

## 1939–1945 Chinese Participation in World War II

World War II began in 1939. Chinese-Canadians were not allowed to **enlist** in the air force or the navy. The Premier of BC strongly opposed allowing Asians into the armed forces.

At the time, Chinese Canadians were not allowed to vote in Canada. The Chinese

community was deeply divided on whether Chinese Canadians should join the war effort. Some people felt that if Chinese Canadians joined the war effort, the government would then have to allow them to vote. Others argued that the Canadian government needed to give Chinese Canadians the vote first, before they enlisted in the military.



In late 1942, Chinese Canadians were allowed to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. In 1943, the Royal Canadian Navy allowed Canadian-born Chinese and Chinese born in Hong Kong to enlist. In 1944, Chinese Canadians were recruited to work in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific in a special operation.

Even before they were allowed to enlist, Chinese Canadians contributed greatly to Canada's war effort. They joined the Red Cross, worked in war-related industries, and raised money through the purchase of war bonds. A war bond was a loan to the government. War bonds could be cashed in with interest after five, ten, or twenty years.



Over 600 Chinese Canadians contributed to the war effort during World War II.

### Vocabulary

**enlist:**  
to join the  
military