



*Collier unloading coal at NKK Steel Company, Yokohama, Japan.*

## **The Chinese, the Japanese and the East Indians**

From the mid-nineteenth century on Vancouver was an obvious but seldom hospitable port for immigrants from the Orient.

The first few Chinese came to Vancouver Island around 1850. With the gold rush a few years later they began pouring in, some directly from China, some from California. Most worked as labourers, gardeners or set up in small businesses.

Railroad tycoon Andrew Onderdonk arranged with the Six Companies, a Chinese organization in San Francisco, to bring in 15,000

Chinese coolies a year to build the western end of the Transcontinental Railway. The influx was resisted by white workmen, particularly miners, and there was violence in 1877 when coal mine operators at Nanaimo used Chinese workers in an attempt to break a strike.

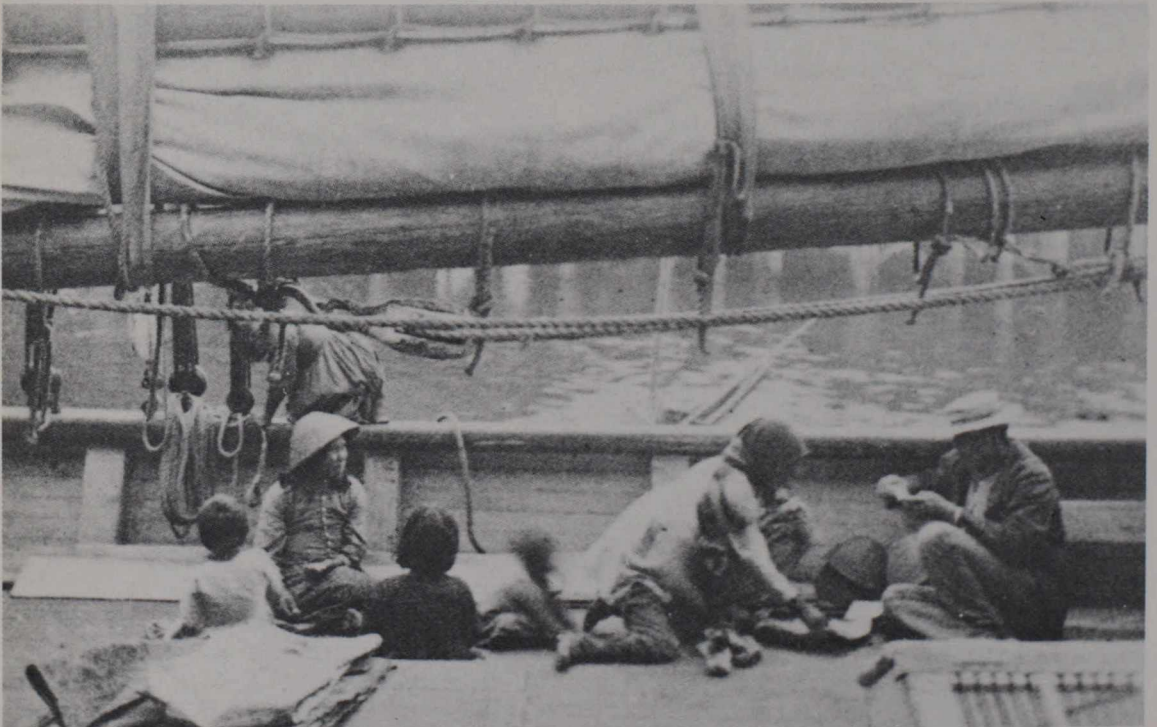
In 1883 the miners demanded that Chinese immigration be stopped, but the federal government, anticipating a great increase in trade when the completion of the railroad made Chinese markets accessible to eastern Canada and the wheat farmers of the prairies, disallowed numerous exclusion acts passed by the British Columbia legislature. Nevertheless, the Dominion Franchise Act was passed in 1885, barring Chinese from voting and fixing a \$50 "head" tax on each immigrant. The tax was raised to \$100 in 1900 and \$500 in 1905.

Immigration continued to increase, however, and 7,078 Chinese entered British Columbia in 1914. The tax was usually paid by companies importing cheap labour.

The efforts to exclude Chinese (as well as Japanese and East Indians) continued, and the federal Parliament passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923. It was made more stringent in the Depression year of 1930.

After World War II the restrictions were dropped and Chinese arrived in increasing numbers. In 1967, 4,142 immigrants arrived; 6,372 came in 1972 and 11,558 (10,725 of them from Hong Kong) in 1976.

Today the descendants of the early Chinese immigrants and more recent arrivals from the Orient are recognized and significant members of British Columbia's diverse community.



*Chinese immigrants arriving in British Columbia.*