

HOW DID DIFFERENT GROUPS RESPOND TO RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION?

Have you ever been treated unfairly or felt judged by someone who didn't know who you are? Many people in Canada, both today and in the past, have faced racism and discrimination in different forms. In this section, we will explore how different groups responded to racism and discrimination in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

CREATING BLACK COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Black people continued to face discrimination in Canada in the late 1800s and onward. In both rural and urban areas, Black people were often denied the same opportunities that white people had. In areas with a large Black population, such as Ontario and Nova Scotia, Black students often went to segregated schools. **Segregated** means purposely separated. If they went to school with white children, Black children were often bullied or threatened. Black families living in rural areas were often given poor farmland or paid lower wages than white families for their farm work. In cities, Black people were often refused service in restaurants, forced to sit in separate sections in theatres, and were not allowed to live in certain neighbourhoods. They also could not join organizations formed by white people, such as unions, social clubs, and sports leagues. One example of how the Black community responded to discrimination was by founding the Coloured Hockey League of the Maritimes. The league gave Black hockey players a chance to play the sport. The league was very popular and many white, middle-class people attended the games. Examine **Figure 8.1**, one of the only photos of a Black hockey team from Nova Scotia. How might an all-Black hockey team have helped the Black community at the time? In 1958, Canadian Willie O'Ree was the first Black hockey player in the National Hockey League (NHL). Since then, the number of Black hockey players in the NHL has increased very slowly. In 2013, out of the league's approximately 690 hockey players, only 22 were Black.



FIGURE 8.1 This photo from around 1922 shows some members of the Africville Sea-Sides, which belonged to the Coloured Hockey League of the Maritimes. **Analyze:** How do you think these players may have felt being part of an all-Black hockey team?

segregated deliberately separated by different racial groups in a society or institution

BLACK CHURCHES HELP RAILWAY PORTERS

At the end of the 1800s, the federal government-owned Intercolonial Railway (ICR) hired many Black men as porters, or servants. Black porters often worked on first-class passenger cars. They were paid lower wages than white employees and worked longer hours. Porters' tasks included serving passengers, shining shoes, and cleaning the passenger cars. Porters were often allowed only three hours of sleep each night and were sometimes treated badly by passengers. Look at **Figure 8.2**, which shows a Black porter standing behind white, first-class passengers. What does the treatment of Black porters reveal about society's attitudes toward Black people during this time?



FIGURE 8.2 This photo from the 1890s shows a Black porter standing behind white, first-class passengers. **Analyze:** What elements of this photo show the passengers' social status?

Despite their harsh working conditions, Black porters were not allowed to join railway worker unions that could have protected them. For example, in 1898, there was a slowdown in railway business. The railway company decided to fire its Black workers, even though white workers were paid more. This was done to avoid violence or strikes from the unionized white railway workers. Also, this would make the jobs of Black workers available to white workers, keeping white union members happy.

Members of Black churches were outraged when they heard the news of the firing. Read **Figure 8.3**, a quote from Reverend Doctor J. Francis Robinson. What solution does he say is necessary to protect Black workers? Black churches rallied behind the railway workers. They contacted newspapers and politicians to make the discrimination public. The church leaders told Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government that if the Liberals did not help the Black porters, the Black community had enough voters to help elect the Conservatives. For weeks after the firing, the Liberals were accused of racism by some newspapers for not supporting the Black porters.

In the end, only some Black railway workers were rehired, but they received no compensation for the firing. Eventually, the Black workers organized their own union because white unions continued to refuse them membership until 1919.

“[If] the Negro porters ... [were] as strongly organized into labour protective unions, etc., like their white brothers, the ICR would not have succeeded so well and peaceably in displacing their colored labour and substituting white [workers] in their stead.”

— Reverend Doctor J. Francis Robinson

FIGURE 8.3 A quote from Reverend Robinson in 1898. Robinson was an African-American minister working in Halifax. **Analyze:** According to this quote, how did preventing Black workers from joining unions affect their job opportunities?

“BEWARE:
LEPEROSY!
LEPEROSY! LEPEROSY!

One Leper let loose
in Chinatown. See
Dr. Carroll’s advice to
Town Council. Why not
patronize [support] the
CYCLONE LAUNDRY,
the only White laundry
in the city.”

— *Vancouver Daily
Advertiser*

FIGURE 8.4 This 1891 advertisement from the *Vancouver Daily Advertiser* was created by white owners of a laundry business. Leprosy is a contagious disease that can cause skin disfigurement. **Analyze:** What emotions are used in this advertisement to persuade people to go to Cyclone Laundry?

benevolent association an organization serving a charitable purpose

CREATING CHINESE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATONS

In the late 1800s, growing anti-Chinese feelings in Canada had led to government bans on hiring Chinese workers. In response, many Chinese people started their own businesses. In Vancouver, the businesses were located in the city’s poorest neighbourhood, called Chinatown. Housing in this area was overcrowded and sanitation was very limited. Chinese people and their businesses soon became identified with health problems. Read **Figure 8.4**, which shows a Vancouver advertisement from 1891. What does this advertisement reveal about attitudes toward Chinese people during this time?

In order to survive, the Chinese community needed to find ways to support itself. Benevolent associations, or charitable organizations, were set up to provide basic services that the government had failed to provide to the Chinese community. By 1910, these associations had set up hospitals and schools, and provided assistance to immigrants and job seekers. They also offered legal support in dealing with government agencies and the law. These associations also gave Chinese people the opportunity to become leaders. On many occasions, members and their lawyers were able to force governments to change discriminatory laws.

CHINESE CANADIAN CLUB

The Chinese youth living in Canada were very aware of the racism and discrimination their community faced. Growing up in Canada allowed Chinese youth to integrate into two societies. They spoke the language and understood the culture of their parents’ generation. They were also able to adapt to the Anglo-Canadian culture since many went to English-speaking schools. Examine **Figure 8.5**. How could a photo like this challenge the definition of who was Canadian and who was not during this time?

In 1914, a group of young Chinese men in Victoria, British Columbia, founded the Chinese Canadian Club. Since Chinese youth were excluded from participating in social clubs run by white people, the Chinese Canadian Club provided its own activities. Chinese youth could participate in social and cultural events like sports and book clubs. The founding members called themselves Chinese Canadian. This was the first time the term was used to identify Canadian-born people of Chinese descent.

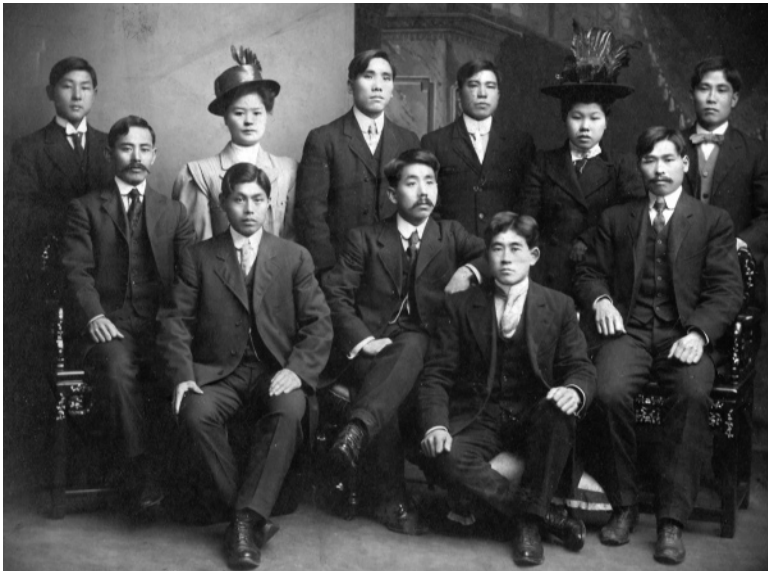


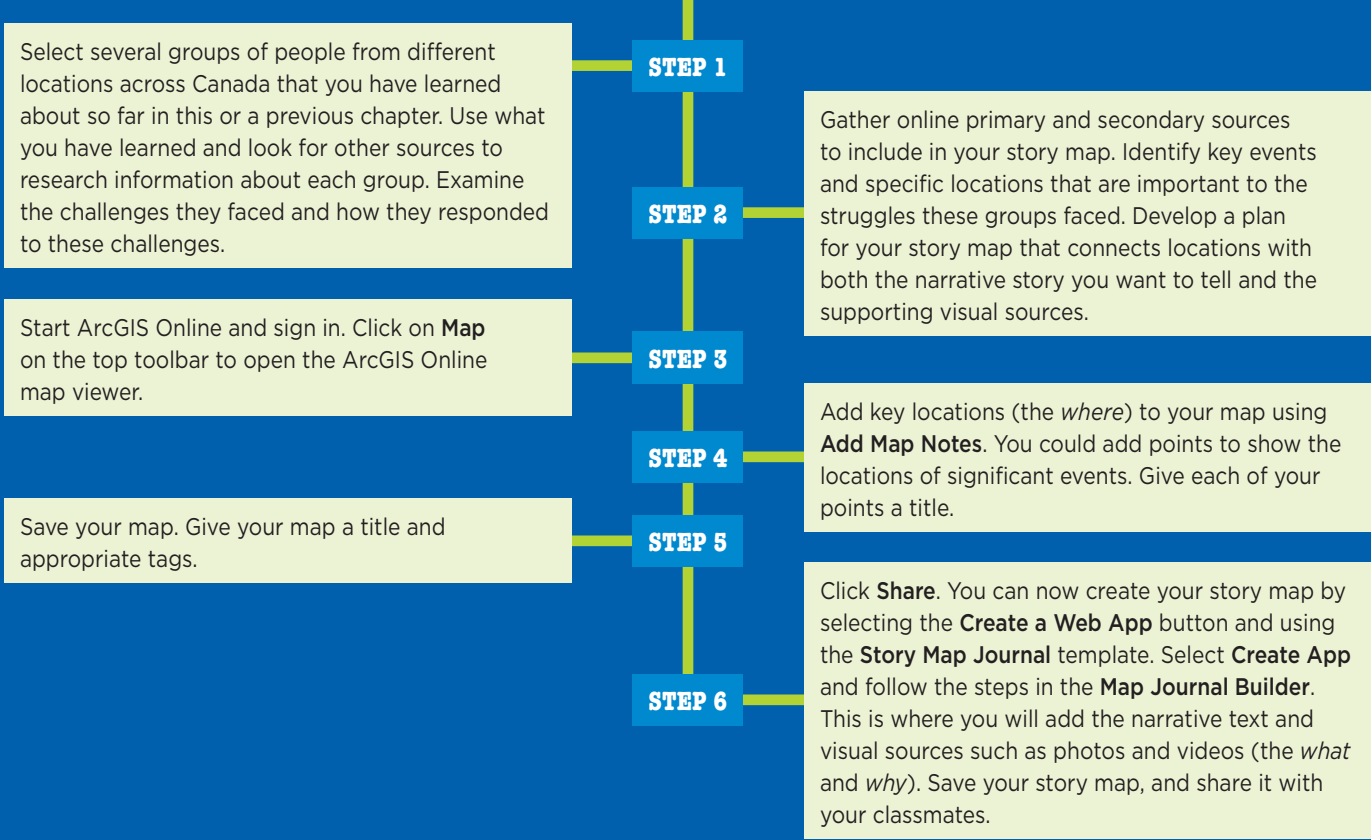
FIGURE 8.5 A photo from 1900 to 1909 of young Chinese people in British Columbia. **Analyze:** Looking at the clothing worn in this photo, what message do you think these men and women were trying to convey about the Chinese community?

CREATING A STORY MAP

Story maps allow you to combine the spatial characteristics of a map (the *where*) with narrative text and visual elements such as photos and videos (the *what* and *why*) to help tell a story. You analyzed one type of story map in Chapter 7. In this activity, you will create your own story map using ArcGIS Online.

Throughout Unit 2, you have been exploring many of the political and social challenges that different groups faced during the 1890s to the early 1900s. In this activity, you will create a story map to document the experiences of some of these different groups and the actions they took to fight for social change. For example, you can look at the history of the Chinese community in Canada. You can document how they responded to racist and discriminatory laws, such as the head tax and hiring bans. They responded by creating their own businesses and organizations, such as benevolent associations and youth social clubs. You can use primary and secondary sources from this chapter and earlier chapters to help you tell their story.

HOW TO CREATE A STORY MAP



ITALIAN WORKERS GO ON STRIKE

After the economic recession in the late 1800s, Canada's economy began to improve during the early 1900s. Though the federal government preferred British and northern European immigrants to settle the country, it needed temporary workers to help build the growing country. As a result, thousands of southern European men, including Greeks and Italians, answered Canada's call for cheap labour.

Thousands of young Italian men arrived in Canada hoping to find good jobs and better opportunities than what was available in Italy. The Italian men were given temporary jobs, mostly in the railway, mining, shipping, and lumber industries. Since many of the jobs were seasonal, the men were not guaranteed work for the whole year and were often treated poorly by their employers. How does the quote in **Figure 8.6** show stereotypes and discrimination against Italian workers?

The Italian workers could not refuse the dangerous and dirty jobs. They needed to work to survive in their new country and to send money back home to their families. Since many Italian workers were restricted to lower-end jobs, with very little pay, relationships with their employers grew tense. Read **Figure 8.7**, a quote from a spokesperson at a railway storage shed. Then examine **Figure 8.8**, a photo of Italian workers building Toronto's sewers. What do these two sources reveal about the working conditions of many Italian immigrants?

"We wish to be treated as other citizens—fire us but don't abuse us. We work like animals and take abuse."

— An unidentified spokesperson for railway freight workers

FIGURE 8.7 A 1909 quote from an unidentified spokesperson for railway freight workers. **Analyze:** How does this quote provide evidence that Italian workers were subjected to discrimination?

From 1902 to 1912, there was a strike by dock and freight workers almost every year. The striking workers, who were mostly Italian, sometimes acted violently. This was due to their frustration with harsh working conditions and lack of job security. Newspaper reports focused on the violence of the strikes, rather than the complaints of the Italian workers. When the strikes were settled, Italian workers were often not allowed to return to their jobs.

Despite facing these harsh conditions, many Italian workers settled in Canadian cities like Toronto and Montréal. This large population of workers allowed Italian communities to grow. Italian settlers gradually opened businesses, such as restaurants, grocery stores, and barbershops.

"Coarse, rough, uneducated peasants from southern Italy, their only advantage being their strong frames and tough sinews that made them an invaluable acquisition to Canada for performing the rough, dirty work such as handling coal."

— *Unnamed lawyer*

FIGURE 8.6 A quote from an unnamed lawyer in Ontario on October 8, 1912, showing the attitudes Italian immigrants faced while in Canada. **Analyze:** Based on this quote, what benefit did the Canadian government see in Italian immigrant workers?

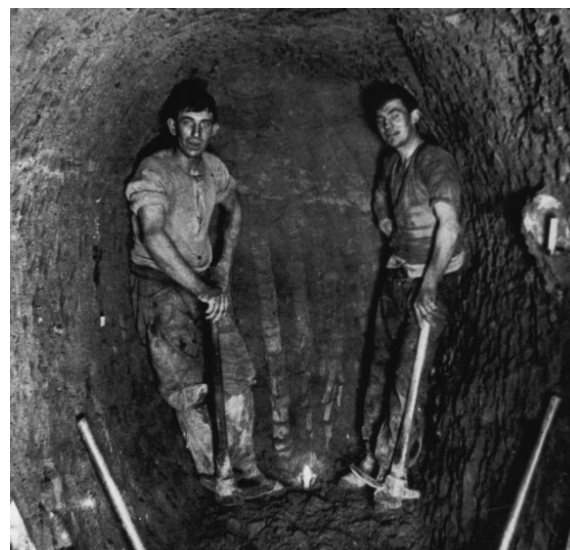


FIGURE 8.8 This photo from 1912 shows Italian workers building the sewage system in Toronto, which took decades to complete. **Analyze:** What can you infer about the working conditions of this job, based on the details in this photo?

CONNECTING TO OUR PAST

EMMA BRESIL: ITALIAN FOLK DANCER

Past and present immigrants to Canada bring more than job skills with them. They also bring their cultural traditions, such as language, food, stories, music, and celebrations. For Emma Bresil (**Figure 8.9**), a Grade 8 student in York Region, Ontario, Italian folk dancing is how she connects with her Italian community and culture.

Bresil dances at the Famée Furlane in Woodbridge, Ontario. Famée Furlane is a social club and benevolent society founded in 1932 by a group of Furlan friends. Furlans are people who originally came from the Friuli region of northern Italy, like Bresil's grandparents. Bresil's *nonna*, her grandmother, came from a town called Solimbergo, in the Friuli region. Bresil's grandfather, her *nonno*, came from Cosa, another town in the Friuli region.

Folk dancing is a very important tradition in Italy, especially in the Friuli region. A folk dancer is called a *balarin*, and performs dances that have been part of Italian culture for hundreds of years. A balarin wears traditional costumes and dances to traditional music. Bresil does the same dances today that her great-grandmothers did in their *piazza*, or town square, in Italy. She also wears the same traditional dance costumes as her great-grandmothers did. Carrying on this Italian folk dancing tradition in Canada is important to the members of the Famée Furlane. That is why the folk dancers perform for

the people of their Italian-Canadian community who attend Famée Furlane events. At the end of some performances, the balarins invite people from the audience to come up and learn one of the dances. Bresil thinks that this "really

brings us together as an Italian community."

Connecting to her cultural heritage in this way is important to Bresil, because she is "carrying on this tradition so it doesn't get forgotten." But folk

dancing has done much more than connect Bresil with her past. Dancing has also helped Bresil stop feeling nervous in front of people. By performing for years, Bresil says "I faced my fear so many times, I don't have stage fright anymore." Perhaps most important of all, Bresil says, "I enjoy dancing for people because it brings joy to them."

"[DANCING] REALLY BRINGS US TOGETHER AS AN ITALIAN COMMUNITY."



FIGURE 8.9 Emma Bresil dressed in a traditional Italian dance costume

A CALL TO ACTION

1. How could you learn more about the experiences of your ancestors? What kinds of resources could help you?
2. How could you organize a cultural group that brings youth together to connect with their heritage? What activity will your group focus on—dance, language, music, clothes, stories, or food?

JEWISH GARMENT WORKERS PROTEST

In the early 1900s, Canada’s garment, or clothing, industry employed many Jewish immigrants. This was because many had worked in the garment industry before coming to Canada. When they tried to get jobs outside of the garment industry, many faced anti-Semitism. Having large numbers of Jewish workers in the garment industry, however, provided some benefits for the Jewish community. Jewish leaders could create their own unions, such as the Canadian branches of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union. These unions helped Jewish workers maintain their culture. For example, they did not work on Jewish holidays and could speak Yiddish at work.

Although unions helped Jewish workers in some ways, Jewish garment workers still faced many workplace challenges, such as low pay and unsafe working conditions. Male, female, and child garment workers were affected by these conditions. Toronto’s Timothy Eaton Company was one of the most powerful employers in the country at the time. Jewish garment workers made up 80 percent of the company’s workforce. Read **Figure 8.10**. What does this quote reveal about the working conditions of the Jewish children at the Eaton Company?

In February 1912, male sewing machine operators were told that they would have the added task of sewing in coat linings. To save money, Eaton’s would not pay the male workers for this extra task. Female workers, who originally did this task, would lose their jobs. In protest over these changes and their harsh working conditions, the 65 machine operators went on strike.

MOBILIZING A COMMUNITY

The number of striking union workers grew to around 1200 as Eaton garment workers from both the Toronto and Montréal factories joined the strike. About one-third of the striking workers were women. Jewish children actively participated in the protests as well.

Recall the chapter opener photo, which shows Eaton garment workers on strike marching through Toronto streets. Look at **Figure 8.11**, showing some of the Eaton Company striking workers. Why do you think these strikers are lined up?



“In this very Kingdom of the Eaton Company, frail children of fourteen years, in busy seasons, work from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.; ... girls are forced at times to take ‘homework’ to do at night, after the long day in the factory.”
— *Weekly Bulletin of the Clothing Trades*

FIGURE 8.10 This is a report from March 29, 1912, in the *Weekly Bulletin of the Clothing Trades* on the conditions of work in the garment factory at the Eaton Company. **Analyze:** Why do you think the quote uses the word *Kingdom* when referring to the Eaton Company?

FIGURE 8.11 Striking Timothy Eaton Company garment workers, 1912. **Analyze:** What kind of message do you think these workers were trying to convey by striking?

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROTESTS

By mid-April, the strike pay given to the striking workers by the union was running out. There was also little support for the strike in the media and among businesspeople. Read **Figure 8.12**. What was Timothy Eaton’s response to the strike?

The striking workers eventually gave up. The Eaton Company refused to hire back all of its Jewish workers. Only a handful of workers were allowed to return to work. Read **Figure 8.13**, a quote from a newsletter of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union. How could the way the strike was presented to the public have affected the strike’s success?

“Those affected [by the dispute at the Eaton Company] are almost entirely Jewish: and the chief slogan by which it was hoped to cut off public sympathy was the report ... that this is ‘only a strike of Jews.’ The appeal to race and creed prejudice has succeeded, too, in so far as it has prevented the Gentile [non-Jewish] Cloak Makers from joining in the sympathetic strike.”
— *International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union*

FIGURE 8.13 This union report from the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union was given to one of the union newspapers to explain the aftermath of the 1912 strike. **Analyze:** What does the source reveal about the non-Jewish garment workers?

Though the Jewish workers failed to improve their working conditions, their actions increased public awareness about sweatshops. The strike also introduced a whole generation of Jewish people to the labour movement, and many became union leaders. Despite this, many Canadians still carried prejudices against Jewish people and other non–northern European immigrants during this time.

“[The strikers] must remember they are paid by us not by the union.... Now they are out, they are out the door for good. Not a single man will be reinstated. Rather than do so we will shut down our factories.”
— *Timothy Eaton, owner of the Eaton Company*

FIGURE 8.12 A 1912 quote from Eaton about the striking workers. **Analyze:** How do you think the striking female workers may have felt hearing Eaton’s words?

Which aspects of Jewish garment workers’ daily lives may have changed after the strike?

CHECK-IN

- 1. **EVALUATE AND DRAW CONCLUSIONS** Choose two different groups and explain which of their actions had the most positive effect on their working conditions. Suggest what might have happened to them had those actions not been taken.
- 2. **INTERPRET AND ANALYZE** What does the development of ethnic organizations reveal about Canada’s attitudes toward minority groups during this time period?
- 3. **CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE** Consider the lack of employment opportunities for minority groups presented in this section. What were some consequences of these disadvantages? Think about short- and long-term consequences, positive and negative consequences, as well as intended and unintended consequences.