



**Lesson:**  
**Tradition in Felicities**  
**Celebrating the History of Victoria's Chinatown**

**OVERVIEW**

This lesson plan is to be used when viewing *Tradition in Felicities*, a film documenting Victoria's Chinatown in the early 20th century. The short film highlights the 2013 Royal BC Museum exhibition *Tradition in Felicities* that marked the 155th anniversary of Victoria's Chinatown, the oldest in Canada. It revealed a close-knit community of families developing new identities as Chinese Canadians.

This lesson invites students to learn about Chinese Canadian arts, culture and everyday life through first-hand accounts of community members who grew up in Victoria's Chinatown.

**KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS**

Chinese New Year, Diversity, Chinese Canadian, Chinatown, Cultural Identity, Multiculturalism

**ESTIMATED TIME REQUIRED** One 45-50 minute period

**SUBJECT** Social Studies

**GRADE LEVEL** Elementary/Intermediate

**OBJECTIVES**

Students will observe and analyze primary and secondary sources to understand the arts, culture and daily life in Victoria's Chinatown and the Chinese Canadian community at the start of the 20th century.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be able to:

- Obtain information from a selection of primary and secondary sources
- Assess diverse concepts of Canadian identity
- Relate a society's artistic expression to its culture
- Observe changing cultural identities within a society (*Extension*)
- Observe changes in cultural identities between 1910 and 1930. (*Extension*)

**MATERIALS:**

*Tradition in Felicities* film (length 15:00) on the Learning Portal, Student Viewing guides, Image Observation Activity sheets

## ACTIVITY

1. Ask students what they know about Chinatown and Chinese Canadian culture. Record any student ideas on the board. Explain to students that they will observe a film with community members from Victoria's Chinatown talking about their experiences growing up there. They touch on their family lives and community events, art and culture and the history and importance of Chinatown itself.
2. Sort the class into groups of three. During the film, one person from each group will focus on a different part of the viewing guide (History of Chinatown, Art & Culture, Daily Life). Hand out the viewing guides and have students circle their part. Explain that during the video, students are to make as many connections as they can to that topic, and write their ideas in the space provided on the viewing guide. Educators can either choose to have students view the video as a class on a digital projector or individually at their own computer (which could allow students to pause the video and rewind for clarification).
3. When the film is over, have students sit with their group members and share their observations made from the video. Each topic should be discussed for about five minutes. When one group member is discussing their topic, the other members will be recording notes on their own guide. At the end of the discussion, each student should have the whole viewing guide completed. When students have finished in their small groups, open up the discussion to the whole class.

### **Class Discussion Questions:**

- Why did a Chinese community come to Victoria to begin with?
- Why do you think it is the oldest Chinatown in Canada?
- What are some cultural celebrations, performances or traditions that you noticed in the video? What would be the art forms related to these celebrations? What are some details you noticed about the lantern? What was it made out of? How did it work? How was it connected to the Community?
- Do you think family had a big role for the community members interviewed? What were some examples of Chinese Canadian families coming together in work and celebration?

## EXTENSION

Students can use the Image Observation Activity sheet to look at three photographs taken around the early 20th century in Chinatown and notice any trends within Chinese Canadian cultural identities over time. Hand out the Image Observation Activity sheets, have students pair up and let them discuss the questions on the sheet:

- What and who do you see in the three pictures? What is in the background?
- What can you tell about the people by the way they are dressed?
- Who do you think might have taken the photographs? Why do you think they were taken?
- Do you see a connection between the photographs? What is the same? Has anything changed? Why?
- What do you think is the most important change that you see over time in the family's portrait? Why?

Invite students to share what they noticed in the photographs. Discuss the answers as a class and record any key points on the board.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Chinese Canadian Genealogy: History & Pioneers**  
hosted by the Vancouver Public Library  
[http://www.vpl.ca/ccg/History\\_Pioneers.html](http://www.vpl.ca/ccg/History_Pioneers.html)
- **Chinese Canadian Stories Project**  
hosted by the University of British Columbia  
<http://ccs.library.ubc.ca/en/resources.html>
- **Critical Thinking Consortium: Chinese Canadian history**  
<http://sourcedocs.tc2.ca/history-docs/topics/chinese-canadian-history.html>
- **Victoria's Chinatown**  
hosted by the University of Victoria Libraries  
<http://chinatown.library.uvic.ca/>

## BOOKS

- Amos, Robert and; Wong, Kileasa. *Inside Chinatown : Ancient Culture in a new World*. Victoria, B.C: Torchwood Editions, 2009.
- Harry Con et al. *From China to Canada: A History of Chinese Communities in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Steward Ltd., 1982.
- Lai, Chuen-yan David. *The Forbidden City within Victoria*. Victoria B.C.: Orca Book Publishers, 1991.
- Lai, Chuen-yan David. *Chinatowns : Towns within Cities in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988.
- Lai, Chuen-yan David and; Madoff, Pamela. *Building and Rebuilding Harmony : the Gateway to Victoria's Chinatown*. Victoria, B.C: Western Geographical Press, 1997.
- Lim, Shirley and; Yuen, Karen; and Cox, Lauren Y. *Through the Harmonious Gate*. Victoria BC: 1986.
- Lawson, Julie. *White Jade Tiger*. Victoria: Beach Holme Pub., 1993.
- Yee, Paul. *Chinatown: An Illustrated History of the Chinese Communities of Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax*. Toronto: J. Lorimer, 2005.

# Tradition in Felicities Viewing Guide

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the topic you wish to focus on during the video. In point form, record any information that has to do with your topic in that section. Fill in the other sections during the discussion after the video.

The form is shaped like a traditional Chinese hat with a wide brim and a high, rounded crown. It is divided into three horizontal sections for taking notes. The top section is a small, semi-circular area at the crown. The middle section is a large, rectangular area with slightly curved sides. The bottom section is a trapezoidal area at the brim. The entire form is outlined with a thick black line, and the bottom edge of the brim is decorated with a wavy, scalloped pattern.

**History of  
Chinatown  
(& why is it important?)**

**Art & Culture  
(arts, performances, traditions)**

**Daily Life  
(jobs, family, community)**

A



Lee Family, about 1903. BC Archives A-02348

B



Lee Family, 1911. BC Archives F-08202

C



Lee Family, about 1920. BC Archives D-05823

## Image Observation Activity

### Discussion Questions

- What and who do you see in the three pictures? What is in the background?
- What can you tell about the people in this family by the way they are dressed?
- Who do you think might have taken the photographs? Why do you think they were taken?
- Do you see a connection between the photographs? What is the same? Has anything changed? Why?
- What do you think is the most important change that you see over time in the family's portrait? Why?