

Asian Heritage Month – May 2023



Noteworthy Canadians of Asian Heritage





Land Acknowledgement

"We acknowledge we are hosted on the lands of the Mississaugas of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Wendat. We also recognise the enduring presence of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples."

Manny Jacinto: Actor



Manny Jacinto is a Canadian actor of Filipino Heritage who has been active in the entertainment industry since 2012. He was born on August 19, 1987, in Manila, Philippines.

Following several minor television roles, he made his big breakthrough playing Jason Mendoza in the NBC sitcom *The Good Place*.

Jacinto emigrated to Canada when he was about three years old. He was raised in Richmond, British Columbia. Jacinto attended the University of British Columbia and received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering.



Avvy Yao-Yao Go: Judge

Madam Justice Avvy Yao-Yao Go has 30 years of advocacy and litigation experience on behalf of low-income racialized clients, mostly through her role as Clinic Director of the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Waterloo. She went on to receive her Bachelor of Law from University of Toronto, and her Master of Law from Osgoode Hall. She was called to the Bar of Ontario in 1991.

As a first-generation Canadian of Chinese heritage, Justice Go devoted the bulk of her legal career to breaking down barriers for marginalized groups, while challenging long-standing Canadian issues including anti-Asian racism, xenophobia, structural inequalities in the labour market, as well as systemic racism and other forms of discrimination within the legal system.

In 2021, Justice Go became the first Chinese Canadian to be appointed to the Federal Court. She has received many awards for her contributions to disadvantaged communities including the Order of Ontario.



Janie Jaehyun Park: Author and Illustrator



Janie Jaehyun Park is a Canadian author who began her career in her native Korea. She began as an illustrator and continued when she arrived in Canada. She was the recipient of the Korean Publishing Illustrators' Association Aware of Excellence in 1991 and 1994.

Janie then branched out into writing and is the author of many books including *The Love of Two Stars: A Korean Legend* and *The Tiger and Dried Persimmon*. She has been a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award two times.

She is a graduate of Yonsei University and Sheridan College.

Christopher Siu : Baker and Entrepreneur

Christopher is the winner of Season 7 of MasterChef Canada. He first appeared on the television program in Season 2 as a contestant but did not advance to the final. He returned to the competition a few seasons later and won. An avid baker, his passion for baking was ignited at an early age when he watched his father bake him a cheesecake for his sixth birthday. These moments helped create a lot of joyful memories growing up in North York and Markham. With the success in MasterChef Canada, Christopher is now also the owner of DaanGo, a bakery with locations in Toronto and Vancouver.

Christopher is also a graduate of the University of Toronto Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy. His parents come from Hong Kong.



Joe Ghiz: Former Premier of Prince Edward Island



Joseph Atallah Ghiz was born in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island in 1945. Son of Lebanese immigrants, Joe grew up in an apartment above the family run corner store. After receiving his early education in Charlottetown, Joe received his post-secondary education at Dalhousie University in Halifax and then Harvard University.

In 1986, Joe Ghiz was elected Premier of Prince Edward Island and became the first Premier of a Canadian province of non-European decent. He organized the plebiscite on the idea of a fixed-link from PEI to the Canadian mainland.

In 1996, at the age of 51, Joe Ghiz passed away from cancer.



Margaret Lyons: Journalist

Margaret Lyons CM, was born Keiko Margaret Inouye on November 21, 1923, in Mission, British Columbia, to Japanese immigrants. She was the first female vice-president of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

Lyons and her family left Mission in 1942 after the expulsion of Canadians of Japanese heritage from the area. The family settled in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where Lyons worked as a domestic worker. In 1944, after moving to Hamilton, Ontario, Lyons served as a housemaid at McMaster University while in high school. Later, she attended the university and received a degree in economics.

Lyons became a producer for BBC's Asian current affairs service. In 1957, Lester Pearson encouraged her to pursue a career in journalism after she interviewed him when he received a Nobel Peace Prize. In 1960, Lyons moved to Toronto and began working as CBC Radio's public affairs producer. She served as the director of the AM radio service and then to vice-president of network radio at the CBC, becoming the first woman elected to that position.

The Lyons New Media Center at McMaster was named in her honor. Lyons was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 2010 for her broadcasting achievements.



Dr. Tak Wah Mak: Scientist



Dr. Tak Wah Mak was born October 4, 1946, in China; he is a Canadian of Chinese heritage. He is a renowned scientist whose work in microbiology and immunology has had a significant effect on public health worldwide. His research concentrates on understanding the elemental biology of cells in order to determine how the immune system works and how tumors form.

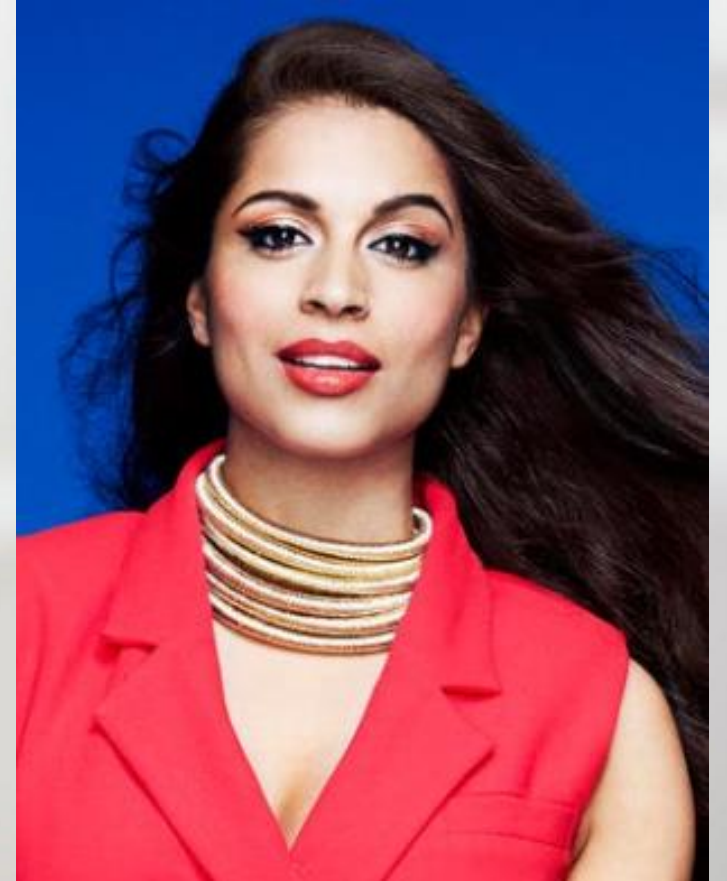
He began his research at the Ontario Cancer Institute in Toronto. In 1984, he solved one of immunology's most complex problems when he discovered how the immune system recognizes pathogens.

Over the next 25 years, Dr. Mak's research solved many mysteries concerning the molecular biology of the immune system and cancer. He has been the director of the Campbell Family Institute for Breast Cancer Research since 2004. Dr. Mak has received the Order of Canada and been recognized around the world through many distinguished awards.

Lilly Singh: Actress

Known as 'Superwoman' online, Lilly Singh Canadian of Indian decent that is a social media sensation. She has demonstrated her bhangra dance skills, comedy skills, hip hop dancing ability, and impressions on her YouTube channel. She was the highest paid female personality on YouTube in 2016.

She was also the host of *A Little Late with Lilly Singh*, a late night talk show with NBC that started in September of 2019. She has also brought her comedy and talents to cities across North America through multi-city tours.



Raymond Moriyama: Architect



Raymond Moriyama was born in Vancouver in 1929. His love of architecture began as a result of a bad accident. At the age of four, he accidentally tipped over a boiling pot of water when reaching for a model airplane that landed near the kitchen stove. The severe burns left him bedridden for months. His father set up his bed so that he could look out a window and see the world outside. A construction project across the street caught his attention and that sparked the interest in architecture.

His family was separated and placed in different internment camps for Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War. After surviving that experience, Raymond finished his undergraduate at the University of Toronto and his master's at McGill University.

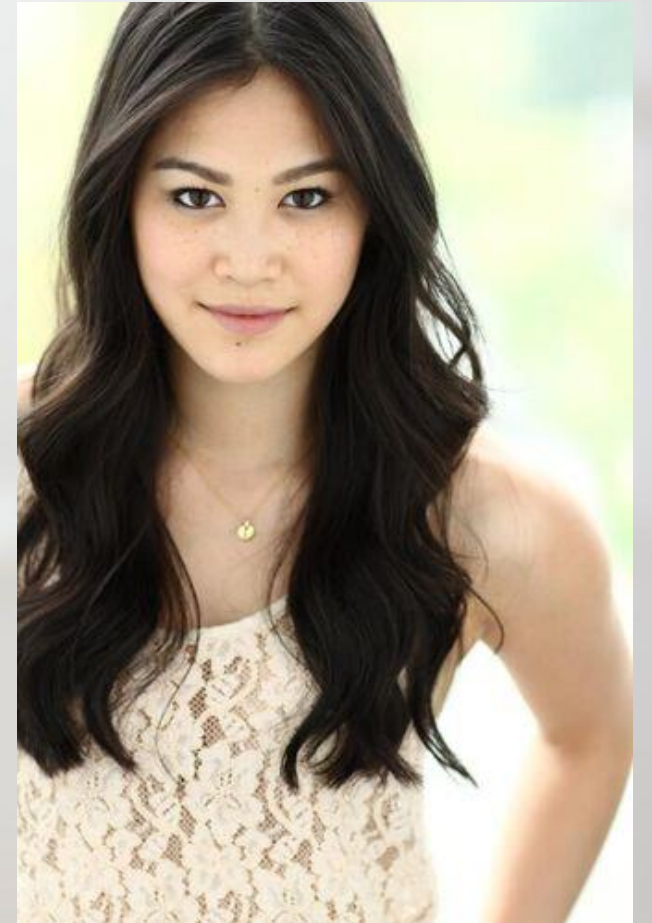
His designs include the Bata Shoe Museum, the Ontario Science Centre, and Canadian Embassy in Tokyo.



Dianne Doan: Actress

Dianne Doan is a Canadian actress of Vietnamese and Chinese heritage hailing from Abbotsford, British Columbia. She began her training in dance at the age of 10 and performed as a back-up dancer for Michael Bublé during his performance at the Opening Ceremonies for the 2010 Winter Olympic games in Vancouver.

She is best known for playing the lead role of *Lonnie* in the Disney film *Descendants*. She has reprised her role in the sequels that followed. Other on-screen appearances include the television show *Vikings*, *So You Think You Can Dance*, as well as appearing in music videos.



Ali Gatie: Musician



Ali Gatie is the voice behind the hit *It's You*, one of the most popular songs in 2019. The song was in the Top 40 of music charts in countries all over the world including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Ireland, Germany, Lebanon, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore.

His parents are from Iraq and Ali was born in Yemen. His family spent some time in the United Arab Emirates before moving to Canada. He is a Muslim R&B musician and calls Mississauga home.

Originally, Ali had planned to go to university and study biology and apply to medical school to become a doctor. However, he decided to pursue music instead.



Sharon Bala: Author

Sharon Bala is an award winning writer who lives in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Born in Dubai, United Arab Emirate, Sharon grew up in Ontario.

Author of multiple books and short stories, Sharon is best known for her book *The Boat People* which won the 2019 Harper Lee Prize for Best Fiction as well as the 2020 Newfoundland & Labrador Book Award.

She has an undergraduate degree from Queen's University and a master's degree in history from the University of Toronto.



Douglas Jung: Politician



Douglas Jung became the first Chinese-Canadian Member of Parliament when he was elected in the riding of Vancouver Centre on June 10, 1957. During his time in office, Douglas Jung set up an “Amnesty” program in 1962 to normalize the status of Chinese immigrants who had entered Canada using false identity papers due to the obstructive immigration laws.

Before being elected, Jung served in the Canadian Armed Forces during the Second World War. Force 136 was a Special Forces Commando group that was comprised only of Chinese-Canadians.

Gurdeep Pandher: Choreographer, Composer, Author

Gurdeep was born into a family of farmers in a village called Siahar in Punjab. By grade 10, Gurdeep had written pieces of poetry, a novel, many short stories, and a play. By the age of 23, he published two books (Mitti De Ghar and Among the Stars). Writing is Gurdeep's passion and lifetime craft.

When he was 17, Gurdeep began taking professional Bhangra classes in Ludhiana, Punjab. He moved to Canada in 2006 and has lived in many places across the country including Squamish, Vancouver, Abbotsford, Saskatoon, Edmonton, North Battleford, Turtleford, Lloydminster, Yellowknife, and now, Whitehorse. In 2012, Gurdeep began teaching Bhangra lessons across Canada.

During the pandemic, Gurdeep began posting Bhangra dance videos filmed in the beautiful landscapes of the Yukon. His work has been featured on CBC, CTV National News, BuzzFeed, The Huffington Post, SBS Australia, and many other platforms. They have brought joy to many throughout the years and brought attention to another style of dance.



Allison Au: Musician



Allison Au is an award-winning jazz musician playing the saxophone from Toronto. She has a mixed heritage with a Chinese father and Jewish mother. Having been introduced to multiple styles of music at a young age, Allison was attracted to the freedom that jazz music provided.

Three of her albums have been nominated for the Juno Award. *The Sky Was Pale Blue*, then *Grey* in 2013, *Forest Grove* in 2016, and *Wander Wonder* in 2019. *Forest Grove* won the Juno Award in 2016 for *Best Jazz Album of the Year* for the Group category.

She formed the Allison Au quartet in 2009 and they perform at jazz festivals in various cities. She also composes and arranges music.



Jean Yoon: Actress

Jean Yoon is a Canadian actress of Korean descent who is best known for her work in the television show *Kim's Convenience*. She played the matriarch of a family trying to run a family convenience store. She has also appeared in other television shows such as *Orphan Black* and *The Expanse*.

In December 2022, the South Korean embassy in Canada announced Jean would be an honorary ambassador between Canada and South Korea in celebration of 60 years of relations between the two countries in 2023.



Payam Akhavan: Professor and Prosecutor



Professor Payam Akhavan was born in Iran and became a Canadian citizen in 1980. Akhavan became the youngest prosecutor of war crimes in the history of the United Nations at the age of 26.

Akhavan has contributed to the activities of numerous non-governmental organizations and grassroots survivors' groups over the years. After receiving his Doctor of Juridical Science (S.J.D.) degree from Harvard Law School, and completing his senior fellow at Yale Law School, Akhavan became the founder of the [Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre](#), Prosecutor of the Iran People's Tribunal, and a member of the UK Child Sex Abuse People's Tribunal. His roles include:

- Member of the [Permanent Court of Arbitration](#) at The Hague
- Designated arbitrator/conciliator at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) of the World Bank Group
- Senior fellow at the [Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights](#)