

**Asian Heritage Month**

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[The Government of Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/asian-heritage-month/about.html) (https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/asian-heritage-month/about.html) explains, “In December 2001, the Senate of Canada adopted a motion proposed by Senator Vivienne Poy to officially designate May as Asian Heritage Month in Canada. In May 2002, the Government of Canada signed an official declaration to designate [this month].”

Canada recognizes, “Asian Heritage Month offers all Canadians an opportunity to learn more about the history of Asian Canadians and to celebrate their contributions to the growth and prosperity of Canada.”

Celebration and acknowledgement of the heritage of achievement and struggles that the multitude of Asian cultures have experienced over many generations in Canada

This year is a little different as The [Canadian Museum for Human Rights](https://www.facebook.com/canadianmuseumforhumanrights/) (CMHR) (https://www.facebook.com/canadianmuseumforhumanrights/): recognizes “[this] time to celebrate the many achievements and contributions of Canadians of Asian origin. Unfortunately, this year, Canadians of Asian descent are experiencing a dramatic increase of racism, including insults and hostility. In Vancouver, a 92-year-old man with dementia was assaulted and seriously injured. In Toronto, an emergency room nurse was spit on and threatened. The association between coronavirus and China has led to irrational expressions of resentment, fear and anger against Asian Canadians.”

CMHR defines “othering,” – as, “When we highlight differences between groups of people to increase suspicion of them, to insult them or to exclude them.” The key is to catch yourself when you engage in ‘othering’.

PSAC reminds all members, including those of Asian descent, that they can count on their union to fully support them if they experience racism in their workplace. Moreover, PSAC encourages all members to be vigilant at work and speak out against racist views and actions.

Educating yourself can make a difference. A local group in Winnipeg, [Asian Heritage Manitoba](https://www.asianheritagemanitoba.com/%29) - AHM (https://www.asianheritagemanitoba.com/) commemorates “[this] time for celebration of Asian Canadians in Canada. This month offers all Canadians an opportunity to learn more about the history and culture of Asian Canadians and to celebrate their contributions to the growth and prosperity of Manitoba and of Canada.” AHM asks everyone, “To practice physical distancing…Be patience and kind to each other. This is not a time for racism and prejudice. We must be strong and band together to battle the virus as well as fear and hopelessness. At this time, more than ever, we must have hope and the courage that we will overcome this difficult period of our lives.”

### **AHM will be part of the next PSAC- Winnipeg & Area Human Rights Committee webinar on May 26 at 6:30pm Manitoba time.**

## **Why is this important to me?**

I come from an Asian background. My parents met at university in Canada. My dad’s family originally are from Hong Kong. Growing up in Toronto in early childhood we learned about our background through Chinese language lessons, attended a Chinese church, had a Heritage instructor in our schools, attended Dragon Dance ceremonies, went to night markets with outside sidewalk sales in China Town, and went to a lot of restaurants for Dim Sum. These are some of my favourite childhood memories.

Throughout my childhood, we listened to a lot of culturally relevant music and watched many movies with Chinese actors such as Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee.

I appreciate this month to have the freedom to celebrate the freedom to learn about my background. I appreciate my job where my colleagues are of various backgrounds including some Asian backgrounds. I enjoy learning from all my colleagues and it has given me a greater appreciation for diverse cultures in Canada that makes my work experience and outlook on life richer because of diversity.

## **Feedback Request:**

We encourage you to share your knowledge, background of personal stories regardless if you have an Asian background, are an ally, or just enjoy learning and experiencing other cultures. Feel free to send your response to the PSAC Winnipeg & Area Human Rights Committee at *winnipeghrc@gmail.com*. Some example ideas:

1. What is your understanding of Asian heritage Month? Are you involved in an organization related to heritage?
2. Are you from an Asian background? If so, how did your parents meet? Did they immigrate to Canada?
3. Have you ever attended an Asian heritage event? If so, what was it and where was it held? What did you learn from it?
4. What is your favourite Asian restaurant? What is an Asian dish you really enjoy?
5. What is a favourite Asian song or singer who you enjoy listening to?
6. What movies that have Asian heritage references do you enjoy? Do you have a favourite actor with an Asian background?