

May is Asian Heritage Month

Asian Heritage Month is an opportunity for us to learn more about the many achievements and contributions of Canadians of Asian heritage who, throughout our history, have done so much to make Canada the country we know and love. This week the Affirming Committee would like to highlight the accomplishments of Adrienne Clarkson.



The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada 1999-2005

Adrienne Clarkson (nee Poy) was born February 10th, 1939, in Hong Kong. After the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong in 1942, the Poy family, Adrienne, her brother Neville and her parents, Ethel and William escaped to Canada. Despite the Chinese Immigration Act the Poy family successfully immigrated to Canada due to William Poy's work at the Canadian Trade Commission in Hong Kong.

The Poy family settled in Ottawa and the children attended public school. Adrienne graduated from U of T with an Honours BA (1960) and MA (1962). From 1962 to 1964 Adrienne studied at La Sorbonne in Paris, France.

In 1965, Ms. Clarkson embarked on an award winning 18-year career with the CBC as host of Take Thirty, Adrienne at Large and the 5th Estate to name just a few of her on camera roles. In 1982, Ms. Clarkson was appointed by Premier Bill Davis as Ontario's first agent-general in Paris. This appointment served as the transition and amalgamation of her journalism and public service careers.

Ms. Clarkson was appointed to the position of Governor General in 1999 by her majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the advice of Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien. Ms. Clarkson became the first person of Asian Heritage to serve at the Governor General and only the second women to serve. As Canada's Governor General Adrienne Clarkson made stronger ties with the Northern Indigenous population as just one example of her many accomplishments.

After serving as Canada's Governor General in 2005, Ms. Clarkson co-founded the Institute for Canadian Citizenship to help new citizens in Canada integrate into Canadian life. In 2006, she established the Clarkson Cup, the championship trophy for Women's Hockey. Since 2007, she has been the Colonel-in-Chief of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. A Privy Councillor and Companion of the Order of Canada.

The theme for Asian Heritage Month 2022 is, “Continuing a legacy of greatness”. This month is a reminder for all Canadians to come together to combat anti-Asian racism and discrimination in all its forms. Here is the link:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/asian-heritage-month.html>

<http://adrienneclarkson.com/>

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/adrienne-louise-clarkson>

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/sports/toronto-furies-win-their-first-clarkson-cup-1.1741429>

<https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/settlement-immigration/room-to-grow>

Those who come at the eleventh hour will receive as fair treatment as those who have been here a long time.” —Wilfrid Laurier



Vivienne Poy, the first person of Asian ancestry to sit in the Senate, proposed a motion to recognize May as Asian Heritage Month in 2001, with an official declaration following in 2002 (photo by David Wong/South China Morning Post via Getty Images)

The Affirming Committee would like to recognize the achievements of Senator Vivienne Poy (nee Lee). Ms. Poy was appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Jean Chretien in 1998. She was the first person of Asian Ancestry to sit in the Red Chamber.

Ms. Poy was born, May 15th, 1941, in Hong Kong and fled to mainland China with her family after Japan attacked Hong Kong in 1942. Ms. Poy moved to Montreal in 1959 and studied history at McGill and earned her master’s degree and PhD in history at U of T. The history scholar became a businessperson in 1981. After studying fashion at Seneca College, Ms. Poy founded Vivienne Poy Mode, which sold high-end knitwear. Ms. Poy is an accomplished author and publisher of histories and biographies. She was also governor of McGill University and chancellor of the University of Toronto.

The Affirming Committee would encourage you to read more about Vivienne Poy in her 1998 biography of her father entitled Building Bridges. Her life is fascinating. The U of T article below will give you further insight into Ms. Poy’s reflections 20 years after the inception of Asian History and Achievement Month. We would also encourage

you to read either a fiction or non-fiction book by an Asian Author. This will provide you with a window into the world of this marginalized Canadian Community.

The Asian Canadian Community is a marginalized group in Canada because of the Historic Legislative Discrimination passed by the Canadian Government including but not limited to; slave wages and the most dangerous jobs building our National Railroad from coast to coast, The Chinese Head Tax, The Continuous Journey Law that kept the Southeast Asian Community from immigrating to Canada and Japanese Internment Camps during WWII. Today many in the Asian community were subject to discrimination and violence because of misinformation from International Leaders that blamed China for the Covid Pandemic. We need to be reminded that the Chinese people can not vote for their leaders and therefore have not control over policy. Further, those who immigrate to Canada, are Canadian and not responsible for any international government decision.

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[Former senator, chancellor – and U of T alumna – Vivienne Poy reflects on Asian Heritage Month, 20 years later | University of Toronto Alumni \(utoronto.ca\)](#)