

# SUZHOU ALLEY WOMEN'S MURAL EDUCATIONAL TOOLKIT

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This free educational toolkit accompanies the Suzhou Alley Women's Mural, an artist- and community-led mural project honouring unsung legacies of women who helped shape Vancouver's Chinatown. This toolkit is primarily geared toward grades 9 to 12, with some activities that may be adapted for grade 5. It also includes a field trip activity for all ages and community groups.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## ACKNOWLEDGING INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

The Suzhou Alley Women's Mural, along with this educational toolkit, takes place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lilwətaʔ /Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. This land was never surrendered or relinquished by the nations through treaties or other means. For millennia and up to present day, Coast Salish peoples have continuously lived, hunted, and stewarded their traditions in the region. The ongoing histories of colonization and urbanization are thus relatively recent events that have forcibly displaced Indigenous communities from their sovereign homelands.

As uninvited settlers on this land, we acknowledge the past and present benefits we have reaped at the expense of Indigenous communities. While the intent of this project is to share the stories of Chinese settler women, we must recognize the broader and interconnected contexts of colonization, racism, and dispossession that have impacted Indigenous communities and other marginalized groups. The history of Vancouver's Chinatown reveals the multilayered nature of colonization in the city, from the initial displacement of First Nations due to the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s to the formation of a ghettoized Chinatown during the early 20th century due to discriminatory policies that prevented the Chinese from settling elsewhere. Chinese and

Indigenous communities struggled (and continue to struggle) against the same oppressive systems of white supremacy in British Columbia and Canada.

While reflecting on Chinese women's histories in this context, we stand with Indigenous Peoples and are committed to the difficult work of decolonization and reconciliation within our communities.

## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This educational toolkit (ET) is designed for all teachers, community facilitators, and educational programmers working in arts and culture organizations who would like to engage students in learning activities around the contents of the Suzhou Alley Women's Mural. It is primarily geared toward students in **grades 9 to 12**, though we have included suggestions for adapting it for **grade 5**.

**The primary goal of this ET is to support and deepen the mural's work in bringing forth the stories of Chinese Canadian women in an educational context for youth.** A team of Vancouver-based teachers active in local schools designed and wrote the ET, which takes a thematic approach to unpacking the stories of the mural.

### Key themes include:

- How women's stories challenge histories of **exclusion** and **oppression**.
- How **place-based commemorations** reveal the values of the people who live there.
- Notions of **leadership** and **success** among **Chinese women**.
- An exploration of **advocacy** and **social justice** work related to the mural.

**The ET includes four lesson activities, which can also serve as stand-alone activities.** The first lesson is a primer that focuses on preparing the teacher (or community facilitator) and the students for potentially difficult and sensitive conversations around race, gender, equity, and oppression. With suggestions for self-reflection, preparatory activities for students, and how to set up a safe and inclusive learning space, this primer is a particularly helpful resource for those new to this material. The second, third, and fourth lessons delve into the thematic contents of the mural. Except for the first lesson, the others may be delivered in any order.

**The ET is designed to supplement and complement the BC Curriculum,** with each lesson listing the relevant key curricular competencies. All the lessons follow a simple and accessible format, with a guiding question, description of teacher-led activities, options for culminating activities, student handouts (where needed), and additional links and resources for further study.

**Please go to the [web version of this toolkit](#) to access the links highlighted and underlined in dark blue throughout this document.**

*\*\* Note: This toolkit was created in July 2023. Links to external resources are being provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only. Links may be outdated if viewed at a later time. Please contact the external site for answers to questions regarding its content.*

## CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

### CURRICULAR CONTENT:

Grade 5	Discriminatory policies; responses to discrimination; Canadian identities; changes in Canadian immigration
Grade 9	Discriminatory policies, attitudes, and historical wrongs; global demographic shifts, including patterns of migration and population
Grade 10	Canadian identities; discriminatory policies and injustices; advocacy for human rights
Grade 11	Methods used by individuals, groups, and organisations to promote social justice
Grade 12 courses	Urban Studies, Social Justice, Political Studies, Asian Studies and 20 <sup>th</sup> Century World History

### CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES:

#### *Grades 5, 9–12*

Students will have opportunities to develop the following Social Studies competencies through the ET: assess significance, evaluate and interpret evidence, compare and contrast continuities and changes, analyze causes and consequences, consider and infer perspectives, make ethical judgments, and use Social Studies inquiry skills and processes. Specifically, students will engage with these competencies through

the following conceptual lenses and potentially other cultural or social constructs and gendered roles:

***Geographical perspective:*** recognizing what qualities or aspects of a place characterize what it means to the people who value it.

***Historical perspective and intergenerational or historical consciousness:*** making connections between the past, present, and future; developing empathy or understanding for what people were like in the past; learning from past generations to better make decisions in the present and face the future.

***Historical and geographical significance:*** assessing how important people and places are by applying critical thinking.

***Evidence:*** using a variety of unique primary and secondary sources to draw conclusions about the past.

***Change and continuity, perspective, and significance:*** recognizing how and why perspectives on whose voices and experiences matter have changed over time.

***Cause and consequence:*** exploring power and determining how to have an impact and make a change through advocacy.

***Ethical judgment and significance:*** deciding who should be remembered and how to best memorialize them.

***Using inquiry skills:*** asking questions; interpreting and analyzing information; and communicating findings and decisions in different ways.

We would love to hear your feedback on this project.

Please contact: [info@cenevolutionmedia.com](mailto:info@cenevolutionmedia.com)

## ABOUT THE SUZHOU ALLEY WOMEN'S MURAL

The Suzhou Alley Women's Mural (SAWM) is a community-led commemorative mural and storytelling project that **honours the contributions and legacies of the women who helped shape Vancouver's Chinatown and community.**

Led by Elisa Yon and Janet Wang, the artist team is composed of local artists who live or work in Chinatown and extended Chinese Canadian communities. **Grounded in community engagement and relationship-building**, the mural features a composition and subject matter developed in close consultation with women of multiple generations, diverse backgrounds, and varied lived experiences who live and work within the community. These community members include the descendants of the individual women represented in the mural. The artist team also collaborated with the community members to facilitate several arts-based workshops and engagement projects to collect creative expressions, stories, and reflections on the significant role of women in the participants' families and communities. These community interactions led the artist team to focus on key themes deemed significant to the community, such as family life, wisdom and education, resilience, and individual agency. By centring the community in this process, the mural project is able to raise awareness of lesser-known local histories and amplify the voices of equity-seeking members of the community.

Unfolding in a scroll-like composition, the SAWM features numerous references to Chinatown's tangible and intangible heritage. Its colourful and lively scenes are populated with the stories of multiple generations of women from diverse backgrounds and professions, including key figures such as Dr. Madeline Chung, Nellie Yip Quong, and Vivian Jung. Panning



from left to right, the mural includes Chinese women's contributions in education, arts and culture, foodways, social justice, politics, the military, and medicine. **A strong emphasis on intergenerational connections is woven throughout**, with older women sharing knowledge with their younger counterparts. From the first significant wave of Chinese immigrants in the mid-1800s up to present day, the mural illustrates the past and present strengths and contributions of women in the community.

**Vancouver's Chinatown was designated a National Historic Site of Canada in June 2010 and is one of Canada's oldest and continuously occupied Chinese settlements.** In 2018, the City of Vancouver formally apologized to Chinese Canadians for past legislation, regulations, and policies that discriminated against them. Since then, artists, community members, and cultural planners have undertaken renewed efforts to strengthen Chinatown's intangible heritage, including ancestral traditions inherited and passed down to descendants (e.g., language, performing and visual arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, and domestic skills). However, women's voices have largely remained absent in these efforts.

Women's images and stories have been omitted throughout history; this is no different for the many Chinatown murals that have come to represent the beloved neighbourhood's tangible and intangible heritage. Acknowledgement of women's sacrifices, endured hardships, and resilience is long overdue. The historical SAWM mural represents an important step toward broadening our collective understanding of Chinese Canadian history—one enlivened through introducing the voices and stories of women. The mural itself is further brought to life in the virtual realm, including through the SAWM interactive website, the digital stories, and this online educational toolkit.

## LESSON #1: GETTING READY

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The lessons in this toolkit ask some big questions and require some conversations that can get tough. Consider this some pre-work to allow you to set up your practice, your group, and your space in a way that will help your group get the most out of these lessons.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

The Suzhou Alley Women's Mural inherently grapples with notions of power, legacy, and whose story gets told. To dig deep into the mural and what it's all about, educators and students alike must be ready to have sensitive conversations that potentially could get challenging. It is vital that educators prepare for these lessons by first reflecting on their own positionality.

It can be really challenging to have these sorts of conversations if you or your group don't feel like you have the right words to articulate your thoughts. It is a great idea to familiarize yourself with some vocabulary before you begin:

- anti-oppression
- colonialism
- decolonial, decolonization
- intergenerational
- intersectionality
- marginalization
- oppression
- patriarchy
- positionality
- privilege
- white supremacy, whiteness

*Note: Language and terminology are fluid and complex, especially in these discourses. Learning the definitions for so many terms can seem overwhelming, and you might feel lost when you find conflicting answers. Give yourself permission to sit in this discomfort and let go of the idea that there is one “right” way or solution or that you can ever “master” the topics by learning terminology. This work is a journey, and developing familiarity and comfort with new language is a part of that journey.*

### ***Who are you and what story do you bring to the table?***

***Intersectionality:*** Law professor and civil rights scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined this term to describe how each person’s identities overlap or intersect, and the oppression they experience is a unique result of that intersection. In simple terms, an Asian woman is both Asian and a woman, but because she is an Asian woman, she experiences oppression that Asian men or white women may not.

Intersectionality is a big part of this project. From the start, the intent of the SAWM has been to honour the unsung intergenerational legacies of Chinatown’s women, who, even in the heart of their own cultural community, have remained uncelebrated. This missing visibility is, in large part, due to the intersection of their identities.

Spend some time considering your own positionality. What overlapping circles form your identity? Take a look at Toronto teacher Sylvia Duckworth’s [Wheel of Power and Privilege](#). In what ways do you have power? In what ways are you marginalized?

More importantly: In what ways do you have power that the rest of your group does not? This positionality is vital to remember at all points in your

lessons. Be mindful that your positionality will change how you relate to the materials. It will determine how much is at stake for you—and for each of your participants. It will impact how the lessons will look and sound coming from you as the educator and how you will occupy space in the conversation. Consider, as examples:

- » *Are you a Chinese woman facilitating this material to non-Chinese people?*
- » *Do you have roots, history, and legacy in Chinatown?*
- » *Are you a white settler with multiple generations of family history in BC?*

All these scenarios, and countless more, change how a person interacts with the materials. It is important to be aware of and name these biases. The answers to these questions may not come easily and likely will not be simple. When you engage with these questions, what does it bring up for you? What is complicated? What makes you feel defensive or uncertain or validated? Give yourself time and space to sit with everything that this process opens up for you.

By doing so, we can model this reflective process to our group. It is also strongly advised that you hold space for your group participants to engage in a similar reflective process for themselves, so that they can engage with the materials and each other with care, too.

## **THINKING ABOUT THE SETUP**

### **BEFORE: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PHYSICAL SPACE**

The SAWM is deeply rooted in community, and so it follows that the lessons around it should equally practice community care. In most

classrooms and gathering spaces, the first step to ensuring such care is to think about the way your space is set up. Is this a space that allows for safe and brave conversations? Is everyone equal in this space? Does it allow for multiple modes of engagement? Consider your space anew by asking questions like:

- » *How can I arrange desks in the classroom to allow everyone to be seen while in discussion?*
- » *How might I arrange the layout of my classroom so that everyone can easily see all visuals (i.e., projector, whiteboard)?*
- » *How might I create enough space for students to get up and move around in the classroom comfortably when needed?*
- » *Where and how can students find safety if they need a break?*
- » *How can I include principles of pedagogical talking circles?*
  - *situated relatedness*
  - *respectful listening*
  - *reflective witnessing*
  - *reciprocal engagement*

## DURING: CRAFTING SOME COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

It is a good idea to set up some community guidelines to keep the lessons grounded in respect, care, and safety. There is no right or wrong way to develop a community agreement. Find what works best for your group.

Prompts to get your community thinking include:

- » *What do you need to feel comfortable in this space and in this work?*
- » *How do you best like to contribute? Talking, writing, small group discussions, etc.*
- » *How do we communicate with one another respectfully when something is problematic? What might this look like?*

- » *What is the best way to ensure that everyone takes up equitable space? What might participating equitably look like?*
- » *What are expectations about respect that we can share among everyone in the room—students and teachers alike?*

If you are not familiar with the idea of a community agreement, consider looking up examples online. Sometimes, groups need prompts and direction. Most community guidelines take the form of an agreement that everyone can see, revisit, and point to. Though it is the responsibility of the whole group to stay true to the agreement, it is your job as leader to hold everyone to it. That is how you keep participants safe and engaged.

#### AFTER: FOLLOWING UP AND CONTINUING THE CONVERSATIONS

One of the gifts of the Suzhou Alley Women's Mural is that it opens up rich and powerful dialogue. Make sure this dialogue doesn't end after one session! The following lessons offer many suggestions on how to move forward with this work and support participants, especially young people, who are moved by this project. If you haven't already, consider taking a field trip to see the mural in person!

Follow up discussion topics:

- » *How can you and your group carry on the conversations that this mural project has evoked?*
- » *How can the SAWM inspire further good?*
- » *How can your group continue to honour the stories of unsung Chinese women, as well as the countless other people whose stories have been ignored by history?*
- » *What is something that stands out about this mural that you want to continue learning or talking about with others?*

## LESSON #2: COMMEMORATING WOMEN'S VOICES IN CHINATOWN— TAKING UP SPACE

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### GUIDING QUESTION:

- *How can we better understand what Chinatown was like for the women who lived there between the 1900s and 1970s?*

### CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES:

*perspective and significance (both geographical and historical); evidence; continuity and change*

### TEACHER-LED LESSON:

This lesson focuses on Vancouver's Chinatown but can be adapted for a local Chinatown or one in a nearby region (for example, Nanaimo or Cumberland).

Because this lesson asks students to explore why place matters to people and how we can develop a sense of place when exposed to multiple perspectives and experiences, it is important that the learning environment promotes intellectual curiosity, thoughtful engagement, and respectful appreciation of the perspectives of the people about the place in which they live, in this case, the Chinatown in Vancouver. Discussions may include colonial systems of oppression, misogyny in traditional Chinese culture, and institutional power. If you have not already explored [Lesson #1](#) with your class, please consider taking the time to do so now.

If your group hasn't yet examined the Suzhou Alley Women's Mural, present the mural to the students at this time. Refer to the section ["About the Suzhou Alley Women's Mural"](#) for some ideas of how to introduce the mural and its related topics to your students. You may also want to explore the [supplementary resources](#) to accompany your presentation (and lesson activities). Encourage students to freely explore the [online reproduction of the mural](#) and to discover some of the featured women using the mural key. If possible, consider arranging a field trip to visit the mural in person!

Engage students in a discussion of place and space (as individuals or in pairs):

- » *What is the difference between a place and a space?*
- » *What makes them similar?*
- » *How are they different?*

Ask students:

- » *What are some important places within your school that students new to the school need to know?*
- » *Why are these places important?*
- » *After inviting students to share their responses with the class: Do we all agree on this list of places? Why or why not?*

Explain that the mural is a type of **commemoration**. Offer or develop a definition of what a commemoration is.

For example: A commemoration or memorialization is a way to remember or honour and learn more about important people, developments, places, or events from the past.

There are many types of commemorations. They range from public holidays (Remembrance Day) to images on currency and stamps ([Viola Desmond](#)).



The SAWM is an example of public art and place-based commemoration. Other place-based commemorations tend to name important places after important people. These include the names of streets, parks, rivers, bridges, mountains, government and university buildings, schools, towns, and lakes.

When places are named after individuals, it shows that people at the time thought those individuals were important. It reveals the values of the people who chose to commemorate those individuals by using their names for particular places. It also shows how they value the place or what the place means to them (consider other factors, including intersectionality, people in power, and the social and political climate at the time).

For example: Immigrant advocate Lilian To had an alley named after her to honour her contributions and success in 2016 ("[Mayor Gregor Robertson and SUCCESS to designate Lilian To Way today](#)," Canadian Immigrant) and a park in 2015 ("[Lilian To Park at Yukon and W17th Avenue created from a street closure and single lot](#)," CityHallWatch). The alley is in Chinatown and the park is in the nearby neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant.

Provide an opportunity for preliminary discussion and speculation about what the people behind the mural value about Chinatown and who they determined to be important in the history of Chinatown.

***\* Worksheet: Lesson #2 Neighbourhood Mapping***

Using a map or a neighbourhood walkabout, **gather names of local streets, buildings, and natural features like rivers and mountains.** What do students recognize about who is being commemorated and where? Ask the class to consider what impression an outsider might have of your community by discovering who is commemorated and where within your community. Further, what inferences might they draw about members of the local community from their commemoration choices?

Explain that, over time, people's ideas of who to memorialize and where have changed. Ask students how the SAWM could be considered a "different" commemoration in this respect, such as compared to commemorations from the 1950s or 1960s. Encourage them to go beyond the obvious and to discuss as deeply as possible how the mural highlights the influence of important women within the Chinatown and Vancouver communities. Ask students why this mural and its message are important for Chinatown and for the people who live and visit there.

Explain to students that developing **a sense of a place** isn't as simple as learning about what it looks like on a map or how many millimetres of rain fall there. Learning about the people who live or lived there and what the place means or meant to them can help students come to a deeper understanding of the place and avoid stereotypes or generalizations about the place. For example, a stereotypical understanding of some locations in Northern Canada may include "isolated" or "barren." Asking the following questions could help students better understand what it means to take on a geographical perspective and develop a more comprehensive understanding of a place:

- » *What is it like to live there?*
- » *What does it mean to the people who live there?*
- » *Why do the people who live there value this place?*
- » *What does where you live mean to you?*

**\* Worksheet: Lesson #2 Commemorations in Chinatown and Strathcona**

Project or share the following commemorations for Chinatown and Strathcona, a neighbouring community in Vancouver that overlaps with Chinatown, to **compare and contrast** with the SAWM. As a class, examine what and who the people behind the commemorations value and how they show a sense of place of Chinatown and Strathcona through the places and people they honour. Ask students how the commemorations

best convey a sense of place. Ask them to reflect on what makes it easier for them to better understand the significance of Chinatown and the people who live and lived there. Discussion questions may include:

- » *Where do these commemorations “live”? For example, where are the plaques, historic sites, and places mentioned?*
- » *Where exactly is the SAWM?*
- » *Why does location matter?*
- » *How do commemorations in a place influence a sense of place?*

Chinatown and Strathcona commemorations:

- Black Strathcona, <http://blackstrathcona.com/>  
(10 short videos)
- Vancouver’s Chinatown National Historic Site of Canada,  
[https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=12951](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=12951)  
(4 pictures and 4 paragraphs)
- Vancouver Heritage Foundation, Places that Matter:  
<https://placesthatmatter.ca/>

Return the focus to the SAWM. Since the mural was created with the intention of being physically sited in Chinatown, discuss what influence or impact it may have within the community as well as for Vancouver at large. Discussion questions could include:

- » *How does the SAWM’s creation contribute to the historical narrative of Chinatown? Vancouver? Canada?*
- » *How does its creation influence other narratives (personal narratives, community narratives)?*
- » *What lens does it bring to the local community’s sense of place? How does the mural influence Vancouver’s Chinatown’s sense of place?*

Wrap up your discussion by asking a central question that connects students' learning to the other lessons:

- » *How would your sense of place in Chinatown be different without knowing about the SAWM, the important women featured, and their influence, impact, accomplishments, and contributions?*

## CULMINATING ACTIVITIES:

**Five possible culminating activities** include making a recommendation for the renaming of an important place in the local community; creating a collage to represent a sense of place; assessing the representation of place in the SAWM; choosing images that reflect students' new understandings of Chinatown through the SAWM; and recognizing diversity within the lives of the women featured in the SAWM. These activities can be done individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

1) ***Collage a Place***

Provide students with copies of archival images from Vancouver's Chinatown or another community. Explain that students should choose a collection of images that showcase the diversity, uniqueness, sense of community, themes, and features that matter or resonate with people who live in that place. They should combine these images into a **creative collage** to represent a sense of place. This task is recommended for grades 5 and 9–12.

2) ***Rename a Place***

Ask students to propose the **renaming of either a local place** to better reflect the values that resonate with current inhabitants of the community **or a place in Vancouver's Chinatown** in honour of a woman featured in the SAWM. This could be in the form of a letter or email, podcast, video, or poster campaign. Students should include why people who live in the community

may find the current name problematic and make a reasonable recommendation for a change. This task is recommended for grades 9–12.

3) ***Assess the Mural***

Ask students to **assess the richness of the SAWM artists' representation of the sense of place** for Vancouver's Chinatown. When exploring a representation of a sense of place, certain types of information are more helpful than others. For example, when trying to get a sense of what a school is like, perhaps the square footage or number of students might not help to know what it's like to be a student there. However, knowing what clubs it has or seeing images of common areas could help give an idea of what it means to have a sense of belonging there. Students should consider how the mural shows a unique history of Chinatown while simultaneously revealing what this community had in common with other places. They should also consider how it shows the different features of Chinatown important to its diverse members and how the mural reflects different themes that the community finds important. This task is recommended for grades 9–12.

***\* Worksheet: Lesson #2 Assess the Mural***

4) ***An Expanded View of Chinatown***

Ask students to choose three features in the mural or in photographs on the website that show an aspect of Chinatown that they weren't expecting based on what they already knew about Chinatown. Ask them to discuss their choices and how this imagery helped them **develop a better sense of place for Vancouver's Chinatown**. This task is equally recommended for grades 5 and 9–12.

### ***Tracing Diversity***

Ask students to explore the diversity of Chinese women in the history of Chinatown. Provide the students with archival materials from the website and the digital stories. Encourage them to recognize the differences in their experiences living in the same place and, in some cases, at the same time. Ask students to choose three important differences in the lives of a small group of women featured in the SAWM. This activity is intended for grades 9–12 and could be adapted for grade 5 by pre-selecting resources on a small group of women for discovery in groups or pairs.

***\* Worksheet: Lesson #2 Tracing Diversity***

## **ASSESSMENT**

- If you choose to assess any of these culminating activities, you may prefer to use Social Studies proficiency scales that you are familiar with or you may apply some of the following assessment criteria:
- Showcase the diversity, uniqueness, sense of community, and themes and features that matter or resonate with people who live in a particular place.
- Identify why a commemoration may be problematic, reasonable, respectful, or resonate with the present community but also reflect the past community.
- Gather evidence for each criterion when exploring a representation of a sense of place.
- Explain what makes up a sense of place (characteristics and features).
- Distinguish important differences—looking for diversity within a community.

## LESSON #3: DEFINING SUCCESS— WHOSE STORIES MATTER?

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### GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- *How should we define success or determine who or what we value?*
- *Whose stories are told in historical narratives and whose are left out?*

### CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES:

*historical significance; ethical judgment; change and continuity*

### TEACHER-LED LESSON:

Because this lesson asks students to consider “Who gets to tell the story and how?” and “What stories get to be told?”, it is important that the learning environment promotes intellectual curiosity, thoughtful engagement, and respectful appreciation of different perspectives and ideas about who or what is considered important in history. If you have not already explored [Lesson #1](#) with your class, please consider taking the time to do so now.

Begin by asking students (individually or in pairs) to create **a list of five individuals they perceive as successful**. This can be people in their lives or out in the world, alive or not. Ask students to debrief their lists in groups. Do they agree with the people that others have come up with? Why or why not? Have groups consider what qualities they used to define an individual as successful or not.

Share the lists of individuals and qualities as a large group. What do the students notice about shared qualities between the people identified as successful? Encourage students to consider examples of commemoration or memorialization, such as statues and names of buildings, that remember or honour people deemed successful or valuable in the past. Discuss the similarities and differences between **characteristics of success** they generated from their lists and characteristics of the past people considered important enough to memorialize (for example, male, educated, upper middle class, discovered something, the first of something). Using local examples may help students generate more ideas.

Ask students to think about how they learned **their definitions of success and value**. Ask them how the definition of success might have changed over time to include folks from different backgrounds (who are not male, able-bodied, white, wealthy, educated).

Now, create your own defining **criteria of success and value**. Students may do this in small groups on chart paper to start or work as a class while projecting onto the screen or whiteboard. Ask students to include four to five criteria. They can include historical criteria, but ask them how inclusive or intersectional these criteria are. Invite students to really consider what the criteria or characteristics look like through embodied examples. It's not enough just to say someone is a "leader"—define the qualities of leadership.



## SAMPLE

Criteria/characteristics	What this looks like
Involved with the community	Participating in community organizing; volunteering
Pioneer	Contributing a new finding or new idea that helped others and improved lives

Next, remind students of an earlier question: How did they learn these criteria of success and value? Introduce the concepts of **norms or normalization** and **socialization**. Explain that through normalization and socialization, we learn values from the people influential in our lives, including parents, family, teachers, and media personalities, both implicitly and explicitly, to the point that we may not even realize when this process occurs. Watch the 10-minute Crash Course Sociology video on socialization: <https://youtu.be/K-RvJQxqVQc>. Ask students to take notes and identify the four influencers of our socialization (family, school, media, institutions).

**Debrief the video** in a class discussion. Possible discussion questions include:

- » *What is a social prescription?*
- » *Who is the biggest social influencer in your life?*
- » *What was interesting or new to you that stood out in this video?*
- » *Do you agree or disagree with the information presented? Was it an oversimplification of how we learn values? Why or why not?*
- » *What are other possible institutions that may shape values and the way people behave? (e.g., workplaces, sports teams, religious groups)*
- » *Aside from the four introduced in the video, is there another social influencer in your life?*

Direct students to the [Suzhou Alley Women's Mural Website](#). If you haven't already worked with the mural, project the SAWM website onto the whiteboard or screen so students can examine it. Or let students access the mural website on their devices to explore it. Ask:

- » *What is this website about?*
- » *What is the mural about?*

Explain to students that the group will further explore the women in the mural to find out why the SAWM project team selected and commemorated them, or, in other words, why they were deemed successful, valuable, or important enough to honour and remember. Only a handful of individual women appear in this mural, and the majority are nameless or faceless but represent those who have worked in and made significant contributions to different social sectors. Let students know that they can research other exemplars of Chinese Canadian women who may not be included in the mural. Organize students into small groups for a Jigsaw and explain the task:

Choose one of the women to research and learn about. What makes her successful or valuable? **Use your criteria of success and value** to explain why she is deemed successful. Present your findings and decisions on chart or poster paper, Padlet, social media (Instagram/TikTok), PowerPoint, video, or other medium. Then explain why you think **these women have been deemed important enough to be honoured** and memorialized in the SAWM.

**CRITERIA OF SUCCESS:**

<b>Characteristics of success</b>	<b>What this characteristic looks like (describe attributes)</b>	<b>Evidence of how this chosen individual has demonstrated this characteristic</b>	<b>Explanation and rationale of why this individual should be honoured</b>

Ask students to answer the following questions in their presentations:

- » *What might have been the individual's influence, impact, or legacy?*
- » *How might they be considered successful, valuable, or important?*
- » *Invite student groups to share out to the class, and then conclude with a deep discussion guided by these questions:*
- » *What are the newly defined characteristics of success that the class chose to focus on to establish these women's contributions, legacies, and accomplishments?*
- » *Whose voices and perspectives should be considered when learning about important local history?*
- » *Why specifically were Chinese women excluded from commemoration and memorialization? (for example, patriarchy in China, lack of education and opportunities for women, immigration of Chinese men as labourers, Canadian laws that prevented Chinese men from bringing their families and settling in Canada)*

- » *Why does the mural tell stories of Chinese women who are both named and not named? (e.g., not everyone achieves glory and fame, and that's not the only measure of success)*
- » *Does a person's name have to be published and known for a person to be "successful"?*

## CULMINATING ACTIVITIES:

**Four possible culminating activities** include analyzing sources for evidence of inclusion and exclusion; highlighting a previously ignored aspect of success or value; showcasing lessons learned from women in our lives; and proposing a commemoration for an important woman (elaborated in detail). This last lesson is recommended for grades 9–12.

### 1) **Analyzing Sources**

Ask students (individually, in pairs, or in small groups) to analyze archival materials about the women featured in the SAWM to uncover evidence of **inclusion and exclusion** experienced by women and also reflected in historical narratives. Ask students to choose the three most compelling pieces of evidence that show inclusion and the **three most compelling pieces of evidence of exclusion**. Invite students to explain their choices and to explain any discrepancies they encountered or challenges in interpretation. This task can be adapted for grade 5 by focusing on either inclusion or exclusion rather than both.

**\* Worksheet: Lesson #3 Analyzing Sources**

### 2) **Exploring Exclusion**

Ask students to **select one theme represented in the mural** and unpack why it was **historically excluded**. Then ask students to rewrite this part of history in the form of a poem, short narrative, or comic. This task is recommended for grades 9–12 and can be done individually or in pairs.

3) ***Honouring an Elder***

Invite students (individually) to develop their intergenerational consciousness (connecting the past with the present or future) by **designing a two-dimensional visual or text-based artwork**—including, but not limited to, drawing, illustration, painting, poetry or prose, collage, photography, printmaking, or embroidery in response to the following question:

- » *What have you learned from a woman elder in your life that connects you to your cultural heritage and/or identity?*

This task is recommended for grades 5 and 9–12.

***Propose a Commemoration***

This task may take more time and has been elaborated in more detail. First, explain the task to students. In pairs or individually, students will **propose and design an appropriate commemoration** for an important local woman in response to the question: ***Who deserves to be commemorated and what is the most appropriate way to do it?*** Students will draft a proposal for a new local commemoration, including some design features (for example, in a sketch).

***\* Worksheet: Lesson #3 Propose a Commemoration***

Alternatively, students could produce a media release or a news article about the SAWM detailing why and how its stories are being told.

Share more information about how the SAWM came to be from the resource [“The Making of the Suzhou Alley Women’s Mural: A Conversation with the Artists.”](#) Explain that the project gathered together women from multiple generations, diverse backgrounds, and a variety of professions to share stories and offered an opportunity for local women artists to uncover, tell, and retell lesser-known histories, guided and informed by women in the Chinese Canadian community who continue the work of their shared ancestors.

Discuss how the SAWM commemoration project differs from other commemorations that students are familiar with—some may be problematic, others well-loved. Begin by analyzing the mural as a commemoration as a class. Comparing and contrasting with an image of a local commemoration that the students are familiar with may help with this brainstorm. For example, discuss the type of commemoration it is, the subject of the commemoration, the location of the commemoration, who came up with the idea for it and how they made it happen, and when it was established.

As a class, continue the discussion about commemorations in general.

Ask:

- » *Why would someone or something be commemorated?*
- » *Is there a fair way to determine who or what should be memorialized?*
- » *Who decides that someone or something should be commemorated?*
- » *How does a commemoration get developed and then shared? Is this process fair or equitable?*
- » *How would you propose or design a commemoration for an important local woman?*
- » *How would you proceed in a fair and equitable way?*
- » *Why does that matter?*

Invite students in small groups to discuss some preliminary ideas for how to determine who they would want to commemorate and how. Encourage them to consider the larger purpose of their design. For example, is it to honour an important person, to thank someone for their contributions, or to celebrate certain values of leadership, community advocacy, or success?

Ask students to carefully consider and research before choosing an important woman to design a commemoration for and then to put together a creative proposal. Remind students that their objective is to propose and design an appropriate commemoration for an important local woman in response to the question: Who deserves to be commemorated and what is the most appropriate way to do it?

Commemoration proposals might include:

- a statement of significance (why the person is important and deserves to be remembered),
- the objective of the commemoration,
- the type and design of the commemoration that reflects the person's importance,
- the exact location proposed and rationale for choosing this place,
- any quotations, details, or symbols that should be included or featured in the commemoration, or
- a title for the commemoration.

Note: Students might want to compare or critique the federal nomination process: <https://parks.canada.ca/culture/designation/proposer-nominate>

## ASSESSMENT

If you choose to assess any of these culminating activities, you may prefer to use Social Studies proficiency scales that you are familiar with or you may apply some of the following assessment criteria:

- Selected compelling yet competing evidence.
- Rewrite of the past includes balanced perspective, accuracy, and plausibility (based on evidence).
- Connects knowledge from the past with the present.

- Shows an appreciation of intergenerational knowledge.
- Proposes an appropriate way to remember someone.
- Identifies the intent of a commemoration.
- Explains why someone is important historically and deserves to be remembered.



## LESSON #4: PUBLIC ART AS ADVOCACY IN CHINATOWN

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### GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- *How can I contribute to meaningful transformation in my community?*
- *What is advocacy?  
What is change?*
- *How is advocacy sustained over time?*
- *Where are the intersections between advocacy and change?*
- *How can I contribute to righting historical wrongs?*

### CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES:

*evidence; continuity  
and change; cause and  
consequence*

### TEACHER-LED LESSON:

Because this lesson asks students to consider what it means to be a member of a community and to reflect on their identity and their role in their community, it is important that the learning environment promotes intellectual curiosity, thoughtful engagement, and respectful appreciation of different perspectives and ideas about identity and community. If you have not already explored [Lesson #1](#) with your class, please consider taking the time to do so now.

Begin by asking students (individually or in pairs): ***What is advocacy?*** You can choose to write student responses on the board or develop a class discussion. Ask students what advocacy means and what it looks like. Together brainstorm a list or web of responses. Do students agree with all the responses? Why or why not? Have students consider different forms of activism that they may know or have seen, thought of, or participated in.

Using the archival images from the supplementary resources folder, have students work in groups to **compare and contrast historical advocacy and activism in Chinatown**. Assign each group one or two photographs and, using markers and chart paper, answer the following questions:

- » *Who do you see in these photos? Who do you not see?*
- » *Who is portrayed in positions of power? How do we know they are in power?*
- » *Who is represented? Who is visible and who is invisible? How do you know?*

In groups, have students **present their assigned photos and their findings to the rest of the class**. Invite students to debrief and discuss, either in their groups or as a whole class. Ask:

- » *What did they notice in this activity about the portrayals of the community?*
- » *What did they notice about the leaders portrayed?*
- » *What is the connection between students' observations and findings and the historical advocacy in Chinatown? Who gets to advocate? Who does not?*

Explain to students that it is important to learn about the community and context in which the Suzhou Alley Women's Mural is situated in order to understand the mural as a form of advocacy and activism. How might the

SAWM resonate with community members who were historically excluded from advocacy and activism in Chinatown? The goal of this lesson is to develop student understanding that advocacy can take on different forms of activism and change over time.

Show students [“The Making of the Suzhou Alley Women’s Mural: A Conversation with the Artists”](#) from the supplementary resources folder. Discuss how the mural is a form of activism that advocates for the acknowledgement of Chinese Canadian women and their historical and ongoing contributions to community and society. How does the SAWM include these women in Chinese Canadian advocacy and activism? How do we as a society include people in advocacy and activism? After learning about the mural-making process from the artists, have students **write a reflection on what they’ve learned about advocacy and activism**. If students need additional support with writing their reflections, revisit the guiding questions for the lesson and have them respond to one of their choosing.

## CULMINATING ACTIVITIES:

**Four possible culminating activities** include developing a plan of action; assessing the richness and diversity of current local advocacy work; designing a comic depicting past, present, or future local advocacy; and creating a visual vignette as a group showing a scene of advocacy (elaborated in detail). All four tasks are recommended for grades 5 and 9–12.

### 1) ***Develop an Action Plan***

Invite students to consider the mural as advocacy work. See activity 4 for more ideas on how to extend the conversation. Organize students into small groups to brainstorm examples

of different types of advocacy work. Students may offer the following responses:

- calling or writing to a local politician,
- contacting the media,
- organizing or showing up to protest,
- standing up for someone when they are not present,
- starting a club,
- writing and performing songs or poems of advocacy, or
- showing what matters to you on social media.

Encourage students to **reflect on what advocacy looks like** for them. Ask students to choose an action they could take in their community and to **develop a plan of action** to implement it. They should include their goals, message, means, and methods. This task can be done individually or in pairs, if students have similar objectives and interests.

## 2) ***Assessing Advocacy Groups***

Ask students to examine a small sampling of local advocacy organizations, including those working in or for Vancouver's Chinatown. What do these organizations have in common? How are they different? Ask students to choose one organization to profile and assess. Students will then share their assessments and discuss what makes an advocacy group effective. Group work is recommended to encourage discussion and debate, as well as to limit the amount of research and class presentations.

***\* Worksheet: Lesson #4 Assessing Advocacy Groups***

## 3) ***Design a Comic***

Invite students to create their own comic depicting a story of advocacy or response to discrimination or injustice. Students can base their stories on a past or present person or event in

Chinatown, in the SAWM, or in local or national history, or they can imagine a future scenario. Encourage students to feature themselves in the comic in the case of an imagined future advocacy story. This activity can also be done in pairs. To provide an example, consider sharing the graphic novel *Escape to Gold Mountain* by David Wong.

4) ***Create a Visual Vignette***

This task may take more time and has been elaborated in more detail. Explain to students that they will work in small groups to **portray themselves projected in the near future in a scene inspired by the vignettes included in the SAWM** and in response to the question: ***How can I contribute to meaningful transformation in my community?*** They will create a visual vignette, which could take the form of a living tableau or a medium- to large-scale image.

Explain that the SAWM represents a tangible form of collective cultural expression, designed to animate Suzhou Alley as a symbolic public space. It is located near the original 1880s settlement site of the city's first Chinese community, and it aims to diversify the telling of Chinese Canadian history in the local landscape.

Discuss as a class how the SAWM could be considered an act of advocacy or activism, including:

- » *How does the SAWM foster intergenerational community engagement and relationship-building?*
- » *How does the SAWM contribute to the democratization of the cultural landscapes of Vancouver?*
- » *What may have inspired the artists of the SAWM to take this action of expression?*
- » *What were their goals and how did they achieve them?*

- » *What other examples of activism or advocacy can we brainstorm from our own community and beyond?*

To confirm their inferences, share [“The Making of the Suzhou Alley Women’s Mural”](#) from the supplementary resources folder. Debrief the activity with students and encourage them to reflect on the inspiration and goals of the SAWM artists.

To prepare for the assignment, provide time for quiet reflection by asking students to respond to the following questions by writing or drawing independently:

- » *After viewing the SAWM, how do you think about community?*
- » *After viewing the SAWM, how do you think about activism?*
- » *How might I describe or define my community?*
- » *How might my identity play a role in my thinking?*
- » *What challenges or issues is my community facing?*
- » *What matters the most to me?*
- » *What might my own advocacy goals be?*
- » *How might I have an impact on my community?*

As a class, discuss some of the responses to the reflection questions or the questions themselves. Arrange students in small groups for collaboration to build a community scene. Encourage students to continue exploring their ideas for meaningful change respectfully and thoughtfully, and promote forward-thinking and being open-minded to possibilities.

Remind students that their objective is to create a visual vignette as a group that shows a scene of themselves in their community making a difference or having an impact. The scenes could feature advocacy goals

that are meaningful to each member of the group, or students could design their scenes around a shared objective.

## **ASSESSMENT**

If you choose to assess any of these culminating activities, you may prefer to use Social Studies proficiency scales that you are familiar with or you may apply some of the following assessment criteria:

- Developed a reasonable plan of action that includes actionable items, clear steps, and achievable objectives.
- Compared and contrasted by noticing important differences and similarities and applying criteria effectively.
- Created an authentic, plausible, evidence-based representation.
- Reflected a plausible, personally relevant, actionable role in future advocacy.

# FIELD TRIP ACTIVITY

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This section outlines accessible activities and discussion topics adaptable for all ages, ideal for teachers, community facilitators, summer camp groups, and Chinatown groups.

## PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

Ready to plan a visit to a local Chinatown or Vancouver's Chinatown? Students could **prepare in advance by researching different vignettes in the mural.**

Share some images, videos, and links from the [supplementary resources folder](#) to get your group thinking about the mural's stories.

**Note: At the time of publication of this Educational Toolkit, the SAWM was not yet realized as a public art installation. Please see the website for updates and location details for site visits: [suzhouallemural.ca](http://suzhouallemural.ca)**

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

During the excursion, consider engaging youth of all ages with these thought-provoking questions:

- » *How are history, place, and identity connected?*
- » *What other murals do you see in Chinatown? How is the SAWM similar or different to other murals in the neighbourhood?*



- » *Did you have any expectations for seeing the mural in person? Are there any differences for you between seeing the mural in the classroom and seeing the mural in Chinatown?*
- » *What is the significance of having the mural in Chinatown?*

## ONSITE FIELD TRIP ACTIVITIES

Have the students run their own self-guided tour. Small groups of students could each offer a brief presentation of a landmark or scene in the mural to the rest of the group. The presenters could engage the group with an interactive task such as making connections, looking for clues, or making inferences about symbols or architectural features. Outcomes of **an informative and engaging tour** might include:

***Significance:*** Students explain the historical significance of the landmark, scene, or people depicted. (How notable were they at the time? In what ways are they insightful or revealing? How did they help shape Vancouver's Chinatown and the history of the Chinese Canadian community?)

***Evidence and interpretation:*** Students rely on accurate and reliable evidence (avoiding prejudiced or unfounded sources), make inferences, and draw conclusions by corroborating and interpreting secondary and primary sources.

***Perspective:*** Students provide insightful historical context to help classmates better understand the significance of the landmark or people.

***Intergenerational or historical consciousness:*** Students offer their classmates the opportunity to develop their historical consciousness by inviting them to connect the past with the present or future.

## SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

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- [Mural image, mural key, and digital stories](#)
- [“The Making of the Suzhou Alley Women’s Mural: A Conversation with the Artists”](#)
- [Archival images of Chinese Canadian Women](#)
- [Archival images of Vancouver’s Chinatown](#)
- [Links and resources](#)

# EDUCATIONAL TOOLKIT CREDITS:

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## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: NEIGHBOURHOOD MAPPING

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1. Using a map or neighbourhood walkabout (or both), gather names of local streets, buildings, and natural features like rivers and mountains.

<b>Named places to memorialize someone</b>	<b>Local examples</b>
Monuments, plaques, or statues	

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: NEIGHBOURHOOD MAPPING

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<b>Named places to memorialize someone</b>	<b>Local examples</b>
Town, village, or city	
Park or forest	

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: NEIGHBOURHOOD MAPPING

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<b>Named places to memorialize someone</b>	<b>Local examples</b>
River, stream, lake, waterfall, etc ...	
Mountain, plain, marsh, etc ...	

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: NEIGHBOURHOOD MAPPING

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<b>Named places to memorialize someone</b>	<b>Local examples</b>
Road, street, highway, or bridge	
School or other building	

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: COMMEMORATIONS IN CHINATOWN AND STRATHCONA

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2. Compare and contrast the Suzhou Alley Women’s Mural with other commemorations for Chinatown and Strathcona. How are they similar or different?

SAWM	Black Strathcona	Parks Canada	Virtual Exhibition



## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: COMMEMORATIONS IN CHINATOWN AND STRATHCONA

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<b>SAWM</b>	<b>Black Strathcona</b>	<b>Parks Canada</b>	<b>Virtual Exhibition</b>

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: ASSESS THE MURAL

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3. Assess the richness of the artists' representation of the sense of place of Vancouver's Chinatown in the Suzhou Alley Women's Mural.

Criteria	Evidence of strengths in the piece	Explanation of the authenticity of the representation
<p><b>Represents the unique characteristics of the place</b> (What is special about this place?)</p>		

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: ASSESS THE MURAL

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<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evidence of strengths in the piece</b>	<b>Explanation of the authenticity of the representation</b>
<b>Represents the common characteristics of the place</b> (How does this place connect to others?)		

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: ASSESS THE MURAL

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Criteria	Evidence of strengths in the piece	Explanation of the authenticity of the representation
<p><b>Reflects important themes or values to the community</b> (Why does this place matter to the people who live there?)</p>		

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: TRACING DIVERSITY

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4. Explore the diversity of Chinese women in the history of Chinatown. Choose three important differences among a small group of women featured in the Suzhou Alley Women's Mural.

Three examples of important differences	Why this diversity matters

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: TRACING DIVERSITY

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<b>Three examples of important differences</b>	<b>Why this diversity matters</b>

## LESSON #2 WORKSHEETS: TRACING DIVERSITY

---

<b>Three examples of important differences</b>	<b>Why this diversity matters</b>

## LESSON #3 WORKSHEETS: ANALYZING SOURCES

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1. Choose the three most compelling pieces of evidence that you can find that show inclusion and the three most compelling pieces of evidence that show exclusion. Explain your choices and any discrepancies you encountered or challenges you had when interpreting the sources.

Evidence of inclusion	Justification



## LESSON #3 WORKSHEETS: ANALYZING SOURCES

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Evidence of exclusion	Justification

## **LESSON #3 WORKSHEETS: PROPOSE A COMMEMORATION**

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- 2. Choose an important woman to design a commemoration for and then put together a creative proposal. Propose and design an appropriate commemoration for a local important woman in response to the question: Who deserves to be commemorated and what is the most appropriate way to do it?**

**Woman's name:**

**Statement of significance (scope and depth of influence, lessons learned from her, etc.):**

## **LESSON #3 WORKSHEETS: PROPOSE A COMMEMORATION**

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**Intent or objective of the commemoration:**

**Title for the commemoration:**

**Type and design of the commemoration:**

## **LESSON #3 WORKSHEETS: PROPOSE A COMMEMORATION**

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**Location proposed and rationale for this place:**

**Any quotations, details, or symbols that should be included or featured in the commemoration:**

## **LESSON #4 WORKSHEETS: ASSESSING ADVOCACY GROUPS**

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- 1. Examine a small sampling of local advocacy organizations, including those working in or for Vancouver's Chinatown.**

**Name (of organization):**

**Location:**

**Mission statements or principles:**

## **LESSON #4 WORKSHEETS: ASSESSING ADVOCACY GROUPS**

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**Objective(s):**

**Type of governance/structure:**

**People involved/volunteerism:**

## **LESSON #4 WORKSHEETS: ASSESSING ADVOCACY GROUPS**

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**Strategies, tactics, and models used:**

**Support/finances:**

**Direct fund usage from donations:**

## **LESSON #4 WORKSHEETS: ASSESSING ADVOCACY GROUPS**

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**Past projects:**

**Successes/challenges:**



# THE MAKING OF THE SUZHOU ALLEY WOMEN'S MURAL: *A Conversation with the Artists*

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## **1. *How did the artist team meet and come up with the idea for the Suzhou Alley Women's Mural (SAWM)?***

The idea was initially proposed by the Vancouver-based interdisciplinary artist Elisa Yon. She recognized that much of the recorded history of Chinese immigration and settlement in British Columbia focuses on the stories and contributions of men, including the existing commemorative murals in Vancouver's Chinatown. She felt it was time to uplift women's voices in the community and make them visible in Chinatown's cultural landscape and public realm.

In 2019, Elisa reached out to fellow local artists Janet Wang and Laurie M. Landry. She also reached out to the City of Vancouver's Chinatown Transformation Team (CTT) to see if they would support the idea of a community-initiated mural and storytelling project. Once Elisa had the support of local artists and the City, she reached out to Yun-Jou Chang at Cinevolution Media Arts Society to see if

they would be interested in being a community partner and to assist the artist team in applying for project funding with the BC Arts Council and, later, the Canada Council for the Arts. Additional artist team members were selected based on their interest and connection to Chinatown, lived experiences, and artist practices, including Carmen Chan, Carol Chan, Daniel Chen, Alger Liang, Catrina Megumi Longmuir, Mengya Zhao, and Stella Zheng.

## ***2. Why did you take a community-engaged approach?***

A community-based mural project had the potential to engage members of Chinatown's community in dialogue and discussion on various topics of relevance, including collective identity, cultural representation, place-making, and safety and security. Since this project aims to recognize the contributions of women within the community, it was important for us to engage women of diverse ages and lived experiences to capture their stories, voices, and messages for future generations.

## ***3. How did you get the community involved and how did community feedback shape the mural?***

The artist team implemented a robust and extensive approach, guided by principles of diversity, inclusion, and equity. This included the following activities:

- » ***Community Project Advisory Committee.*** *With the help of the CTT, we were able to bring together a group of women who represented a diversity of ages and lived experiences. Many of the women also were connected to community cultural and heritage organizations such as the Chinese Canadian Museum, Vancouver Heritage Foundation, Chinese Canadian Historical Society of British Columbia, Pacific Canada Heritage Centre — Museum of Migration, and Youth Collaborative for Chinatown.*

- » **Community Storyboards.** *The first exercises with the advisory committee and artist team were a series of community storyboards to collect and invite contributions in the form of keywords, images, drawings, and archival materials and research. Since we needed to navigate in-person gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic, we developed a series of digital storyboards. We divided the storyboards into subject areas, including arts and culture, law, education, medicine and nursing, community and social development, social justice, government, and military.*
- » **Seniors Art Activity Workshops.** *The project team presented and hosted workshops in collaboration with staff at the S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Simon K. Y. Lee Seniors Care Home and Harmony House. The first was a floral drawing workshop with women elders and staff, who helped us research and identify Chinese floral species that hold symbolic value in Chinese culture. Mengya Zhao incorporates these drawings into her design and composition of floral and medicinal imagery as foundational pattern elements (appearing along the bottom portion of the mural). The second workshop with women elders consisted of a collage and storytelling workshop. The artists led a short skills- and knowledge-sharing lesson, followed by the prompt: What guidance or message would you like to share with future generations of women in the community? The elders responded to this question in their artwork collages. As a thank you, the artists gifted the art supplies — tote bags, scissors, materials, paper, and glue sticks — to the seniors for their future art-making activities.*
- » **Mail Art Project.** *To reach out to younger members of the community, the artist team presented a mail art project. A call out was issued to the community inviting women to participate. We sent out 16 mail art kits, which include a pre-stamped blank postcard, limited edition “Solidarity Forever” tote bag, and instruction page. Participants created artworks in response to the prompt: What have you learned from a woman elder in your life that helped connect you to your cultural heritage?*

» **Online Survey and Website Engagement Portal.** We also launched a project website and online survey on International Women's Day (March 8) in 2021. The "Auspicious 8 Question Survey" invited members of the community to provide feedback and responses to question, such as: What colours do you think symbolize strength, resilience, and endurance? The artists then collected the responses into word clouds, with popular keywords and themes transferred to the digital storyboards. In addition, we made the Instagram account @suzhoualley mural to share updates, work in progress, and completed pieces. Community members have reached out to us on Instagram, through direct message, and by leaving comments.

#### **4. How did you get the resources and various permissions needed to create the SAWM?**

In partnership with Cinevolution Media Arts Society, we were able to apply to funding programs at the BC Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts. Both organizations offer grants that support community-based art projects.

Implementing art projects in public space require artists to work with multiple project stakeholders. In our case, this included the City of Vancouver, Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee, Chinatown Legacy Stewardship Group, Lim Sai Hor Kow Mock Benevolent Association, and S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

#### **5. As a community advocacy project, what are the top three takeaways or social impacts you would like the community to understand or experience in relation to the mural?**

Firstly, we would like women in the community (present and future) to understand that we see them — we acknowledge their sacrifices and the hardships their ancestors endured to benefit future generations.

Secondly, we would like children to learn about the contributions and legacies of their elders and shared ancestors so they feel empowered to take on the struggles — both personal and collective — that they will inherit from previous generations.

Thirdly, we would like arts and culture funding programs, as well as city authorities, to take note and use this project as a case study on how mural projects can be more than beautification exercises for a community or neighbourhood. They can offer and do so much more, including:

- » *Uplift marginalized voices and offer communities a place within the cultural landscape of a city, neighbourhood, and community.*
- » *Build community relationships and social capital.*
- » *Be a symbol of community pride and collective identity.*
- » *Raise awareness of the contributions and stories of people in the community.*
- » *Raise awareness of issues and topics of relevance for people in the community.*

## **6. *What was your biggest challenge in creating the mural?***

One of the biggest challenges was navigating the COVID-19 pandemic while implementing the community engagement phase of the project

Time commitment was also a challenge. Community-initiated projects tend to have longer project timelines to accommodate funding processes and the availability of the individual members of the project team. This project started in 2019 and was a passion project — meaning that much of the time required to get the project off the ground was volunteered time. People believed the work they were doing was worthwhile and would benefit the community.

Another key challenge was navigating stakeholder opinions about how the mural might positively or negatively impact the use of public space in Chinatown, especially during a time of increased anti-Asian sentiment and neighbourhood vandalism. Finally, building collaboration within the team and with the larger community required openness in dialogue while developing ideas for what to depict in the mural.