The Contribution of Chinese Canadians in the Second World War

"We thought that serving in the armed forces would be an opportunity for us to prove to the general public that we are loyal Canadians; that in this time of need, they would see that we have no hesitation to don the King's uniform and go overseas to fight for our country, fight to preserve democracy."

- Former Force 136 (Special Operations Executive) Sergeant Roy Mah

When war was declared in 1939, more than 600 Chinese Canadians volunteered to fight for Canada. While Chinese Canadians served in all theatres of the war and many risked their lives for their county, they did not have the right to vote in Canada.

Many young Chinese Canadians believed that serving in the military demonstrated their loyalty and would convince the government and public that they deserved the right to vote. Chinese Canadians did eventually achieve the right to vote in federal elections, soon after the war, in 1947.

Note: You may want students to use headphones if they are doing these activities independently. Alternatively, simply play the brief clips from war veterans through a pair of speakers.

Learning Outcomes:

1.   To understand the contribution of Chinese Canadian servicemen and women during the Second World War.

2.   To appreciate the Chinese Canadian struggle for acceptance at home and overseas.

Listen and Learn:
Listen to the experiences of the following Chinese Canadian Veterans as they recount their service in the Second World War.

Peggy Lee, Women's Ambulance Corps:

Frank Wong, Royal Canadian Engineers

Victor Wong, Royal Canadian Army, Special Operations Executive, Force 136

A Project of

Discussion Questions:

1. What prompted Victor Wong to join the service? How did he enlist?

2. How was Peggy Lee involved in the war effort? What were some of her responsibilities?"

3. How was Frank Wong, a Chinese Canadian, treated by his fellow servicemen?

4. Where did Frank Wong travel during the Second World War? How does he describe his duties overseas?