

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario Celebrates



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 2022 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 work contemplates liminal spaces and ancestral ghost spirits. She seeks to create sincere, heartfelt connections through visual language. She believes that drawing is an empowering way to see thoughts – like a map of how your brain is wired and she finds comfort in this as a reflective practice. She primarily works at the intersection of illustration and graphic design, but delights in fluidity and fumbling in translation between different artistic practices, including sound, poetry, food, and sport. In community, she finds strength in decolonizing ideas and practices and her favourite projects use art to witness, document, and tell stories that uphold these learnings.

Artist Statement

I was thinking about how much of human interaction these days happens from screen to screen, whether through our phones or laptops with layers upon layers of open windows. So much of the information we consume is constrained in boxes, disembodied from the creator and viewer, and disconnected from all the other boxes of people and content. My wish with this visual was to ask: What if we could pull all of these boxes together in one space? What would we discover and what connections could be made? What stories could we tell? How can we create more time and space to listen, share, and reconnect?

About the poster

- Kindness and Creativity
- Collectivity and Peace

The concept of the poster is to create a generative and creative space of contemplation, like a set of picture cards. Each image can be read on its own and also as part of a group or whole. They can be paired, mixed-and-matched, or interpreted as linear or non-linear. The poster is meant to offer the viewer a space to actively engage in the narrative and imagine what stories can be unlocked. How can we create more active/less reactive spaces in a time of acceleration?

As 2022 rolls in and we cautiously enter another time of re-opening, the media continues to barrage us with 24-7 coverage of anti-vaccination/mask demonstrations, war, and the still ongoing healthcare crisis. In reaction to these crises, one of the feel-good themes we've seen on mainstream media over the past few years, is the kindness and creativity of ordinary people. The poster reflects these current media themes and socio-political events, a space to process our individual and collective experiences and make connections.

Background

To honour one of our most precious elders at a time when the world needs so much more kindness and creativity, I chose a quote by the Japanese-Canadian Nobel Peace Laureate, nuclear disarmament activist, and Hiroshima atomic bomb survivor, Setsuko Thurlow.

"Think beyond (the self). Life has so much more meaning when you do things for the collective good; things that you don't really have to do, but which ultimately give your existence a sense of purpose."

In Hiroshima, it is said that if we make friends with people around the world, we can work together towards peace. Hiroshima is a special place because through the stories of survivors like Setsuko, *kindness* has become a necessary quality of the people, and a *political act*.

What is kindness? How can we be kind to ourselves? How can we be kind to our friends and family? What does kindness look like in a community? What are acts of kindness in a globalized world? What kind of things are good for humans, animals, and the earth, as a collective?

Images on the Poster

The images represented are related to current news events, locally and globally, as well as scenes from everyday life. They are meant to inspire contemplation on the above questions.

Protect our elders
Tiger
Bonsai Tree
Sleepy Sun
Eye Fire
Big Hand/Small Person
Exploding Building/War
Skull Gasoline Stand
Taiko Drummers
Yellow Umbrella
Two House Plants
Indigenous Railroad Blockades
Two Sick Fish
Girl with Carrots
Police
Cherry Blossom (Sakura)
TikTok/Instagram
Tank
Seagull Cry
Online Classes/Social Media
Child and Cat
Nurse and Patient
Breaking News

Curricular Considerations

Questions to explore:

- Which images do you connect to and why?
- Do you see relationships between any of the images?
- Which of the images suggest kindness? How?
- Which of the images suggest creativity? Collectivity? Peace? How?
- Which images do you like/dislike and why?
- What stories do you think of when you see this image?
- What do you think is happening?
- What kind of questions can you ask about these images?

Story Telling:

Print out a sheet of the images and have students cut out the squares. They are able to physically move them around like tiles. They can work independently or in groups to select one image or more and create a *before, during, and after* story. This can be represented as a graphic storyboard, spoken word, drama through tableaux, visual organizer, etc.

Research:

Explore with the class about the life, contributions, and work of Setsuko Thurlow.

Resource links:

torontonajc.ca/2022/02/17/vow-from-hiroshima-a-documentary-portrait-of-setsuko-thurlow-c-m/

icanw.org/setsuko_thurlow

governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/setsuko-thurlow

nytimes.com/2020/08/06/world/asia/hiroshima-japan-setsuko-thurlow.html

Current Events:

Discuss and investigate with the class current day topics that are represented in the images of the poster, and Setsuko Thurlow's words. Themes below can be explored:

- Anti-war;
- Climate Justice;
- Sustainability;
- Indigenous Land Rights;
- Food Security;
- Media Literacy/Fake News;
- The Rights of Nature; and
- Everyday Kindness, Creativity, Resistance, and Friendship.