

Asian Heritage Month



“Continuing a Legacy of Greatness”

Image: Government of Canada

Asian Heritage Month is an opportunity to honour and celebrate Asian heritage and the excellence and resilience of people of Asian descent in B.C.

In 2001, the first appointed Asian senator, Vivienne Poy, proposed a motion in the Senate of Canada to acknowledge the past and present contributions of Asian Canadians: “I thought it was time, after all that we (Asians) have done collectively in the past three hundred years. We helped build Canada as a nation” ([CBC Radio Canada International](#)). “The reason why I introduced [the motion] was because Asians – meaning all of Asia, all the way to west Asia – we were quite invisible in Canada because we were not part of Canadian heritage. I just wanted to give visibility to all Asians in Canada – Canadians of Asian heritage. That was the main reason – just for visibility. Just to let everybody know we're here” ([University of Toronto](#)). In schools and classrooms, we can commit to this celebration and visibility of Asian heritage especially in May. This month is also a reminder for all Canadians to come together to combat anti-Asian racism and discrimination in all its forms. Anti-Asian hate has also had a long history in Canada with continuing impacts on our current generation. Today, Anti-Asian racism has evolved into a complex and often misunderstood system of inequity and marginalization. The global pandemic has surfaced insidious and widespread physical and symbolic violence against Asian communities.

Asian American educator and author, [Liz Kleinrock](#) writes: “While it is important for [students] to learn about how Asian [diasporic] communities have been subjected to injustice, there must be balance. She urges us to “centre [Asian] joy, not our oppression.” In what ways can we centre and begin with joyful representation of Asian Canadians?” Asians are also not a monolith. There are 48 countries in Asia. How might we include varied representation of Asian identity in our learning spaces?

Lastly, although there is a month dedicated to celebrating Asian history, equity, diversity, and inclusion could be the lens through which educators approach all learning. The voices, accomplishments and stories of Asian Canadians can be affirmed and embedded throughout the year through culturally and historically responsive pedagogy.

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Stories and Representation

“Now more than ever, the world needs our stories.” Kelly Yang

These are stories from Asian communities that we might share with students across areas of learning and grade levels. Stories that nurture students’ construction of positive personal and cultural identity. Stories that help to build empathy for and understanding of people from diverse backgrounds. Stories that develop awareness, understanding, and appreciation of connections among people. Teachers might choose to use the resources listed below, either completely or partially, or use them as inspiration to source similar content and texts.



ELDER LARRY GRANT: NOT BELONGING AND INTERTWINING CULTURES

Elder Larry Grant is of mixed Chinese and Musqueam ancestry. Born on a hop field as a premature baby in Agassiz, B.C., Grant was raised in Musqueam traditional territory. After retiring as a longshoreman, Grant enrolled in the First Nations Language Program at UBC to reconnect with his mother’s ancestral language, *hən’q’əmin’əm’*. Through this transformational process, Grant achieved his goal of learning how to welcome people to Musqueam territory using the language, discovered his aptitude for sharing stories, and developed a strong passion for revitalizing *hən’q’əmin’əm’*. Today, he serves the Musqueam Nation as the Language and Culture Consultant. In the videos linked below, Elder Larry Grant shares an array of experiences being of mixed Chinese and Musqueam ancestry.



ON BEING YUKIKO

JEFF CHIBA STERNS

Emma, who is Gosei & ‘quarter’ Japanese, learns about her roots through the story of her great-great grandmother Maki, a Japanese picture bride who journeyed to Canada at the turn of the 20th century.



HOME BODY

RUPI KAUR

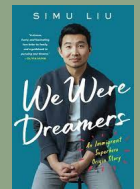
An illustrated poetry collection of raw, honest conversations with oneself - reminding readers to fill up on love, acceptance, community, family, and embrace change.



WE WERE DREAMERS

SIMU LIU

In this honest, inspiring and relatable memoir, newly minted superhero Simu Liu chronicles his family’s journey from China to the bright lights of Hollywood with razor-sharp wit and humour.

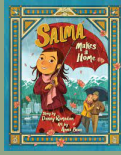


Stories and Representation



SALMA MAKES A HOME

DANNY RAMADAN

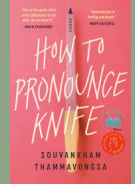


After a year, eleven months, and six days apart, Salma’s dad is finally joining her family in their new home. Salma is so happy to see her baba—but she’s also worried. What if he misses Syria so much that he leaves them again? But as Baba shares memories of Damascus, Salma starts to realize how much she misses Syria, too. Can Salma make space in her heart for two homes? (Available May 2023)



HOW TO PRONOUNCE KNIFE

SOUVANKHAM THAMMAVONGSA



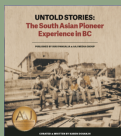
This collection of stories focuses on characters struggling to make a living, illuminating their hopes, disappointments, love affairs, acts of defiance, and above all their pursuit of a place to make their own. Thammavongsa paints an indelible portrait of watchful children, wounded men, and restless women caught between cultures, languages, and values.



UNTOLD STORIES: THE SOUTH ASIAN PIONEER EXPERIENCE IN B.C.

KAREN DOSANJH

Richmond-born author, Dosanjh’s book details migration of South Asians and Sikh’s to BC. What began as research into her family’s history turned into a much bigger project – tracing the origins of the first Sikhs in Canada. Her upcoming documentary will also premiere in the fall at the Sikhlen’s Film Festival.



FINALLY SEEN

KELLY YANG

From the New York Times bestselling author of Front Desk comes a gripping middle grade novel about a young girl who leaves China to live with her parents and sister, after five years apart, and learns about family, friendship, and the power of being finally seen.



RECIPE FOR CHANGE: DINE WITH HASAN MINHAJ, EUGENE LEE YANG, AND MICHELLE KWAN

In this episode of Recipe for Change, Hasan Minhaj, Eugene Lee Yang, and Michelle Kwan are joined by Olivia Munn, Jay Shetty, Margaret Cho, BD Wong, Katelyn Ohashi, Lisa Ling, Auli’i Cravalho, Asia Jackson, Simu Liu, Amanda Nguyen, Tina Tchen, Ross Butler, Jason Y Lee, Brandon Flynn and Sophia Bush. Together they’ll celebrate global Asian and Pacific Islander culture and discuss the recent and historic acts of violence against the API community, all while dining on prepared cuisine from acclaimed Chefs, Jet Tila, Alvin Cailan, and Melissa King. Don’t just take a seat at the table; take a stand.



Teacher Resources and Networks

Here is a selection of resources for educators to use in planning for student learning. Relevant networks and organizations have also been linked as each website offers even more extensions and resources.



Government of Canada
Gouvernement du Canada

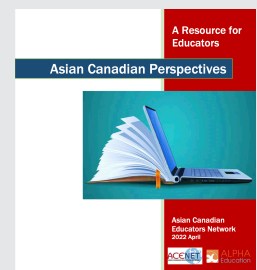
The [Government of Canada website](#) for Asian Heritage Month offers digital toolkits, videos to celebrate Asian heritage, summaries of significant events in Asian Canadian history, educational resources, and more.

During the 1940s, Canada enacted mass displacement and dispossession of people on racial grounds. [Landscapes of Injustice](#) is dedicated to recovering and grappling with this historical injustice against Japanese Canadians.



ACCT Foundation ACTION! CHINESE CANADIANS TOGETHER

ACCT Foundation is a non-partisan organization that builds the capacity of Chinese Canadian leaders committed to creating a more equitable society in Canada. They facilitate capacity building programs across the country, host leadership conferences, and provide a platform where work in academia can inform work in the community.



Their [Asian Canadian Perspectives: A Resource Guide for Educators](#) supports culturally responsive and relevant learning. The texts and accompanying lesson ideas are pathways to implement the Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum, specifically in Language Arts and Social Sciences.



Their [Video Campaign Project](#) has been created to promote a greater awareness and understanding of anti-Asian racism through providing historical and contemporary underpinnings of hate, racism and discrimination. Includes discussion guides. Grades 4-12.

ROYAL BC MUSEUM OUTREACH KITS

Teachers can bring stories and objects from the Royal BC Museum, in Victoria, into their own classrooms. Learn more [here](#).



[The Writing on the Wall: An Outreach Kit on Chinese Canadian Historical Wrongs](#)



[Building Community: Paldi and the Legacy of South Asian Canadians in BC](#)

Stop Asian Hate

Anti-Asian hate has had a long history in Canada. Our history records evidence racist legislation and policy and the systematic dehumanization of Asian Canadians. Historical injustices in this country that made a direct impact on Asian-Canadian communities include the Chinese Head Tax and exclusionary laws,

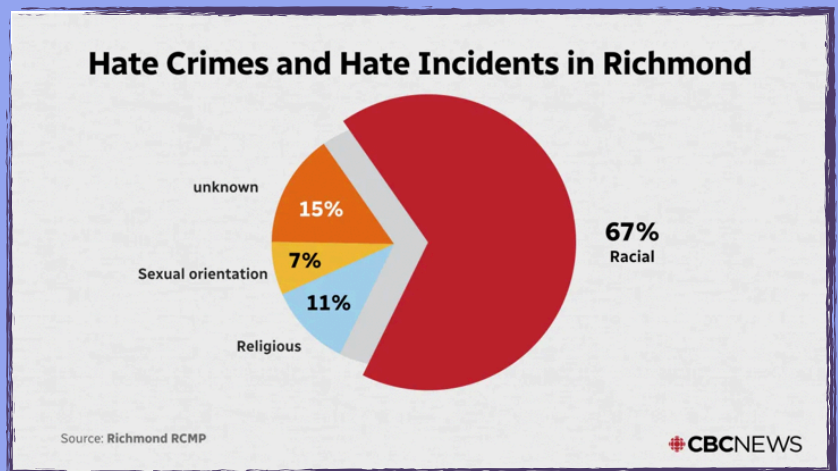
the exclusion and disenfranchisement of South Asians, and Japanese Internment. Anti-Asian racism persists to this day. The global pandemic has surfaced insidious and widespread physical and symbolic violence against our Asian communities, harkening back to an enduring, racist “yellow peril” narrative.

RACISM STILL ON THE RISE

Richmond RCMP said 67 per cent of the hate crimes and incidents in 2021 were racially motivated.

A report by the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter (CNCTO) and Project 1907, says there were 943 reports of racist incidents across Canada in 2021.

(Source: CBC News)



CHINESE CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



The CCNCSJ is committed to educating, engaging and advocating for equity and social justice for all in Canada. Shaped by the current outbreaks in anti-Asian racism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, their main project is empowering and equipping Canadians to combat anti-Asian racism through online resources and social media.

The powerful video linked [here](#) is just one of [several resources](#) created by this organization.

Every effort has been made to choose resources that are useful and appropriate for a wide range of students. Additional resources are [archived](#) in past issues of this annual newsletter. Each class of students and teacher is different, and previewing all the resources is essential! If you have any questions or ideas, please reach out to Baren Tsui, Teacher Consultant for Equity and Inclusion.