



PROJECT GOAL

This project aims to produce plain language public legal education material that will be shared with ALPHA's partner educators through Teachers' Conferences and other offerings for Professional Development.

These materials will enable teachers to develop a unit, or teach and integrate lessons about the experience of colonialism particularly, the era known for the emergence of "New Imperialism" in the mid-18th to early 19th century as it affected Asian countries and peoples. The materials can complement their already existing courses under World Canadian Studies, such as: Geography, History, Civics, Economics, and Law & Politics.

UNEQUAL TREATIES PROJECT Guide & Education Toolkit

"In the standard narrative of the peace conference, non-Western regions and peoples figure most often as inert masses of territory and humanity that the great powers carved up in an unprecedented expansion of imperialism."

Erez Manela on the Versailles Peace Talks of 1919

BACKGROUND & PROJECT RATIONALE

Teaching about Asia in North America has been persistently problematic because of the problem of eurocentrism, which often leads in the failure to include or a tendency to marginalize North American links to Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean (Price, 2011, 2). Eurocentrism in history pertains to the presumed centrality and dominance of Europe in global historical affairs. This perspective carries with it assumptions about the purported superiority of Europe over the rest of the world. Nakip adds: "It is the assumption that since Europe grew richer and more powerful than all other societies it is "superior" to them; its perspective, therefore, ought to be privileged over all others." (Nakip, 2014, 129)

Compared to the United States, Canadian history writing leaves out even more when it comes to the story of World War II. Depictions of Canada's past tend to be Atlantic-centered and focused on European immigrant experience, which both displaces First Nations peoples and Canadian links to the Pacific. However, such attempts to correct Eurocentric narratives have met resistance as well as accusations of "killing" or diluting Canadian history. (Price, 2011, 3)

Contrary to such fears, introducing more globally balanced and cross-cultural and historical content into the curriculum can actually impart important life skills and develop the capacities of Canadian students, which can help them to become more globally informed, culturally competent, and sensitive citizens. Exposing students to multiple perspectives and encouraging them to take a historical perspective as they make sense of their own heritage can help broaden their understanding of the world around them.

PROJECT OUTPUT

Unequal Treaties will be a series of short essays that feature as well as analyse key treaties between the colonial powers – European states and Japan, and Asian countries like China, Korea, and, for a time, Japan in the mid-18th and early 19th century. The term “unequal treaty” is commonly used by historians to refer to the kinds of commercial treaties that a number of Asian countries entered into with Western colonial powers at gunpoint during the first industrial revolution (Cassel, 2016, 23). These treaties which pertained to commercial privileges within a given port established and comprised the treaty port system. Studying the treaty port system and how unequal treaties facilitated imperialist industrial expansion provides students with a better sense of the how the industrial revolution impacted and arguably transformed the lives of around 444 million colonised peoples in Asia.



ASSIGNMENTS

Each law student intern/volunteer is expected to undertake the following assignment:

1) Write a 250–300 word summary description of 2–3 key treaties. The short description should highlight the historical significance of the treaty (to both colonising power and the colonised), explain the terms of the treaty using plain language, and in a manner that also mentions their historical significance;

2) Write a 900–1,200 word essay about the historical circumstances surrounding the adoption of the treaty (e.g. How it came about, what conflict or event did it arise in relation to, who were some of the key figures involved in initiating/securing the treaty, its impact, etc.).

WHAT CAN VOLUNTEERS GAIN FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE AT ALPHA?

Through the project, students can further strengthen their skills in the following areas:

- Legal Research and Legal historical analysis
- Historical Thinking and Critical Thinking
- Cross-cultural analysis

In addition, ALPHA Education hopes that the project can also help

- Engender empathy, ethical perspectives and social engagement
- Help students to become more globally informed, culturally competent, and sensitive citizens

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PROJECT

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