



Alex Louie in the group shot of the Chinese Canadian Veterans' 14th Anniversary
www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/hr_cdnchinese/profile/louiea

Alexander Shukee Louie

"When I put on that uniform for the first time, I felt like a man ... a human being ... I was not ashamed of being Chinese anymore."

Alex Louie speaking in NFB documentary Unwanted Soldiers

As Camp X in Whitby, ON was closing down, another secret camp was coming into being near Penticton, B.C. The S.O.E. camp was to train Chinese-Canadians for high-risk operations behind Japanese lines. Up until 1944 the Canadian government refused to allow Canadian-born Chinese to serve and treated all Chinese-Canadians as second class citizens. They did not have the right to vote. Alexander Louie in the NFB film *Unwanted Soldiers* talks about growing up in the Chinese ghetto of Vancouver. "I was spat at, glared at and sworn at when I left the ghetto." In spite of this treatment, hundreds of young Chinese-Canadian men answered the call when on March 24, 1944 the Canadian government allowed the British government to set up the super-secret tented camp at Commando Bay.

Two Camp X trainers taught the first 15 Chinese-Canadian recruits demolitions, unarmed combat, silent kill and small arms. They also received training in wireless radio operations, ambush planning, survival and sabotage. For example, they learned how to attach limpet mines to enemy vessels. During their seven days a week early morning training from May to September 1944 the young men became proficient

swimmers in the cold waters of Commando Bay. Many of them had not learned to swim as Chinese-Canadians were not allowed in B.C. swimming pools. When the first trainees arrived in Australia, they received further parachute jumping training.

As a tribute to the excellence of their service on dangerous missions in South East Asia four of the five Chinese-Canadian agents dropped into Borneo received the Military Medal. The British War Office wanted more Chinese-Canadians! This time in January, 1945 136 Chinese-Canadians were given the go-ahead to train in England and India for Force 136. "We were wanted to parachute in to arm resistance in the Malay area and we were told to expect 80% casualties," said Louie. "We took the risk to earn full Canadian citizenship".

After Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Japanese surrender Force 136 was redirected to accept the surrender of Japanese soldiers, help with the repatriation of Allied POWs, supervise work parties of surrendered Japanese soldiers and keep peace between the Chinese and Malays who were fighting in the vacuum left by the Japanese surrender. Alex Louie described seeing 500 walking ghosts, skeletal Allied POWs. Sgt. Bing Lee Chinn interpreted as his team gave medical assistance to guerrillas suffering from beriberi and skin ulcers. Force 136 was up to all tasks.



Alexander Shukee Louie
obits.dignitymemorial.com

By the end of September 1945 Force 136 was disbanded. Alex Louie returned to B.C. to co-found the successful Le Kiu Asian Importing Company and open the Marco Polo Restaurant and night club. In 1947 the Canadian government repealed the *Chinese*

Exclusion Act of 1923; Chinese-Canadians received the right to vote. Two of Mr. Louie's children entered professions from which Chinese-Canadians had been excluded.

The 150 Chinese-Canadians who served during WWII did not change the tides of war, but by their service, they did change the tides of the society in which they lived.