

Asian Heritage Month at the Toronto District School Board



This slidedeck is the final product of an inquiry project undertaken by a teacher and a small group of students in response to our Asian Heritage Month theme: “Discover. Share. Celebrate our Resiliency!”

The work here represents just a few facets of the much larger, diverse, complex, historic Asian diaspora.

Land Acknowledgement

Asian people have arrived to the land now known as Canada in many waves over time, as undocumented, labourers, migrant workers, refugees and immigrants.

When arriving in Canada, settlers, including Asian people, become part of Canada's historic and ongoing project of colonialism. We have a responsibility to learn the histories of Indigenous peoples whose ancestral lands we now occupy, and to recognize the enduring presence of all First Nations, Métis and the Inuit peoples.

We also recognize how Indigenous and Asian struggles are inextricably linked. We recognize the need for our communities to raise our voices in solidarity, share resources and take collective action for truth and reconciliation.



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MAY 2021

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Credits

On December 6, 2001, the Senate of Canada adopted a motion introduced by the honourable Dr. Senator Poy to federally recognize the month of May as Asian Heritage Month.

In May 2002, the Government of Canada signed an official declaration to designate May as Asian Heritage Month.

Asian Heritage Month is a time to reflect and highlight the important contributions of Asian Canadians to the settlement, growth and development of Canada, the diversity of the Asian community, and its present significance to this country.

(Poy, 2009)



Why do we celebrate Asian Heritage Month?

Why is it important today?

Challenging stereotypes about Asian people as “forever foreigners” and “model minorities” involves:

- Interrupting perceptions of Asian identity as singular and monolithic by learning about a diversity of Asian identities, cultures and beliefs
- Recognizing the historical and ongoing contributions of Asian peoples to life in Canada
- Celebrating the accomplishments of historic and contemporary Asian Canadians

Who is of “Asian” Descent?

The term “Asian” refers to a broad group of people spanning diverse political, economic, social, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious contexts.

The Toronto District School Board and Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario understand the definition of “Asian” to apply to, but is not limited to, all individuals who come from or whose ancestors came Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, West Asia.

Some additional demographic and census data, on the these students who self-identify as Asian in the TDSB, can be found on the following slides.



40%

In the TDSB, more than 40% of students self-identify as Asian

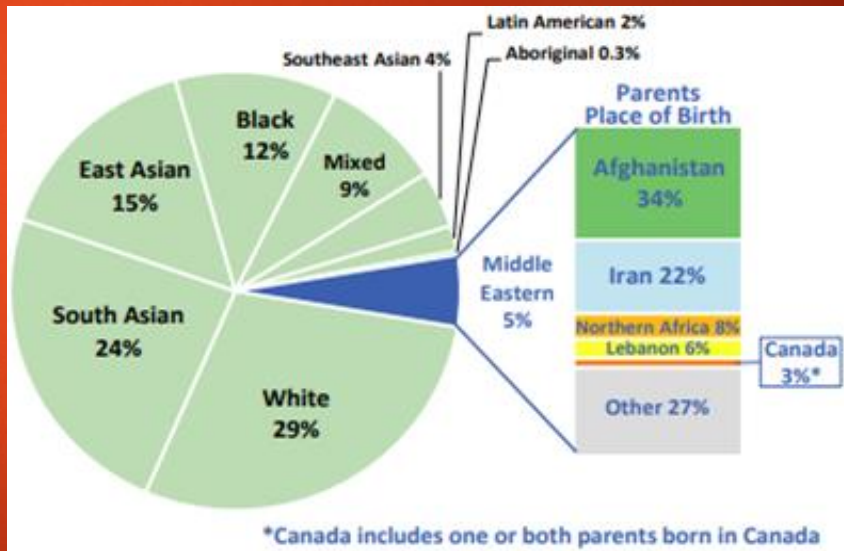
*This data is from our [2011 TDSB Census Portrait](#).

Central & Western Asia: Overview

*The data below comes from our [2011 TDSB Census Portrait](#), which groups these two distinct geographic areas together.

5%

In the TDSB, Central Asian students make up % of the student population



Central Asia: History in Canada



1970s

Immigration from Tajikistan to Canada began during the Cold War.

Until 1978

About 1,000 people of Afghan heritage living in Canada.

1981-1995

Around 10,000 people of Afghan heritage came to Canada as refugees and asylum seekers

2011

2,400 people of Tajik heritage living in Canada

By 2016

About 84,000 Afghans and 3,920 people of Uzbek heritage living in Canada.

Spotlight: Tajikistan

- Music and Dance
 - Folk music has an important role in Tajik culture
 - Some common instruments are daf (drum), rubab (lute), and karnay (wind instrument)
- Religion and Festivals
 - Navruz is a festival that is also known as the Persian New Year. It lasts for 4 days from March 20-23. During this time, people clean their homes, play games outside, and visit with friends and family.



Western Asia: History in Canada



1882

The first individuals of West Asian descent settled in Canada (originally from Lebanon and Syria)

1915

Approximately 1,500 survivors of the Armenian Genocide came to Canada as refugees. There were already 1,800 Armenians living in Canada at the time.

1923

The “Georgetown Boys” or “Canada’s Noble Experiment” was Canada’s first international humanitarian act by taking in orphaned children from the Middle East. The Armenian Relief Association of Canada brought 110 children to George town, Ontario.

**November
2015**

Canada initiated “Operation Syrian Refugees,” a national humanitarian effort that welcomed more than 25,000 refugees from Syria in 100 days.

Spotlight: Palestine

- Traditional music from Palestine has a set rhythm but no fixed lyrics which allows for improvisation
- Ataaba is a form of folk singing that is made up of 4 verses.
 - The first three verses end with homonyms (words that sound the same but mean different things). The fourth verse is the conclusion.
 - Often performed at weddings and festivals.



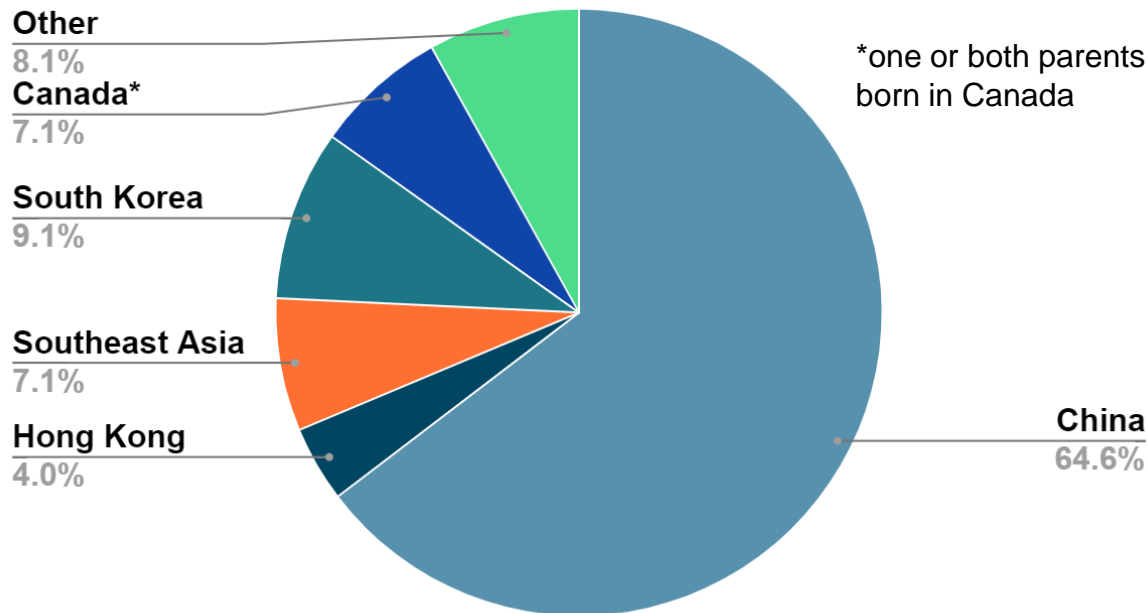
East Asia: Overview

*The data below comes from our [2011 TDSB Census Portrait](#).

15%

In the TDSB, East Asian students make up 15% of the student population

East Asian Students in the TDSB



East Asia: History in Canada

1788	1877	1885	1916	1923	1942	1948
First Chinese settlers arrived in Canada.	First known immigrant from Japan settled in Victoria B.C.	15,000 Chinese labourers completed the B.C. section of the Canadian Pacific Railway. More than 600 died. The Chinese Head Tax forced migrants to pay \$50 to enter Canada. This increased to \$500 in 1903.	222 Japanese Canadians served in WWI	Chinese Exclusion Act banned all Chinese immigrants from entering Canada for 24 years	Canada sends 21,000 Japanese Canadians to internment camps	First recorded Korean immigrant, Tae-yon Whang, arrived in Canada

Spotlight: Tibet

- Tibet has a beautiful culture that consists of fascinating food, dance, celebrations, and language.
- The most popular food is yak meat. It is often boiled, dried, or stewed.
- Tibetan dance is called the Gorshay.
- Losar is the name of the Tibetan New Year. It takes place every February.
- Parkdale, Toronto is the 1st Tibetan neighbourhood in Canada.



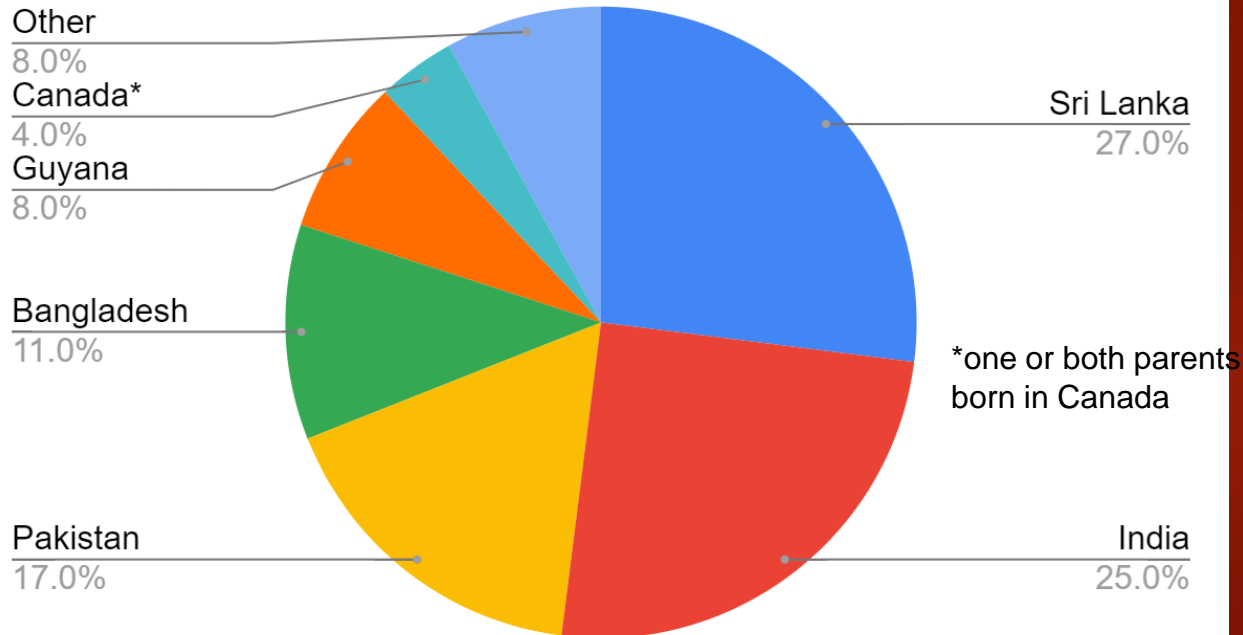
South Asia: Overview

*The data below comes from our [2011 TDSB Census Portrait](#).

24%

In the TDSB, South Asian students make up 24% of the student population

South Asian Students in the TDSB



South Asia: History in Canada

1903

First South Asian expatriates came to Canada settling in Vancouver and Victoria. A majority of them were Sikhs.

January 1,
1907

Immigration to Canada from South Asia was banned, which resulted in a drop in South Asian immigrants to 2,000.

1914

The Komagata Maru ship carrying 376 South Asian immigrants (mostly Sikh) arrived in Vancouver. Most of the passengers were denied entry to Canada and turned away.

August 11,
1986

155 Tamil people first arrived in Canada on the shores of Newfoundland.



By: Jaanuya

Spotlight: Sri Lanka

The traditional dance is called Bharatanatyam

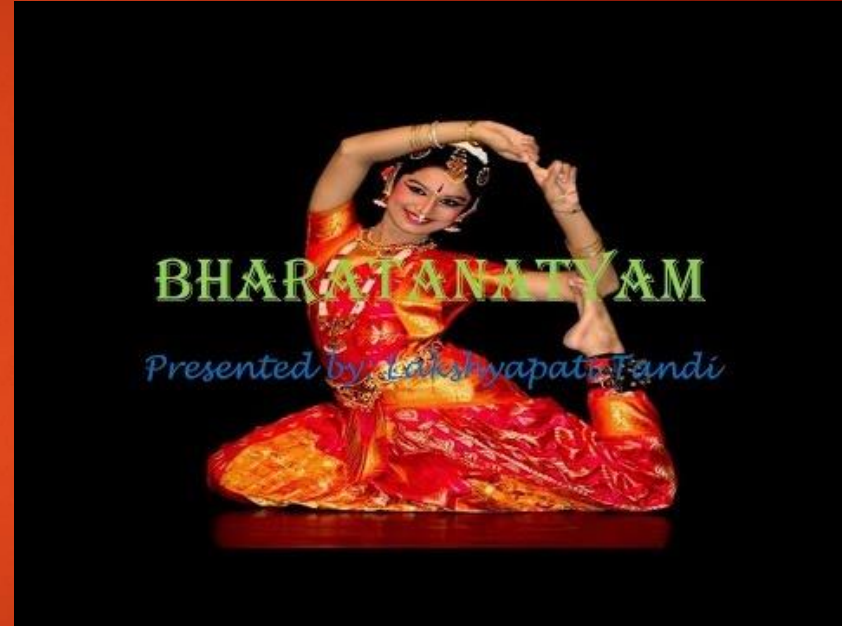
A yoga dance that began in the 18th century

Both men and women perform this dance

Popular in Tamil Nadu

The Varnam (the center main piece of the dance) emphasizes eloquent dance

When learning this dance tradition it is necessary to have expressions, posture and rhythm



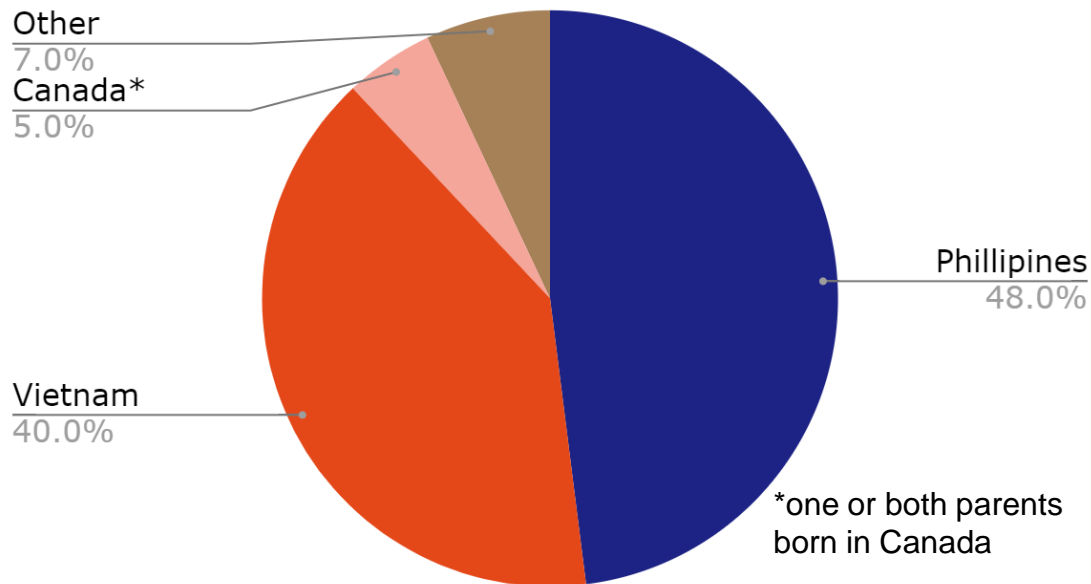
Southeast Asia: Overview

*The data below comes from our [2011 TDSB Census Portrait](#).

4%

In the TDSB,
Southeast Asian
students make up 4%
of the student
population

Southeast Asian Students in the TDSB



Southeast Asia: History in Canada

The Fall of Saigon marked the end of the Vietnam War. This resulted in a large population of refugees escaping from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to other parts of the world.

More than 98,000 Southeast Asian refugees, often referred to as “boat people,” had come to Canada. Canada took a leading among Western countries through its refugee resettlement program.

Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac became the first Vietnamese Canadian to be elected to the House of Commons

November 1, 1978

1981

September 17, 2007

By 1985

Canada accepted 604 refugees from the boat *Hai Hong*

Conrado Santos was elected to the Manitoba Assembly for the New Democratic Party. He was the first Filipino Canadian to be elected to office.



By: Jeanelle

Spotlight: Philippines

- Various Filipino foods, deserts, drinks and snacks that are enjoyed across the world.
- Boodle fights are meals that are served table top on long tables, and are eaten by using kamayan, which means to eat with your hands.
 - Boodle fights originated from the Phillipine military where a pile of food would be served on a really long table in a mess hall.
 - Hungry soldiers ate with their hands, showing brotherhood and equality.
 - “Fights” refers to the act of grabbing and eating the food before anyone else does.





Notable Canadians of Asian Heritage

- ▶ Name: Dr. Theresa Tam
- ▶ Description:
 - ▶ Born in Hong Kong in 1965
 - ▶ She is a chief Public Health Officer of Canada and head of Public Health Agency
 - ▶ She is undoubtedly one of the most important figures in Canada's health history
 - ▶ Dr. Theresa Tam is usually seen in daily briefings during the Coronavirus pandemic
 - ▶ Theresa Tam helped guide many Canadians through several crises

By: Jaanu

Notable Canadians of Asian Heritage

▶ Name: Rupri Kaur

▶ Description:

- ▶ Born in Punjab, India and raised in Brampton
- ▶ She is a well-known poetry writer that explores the immigrant experience and sexual trauma
- ▶ She gained fan base after posting illustrated visuals of her personal poems on Instagram
- ▶ She got an award for writing the best poetry

By: Jaanu



Notable Canadians of Asian Heritage

► Name: Rathika Sitsabaiesan

► Description:

- Born in Sri Lanka
- December 23, 1981
- First Tamil Sri Lankan Canadian politician.
- First Tamil to be elected for Parliament at the Federal level.
- She is also an activist
- She was representing Scarborough



By: Jaanu

Notable Canadians of Asian Heritage

- Name: Payam Akhavan
- Description:
 - Payam Akhavan was born in Iraq
 - He flew to Canada at the age of 16 because he had to escape persecution from the Iranian Government
 - At the age of 26, he became the youngest prosecutor of war crimes
 - To this day, Payam Akhavan is a professor at McGill University



By: Jaanu



Notable Canadians of Asian Heritage

▶ Name: Eileen de Villa

▶ Description:

- ▶ Toronto's public health chief and Peel Region's former medical officer of health.
- ▶ Filipina-Canadian originally born in America, who lived for a short time in the Philippines in the 1970s and later moved to Canada.
- ▶ You may recognize her from being on TV or online speaking about the COVID-19 pandemic.

By: Jeanelle



Notable Canadians of Asian Heritage

▶ Name: Andrew Phung

▶ Description:

- ▶ Born in Calgary
- ▶ Vietnamese-Canadian actor
- ▶ Won multiple Canadian screen awards, including Best Supporting Actor in comedy
- ▶ Most recognized for playing the role of Kimchee in the Canadian sitcom Kim's Convenience

Notable Canadians of Asian Heritage

▶ Name: Bhutla Karpoche

▶ Description:

- ▶ Member of Provincial Parliament for Parkdale-High Park
- ▶ Represents the Tibetan community in many ways
- ▶ Was chosen the “best local politician” by the Toronto Star in 2019
- ▶ Supports issues of social justice and public health
- ▶ First person of Tibetan heritage to be elected to public office in North America



By: Jangchup, Jaanu



Notable Canadians of Asian Heritage

- ▶ Name: Maitreyi Ramakrishnan
- ▶ Description:
 - ▶ She is a young Netflix actor
 - ▶ Maitreyi is a Tamil Canadian
 - ▶ She is of Sri Lankan origin
 - ▶ She is 19 years old, born on December 28, 2001
 - ▶ She is known for her leading role in the Netflix series "Never Have I Ever"

By: Jangchup, Jaanu

Interactive Quiz

► Click on quiz below and see how many questions you can answer correctly. The quiz will expire on:

► [Kahoot Quiz](#)



Credits

- ▶ Lira Jeanelle L., Grade 8
- ▶ Jaanuya M., Grade 7
- ▶ Jessica P., Grade 7
- ▶ Jangchup T., Grade 8
- ▶ Stephanie Cheung, Teacher

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