. The leaders of the labour unions acknowledged and apologized for the decision of the labour movement to use white supremacy and anti-Asian racism and violence to organize workers a century before.

Chinese Freemasons in Canada

Summary

- The Chinese Freemasons were a fraternal society that played a prominent role in the social organization of Chinese Canadian communities.
- This organization had no formal affiliation with the Freemasons of Europe or North America.
- The Chinese Freemasons served as a mutual aid association among Cantonese men who had migrated overseas.
- Chinese Freemasons in Vancouver and in British Columbia donated large sums of money to the nationalist revolution in China in 1911 under Dr. Sun Yat-sen that overthrew the Qing Dynasty.

Backgrounder

The Chinese Freemasons (洪門) were a fraternal society that played a prominent role in the social organization of Chinese Canadian communities. Originally a secret sworn brotherhood formed to overthrow the rulers of the Qing Dynasty, the Freemasons served as a mutual aid association among Cantonese men who had migrated overseas. They helped new arrivals, and would take care of members who were in need. Although the name “Chinese Freemasons” was used in English, they had no formal affiliation with the Freemasons of Europe or North America. One of the important historical roles that the Chinese Freemasons played in Vancouver and in British Columbia was to support the nationalist revolution in China in 1911 that overthrew the Qing Dynasty. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the first President of the Republic of China, travelled around the world raising funds to support the building of the new nation of China, and the Chinese Freemasons in British Columbia helped by donating large amounts. The Chinese Freemasons building in Vancouver was in fact mortgaged to raise funds for Dr. Sun.

The History of the Chinese Freemasons

by David Chuenyan Lai, historian

The Manchu overthrew the Ming Dynasty and established the Qing Dynasty in China. Many Ming loyalists formed secret societies with the objective of overthrowing the Manchu government and restoring the Ming Dynasty of the Han people. One of these secret organizations was the Hongmen or Hong League.

Many Chinese residents on the Pearl River delta in Guangdong Province went to California and later to British Columbia to join the gold rushes and railway construction. Many of these early Chinese immigrants were members of Hongmen. After their arrival, they established lodges of Hongmen and continued their fight against the Manchu government. Chee Kung Tong was the largest lodge of Hongmen in British Columbia. By 1910, over fifty Chee Kung Tong had been established in cities across Canada. Dr. Sun Yet Sen, a member of the Hongmen, arrived at Vancouver on 6 February 1911, and started fund-raising across Canada for the uprising in Canton. He received much help from members of Chee Kung Tong across Canada. After the success of the revolution, the Republic of China was established in 1912. Members of Chee Kung Tong planned to reorganize the Tong into a Dang (a political party) and participate in the discussion of China affairs.

In 1920, Chee Kung Tong in San Francisco started to use Chinese Freemasons as the English name for Chee Kung Tong. In 1925, Chee Kung Tong was renamed as China Chee Kung Dang (China Chee Kung Party). However, Hongmen members in some cities still wanted to keep the name of their lodge as Chee Kung Tong and did not want to use the new name. Finally, in 1944, all Chee Kung Tong members in North and South America agreed to add the word "Hongmen" and call their lodge China Hongmen Chee Kung Dang. November 4th 1945, Chee Kung Tong in Canada adopted the new name China Hongmen Chee Kung Dang. On August 1st, 1946, all overseas Chee Kung Tong members agreed that their lodge would call China Hongmen Minzhidang (China Hongmen People's Rule Party). On June 13th, 1947, Hongmen members in Canada for the first time used the name of China Hongmen Minzhidang to call for a Conference. On July 22nd, 1971, China Hongmen Minzhidang in Canada was officially registered as Chinese Freemasons' National Headquarters of Canada with the Canadian government.

China Hongmen Minzhidang in Canada continues to maintain Hongmen's three commitments of Loyalty, Righteousness and Chivalry, relying on righteous solidarity as its spiritual pillar. Furthermore, it takes benevolence as its basic goal, with emphasis on caring, righteousness and justice, and loving the motherland and the hometown. It advocates harmonious coexistence between communities and continues to support the peaceful unification of China.

Chinese Immigration Act (Chinese Exclusion Act) – 1923

Summary

- The *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1885 was repealed in 1923 and replaced with a more restrictive act commonly referred to as the Chinese Exclusion Act.
- This new legislation banned Chinese immigrants from entering Canada except for students, diplomats and merchants.
- The Act was passed on July 1st, 1923—Dominion Day. The Chinese Canadian community renamed this celebration “Humiliation Day”, and, as a protest, closed their businesses and boycotted Dominion Day for years after.
- The Act was not repealed until 1947.

Backgrounder

The existing Head Tax in 1903 requiring Chinese immigrants to pay \$500 was not restrictive enough for some Canadians. Anti-Chinese organizers had been trying for decades for more restrictive legislation, and more people listened to their message during poor economic conditions. Calls for a complete ban on Chinese immigration originated in British Columbia, but also received support across Canada.

The *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1885 was repealed in 1923 and replaced with a more restrictive act commonly referred to as the Chinese Exclusion Act. This new legislation banned Chinese immigrants from entering Canada except for students, diplomats and merchants. Immigration to Canada was controlled or restricted for many countries, but only Chinese were completely barred from immigrating.

The *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1923 also required persons of Chinese origin, including Canadian-born Chinese and naturalized citizens, to be registered with the government and receive a certificate within twelve months. Also under the act, any Chinese person wanting to leave Canada had to register beforehand, and if they failed to do so, was treated as new immigrants on their return.

The Act was passed on July 1st, 1923—Dominion Day. The Chinese Canadian community renamed this celebration, Humiliation Day. As a protest, Chinese-Canadians closed their businesses and boycotted Dominion 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, which resulted in long periods of separation. Chinese wives were left to raise their children in China, and often experienced economic adversities 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, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 68. © Oxford University Press Canada 1998.

After decades of trying to overturn anti-Chinese legislation such as the 1923 Exclusion Act, Chinese Canadians and their allies were finally able to convince the Canadian government to repeal the Act in 1947. However, the long struggle to be treated in the same way as other Canadians was still not over. Although Chinese-Canadians also re-obtained the right to vote in elections in 1947, it was not until 1967 that Chinese wishing to immigrate to Canada were admitted under the same criteria as other applicants.

Chinese Participation in World War II – 1939 to 1945

Summary

- At the start of WW II in 1939, Chinese Canadians were barred from enlisting in the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Navy.
- In 1940, the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) called up Canadians for home defense, but specifically excluded Japanese Canadians and Chinese Canadians.
- Although they were unable to enlist, Chinese Canadians contributed greatly to Canada's war effort by joining the Red Cross, and working in war-related industries.
- When the NRMA was amended in 1942 to allow conscripts and volunteers to be sent overseas, Chinese Canadians were once again specifically excluded.
- In late 1942, the Royal Canadian Air Force lifted its ban on Chinese recruits.
- In 1943, the Royal Canadian Navy began allowing Canadian-born Chinese and Chinese born in Hong Kong to enlist.
- In 1944 Chinese Canadians were enlisted to work in Special Operations in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific, due to their language skills and perceived ability to blend in behind enemy lines.
- Over 600 Chinese Canadians served, in all three branches of the Canadian armed forces and British forces, during the Second World War.

Background

When Great Britain and its allies, including Canada, entered World War II in 1939, Chinese Canadians were barred from enlisting in the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Navy. Chinese Canadians were able to volunteer for the Canadian army, but most recruiters in British Columbia did not accept Chinese volunteers and so Chinese Canadians needed to enlist in other provinces.

In 1940, the *National Resources Mobilization Act* (NRMA) called up Canadians for home defense. The governments of Saskatchewan and British Columbia strongly opposed enlisting Asians into the armed forces, so acting on a request from the Premier of British Columbia, the NRMA specifically excluded Japanese Canadians and Chinese Canadians.

Although they were unable to enlist, Chinese Canadians contributed greatly to Canada's war effort by joining the Red Cross, working in war-related industries, and raising significant amounts of money through the purchase of victory bonds. Without the vote and subject to legalized racial discrimination, however, Chinese Canadians were deeply divided on the subject of military enlistment. Some argued that enlistment was the best path to the franchise and equality within the law, while others argued that the vote needed to come first before the Canadian-born generation of young men risked losing their lives fighting for a nation that treated them as second-class citizens.

After Japan attacked Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Canada declared war on Japan and became an ally of China. But when the NRMA was amended in 1942 to allow conscripts and volunteers to be sent overseas, Chinese Canadians were once again specifically excluded.

In late 1942, the Royal Canadian Air Force was the first of the Canadian services to lift its ban on Chinese recruits. In 1943, the Royal Canadian Navy followed suit and began allowing Canadian-born Chinese and Chinese born in Hong Kong to enlist. It was not until 1944, when the British War Office wanted Chinese Canadians to work in Special Operations in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific, due to their language skills and perceived ability to blend in behind enemy lines, that the NRMA was amended to call up Chinese Canadians.

Over 600 Chinese Canadians served, in all three branches of the Canadian armed forces and British forces, during the Second World War.

Chinese Immigration Act (Chinese Exclusion Act) Repealed – 1947

Summary

- In 1923, the federal government passed the *Chinese Immigration Act*, otherwise known as the Chinese Exclusion Act banning almost all immigration of Chinese into Canada.
- After Chinese Canadian participation in WW II, the Chinese community pushed for the right to vote.
- In 1947, following the war, the federal *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1923 was repealed, and the *Canadian Citizenship Act* came into effect.

Background

In 1923, the federal government passed the *Chinese Immigration Act*, otherwise known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. This legislation banned almost all immigration of Chinese to Canada, except for diplomats, foreign students, and those who were granted special permission. With so many Chinese already burdened with debt from the Head Tax, the Exclusion Act essentially shattered the dream of being able to unite and raise their families in Canada.

During World War II, the courageous efforts of Chinese Canadians serving abroad helped to sow the seeds of change. Meanwhile, Chinese Canadians continued to push for the right to vote at home. In 1947, following the war, the federal *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1923 was repealed, and the *Canadian Citizenship Act* came into effect.

For the first time in 75 years, Chinese Canadians were able to cast ballots in provincial and federal elections. Since membership in many professional associations was tied to the franchise, Chinese Canadians in BC were now legally permitted to enter fields such as medicine, law, pharmacy and accounting for the first time.

In practice, however, employment discrimination based on race would continue for decades.

Repealing the Act on paper was easy for the federal government, but for the many Chinese Canadians who endured the exclusion years, reconciling this difficult part of Canadian history would take generations.

Canadian Citizenship Act – 1947

The *Canadian Citizenship Act* came into effect on January 1, 1947, creating for the first time a distinct category of Canadian citizenship. Until that time, those in Canada were considered British subjects, with no uniform set of citizenship rights. The Citizenship Act conferred citizenship to children born in Canada (birthright citizenship), and set out rules for how immigrants could be naturalized.

Canadian citizenship and the franchise, however, were not extended to Chinese Canadians until April, 1947. Anti-Chinese legislation such as the 1923 *Chinese Immigration Act*, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, was repealed in March 1947, and Chinese Canadians were explicitly given the vote along with South Asian Canadians the following month. Japanese Canadians were not given the vote until two years later, in 1949. Canadians with Aboriginal status did not gain the vote until 1960. Because many professional associations in British Columbia had rules about members needing to be enfranchised, not being able to vote meant that Chinese Canadians and others denied the vote could not become doctors, lawyers, or other professionals until 1947.

Fair Employment Practices Act – 1956

Summary

- Throughout the 1950s most Canadian provinces, and the federal government, enacted legislation prohibiting racial and religious discrimination in employment and/or housing.
- On March 2, 1956, an Act, commonly known as the *Fair Employment Practices Act*, was enacted to prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of race, religion, colour, nationality, ancestry, or place of origin.
- The Act further prohibited the exclusion, expulsion or suspension of any person from a trade union based on these same grounds.
- Acts regarding fair practices in employment and housing would eventually evolve into comprehensive Human Rights Codes, beginning in the early 1960s.

Backgrounder

Although the disenfranchisement of Chinese Canadians and other Asian Canadians began to formally end in 1947, when the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, ancestry and place of origin continued. Japanese Canadians did not gain the right to vote or to return to the west coast until 1949.

Throughout the 1950s most Canadian provinces, and the federal government, enacted legislation prohibiting racial and religious discrimination in employment and/or housing.

On February 24, 1956, a bill was submitted to the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia called, *An Act to prevent Discrimination in Regard to Employment and in Regard to Membership in Trade-unions by Reason of Race, Religion, Colour, Nationality, Ancestry, or Place of Origin*. On March 2, 1956, the bill received Royal Assent and became commonly known as the *Fair Employment Practices Act*.

The Act prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of race, religion, colour, nationality, ancestry, or place of origin. The Act further prohibited the exclusion, expulsion or suspension of any person from a trade union based on these same grounds. The act was amended several times to further prohibit discrimination based on age, and to prohibit discrimination in employment applications, or advertisements for employment.

Acts regarding fair practices in employment and housing would eventually evolve into comprehensive Human Rights Codes, beginning in the early 1960s.

The *Fair Employment Practices Act* and subsequent human rights legislation gave those in Canada who were being discriminated against a legal means of recourse, and helped many Canadians to combat many continuing acts of racial discrimination in workplaces and housing.

Douglas Jung (鄭天華)

Summary

- Jung was born in Victoria on February 24, 1924
- In 1957, Jung was the first Chinese Canadian to be elected to be a Member of Parliament of Canada
- At the age of 15, in 1939, Jung voluntarily enlisted in the Canadian Army with the intention to change the status of Chinese Canadians through military service.
- In 1944, he was recruited by the British Special Operations Executive along with a group of other Chinese Canadian soldiers for a secret plan known as Operation Oblivion.
- He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws degrees in 1953.
- He ran in the riding of Vancouver Centre as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, winning his seat in 1957.
- Jung went on to represent Canada at the United Nations, and received the Order of Canada and the Order of British Columbia.
- Jung died in 2002 at the age of 77.

Backgrounder

Douglas Jung was the first Chinese Canadian to be elected as Member of Parliament of Canada in 1957; just ten years after Chinese Canadians had won their long fight to regain the right to vote. Jung played a key role in that struggle, having voluntarily enlisted in the Canadian Army in 1939 with an explicit intention of helping change the status of Chinese Canadians through military service.

Jung was born in Victoria on February 24, 1924, and so was only 15 years old when he enlisted. In 1944, he was recruited by the British Special Operations Executive along with a group of other Chinese Canadian soldiers for a secret plan known

as Operation Oblivion. Jung and his comrades were to be given special training at Commando Bay in the Okanagan so that they could be dropped behind enemy lines in Southeast Asia to help train and arm guerrilla forces to fight the Japanese Imperial Army. Sworn to secrecy for decades after the war was over, almost no Canadians knew about this dangerous mission, but the military service of Jung and other Chinese Canadians who had fought in World War II allowed Chinese Canadians to demand equal treatment with other veterans, and helped lead to Chinese Canadians regaining the right to vote in 1947.

Douglas Jung used funds provided to military veterans for education to attend the University of British Columbia, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws degrees in 1953. He was called to the Bar in British Columbia in 1954, and ran in the riding of Vancouver Centre as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, winning his seat in 1957. Serving as an MP in Prime Minister John Diefenbaker's government, Jung supported what became known as the "Confession program" which allowed Chinese Canadians who had irregular identification papers (so called "Paper Sons" who had evaded racially discriminatory immigration laws), to fix their illegal status. Jung went on to represent Canada at the United Nations, and continued to be a community leader after leaving political office, receiving the Order of Canada and the Order of British Columbia in recognition of his service. Jung died in 2002 at the age of 77 from complications after suffering a heart attack.

In 2007, a controversy erupted after a federal building in Vancouver was named after Howard Green, an MP who had been a vehement proponent of anti-Japanese legislation and the removal of Japanese Canadians from the West Coast during World War II. The building was renamed in honour of Douglas Jung, and was the first federal building in Canada to be named after a Chinese Canadian.

Chinese Adjustment Statement Program – 1960

Summary

- Chinese immigrants evaded racially discriminatory laws by acquiring, for themselves or their children, the identity of other people who were legally allowed into Canada or the United States.
- People (mostly males) who entered Canada and the United States by acquiring their identification were called “paper sons”.
- In 1960, a so-called “Confession” program was enacted by the federal government so that people could have their legal status adjusted to match their “true” identity.
- Between 1960–1970, 11, 569 Chinese Canadians adjusted their identity.

Backgrounder

Between 1885 and 1947, when Chinese immigration was restricted by the Head Tax or by outright exclusion, some Chinese immigrants found clever ways of evading the racially discriminatory laws. They acquired the identities of other people, who were legally allowed into Canada or the United States. Other immigrants, who could not prove who they were with a recognized birth certificate (in many rural Chinese villages there were no birth certifications that were legally recognized by the Canadian government), needed to purchase someone else’s birth certificate or identification, so that they would have an identity that was legally recognized by Canada. For many who wanted to bring children from China or Hong Kong, even after the end of Chinese exclusion in 1947, there were restrictions on the age of the children. So, in order to reunite the family, it was necessary to purchase a “paper” or false identity for a child who was considered too old for family reunification. Often, the false identity acquired was for a real person who existed. Other times, the identity was only on paper—for instance, a birth of a child that had been reported and therefore officially recognized by the Canadian or U.S. government, but for which there was no actual child born. This “paper son” was therefore a legal identity that

could be purchased for use by another person who was not legally able to enter Canada or the United States.

Paper sons were much more common in the United States than Canada. After Chinese were excluded from the United States in 1882, the necessity of using false identity papers in order to join other family members in the US became common, especially after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 destroyed many government records of Chinese Americans, particularly those who were born in the United States. With records destroyed, Chinese immigrants were able to create many more legal openings or immigration slots by providing other kinds of legal identification papers that the United States government would accept as proof of eligibility to enter the United States.

In 1960, thirteen years after Chinese immigration exclusion was repealed, and Chinese Canadians finally regained the vote, a so called “Confession” program was enacted by the federal government so that people whose legal identity did not match their actual identity could come forward, confess the details, and have their legal status adjusted to match their true identity. A similar Chinese Confession Program had been enacted in the United States in 1956, and under pressure from Chinese Canadian lawmakers such as MP Douglas Jung and community leaders such as Foon Sien Wong, the head of the Chinese Benevolent Association in Vancouver. The Canadian government followed suit. Between 1960–1970, 11, 569 Chinese Canadians adjusted their identity. Some others never came forward because the act of confessing often also exposed others, creating information that could be used against other people, even though amnesty was granted to those who came forward. Many Chinese Canadians distrusted the government because of its long history of anti-Chinese racism, and were wary of the program, fearing that even if the intentions of the government were sincere at that moment, that the information about illegal identities and activities could be used against the person or their family later.

Even after anti-Chinese discrimination and racial preferences were removed from immigration policy in 1967, and Chinese immigrants could enter Canada without having to acquire false identities, some elderly Chinese Canadians who had entered Canada under a paper name used that name officially, but were known in the

Chinese Canadian community by their real names. For other Chinese Canadians who had inherited family names that were paper names, the false name had been used for so long that it was more convenient to keep the paper name. Many younger Chinese Canadians who had been born in Canada may not have even been aware that their family name was actually a paper name, and because this false name had actually been their real name for their whole lives, there was little reason to change the name.

Universal Immigration Policy – 1967

Summary

- The 1960 Canadian Bill of Rights rejected discrimination based on race, colour, national origin, religion, or sex.
- The federal government was forced to address its process of selecting immigrants on the basis of race or national origin.
- In 1967 the Universal Immigration Policy gave equal opportunity to all prospective immigrants regardless of country of origin or racial background.
- The Universal Immigration Policy increased opportunities for highly educated and skilled migrants to enter Canada from Asia, which helped many Chinese Canadians reunite with family members.

Backgrounder

From the post-war years until the early 1950s, immigrants to Canada came almost exclusively from Europe. Then in the 1950s and early 1960s, Canada began losing many professional, technical and managerial occupations to the United States, resulting in a shortage of skilled labour. If Canada wanted to compete in a global marketplace, it needed to attract and maintain a supply of well-educated and skilled workers.

In 1960, the Canadian Bill of Rights was introduced. The Bill of Rights rejected discrimination based on race, colour, national origin, religion, or sex. The language of the Bill of Rights made it necessary for the federal government to address its process of selecting immigrants on the basis of race or national origin.

On October 1, 1967 the Canadian government introduced a new Universal Immigration Policy that gave equal opportunity to all prospective immigrants regardless of country of origin or racial background. The new immigration regulations used a point system for assessing prospective immigrants, which considered factors

such as: education and occupational skills, employment opportunities in Canada, and the degree of fluency in English or French.

The removal of racial barriers in the new Universal Immigration Policy increased opportunities for highly educated and skilled migrants to enter Canada from Asia, and other parts of the world, where immigration had been historically restricted. It also helped many Chinese Canadians to reunite with family members.

Official Multiculturalism Policy – 1971

Summary

- Pierre Trudeau's government presented Canada's official Multiculturalism Policy on October 8, 1971.
- Under the Multiculturalism Policy, the rights, values, and contributions of all Canadians were considered equal. This meant that anyone, regardless of his or her race, cultural heritage, ethnicity, religion, ancestry, and/or place of origin, could keep their identities without persecution.
- "Multiculturalism" was written into the constitutional Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982.
- The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* was passed in 1988, under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's government.

Backgrounder

In 1963, Lester B. Pearson's government established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Originally tasked with examining the state of English-French relations as the "founding" races of Canada, the commission was also instructed to acknowledge the contributions of other ethnic groups. In their fourth and final report, the commission came forward with recommendations that emphasized the shift away from the policy of "assimilation" towards one of "integration."

The Royal Commission's final report recommended that the Canadian government:

- Assist cultural groups to retain and foster their identity.
- Assist groups to become full participants in Canadian society.
- Promote creative exchanges among all Canadian cultural groups.

Pierre Trudeau's incoming government adapted these recommendations, and presented Canada's official Multiculturalism Policy on October 8, 1971. The policy was important in that it was the first of its kind in the world. In addition, it challenged the conception that Canada was only a nation of "bicultural" and "bilingual" heritage. Under the Multiculturalism Policy, the rights, values, and contributions of all Canadians were considered equal. No one was to be persecuted based on his or her race, cultural heritage, ethnicity, religion, ancestry, and/or place of origin. In addition, the policy formalized the recognition of the rights of Aboriginal peoples, as well as federal support of bilingualism (English and French).

Although the policy was enacted in 1971, "multiculturalism" was written into the constitutional Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* was then passed in 1988, under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's government.

Canadian Parliamentary Recognition – 1980

On June 16, 1980, the Parliament of Canada passed a motion recognizing “the contribution made to the Canadian mosaic and culture by the people of Chinese background”. This was the first official recognition of Chinese railway workers in Canada’s history.

Two years later, in June of 1982, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada installed a bronze plaque at Yale Museum in British Columbia to honour these Chinese railway workers.

In June of 1986, four Canadian labour unions erected a cairn in the Chinese and Japanese Cemetery in Cumberland and dedicated it to Chinese and Japanese miners killed in coalmines.

In 1987, all three political parties supported the introduction of an all-party parliamentary resolution to recognize the injustice and discrimination of the Head Tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act.

On June 22, 2006, the Parliament of Canada issued a full apology for the 1885 Head Tax and 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act that barred Chinese immigration to Canada until 1947. A similar apology in May, 2014, was made for anti-Chinese legislation and historical wrongs by the government of BC.

These series of events represent the ongoing reconciliation process between the Canadian and provincial governments and the Chinese Canadian community for past legislative discrimination.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – 1982

Summary

- In 1982, Pierre Trudeau, the Liberal leader and Prime Minister of Canada, patriated the constitution from the British Parliament back to Canada, granting full independence to the Canadian Parliament.
- Despite Quebec's opposition, the *Canada Act* was passed in 1982, which formally enacted the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Provincial legislatures were granted the use of the “notwithstanding clause”, which protected provincial laws from judicial oversight and interference if used.
- The Charter guarantees fundamental freedoms, democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights and equality rights.

Backgrounder

History and Context of Enactment

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a constitutional bill of rights and constitutes the first part of the *Constitution Act* of 1982. The Charter and the *Constitution Act* of 1982 were enacted and signed into law by Queen Elizabeth II of Canada on April 17, 1982.

The Charter was preceded by the Canadian Bill of Rights, which protected many of the rights that are presently in the Charter, such as the freedom of speech and the presumption of innocence. However, the Canadian Bill of Rights could be single-handedly amended by a simple majority of Parliament and was only applicable to the federal government. Due to these and other shortcomings, the Canadian Bill of Rights was criticized and motivated political leaders to call for constitutional reform and to improve the protection of rights in Canada.

In 1982, Pierre Trudeau, the Liberal leader and Prime Minister of Canada from 1968–79 and 1980–84, patriated the Constitution from the British Parliament to Canada. This meant that constitutional amendments no longer needed approval from the

British Parliament, granting full independence to the Canadian Parliament to make changes to the Constitution. Thus, Canada could implement the Charter as long as the federal government had approval from the provincial governments.

Trudeau succeeded in reaching an agreement with nine of the premiers on patriating the constitution and implementing the Charter, in exchange for allowing provincial legislatures to use the notwithstanding clause, which protected provincial laws from judicial oversight and interference if used. The province of Quebec refused to sign onto this agreement. Despite Quebec's opposition, the *Canada Act* was passed in 1982, which formally enacted the Constitution and the Charter.

The Charter

The Charter guarantees certain political and civil rights of people in Canada from the laws, policies and actions of all levels of government. Its purpose is also to unify Canadians on a set of principles that embody those rights. The guaranteed rights and freedoms are categorized as follows: fundamental freedoms, democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights and equality rights.

Canadian citizens enjoy protection of all rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Charter. All other persons in Canada enjoy protection of all rights and freedoms, other than the right to vote and limited mobility rights.

Exceptions to the protection of these rights are the “limitations clause” (section 1) and the “notwithstanding clause” (section 33). Section 1 allows governments to justify certain infringements and violations of Charter rights if the purpose of the government action is of sufficient importance that it can be “demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society”. Section 33 allows governments to temporarily override certain rights and freedoms.

For Chinese Canadians and others who have historically suffered legislated forms of discrimination and racism, the passage of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* created a set of constitutional rights that will hopefully ensure that racially discriminatory laws such as the Head Tax—which singled out one group for different treatment because of their race—could be challenged legally if any government tried to pass such a law again in Canada.

David Lam (林思齊)

Summary

- Lam was born in Hong Kong in 1923, and became a successful real estate developer and a prominent community leader and philanthropist in Vancouver.
- From 1988 to 1995 David Lam served as Canada's first Chinese Canadian and first Asian Canadian to serve as a Lieutenant Governor.
- In 1988, he was made a Member of the Order of Canada and was promoted to Officer in 1995.
- In 1994, the Queen made Lam a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (CVO).
- In 1995, Lam was awarded the Order of British Columbia.
- Lam died in 2010.

Background

In 1988, David Lam became Canada's first Chinese Canadian and first Asian Canadian to serve as a Lieutenant Governor. He was also the second non-white Lieutenant Governor, following the appointment in 1985 of Jamaican-born, black Canadian Lincoln Alexander in Ontario.

David See-chai Lam (September 2, 1923 – November 22, 2010) was born in Hong Kong, and became a successful real estate developer and a prominent community leader in Vancouver. When he was appointed the 25th Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia from 1988 to 1995, it was widely seen as a landmark in the history of BC and in Canada. Lam and his family were among those who could immigrate to Canada following the end of Chinese exclusion after the end of World War II. He received a degree in economics from Lingnan College in Hong Kong and a Masters of Business Administration from Temple University in Philadelphia.

David Lam was known for his philanthropy, supporting education, medical research, and hospitals in particular, and he helped encourage many new immigrants from Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s to become more active contributors to charity. In 1986, he helped found the Canadian International Dragon Boat Festival, one of the iconic summer events in British Columbia each year, and his donations to universities such as UBC and SFU opened the door for other Chinese Canadians, and in particular migrants from Hong Kong, to make high profile donations towards higher education and research.

In 1988, he was made a Member of the Order of Canada and was promoted to Officer in 1995. In 1994, Lam was made a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (CVO) by the Queen, and in 1995, he was awarded the Order of British Columbia. He died from prostate cancer at the age of 87.

Federal Government Apology for the Chinese Head Tax – 2006

Summary

- In 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered an apology in Canadian Parliament for the Head Tax and other anti-Chinese legislation.
- The Canadian government offered symbolic payments of \$20,000 to living Chinese Head Tax payers, or living spouses of deceased payers.
- The government also established a \$5 million community historical recognition program for Chinese Canadian projects.

Backgrounder

From the earliest recorded appearance of Chinese migrants who accompanied British fur trader John Meares in 1788 in Nuuchah-nulth territory to build a fort in an inlet named *Mowichat* (what is now called “Nootka Sound”, on the west coast of Vancouver Island), to the thousands who came after 1858 after the start of the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush, to the 15,000 railway workers who helped unite British Columbia with the rest of Canada, Chinese immigrants to Canada have played a significant role in building Canada. In spite of these, and many other great contributions, Chinese immigrants were often treated as outsiders and discriminated against legally and socially in Canada.

Upon completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway and in response to strong anti-Chinese organizers in BC, the federal government passed the Chinese Head Tax in 1885. The Act imposed a Head Tax of \$50—a significant amount of money at the time—on every Chinese entering Canada as a means to discourage Chinese people from entering Canada. In 1900, the Head Tax was raised to \$100, and again in 1903 to \$500—equal to around two years wages for a labourer!

The Head Tax remained in effect until 1923, when the federal government passed the *Chinese Immigration Act*, otherwise known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. This new legislation banned almost all immigration of Chinese into Canada, except for diplomats, foreign students, and those who were granted special permission. The Chinese Exclusion Act remained in effect until 1947.

In 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered an apology in Canadian Parliament for the Head Tax and other anti-Chinese legislation. “For over six decades, these malicious measures, aimed solely at the Chinese, were implemented with deliberation by the Canadian state,” said the Prime Minister. “This was a grave injustice, and one we are morally obligated to acknowledge.”

The Canadian government offered symbolic payments of \$20,000 to living Chinese Head Tax payers, or living spouses of deceased payers, but by 2006 there were few surviving head taxpayers still alive. The government also established a \$5 million community historical recognition program for Chinese Canadian projects completed between 2010 and 2012, although \$500,000 of that amount was not spent because of the short length of time allowed for community projects.

BC Apology to Chinese Canadians for Historical Wrongs – 2014

In May 2014 the legislative assembly and the Province of British Columbia apologized to Chinese Canadians for historical wrongs committed by past provincial governments.

These wrongs include 160 historical racist and discriminatory policies, such as denying Chinese immigrants the right to vote, and supporting and taking payments for the head tax. These laws and practices have been repealed or made illegal by human rights legislation. However, past historical wrongs and the lack of acknowledgment of legalized anti-Chinese racism continued to cause bitterness and disappointment among many Chinese Canadians.

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

The legacy efforts planned as part of this apology to the Chinese Canadian community in BC included updating education curriculum to better reflect our rich multicultural heritage, and to 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.

Apology and Legislature Motion

Apology

Today we express our sorrow and regret for historical provincial government practices that were once considered appropriate. While the governments which passed these laws and policies acted in a manner that was lawful at the time, today this racist discrimination is seen by British Columbians – represented by all members of the legislative assembly – as unacceptable and intolerable. We believe this formal apology is required to ensure that closure can be reached on this dark period in our province's history. The legislative assembly's apology today signifies our deepest regret for the hardship and suffering our past provincial governments imposed on Chinese Canadians.

The entire Legislative Assembly acknowledges the perseverance of Chinese Canadians that was demonstrated with grace and dignity throughout our history while being oppressed by unfair and discriminatory historical laws.

Moreover, we acknowledge the overwhelming contribution by Chinese Canadians to British Columbia's culture, history and economic prosperity.

On behalf of the Province of British Columbia, and on behalf of the entire legislative assembly, we sincerely apologize for the provincial government's historical wrongs. We are sorry for the discriminatory legislation and racist policies enacted by past provincial governments. We will ensure that this never happens again.

Legislature motion

Be it resolved that this Legislature apologizes for more than a hundred laws, regulations, and policies that were imposed by past provincial governments that discriminated against people of Chinese descent since 1871, when British Columbia joined Confederation, to 1947. These laws and policies denied British Columbia's Chinese communities' basic human rights, including but not limited to, the right to vote, hold public office, or own property; imposed labour, educational and employment restrictions; subjected them to health and housing segregation, and prevented them from fully participating in society. The House deeply regrets that these Canadians were discriminated against simply because they were of Chinese descent. All members of this House acknowledge that we all aspire to be a fair and just society where people of all nations and cultures are welcomed, accepted and respected.

Be it further resolved that the House acknowledge that the Chinese Canadian Community endured untold hardships and persevered with grace and dignity. We acknowledge that despite being subjected to discriminatory laws, policies and practices, the Chinese community has made, and continues to make, substantial contributions to the culture, history and economic prosperity in our province.

