



Early Chinese Canadians, 1858-1947

Handout 2.3, the museum challenge

L.P. Hartley wrote “the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.”

Imagine that you travelled back in time to the mid-1800s up to the mid-1900s. Would the lives of Chinese Canadians in Canada have any similarities to life in Canada today? Would their lives be completely different in every way?

Imagine that your city has asked your school to participate in the creation of a museum exhibit commemorating the Chinese-Canadian community. It will be your job, as a group, to create an exhibit on the theme and challenge outlined below.

The theme of the exhibit: Continuity and Change

Your challenge: you must show how things have changed from the past for Chinese Canadians, and what may have remained the same.

Putting the Exhibit together:

Step 1:

- Look over your analysis of photographs and decide on a topic that could relate to the Chinese immigration experience that interests your group. You might investigate work, family, gender, community life, pastimes or sports, homes, traditions, the army, or civil rights.

Step 2:

- Each student should be responsible for researching one of the time periods listed below. Assign to each member in your group, one time period from the list below:

1858 (Gold Rush) to 1885 (imposition of Head Tax)

1885 to 1923 (*Chinese Immigration Act* that stops immigration from China)

1923 to 1939 (Beginning of the Second World War)

1939 to 1947 (Repeal of the *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1923, in 1947)

Step 3:

- Begin your individual research with *The Early Chinese Canadians, 1858 to 1947* website at <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/early-chinese-canadians/Pages/introduction.aspx>.
- Take notes similar to the ones that you did for analyzing the photographs in **Handout 2.1** and **Handout 2.2**.
- You should make inferences from at least three primary sources.
- Summarize information about your topic from at least one secondary source such as the text on the website. You may use the websites listed on the **Web links** section.

- Remember to write down information to identify the source, such as the date and the author, if known.

Step 4:

- Share your research with your team members and choose the sources that best answer the question: **How was life for Chinese Canadians in the time periods listed above the same and different from today?**

Step 5:

- List the main ideas that answer the question in step 4.

Step 6:

- Divide up the work among your group members to create:
 - paragraphs that interpret the primary sources and explain the big ideas.
 - paragraphs that reach conclusions about change and continuity in the Chinese community.
- Your final exhibit should include a copy of at least one primary source from each member of your group.
- Your final exhibit should also include one paragraph from each member that describes and interprets the source, and answers the focus question in Step 4.
- Include a title for your exhibit, as well as overall conclusions about change and continuity.

Step 7:

- Edit each other's work.
- Decide on a title for your exhibit and plan your display. Put it together.
- You may wish to recreate "artifacts" to add to your exhibit — objects or symbols that you think will add a feeling of authenticity to the display.
- You may wish to mount your exhibit in your classroom, in the hallway, or in a display case.
- Make sure to ask your teacher how large your display can be before you begin creating it.

Step 8:

Museum opening. Display or present your exhibit to your classmates and teacher.