

September 2, 2022

Greater Victoria School Board issues apology for the 1922 segregation

VICTORIA, BC – The Board of Education is issuing an apology for decisions made by a previous Board in the early 1900s that supported segregationist policies, leading to Chinese students being segregated in the public school system.

In 1907, the Victoria School Board passed a motion requiring Chinese students to pass an English exam to attend schools in the school district. The practice was legally challenged by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, and the District adapted the direction to allow Canadian-born Chinese students to enroll in Victoria schools. Chinese-born children who did not pass the exam were still forced to seek an alternative educational pathway.

In July 1922, the Board passed another resolution to segregate all Chinese students up to grade seven for the upcoming school year. The policy came into effect on September 5, 1922. On that day, Principals removed Chinese students from their classes and led them to the Chinese Public School on King Road. As the cohorts neared the building, students dispersed and began striking in protest.

The Chinese Canadian Club, the Chinese Commerce Association, and the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association supported the strike.

“Among a long list of historic wrongs perpetuated against the Chinese community in Victoria, this stands out as a particularly dark incident for our school district. The Greater Victoria School Board apologizes for the actions of its previous Trustees and former Board Chair, George Jay. The racist discrimination that led to this act is unacceptable and viewed with regret,” said Board Chair Ryan Painter. “We will work with the Chinese community to ensure this history is not forgotten and remain committed to celebrating their immense contributions to the City of Victoria and South Vancouver Island.”

“What started as a school boycott became a protest movement for equality which brought together the Chinese community locally, regionally and nationally from county and clan associations to individuals,” said Alan Lowe, Chair of the Victoria Chinatown Museum Society. “Those of us, of Chinese descent, who were born and raised in Victoria, were able to attend public schools because of those who preceded us.”

On Monday, September 5, 2022, locals will retrace the students’ steps and participate in a commemorative walk marking the 100th year anniversary of the student strike. For more information visit: <https://victoriachinatownmuseum.com/>

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