

The Chinese in Western Canada

1. The first Chinese immigrants came to Canada during the gold rushes of the 1850s. Around 1858, Chinese people came from California to the Fraser River and the Cariboo in search of gold. By 1860, the Chinese people who arriving were coming directly from China. Several thousand lived in what is now British Columbia. By 1866, most of the gold in British Columbia was gone, so many Chinese left the country. Those who stayed got jobs as household servants, cooks, gardeners, and laundry workers.
2. British Columbia joined Confederation on the condition that a railway would be built within 10 years. When work started on the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Canadian government realized that there were not enough workers to complete the railway quickly. The railway construction company was allowed to bring in 17 000 Chinese workers, including at least 10 000 from China. Only Chinese males were allowed to come to Canada. The government planned for these workers to return to China after the railway was built. Working on the railway was very hard and dangerous, and many Chinese died.
3. When the railway was finished in 1885, many Chinese workers did not go home. They had not made their fortune as they had expected, and the railway company refused to pay for their trip home. By 1891, 9129 Chinese people were living in Canada: 8910 in British Columbia, 31 in Manitoba, 97 in Ontario, and 36 in Quebec. The Chinese people worked for low wages, so many other workers resented them. By the early 1900s, several small Prairie towns had restaurants run by Chinese men. Many of these men could not bring their families to Canada to join them.
4. In 1885, to stop Chinese from coming to Canada, the government required Chinese labourers to pay a head tax of \$50 a person to enter the country. By 1901, that head tax was increased to \$100. There were still Chinese immigrants arriving, so the government raised the head tax to \$500 a person in 1904. In 1923, the Chinese Immigration Act made it very difficult for any Chinese to enter Canada. By 1930, very few Chinese people were coming to Canada, so the head tax was cancelled. In the 1950s and 1960s, changes in immigration rules made it easier for Chinese families to come to Canada.
5. According to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the first three Chinese arrived in Manitoba in 1877. They came by stagecoach from the United States and entered Canada at Emerson. Two men and one woman were in this group. They came to open a laundry. The next year more Chinese came, and soon the most of the laundries in Winnipeg were owned by Chinese immigrants. This was the beginning of Winnipeg's Chinatown. By the 1920s, there were 150 Chinese laundries in Winnipeg. Soon there were grocery stores, restaurants, and other businesses run by Chinese immigrants. Today, more than a million Canadians are of Chinese origin. About 14 000 Chinese-Canadians live in Manitoba.