



The Early Chinese Canadians, 1858-1947

Educational Resources

Lesson 2

Inference from Evidence:

What was life like for early Chinese Canadians?

Activity 2.1

Understanding Inference

(This activity is based on ideas from Claire Riley's, "Evidential Understanding, Period Knowledge and the Development of Literacy," *Thinking History*, 97, pp. 6-12.)

Students will need access to the website *Chinese Immigrant Experience* (<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/chinese-canadians/index-e.html>) for the following lesson, or have multiple printed copies of various photographs from the site.

1. If your students have not explored the use of evidence and the concept of inference before, you may wish to begin with an introductory activity. Some suggestions:
 - Ask students to imagine what would happen if they had amnesia. How would they know what their life was like as a child?
 - Bring in personal photographs or artifacts, puzzling ones if possible, and ask students to infer what they mean and what they tell about you.
 - Ask for a student to volunteer an artifact in their possession and ask for inferences in a similar manner.
2. From student answers, identify some of the challenges of understanding what took place in the past. We cannot directly access the past and therefore must do so by interpreting evidence. This involves certain degrees of uncertainty. We may know for certain that a student went to school in the past but we are less certain about how he or she felt about it.