



FOOD HISTORY – INQUIRY PROJECT

GRADE LEVEL – 4 to 12

DECODING OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

DID YOU KNOW?

- Photographs have tremendous power to communicate information
- Photographs are a useful primary source of information and can teach us a great deal about historical events.
- Photographs can tell a story

Almost every family in BC has old photographs that tell a story about food, agriculture and food production of the past. Local museums and archives also have collections of photographs. Your Food History inquiry is to locate old photographs of kitchens, farming, food production, or other food related topics to study, analyze, reflect upon, and tell their story.

- Begin your research by locating old photographs, and then begin the process of decoding, describing, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating what you see.
- **Describe** the photograph, making note of as much essential factual information as is available. E.g., Does the photograph have a title? Who is the photographer? When and where was the photograph taken? Look at the subject matter and describe it as clearly as you can. Are there people in the photograph? What are they wearing? What are they doing? Is it a landscape? Does it show the country or the city? What food products are pictured? What food preparation/processing equipment is being used? List as many facts as you can.
- Then **analyze** the photograph. First, what comments can you make from the clues in the photo? If there are people in the photograph, how old do they appear to be? What do you think the relationships between the people are? What do facial expressions and body language suggest? What is going on in the background? Do you see any writing in the photo (signs, or posters, for example)? Are there recognizable buildings or landmarks? What time of day does it seem to be? Think about overall mood or feeling.
- Then **interpret** the photograph. Use the information that you have discovered through your description and analysis to draw conclusions about the photograph. Can you now say what is happening in the photograph and what it tells us about food, food preparation, production, or agriculture? You might need to do some research in order to discover the historical context of the photograph. What was happening in the world at the time? What is revealed about everyday life and adapting to the environment?
- The final stage of your decoding is an **evaluation**. Make a judgment about the value, the significance and the importance of the photograph. Is the photograph useful to you in terms of understanding food history? What does it add to your knowledge of the significance of food?
- Consider comparing and contrasting the photographs with matching images of today. If the photo is from your family's photo album, consider interviewing the people in the photo or people who knew them.