



Edmonton Dialogue Summary

ASIAN CANADIAN INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

EVENT DETAILS

- Asian Canadian Intercultural Dialogue: Edmonton
- Saturday, November 29, 2024, 2pm to 5pm
- Edmonton Public Library

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The path to settlement for newcomers and the full and meaningful integration of racialized Canadians can be an arduous and challenging journey. Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipino Canadians make up a substantial part of the workforce in food and health service sectors as essential workers, providing support to Canadians during challenging times. Yet, they and other immigrant communities have been blamed, scapegoated, and mistreated during the pandemic and in social issues such as employment and housing crisis. Their contributions, participation, and resilience – whether recent or historical – are largely unrecognized.

Through the power of conversation and storytelling, Asian Canadian Intercultural Dialogues are organized in key locations across Alberta (Edmonton, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Calgary) to increase knowledge and understanding about East and Southeast Asian Communities (centered on Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese), provide a safe space to connect and network with fellow community members and inspiring leaders, as well as discuss next steps for greater and collective impact towards advancing inclusion and equity in Alberta. With the theme No Canada Without Me, the dialogue enhances the importance and value of everyone who consider Alberta and Canada their home.

ACCT Foundation demonstrates its commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by engaging three Indigenous Elders—Elder Adrian Wolfleg of Siksika Nation, Elder Gilbert Crowchild of Tsuut'ina Nation, and Elder Rod Hunter of Bearspaw First Nation— to begin the project in a meaningful way. The project's panel of speakers and community leaders from the East and Southeast Asian communities, gathered in a 3-hour sharing of culture, history, and purpose with the Indigenous elders. A land acknowledgement also marks the beginning of each dialogue, giving recognition to those who were here before us, encouraging our communities to start integrating Truth and Reconciliation in their projects as organizations and in their settlement and integration as Asian Canadians in Treaty 6, 7 and 8. As we acknowledge the land, we called upon our collective culture and traditions to work together, build relationships, have deeper and meaningful

Address: 915 – 33 Street NE Calgary, Alberta T2A6T2

Website: www.acctfoundation.ca

Email: events@acctfoundation.ca

collaborations across cultures and generations to create an inclusive space for everyone who consider Alberta and Canada their home.

This project is funded by the Government of Alberta's Ethnocultural and Anti-Racism Grant Programs and presented by [ACCT Foundation](#) and [ACT2END Racism Network](#).

SUMMARY

Attendance

Approximately 75 participants attended the Edmonton Dialogue representing East and Southeast Asian communities, immigrant serving organizations, cultural associations, businesses, service providers and non-profit organizations. Organizations represented are:

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| 1. Aiya Collective | 16. Filipino Canadian Association of Leduc |
| 2. BelongInclusivity | 17. Hakka Tsung Tsin Association |
| 3. Canadian Saranay Association of Alberta" | 18. Immigration Community Alberta Network (ICAN) Association |
| 4. Chinatown and area Business Association | 19. Migrante Alberta |
| 5. Chinatown Longevity Guild | 20. Multicultural Health Brokers Co-Operative |
| 6. City of Edmonton Archives. | 21. Nasipitnons in Edmonton Association |
| 7. Edmonton Arts Council | 22. PHIDEAS Philippine Edmonton Events and Arts Society |
| 8. Edmonton Chinatown Multicultural Centre | 23. Philippine Arts Council |
| 9. Edmonton Japanese Community Association | 24. Philippine Business Society of Alberta |
| 10. Edmonton Philippine International Centre (EPIC) | 25. Spruce Grove - Stony Plain Filipino Canadian Association |
| 11. Edmonton Vietnamese Community Association | 26. The Alberta Chronicle |
| 12. Edmonton Viets Association | 27. The Inclusion Journey |
| 13. Emmanuel Church Edmonton | 28. The Shaama centre |
| 14. Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary. | 29. United Filipino Entrepreneurs Association (UFEA) - Edmonton |
| 15. Federation of Korean Canadian Association | 30. University of the Philippines Alumni Association Edmonton (UPAAE) |

The Edmonton Dialogue was facilitated by a panel of community leaders from Calgary and Edmonton:

1. Anna Ko | President, [Calgary Korean Women's Association](#)
2. Anne-Marie Pham | Founder, [Calgary Vietnamese Youth Association](#)
3. Carley Okamura | Co-chair, Committee Advocating for Racial Equity (CARE), [Edmonton Japanese Community Association](#)
4. Cesar Cala | Chair, [Filipinos Rising](#) (FRIENDS)
5. Jae Shim | Founder & Owner, [Shim Law](#) | Advocate for Multiculturalism & Inclusion
6. Marichu Antonio | Adviser, [AFCLA](#) | former Executive Director, Action Dignity
7. Patti Pon | CEO, [Calgary Arts Development](#)
8. Teresa Woo-Paw | Chair, [ACCT Foundation](#)

Dialogue Highlights

The dialogue began with speakers sharing their community histories in Alberta and Canada, along with personal journeys of leadership and engagement. Their stories highlighted both the unique and shared experiences of Asian Canadian communities. From historical challenges such as the Chinese head tax, Japanese internment, Vietnamese refugee struggles, Korean gender barriers, and Filipino professional restrictions – all leading to serious issues on mental health, family separation, economic hardships, intergenerational gaps, and decline in cultural preservation – to their stories on community building and engagement: initiating cross-cultural collaboration for Asian Heritage Month, professional networks across communities, combined responses to systems and policy change, development of community-based crisis response model to address discrimination and immediate needs of the community, public awareness and advocacy around anti-Asian racism leading to a more united Asian community, and formation of support networks to address professional barriers. These leaders stress the importance of Asian Canadian stories, which showcase the resilience of communities that have transformed hardships into opportunities for growth and unity. They highlight the need to ensure that our history, contributions, resilience, and active participation are integrated into the broader narrative of Canada and Alberta.

The true power of these stories lies not just in documenting past achievements but in providing models for future community building. As one community leader reflects, "We have to identify our challenges and find innovative ways of getting over it." This legacy can be continued through documented community histories, cultural preservation and intergenerational knowledge transfer, intercultural collaboration, innovative support systems, and sustainable community development. It was highlighted that while culture and traditions hold great significance, it is essential to actively establish our place in society and affirm that we are not "others." As Teresa Woo-Paw notes "We believe and value modesty... but I think that we need to balance our valuing of modesty, to also claim our rightful place in Canada."

The panel also highlighted that need to appreciate not just our cultural and individual uniqueness but the growing population of Asian Canadian communities in larger cities in Alberta, which can influence policy, elections, and systems. As Patti Pon mentioned, "In Canada, we talk about ourselves being a cultural mosaic, a mosaic where each little piece comes together to make a beautiful picture." The stories of Asian Canadian integration and resilience in Alberta demonstrate how distinct communities, while maintaining their unique identities, contribute to this larger mosaic. Anna Ko emphasized this saying, "Your voice is going to be stronger if we're together."

The Community Dialogue continued with panel speakers leading smaller groups, providing participants the opportunity to share their stories and experiences. While guide questions were offered to steer the discussions, participants were encouraged to engage and share in an organic and natural manner.

Community members shared their personal and community struggles and successes that mostly reflected the panel speakers' stories and presentations. Groups imparted intergenerational issues, racism and discrimination in public places, schools and work settings, gender barriers, and language and professional challenges. They also shared how they initiated and organized groups and projects to address these issues.

Leadership development emerges as a crucial theme across communities. Growing political representation and influence is evidenced by increased participation in elected positions and policy development. Business and professional achievements include the creation of innovative social enterprises and professional networks. Cultural leadership initiatives focus on preservation and innovation, integrating arts and with particular emphasis is placed on youth engagement and succession planning to ensure sustainable community development.

Collaborative approaches emerge as crucial for future success. Cross-cultural coalition building enhances collective impact while resource sharing maximizes community benefit. United advocacy strengthens community voice, and joint programming creates opportunities for shared learning and growth. The work of building community support continues, shaped by both current needs and future vision. As one leader reflects: "We need to find ways in which we could work together and identify some of those key places and points of cooperation."

Communities have developed creative solutions to address systemic barriers. Social enterprises turn traditional barriers like "Canadian experience" requirements into opportunities for employment. Professional development initiatives include mentorship programs and career support networks. Cultural preservation programs such as language and heritage curriculum ensure continuity while fostering innovation, and cross-cultural collaborations strengthen collective impact.

Strong support networks develop through both formal organizations and informal connections. Educational initiatives range from heritage language programs achieving formal recognition to professional development support. Cultural programs foster intergenerational connection while celebrating community heritage, and inter-community collaboration enhances resource sharing and collective impact.

Looking toward the future, communities identify several strategic priorities. Enhanced political representation remains crucial for ensuring community voices inform policy development. Resource equity focuses on sustainable funding models and infrastructure development. Cultural preservation balances tradition with innovation, while professional development creates pathways for continued achievement.

The success of Asian Canadian communities in addressing challenges while building stronger, more inclusive systems provides a model for social change that benefits all Albertans. Their collective strength creates new possibilities for building vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable communities across the province.

Through united effort, innovative thinking, and strategic action, Asian Canadian communities continue to transform challenges into opportunities while strengthening Alberta's social fabric. The future of Asian Canadian communities in Alberta stands at a pivotal moment. As demographics shift toward visible minorities becoming the majority in major cities, the work of community building takes on renewed urgency and significance.

Priority Areas for Action

The following themes have emerged from the community dialogue: capacity building, political and leadership development, cultural preservation, intergenerational initiatives, and cross and intercultural collaboration towards transforming systemic barriers, achieving equitable representation, ensuring cultural vitality, and building sustainable community infrastructure.

More specifically, Participants proposed the following actions to begin the work:

- Increase electoral participation.
- Build capacity for leadership, access to funding, professional development, and policy engagement. The community should leverage on existing workshops and training programs offered across the Asian Canadian community.
- Expand Asian Canadian representation across media by enhancing digital presence, creating a dedicated media outlet, and collaborating with existing ethnic media.
- Preserve culture through continuing and deepening of community storytelling initiatives, increased engagement with the arts sector, intergenerational activities (including elder and youth involvement), enhanced documentation and recording of cultural and

historical narratives, and extending cultural festivities and celebrations across Asian communities.

- Foster intercultural collaboration within the Asian Canadian community by building directories, facilitating mentorship, entrepreneurship, and skills development programs, and joint advocacy efforts to address shared challenges including credential recognition, racism, language barriers, mental health, and intergenerational issues.

FEEDBACK

The dialogue received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, with many expressing enthusiasm for future events. One participant suggested organizing a similar Asian Canadian Intercultural Dialogue in Edmonton, featuring their own distinguished panel of speakers. A smaller group, identified through a post-event signup form, has committed to initiate Asian Canadian intercultural activities as a follow-up to this dialogue.

The event highlighted the active and independent nature of Asian communities while underscoring the need for greater intentionality in collaborating to amplify their collective voice. There was also a strong interest in learning about initiatives from other cultural communities and organizations to foster more meaningful partnerships.

ATTACHMENTS

- Background Paper on the History, Contributions, and Participation of Asian Canadians in Alberta (focused on Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese communities)
- Project Background Slides presented by Teresa Woo-Paw
- Community Slides by panel speakers presented in Lethbridge and Red Deer

CONTACT

If you have any questions or concerns about this summary or if you'd like to connect with ACCT Foundation, please email: events@acctfoundation.ca.