

# Viewing Guide for *Finding Fred Lee*

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## Before Viewing

World War One, the Great War, was a global conflict from 1914-1918. At the time, Canada was still considered a British Dominion, the Canadian Pacific Railway had been completed for a few decades and the Chinese head tax had been raised to an exorbitant \$500 per person.

### Discussion Question to set context

Near the beginning of *Finding Fred Lee*, the filmmaker Jack Gin says, “We thought WW1 was all about guys with English names and Scottish names who would go over the top and get annihilated. Well, turns out we had a Chinese kid from Kamloops who got annihilated.” How does his original understanding of WW1 compare to your understanding of Canadians’ participation in WW1?

## During Viewing

Read the After Viewing Discussion Questions before you watch the film. Think about them and make jot notes about them while you watch so you will be able to discuss the questions afterward.

## After Viewing Discussion Questions

1. In many ways, Private Fred Lee’s story is about belonging (or not belonging). He belonged to a family, a battalion and a country.
  - A. Why do you think the director introduced the concept of family. What can you infer about Fred Lee’s place in his family from the film?
  - B. The filmmaker Jack Gin discovered the Lee family in Kamloops where father Chong Lee was raising a family that included Fred Lee who was born there in 1894. He also discovered Chong Lee's British Subject papers, an oath of allegiance to the then Queen of the British Empire. Do you think Chong’s son, Fred Lee, would have considered himself a British Subject or a Canadian or both?
2. What does Private Sidney Winterbottom’s reference to Fred Lee in his letter, “Isn’t it too bad Fred Lee was killed? He was such a fine young fellow and absolutely couldn’t be persuaded to drink, smoke, or swear over here.” tell you about how his

fellow soldiers saw him? Do you think Fred Lee was accepted and respected? Why?

3. Fred Lee was ethnic Chinese. He lived and died during a time ethnic Chinese people were not seen to “belong” in Canada. The \$500 head tax was designed to discourage people of Chinese descent from immigrating. The ethnic Chinese people who already lived here were denied many rights. However, Jack Gin uncovers evidence that Fred Lee’s family were well respected pioneers.
  - C. What does this tell you about the nature of “belonging”.
  - D. At this time, anyone of Chinese ethnicity was denied the right to vote. Fred Lee was denied that right, yet he volunteered to fight for his country. Why do you think he volunteered?
4. Think about the Canadian soldiers mentioned in the film. How were they different from each other? In what ways were they similar?
5. In the credits, you can see that Jack Gin visited many museums both personally and digitally to do his research. What does this tell you about the role of archival museums in research?

### **Point to Ponder:**

As a British Dominion, Canada was at war as soon as the King of the Empire declared war on Germany. Canadian battalions (of 1000 soldiers) were considered part of a "Colonial Army" under British Command. Because Canada was not a nation at the time, it did not have a National Army and called its army, the Canadian Expeditionary Force. After the Battle of Vimy Ridge, British Command promoted Canadian General Arthur Currie to head the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Under General Arthur Currie, the CEF became a respected and feared army. It would advance with some 37 battle victories to close out the war. During this time, the British (and the English press) started calling Currie's army, the National Army of Canada. Many historians consider this the moment Canada became a Nation.

Do you think the Battle of Vimy Ridge was the moment Canada became a Nation?

### **Beyond Finding Fred Lee**

Jack Gin says he is not related to Fred Lee. Despite this, he was inspired to research Fred Lee’s story and make a film about him. There are many untold stories, perhaps even in your own family. Think about taking this opportunity to tell your family about Fred Lee and asking them to tell you about stories they have heard...how could you find out more and share this story?