



Description of Project:

Rocky Railway High (Closure) is an interactive art project commemorating the Chinese railway workers in Canada. It is supported by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration under the Community Historical Recognition Program.

Over the month of July 2011, David Cheung, a contemporary artist and his two sons, who are descendants of a railway worker, travelled by train and by bicycle along the section of the railway constructed by the Chinese workers. The trip began in Vancouver, British Columbia, traveling through the Fraser Valley to the last spike in Craigellachie, and ending in Victoria, at a cemetery where many unnamed Chinese railway workers were buried. They visited important sites, met with local historians, artists, and community members, gave presentations about the project, and collected public submissions, all of which was documented through photographs, videos, blog entries, and on-site artwork (more information can be found at: <http://rockyrailwayhigh.blog.com/>).

A total of 5,000+ pieces of artwork or writing are now being collected from the public to represent the number of Chinese workers that perished during construction of the railway. We ask the public for their reflections on the railway workers, the Exclusion Act, and the Head Tax by writing, illustrating, drawing, or painting on a post card sized paper (about 4"x6") resembling the shapes of tents used by the workers. The work can be submitted physically by mail and in person or submitted online on our website and Facebook page.

(Submission form: <http://rockyrailwayhigh.com/rockyRailwayHighClosureSubmissionForm.pdf>)

A series of multimedia artwork (photographs, paintings, mixed medias installation, digital media & videos) will be produced basing on information collected from the expedition and the history of Chinese railroad workers and the 1923 Exclusion Act and Head Tax.

Contributions received from the public and the artwork created by the artist will be exhibited together in November 2011 at the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver in British Columbia. Descendants of Chinese railway workers and Head Tax payers will be invited to participate in presentations and forums when available. All of the public contributions will be digitally archived on the Rocky Railway High (Closure) website, and will be incorporated into the future Heroes of Confederation, Canada's Pioneer Chinese Railway Workers Museum to be built in Kamloops, British Columbia. (Submissions can be viewed at: <http://rockyrailwayhigh.com/submissions.html>)

After the exhibition in Canada is completed, all 5,000+ contribution from the public will be shipped to Guangdong, China to be buried in a permanent site representing a symbolic homecoming of the Chinese railway workers who perished in the building of this nation.

All work and video documentation will also be archived and available for viewing on our website. Artwork produced by David Cheung from this project will be available for future exhibitions at private galleries and public institutions.

Purpose of project:

1. By engaging more than 5,000+ students and general public in a hands-on interactive art project, more than 5,000 pieces of artworks and written work will be produced based on information regarding the Chinese railway workers, and how the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act and Head Tax left the workers stranded in a country as second class citizens, separated from their families.

The project will bring attention to the effect on the workers and their families as well as the Chinese community in Canada. It intends to enhance awareness and recognition of contributions by the Chinese Railway workers, knowledge about their relation to the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act and Head Tax. The project will also emphasize the lasting effects on the families of the workers and the Chinese community. The project seeks to prevent future acts of ignorance and discrimination, while promoting multiculturalism and diversity in Canada.

2. The project also symbolically brings closure to the Chinese railway workers who perished during the construction of the Western section of the Canadian Pacific Railway, also bringing a sense of closure to the families of the workers and to the Chinese community.

3. Create a series of contemporary artwork basing on information collected from an expedition to the Rockies along the railway line the Chinese railway workers worked and resided, the history of the Chinese railway workers, Chinese Exclusion Act, the Head Tax, and the effect of the unfair laws on the workers and their families, for exhibitions at mainstream public art institutions and other venues.
4. A website (www.rockyrailwayhigh.com) has been created to archive all contributed artwork and writings permanently as well as documenting the Rocky Railway High (Closure) art project. It will also provide information about the history of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Head Tax and the Chinese Railway workers.
5. Produce a series of video documentation of the project for online viewing and download.
6. Incorporate the collected public work in the future Heroes of Confederation, Canada's Pioneer Chinese Railway Workers Museum to be built in Kamloops, British Columbia.

Trip Updates:

Organizations and individuals supporting Rocky Railway High (Closure):

- Kamloops Multicultural Society
- Chinese Canadian Historical Society of British Columbia
- Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver
- Revelstoke Railway Museum
- Revelstoke Museum and Archives
- Rotary Club of Ashcroft/Creek
- Richmond Art Gallery

Media coverage include:

- 07/15/11 Radio NL Kamloops, Interview for Morning Report with Tara Gostelow
- 07/19/11 Revelstoke Times Current, "Rocky Railway High Project seeks YOUR input" by David F. Rooney
<http://www.revelstokecurrent.com/2011/07/19/rocky-railway-high-project-seeks-your-input/>
- 07/20/11 Revelstoke Times Review, "Artist David Cheung looking for help for commemorative art project" by Alex Cooper
http://www.bclocalnews.com/kootenay_rookies/revelstoketimesreview/community/125899493.html
- 07/25/2011 Kamloops Daily News, "Honouring the past: Artist's project aims to remember price paid by Chinese rail workers" by Robert Koopmans <http://www.kamloopsnews.ca/article/20110725/KAMLOOPS0107/110729978/-1/kamloops01/honouring-the-past>
- 08/05/11 Wow TV晨早360 - 0805 落磯鐵路華工高(回歸)9月多倫多預展(粵),
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqhdwojwXlY&feature=player_embedded

Sponsors:

- Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Community Historical Recognition Program
- VIA Rail: sponsored 3 overnight train tickets from Vancouver to Kamloops, B.C.
- Canadian Pacific Railway: offered to donate a section the CPR rail for the Rocky Railway High (Closure) exhibition

Timeline of project:

- March 15th, 2011: Start project.
- March 31st, 2011: Launch project online and off-line to school and public. Call for public contributions.
- July 11th, 2011 - August 2nd, 2011: Rocky Railway High – B.C. Trip.
- September, 2011 - November 2011: Campaign for participation of public schools across the country.
- November 15th, 2011: Deadline for public submissions.
- End of November, 2011: Exhibition at Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver in Vancouver, B.C.
- December 15th, 2011: Burial in Guangdong, China.

Contact:

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Blog: www.rockyrailwayhigh.blog.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/RockyRailwayHigh

Submission form: <http://rockyrailwayhigh.com/rockyRailwayHighClosureSubmissionForm.pdf>