

# CHINESE HEAD TAX

## SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES



11255 Okanagan Centre Rd. W.  
Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7

### ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

1. Students will learn about the Chinese Head Tax and Canada's immigration act
2. After hearing of some personal histories of Chinese immigrants, students will conduct their own research and write a diary entry from the perspective of a Chinese immigrant



**BIG IDEA:** Historical & contemporary injustices challenge the narrative & identity of Canada as an inclusive, multicultural society; The causes of social injustice are complex & have lasting impacts on society.

### COMPETENCY:

Inquiry, evidence, historical perspectives, ethical judgement

### CONTENT:

Environmental, political, & economic policies; discriminatory policies & injustices in Canada & the world; advocacy for human rights; social injustices in Canada; governmental & non-governmental organizations in issues of social justice & injustice

### WHAT WILL WE KNOW:

- History of Chinese immigration in Canada
- Diaries as a historical source

### FURTHER INQUIRY:

*Field Trip Suggestions*

1. Lake Country Museum and Archives



**We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which the Lake Country Museum is situated, where this lesson was developed, is on the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.**

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**Lake Country Heritage and Cultural Society**

**11255 Okanagan Center Road West**

**Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7**

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# The Chinese Head Tax

<b>Learning Objective(s)</b>	Students will think critically about the Immigration Act and Chinese Head Tax while conducting a case study on influential members of the Okanagan's Chinese community.
<b>Suggested Grades</b>	Secondary
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research materials for students (computer, books)</li> <li>• Option to show photographs (provided)</li> </ul>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>After going over the history of the Chinese Head Tax and Immigration Act in Canada, have them reflect on the content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How could the Head Tax affect the lives on Chinese immigrants who came to Canada?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When Wong Bing came to Canada, he would have had to pay \$100 to enter</li> <li>○ How could the Head Tax have affected the Goldie family?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Was there another way Canada could have addressed immigration at the time?</li> <li>• How might Canada be different had there been no Chinese Head Tax?</li> </ul>
<b>Journaling Exercise</b>	<p>Many stories of the Chinese community in Canada have been lost due to lack of documentation. For example, we only have Wong Bing's story due to Jessie Goldie's diary entries. Prompt your students to think about the importance of documentation, and if students think journals are a reliable source when learning about the past.</p> <p>Have students research the Chinese community within the Okanagan, or even Canada as a whole, and have them write out a diary entry from the perspective of a Chinese immigrant that includes themes/events found in their research. They may also choose to write about a specific person.</p> <p>Then, have them to a reflection on the activity. Why did they choose this person/story? What is significant about it? What can we learn about life for Chinese immigrants through this diary entry?</p>
<b>Historical Context</b>	In an effort to prevent Chinese immigration into Canada, the Canadian government implemented a 'Head Tax'. The taxes began at \$50/person in 1885, and went up to \$100/person in 1900 and then

	<p>\$500/person in 1903. The result was many Chinese families splitting apart as many could only afford to send one family members, resulting in Chinese men coming into Canada alone, with many sending the majority of their money back to China for their families.</p> <p>Many Chinese men worked on the Canadian Pacific Railway and in the mines during the Gold Rush. When the railway was built and the gold rush ended, many settled into working at orchards, gardening, or running their own businesses.</p> <p><b><i>The Story of Wong Bing</i></b></p> <p>Wong Bing was a cook at Rainbow Ranch, working under Jamies Goldie and his wife Jessie Goldie. However, Bing became more than just a cook for the Goldie family. In Jessie Goldie’s journal, she describes Bing as “honesty itself” as he helped with laundry, caring for their children, doing extra work on the land, and even buying the family gifts at Christmas.</p> <p>Bing had also established good connections with other Chinese communities within the Okanagan. Goldie mentioned in her journal that they did not grow strawberries or asparagus, but there always seemed to be some on their table from Bing trading their eggs in exchange for other goods. Bing also brought in more farm hands from his connections through the Chinese community.</p> <p><b><i>The Story of Lee Dye</i></b></p> <p>Lee Dye worked on the chief cook on the S.S. Sicamous, a passenger ship that travelled on the Okanagan Lake from Penticton to Okanagan Landing. The food he cooked was all local, some from a company farm or gathered from other local farms. He worked on the ship for 10 years before returning back to his family in China when he retired in 1928.</p> <p><b><i>The Story of Wong Foon Sien</i></b></p> <p>Wong Foon Sien was a very important figure in the Chinese Community in Canada because of his advocacy for the reunification of Chinese families due to the Immigration Act. His son had come to the Okanagan and purchased land in Osoyoos, and his grandson, Roger Wong, also settled in the Okanagan with his family and opened Intrigue Wines. Wong Foon Sien was designated a National Historic Person by the Government of Canada in 2008.</p>
<p><b>Further Inquiry</b></p>	<p><u><i>Field Trip Suggestion:</i></u></p> <p><b>Lake Country Museum and Archives:</b></p> <p>Come visit the Lake Country Museum and Archives! The museum features many great displays and features an exhibit containing much of this information called “The Beyond Chinatown Exhibit.” You can</p>

also find further information about Okanagan's Chinese Communities on the Lake Country Museum and Archives website:

<https://www.lakecountrymuseum.com/>

*Other Resources:*

**[The Diary of Dukesang Wong: A Voice From Gold Mountains](#)**

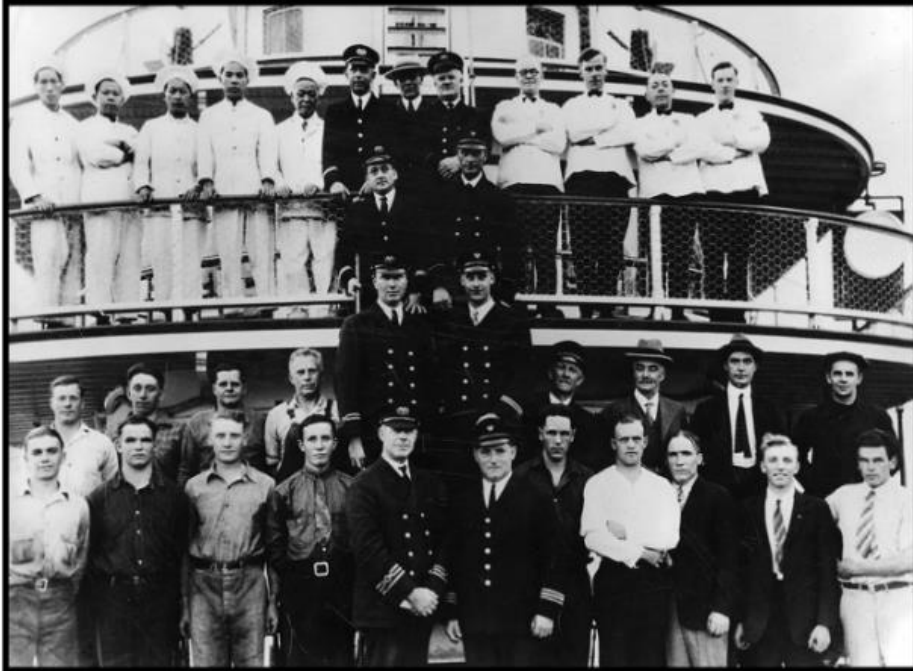
This is a diary written by Dukesang Wong, the only first-hand account of a Chinese man working on the railway. This book can provide a great visual of what life might have been like working on the railway and the incentives to come to Canada.



Wong Bing Pictured on the right in front of a Barn North of the Sundial House 2007.017.011 LMCA



The Sundial House where Wong Bing worked 2007.017.010 LCMA



Lee Dye, Top row 5<sup>th</sup> from the left. Okanagan Archive Trust Society



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