Won Alexander Cumyow

Document 1: Lesson Strategy

**Introduction:**

Won Alexander Cumyow was the first person of Chinese heritage born in Canada—yet he (and all Chinese-Canadians) were denied voting rights.

Ask students to think about the challenges and accomplishments of Won Alexander Cumyow and then show the vignette. Discuss his challenges/accomplishments.

Next, focus on Cumyow’s battle for the vote, brainstorm with students, with these suggested prompts:

Which groups in Canada have been excluded from voting? Why were they excluded? How does not having the right to vote impact on individuals? How did excluded individuals win the right to vote?

**Body:**

Ask students to form groups of four and distribute the set of information handouts to each group. Each student takes one of these information sheets. The teacher is encouraged to supplement this activity sheet with resources gathered from the list of additional suggested materials.

Also distribute a large piece of paper to each group and a marker. This paper will be a “placemat” for the group to write on. Ask one student in the group to write the essential question, “*How was Won Alexander Cumyow’s struggle to win the right to vote connected to a wider struggle in Canada for the universal franchise?”* in the centre of the flip chart paper and to draw lines out in to four quarters, with space for each student to answer the question. (Alternatively, the teacher can prepare these placemats before the lesson.)

Using the information sheets, students will write answers on their section of the placement. They will then share their answers with the group.

Suggested secondary activity: Students flip the paper over and write a second essential question. It could be a question the teacher--or students--create based on the vignette, “Won Alexander Cumyow.”

**Closure:**

Students share their groups’ answers with the class. This could lead to further class discussion about democracy and voting rights. What are the factors which have led to expanded voting rights in Canada? Does the universal right to vote strengthen democratic society?

**Assessment: Suggested activities**

1. Students write a paragraph based on the answers on the placemat and classroom discussion.

2. Homework assignment – Using the internet, research another Canadian or groups of Canadians who fought for the right to vote.

3. In the next class, in groups of four, be prepared to share your findings using the placemat format.