



The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario celebrates May Asian Heritage Month 2021

In Ontario, the month of May is dedicated to celebrating the contributions of Canadians from over 30 countries that make up the Asian and South Asian diaspora.

Asian Heritage Month has been a focus of celebration in many communities across Canada since the 1990s. In December of 2001, Senator Vivienne Poy proposed a motion that was adopted by the Senate of Canada, designating May as Asian Heritage Month nationally. In May 2002, the Government of Canada made this motion official by signing a declaration to designate May as Asian Heritage Month.

ETFO's May Asian Heritage Month 2021 Poster

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Artist Bio

Emmie Tsumura is a multidisciplinary artist currently based in Tkarón:to/Toronto. Guided by Japanese folk tales, her current research tracks the lives of Japanese ghost spirits. She uses illustration as a tool to witness and tell stories, and documents an ongoing process of negotiating Japanese settler/colonial identity.

Artist Statement

The poster design was inspired by the many faces of Asian-Canadian activism; those whose struggles we now benefit from; those whose shoulders we now stand on; those still to come. I found myself feeling proud of these passionate and resilient people who pushed against unfair labour practices, gender discrimination, homophobia and white supremacy, despite terrible living and working conditions and even at the risk of their own lives. I wanted to create a collage with a feeling of warmth and solidarity, spanning many generations of people of different cultural backgrounds and identities to celebrate what is possible.

About the poster

- *Resistance & Change*
- *Celebrating Asian Canadian Stories*

This year's poster captures five stories of collective resistance. They chronicle Asian Canadian struggles, experiences and resilience in different political and social spaces.

Striking for Labour Rights shines a light on early forms of worker resistance. During the early 1900s, Asian mill and shingle factory workers coordinated strikes in protest of discriminatory wage practices and unfair working conditions. These events demonstrated the power of collective strength in the labour movement.

Fighting Against Segregation focuses on the year-long protests in British Columbia in response to the racist policies of school segregation. The prevailing ideologies that Asians were 'unassimilable' kept Chinese and other racialized children separate from dominant white educational spaces.

Anti-racism and Queer Activism highlights Gay Asians of Toronto, an organization founded in 1980, the first in Canada that provided a space for those living in the intersections of race, sexuality and gender to find support and a space for political and social expression.

Art and Resistance features two arts-based collectives, Desh Pardesh and Raging Asian Womxn (RAW). Both groups have worked to provide a venue for racialized people to utilize art as a medium and activist space for fighting oppression.

Building Solidarity brings the anti-racist movement closer to the present where the focus becomes coalition building and allyship amongst many racialized groups in order to address and dismantle white and male supremacy. Through grassroots organizing, social media actions, and collective alliances, the anti-racist communities move towards deeper and necessary forms of solidarity and collective actions.

Additional Curricular Activities

Create a timeline of events in Canada's history to feature past discriminatory laws and practices targeted at Asian communities and other communities of colour. Additionally, highlight stories of community struggle, resistance and solidarity in the past and current spaces.

Follow current events in the news and social media to learn about the historical and contemporary issues of anti-Asian racism and other forms of racism. Identify the organizations that are amplifying voices of groups who are raising awareness and building collective allyship with other anti-racist and intersectional movements. Examine how these groups have strategized to dismantle white supremacy and colonialism.

Share a read-aloud or chapter book with the class and explore themes of identity, culture and social justice. Extend discussions with students and have them make connections with self, other texts, locally and globally.

Explore systemic racist ideologies such as 'othering, myth of model minority, yellow peril,' which are particular brandings of white supremacy and racism impacting Asian identities and communities. Explore ways to debunk these myths and start a local project to challenge anti-Asian racism (create messaging posters during and after May, plan an assembly to educate the school on anti-racist issues, share learnings about different forms of racism and ways to challenge, with other students/classes).

Research local communities that are engaged in anti-racist work and develop an actionable plan to fight racism (e.g., participate in a local campaign, write a letter to a political leader, fund-raise for a community organization, etc.).

Resources

For a PDF version of the posters and for more information and resources on **Asian Heritage Month**, please see the link:



[Asian and South Asian Heritage Month - May 2021](#)

[Addressing Anti-Asian Racism: A Resource for Educators](#)

[Social Justice, Equity and Environmental Calendar](#)

[White Privilege Lesson Plans](#)