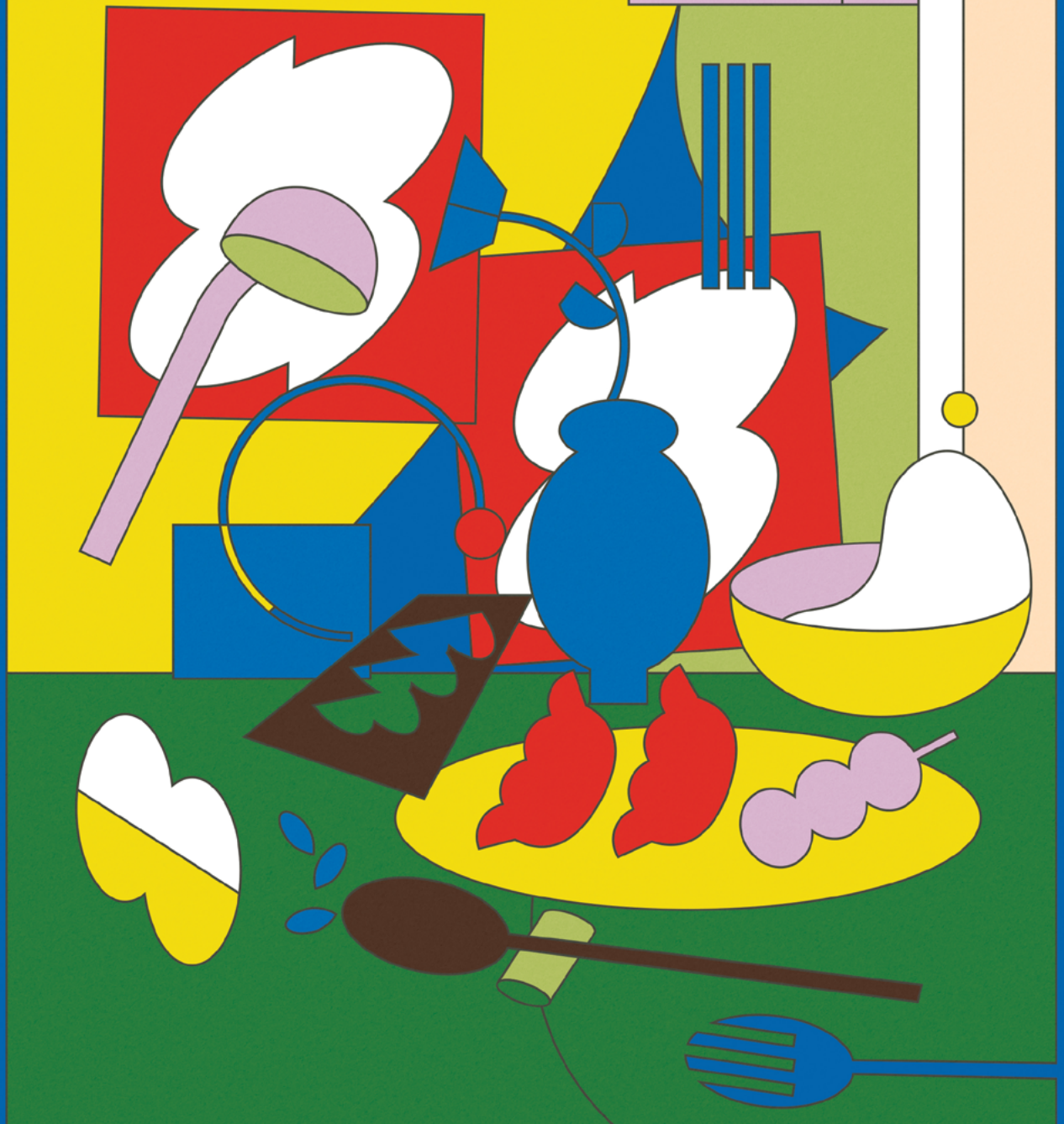


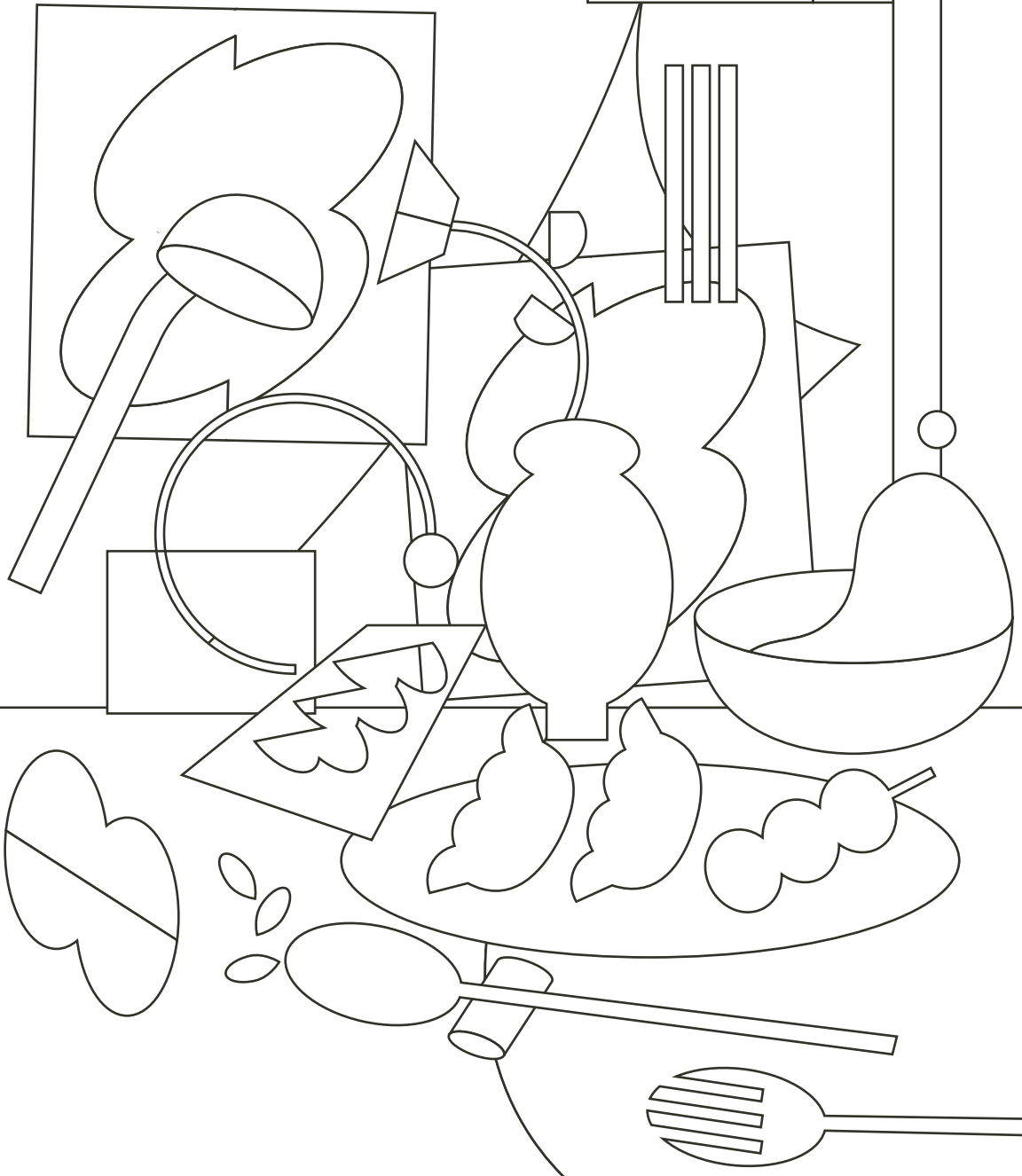
Asian Community Convener Project

Report



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Land Acknowledgement

This project was completed on ancestral, traditional, unceded, and occupied Indigenous territories, on land colonially known as Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The city of Vancouver is within the territories of three title-holding Nations: the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam), S^kw^xwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lílwətaʔł (Tsleil-Waututh).

This land was never surrendered, relinquished, or handed over to Canada or British Columbia through a treaty or other means. It is sovereign and unsurrendered. Hua foundation and the contributors to this project are committed to supporting the sovereignty of Indigenous communities and their ongoing work to reclaim their territories.

We would also like to acknowledge the Indigenous nations who, for time immemorial, have stewarded the land that our team and community works, lives, and relies on: the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam), sə́lílwətaʔł (Tsleil-Waututh), qiqéyt (Qayqayt), q[']wa:n̓ł'ən̓ (Kwantlen), k^wik^wə́łəm (Kwikwetlem), s̓cəwaθən məsteyəx^w (Tsawwassen), and q̓ic̓əy̓ (Katzie) nations, who speak hənqəminəm; and the S^kw^xwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), whose language is S^kw^xwú7mesh Sníchim.

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Introduction

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Asian Community Convener (ACC) project, along with the Black and Interfaith Communities Convener projects, were established by the British Columbia Multiculturalism branch and the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives, Rachna Singh, who reports to the Ministry of the Attorney General, to support coordinated efforts to address racism and hate in BC communities. The Resilience BC Community Conveners Pilot Project was launched in 2021 to advance dialogue and support initiatives that address racism within the province of British Columbia.

With the ACC project, we aim to understand the ways that anti-racism is understood and advanced by organizations serving Asian diasporic communities, particularly those that are based in the Lower Mainland. This community-based research project is an endeavour to catalogue the work that is currently being done by Asian diasporic community organizers and organizations, and to document the shared wisdom of our communities. By undertaking and sharing this project, we hope to support and build long-term capacity for anti-racism work locally.

To understand community organizations' approaches to, experiences of, and challenges in anti-racism work, we engaged with 32 organizations between December 2021 and April 2022 through interviews and a roundtable discussion.

The project team spoke with staff members from 32 community and non-profit organizations. In total, there were 38 research participants, including two members of the research and writing team. Seventeen participants were Chinese Canadian, nine were Filipinx¹, Filipino, or Pilipino, four were Punjabi and South Asian, two were Japanese Canadian, one was Korean Canadian, one was Black, and one was Indigenous. The capacity of the organizations represented was also varied—fifteen organizations were mostly run by volunteers, nine were mostly run by part-time contractors or staff, and seven were mostly run by full-time staff.

Though the interviews were structured, they were conversational; we prioritized frankness and connection. The process of building trust and connections between Asian diasporic organizers and organizations was as important as the findings of this report.

After each interview, we entered our data into a spreadsheet organized by question topic, which included using tags to note and sort data into categories and common themes. The tags noted common approaches to anti-racism, type of work, location, and cultural community. To amalgamate this data, the project team hosted

and participated in a “learn-in” to share our insights from interviews. We discussed what each organization's definition of anti-racism is, their capacity to address it, their hopes for their work, and the support needed to further their impact.

This document is more than a research report. It is a celebration of the creativity and tenacity demonstrated by Asian diasporic community organizations. It is a provocation of the conventional definition of anti-racism work. It is an exploration of the cultural dynamics that help and hinder anti-racism in Asian diasporic communities. It is a petition for more time and more resources for racialized communities to do the vital work of healing that is foundational for sustainably addressing racism.

ABOUT HUA FOUNDATION

Hua foundation is a youth empowerment non-profit connecting cultural heritage and social change. Our approach is about leading community-based research and action, empowering youth and incubating youth-led initiatives, and building community partnerships and resilience.

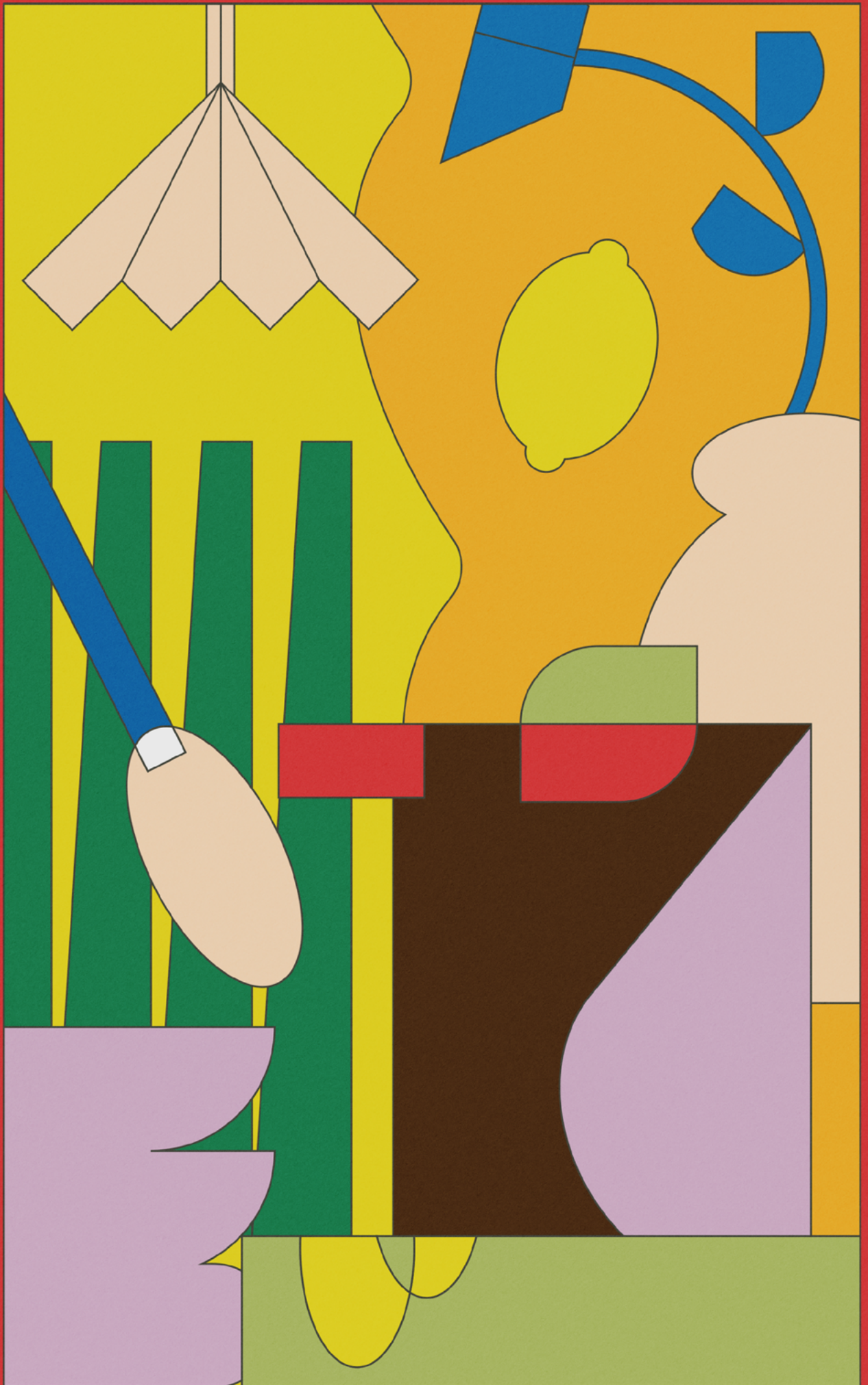
Our work lives at the intersection of cultural heritage and social change. We offer a wide range of programs and services that empower youth to take ownership and leadership roles in addressing complex societal issues that impact their communities. From facilitating youth workshops and developing educational resources to convening coalition-based emergency response projects during the pandemic, we centre agency and self-determination.

We are based in Vancouver's Chinatown and have worked alongside youth and community members from the Asian diaspora since 2013. We are guided by the desire to dignify the lived experiences of racialized people by building pride and meaningful connections to our ancestral cultures, our cultural practices, and our cultural communities. The stuff of our hearts is hard to quantify, of course. So much of this work lies in shedding light on that which feels intangible but shapes our everyday lives.

We apply community-based approaches to research and engagement design, grounded in reciprocity, to provide policy analysis and recommendations that address the root causes of social, environmental, and cultural issues.

Our mission is to strengthen capacity among Asian diasporic youth, in solidarity with other communities, to challenge, change, and create systems for a more equitable and just future.

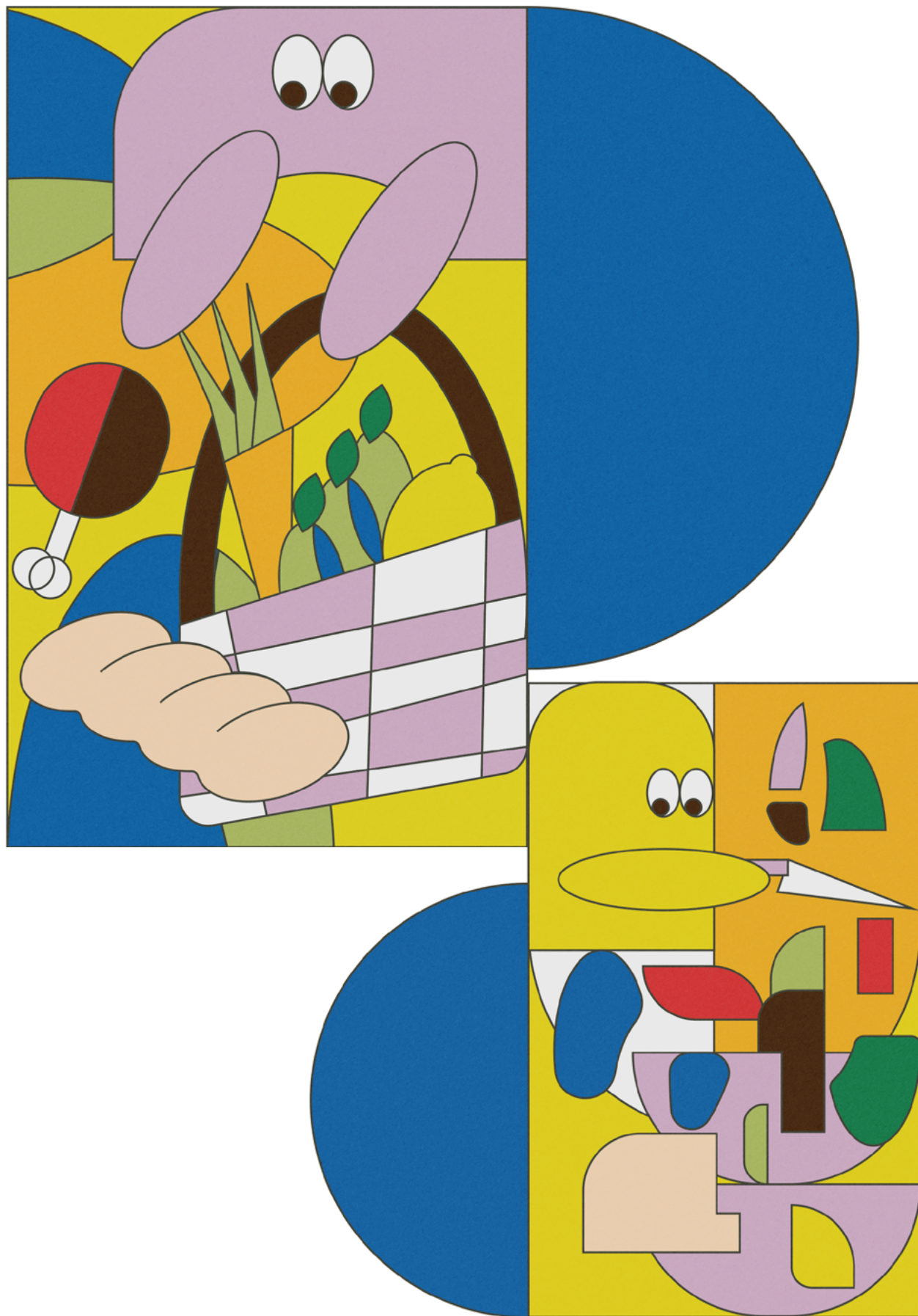
¹ Our use of “Filipinx” is so that we do not exclude transgender and non-binary folks with ancestral roots in the Philippines. This is the term we default to for the purposes of this project, but some community organizations/leaders use gender-specific modifiers, e.g. Filipino, Pilipino.



Section I. Background

Let us show you how we gathered our ingredients (*data*), prepared them (*observations*), and broiled, stewed, and double fried our ingredients (*analysis*).

Before serving you, we shared the dishes with the community members who gave us the materials for the feast. They advised about where to add a little salt or sweetness (*peer review and editing*).



Methodology

GATHERING INGREDIENTS (DATA)

Ingredients for our meal were gathered through conversations with community leaders and members, as well as our lived experiences as community organizers and racialized bodies on this land. This is a community-based research project, meaning that this research was conducted with, for, and by people from the South Asian, East Asian, and Filipinx communities.

To begin our outreach, we compiled a list of 116 BC-based organizations which are led by and provide programs and services to Asian diasporic communities. This list was based on online research, long-held relationships, and knowledge gained through our experiences in community organizing.

Out of the 116 organizations on the list, we were able to reach out to 46 within our timeline. We wanted to contact a variety of organizations representing a diversity of mandates from arts to policy to service organizations. Fourteen organizations did not respond or declined to participate. Some folks expressed distrust in government-funded projects. These refusals and non-responses asked us to consider how the dynamics between ethnic communities within the Asian diaspora impacted trust in and regard for our process.

Between December 2021 and April 2022, we engaged 38 participants representing 32 organizations. Several of the participants represented more than one community organization.

We gathered their insights through a variety of methods: interviews, one roundtable discussion, and one participant participated in the research via email. Prioritizing health, safety, and harm reduction, all the interviews were conducted remotely. Participants determined their own preferences for anonymity and confidentiality.

The interviews were organized in two parts. The first gathered information about the organizations' missions, structure, leadership, staff or volunteer capacity, services offered, and the community, or communities, they serve. The second part of the interview asked open-ended questions, prompting participants to reflect and think introspectively. We asked them how they defined anti-racism work, what their approaches to anti-racism work were, what challenges they faced while

doing this work, and the support they needed to sustain and succeed in this work (*see Appendix for a complete list of interview questions*).

Once the planned interview questions had been answered, we encouraged both the interviewer and participant(s) to continue to inquire, probe, and elaborate as they felt comfortable.

A few participants expressed reservations about being interviewed; they saw the process as impersonal and antithetical to community building and too focused on the perspective of a single organization. Instead, they preferred exchanging ideas and participating in generative discussions with other organizations.

In response to these concerns, we offered a roundtable interview format. Because this research method was introduced in February 2022, only one took place. The virtual event hosted four organizers representing six organizations in the Filipinx community.

PREPARING THE INGREDIENTS (OBSERVATIONS)

We prepared the ingredients for the feast by sharing our reflections with each other, by writing journal entries, recording our organic conversations with one another then listening to them, and by embracing iterative processes. As a part of this process, we hosted an internal *learn-in* event to celebrate our *harvest* and aggregate what we had heard and learned. We held this celebration to facilitate the slow processing and reflection of our past five months of engagement in our respective communities, which also served as a first scan through the data we had collected. We were able to hear what stood out to each other from this stage in the project without having to read long transcripts or listen to hours of interviews together. This also allowed us to take notes that would become a preliminary outline and guiding document for the quotes, thoughts, and analysis that became this report.

At the learn-in, we shared our data through a variety of media and methods, including presentation slides, music, memes, graphs, dance, and more. The event spanned four hours of listening, asking questions, taking notes, and sharing feedback with one another.

COOKING (ANALYSIS)

Unlike traditional research that has a clear cut between observation and analysis, these processes were intertwined in this project. You can imagine their relationship as a process of *double frying*.

Community organizers are experts in their own work. During the interviews, participants made meaning from their experiences, and provided their own analysis to some interview questions. We applied their meaning-making as recipes for the first stage of frying the ingredients we gathered. Their analysis contributed to some of the major themes and conclusions in this report.

But how did various themes connect? What structural and cultural factors underlie these varying analyses? What was missing? To answer these questions, we *double fried* the data with our own spices by applying our own politics, experience with community organizing, and theoretical frameworks to the participants' stories.

We prepared and cooked our dishes with the utmost care and patience. We took the time to care for each other and adjusted our speed, tasks, and methods; we built an accountability system to support one another. We co-created a team culture where knowledge sharing and appreciating differences was consistent and expected.

At times, we had to sit with uncomfortable emotions and challenge our own preconceptions. Some of the stories and experiences shared were unfamiliar. Some were hard to digest, but we persisted in digesting them and gaining understanding. It was a process of unlearning about our own communities and each other's.

TEST KITCHEN TASTING (PEER REVIEW AND EDITING)

Before sharing our dishes with you, we served the research participants and our colleagues at hua foundation first. In their review, our colleagues at hua foundation were asked to pay particular attention to how Filipinx and South Asian communities are represented in this report and to check our biases as a team, in which Chinese and Chinese Canadian folks are overrepresented.

We asked research participants to review drafts of this document and ensure they are accurately represented and to give us informed consent to share their comments

ABOUT OUR KITCHEN (RESEARCH SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS)

While our kitchen was large enough to prepare a variety of dishes, we wish it was bigger. There was not enough space, ingredients, and sometimes, skills and knowledge,

to serve you everything we wanted. There is much more Asian diasporic community organizations have to offer than what is written about in this report.

The scope of this research was limited by the project timeline (as determined by our grant funding requirements), the capacity of our small team, the budget, our own subjectivities, and the capacity and preferences of the individuals who participated in interviews.

We did not have the ability to cover all aspects of anti-racism work. One salient aspect we feel is missing is in-depth discussion of the impact of policing on our communities and the work organizations are doing to implement abolitionist values.

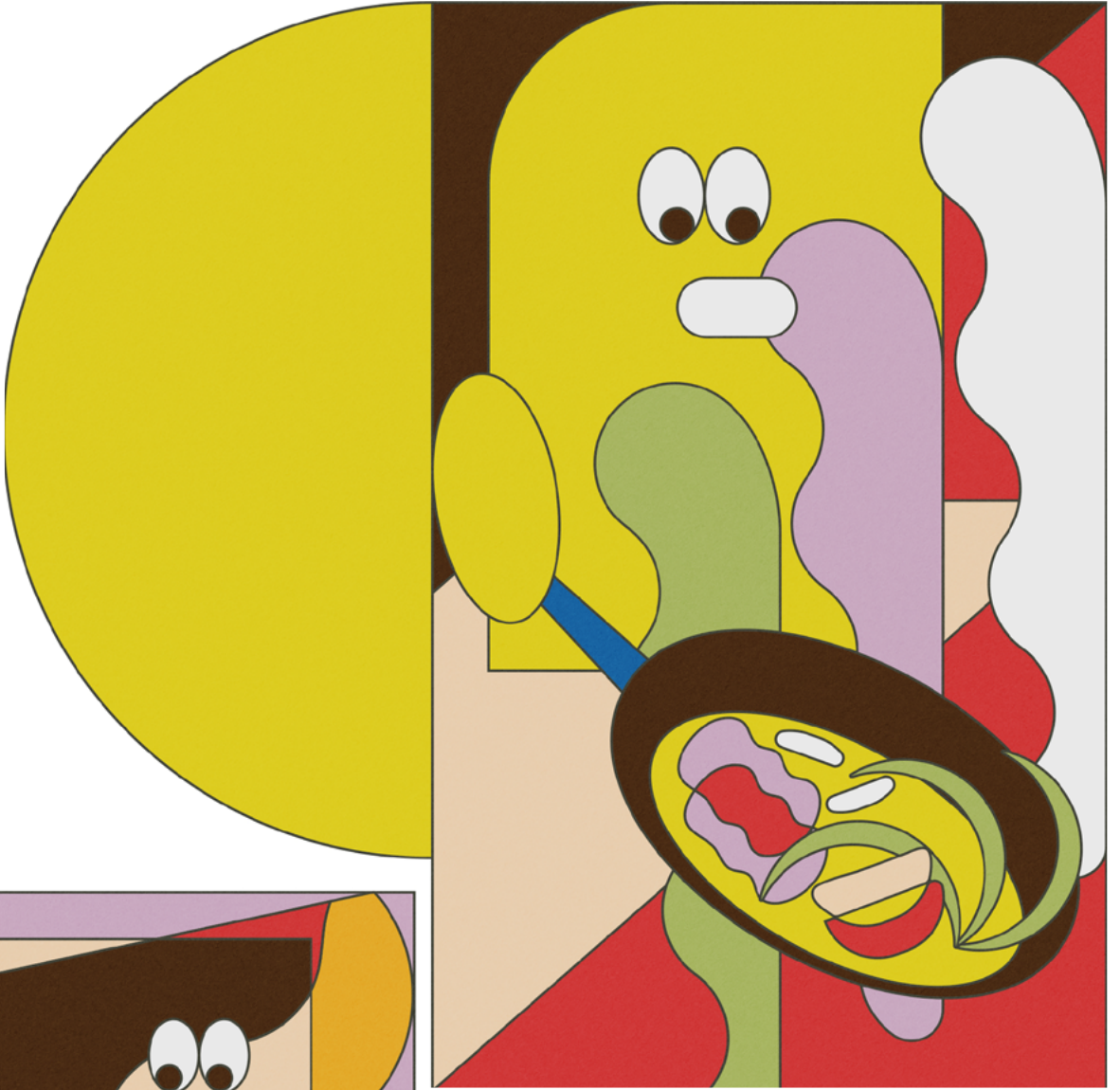
You will also notice that only some Asian identities are represented in this report. Due to limited capacity, we did not get to speak to a number of Asian ethnic communities.

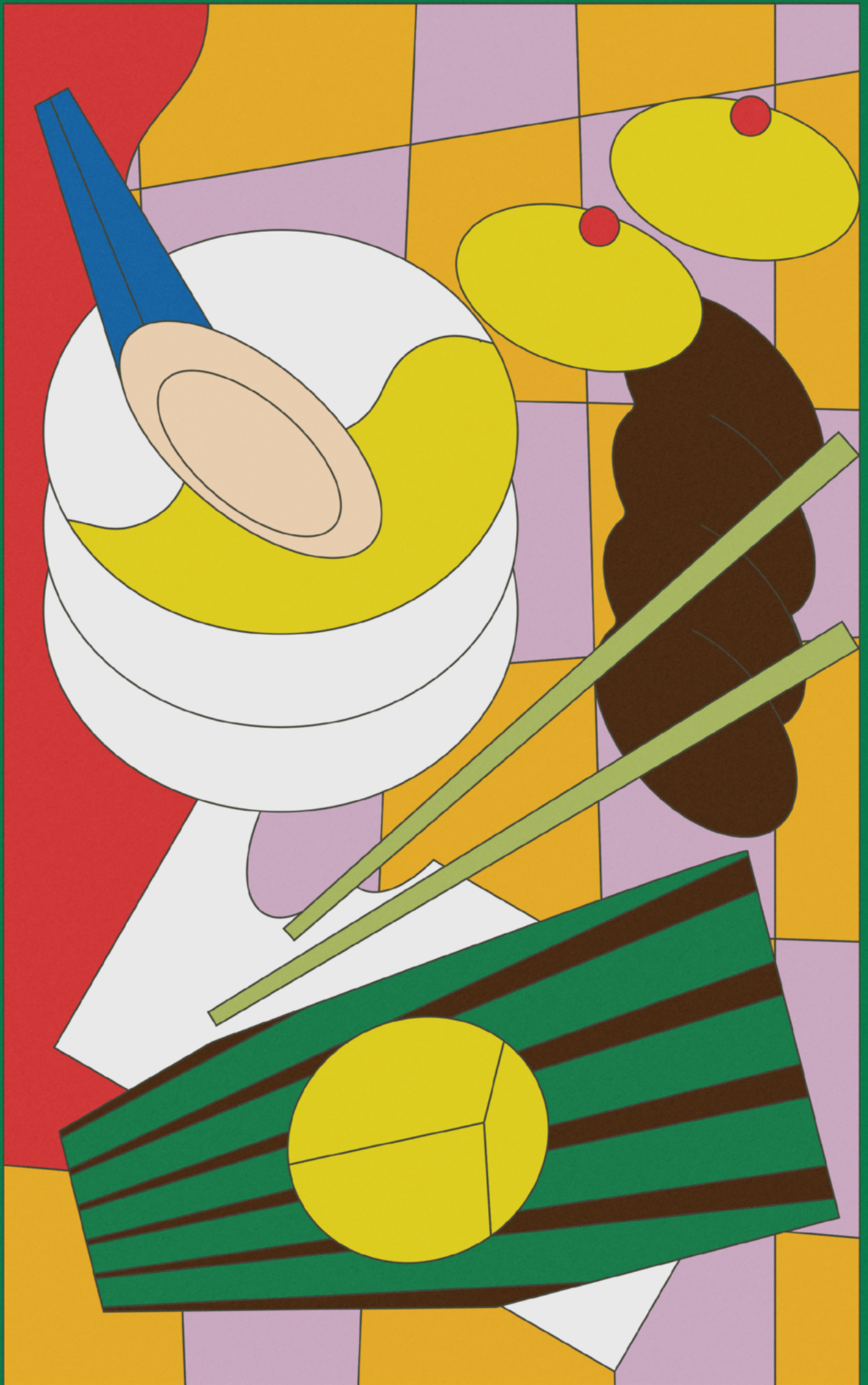
Similarly, we, the Community Coordinators, are Filipina, Punjabi, Cantonese, and Chinese. This is only a small section of the Asian diaspora, and we do not represent our entire communities. We also bring our own subjectivities to this research, at times, we are the research subjects commenting on the work of organizations we are involved with. In other words, we want to recognize both the expertise our lived experiences afford us and the limitations of our biases.

Organizations we interviewed were almost exclusively from the Lower Mainland though we tried to engage with Asian organizers in Northern BC and in the Interior. We recognize the inequitable access to resources about anti-racism, resource distribution, differing levels of safety, and more that disproportionately affect Asian communities outside of city centres. The arduousness of relationship and trust building online also played a large role in our inability to engage with those outside of our own networks in the region we live in.

Regarding the process, we want to note participants were prepared for interviews in different ways. A number of participants were given questions in advance upon request. While this created transparency and helped some participants feel more prepared, comfortable, and confident in participating in our projects, others formulated their answers beforehand and were less willing to engage in a conversation.

Though all of our interviews are held with equal importance, some interviews that were conducted are not mentioned in the following sections. These organizations participated in our research as interviewees and are not mentioned due to requests for anonymity and other reasons, and we thank them for their time and expertise that has shaped the analysis in this report, despite not being named.





Section II.
Taste the Feast: Findings

Let's eat this *bountiful feast* together. What we offer you might make you uncomfortable. It might make you *sweat*, make your mouth *tingle*, and it might be hard to *chew*— but we promise it will be *nourishing*. We feel lucky and grateful to share this course of dishes with you. We hope you appreciate its flavours, textures, and complexity.

Redefining Anti-Racism

One of the primary takeaways from this project is the need to broaden the definition of anti-racist community work. We also heard concerns about the centering of whiteness in anti-racism work, which shows up as performative politics that are only superficially invested in the liberation of people of colour. Centering whiteness has become so common in our community work that some want to renounce the term anti-racism work altogether. Brooke Xiang, the president of Vancouver Chinatown Today, told us, “When I hear the term *anti-racism*, I immediately think of white people. [...] Anti-racism work carries performativity.”

Currently, institutional and mainstream ideas of what is considered legitimate anti-racism work includes initiatives by registered non-profits and charities that can be delivered as one-time, discrete programs, and protests and direct engagement with government. These concepts of anti-racism work are narrow and limiting—a dynamic that has been exacerbated by the professionalization of community organizing.

As a result, we have collectively diminished the importance of work related to bolstering cultural heritage, language, education, social services, mental health and emotional healing, and youth organizing. Within the current institutional paradigm of anti-racism work, Asian diasporic community organizations are often marginalized because their programs and services do not align.

One of the challenges is proving their legitimacy and expertise when applying for grants. At times, we found that the logic of funders has shaped how organizers and organizations perceived and presented their work. Some organizations were resistant to identifying their organizing and community programs as anti-racist, but from our perspective, their work is impactful, urgent, and relevant.

Their services and programming would not appear to be part of the ecosystem of anti-racism work at first glance: More than half the organizations in this project utilize arts and culture for community building and organizing dialogues about anti-racism. Additionally, 30% of

the organizations in this project mentioned the significance of representation and 20% mentioned cultivating intergenerational relations as part of their work.

As you will read in the following sections, addressing racism requires culturally specific, relevant, and nuanced strategies that extend beyond protests and training (while both are necessary and vital). When we move away from the binary and toward the “both/and” conceptual orientation described by Black feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins², we are able to recognize, celebrate, and support emerging and divergent approaches to anti-racism.

Racism is a system of oppression that manifests at individual, interpersonal, community, and systemic level. Accordingly, it follows that racism—and its connected systems, including capitalism, ableism, sexism, and colonialism—needs to be tackled at multiple levels through various strategies and tactics, with an intersectional approach.

In this project, *anti-racism work* refers to a wide spectrum of activities, including building intergenerational bonds, community-engaged arts and culture, building solidarities between Asian ethnic communities, and fighting for representation. While this work does not always directly or explicitly address racism, our research and our experience as community organizers demonstrates that these programs and services are necessary in moving toward an equity-oriented future that includes racial justice.

² For more information on Patricia Hill Collins and her work, see [here](#).

When we conveyed this to the research participants, they were able to see their current work as anti-racist and relevant to healing racialized communities. As well, anti-racism is a core value that informs their work and operations. With this shift in perspective, they brought more stories forward. Anti-racism work in Asian diasporic communities is at once hopeful, complex, diverse, and charged. By building our communities, we are doing the work to build our capacity for sustainable, meaningful change. We need to appreciate and openly support the work happening at the personal and interpersonal levels as essential and foundational to anti-racism at the movement and systems level. As Dr. Leonora Angeles, President of the National Pilipino Canadian Cultural Centre (NPC₃), told us, “Anti-racism work is everybody’s work.”

One of the aims of this report is to invite you, no matter your racial background, to reconsider your conceptions and ideas about what anti-racism work looks like and the breadth of strategies and tactics necessary to have a lasting impact. The individuals, communities, and organizations that come to this work, and who participated in our research, are vastly diverse. As such, their needs, strengths, capacities, and resources are as varied. Effective strategies for addressing racism change over time and will differ depending on context. Anti-racism is an ongoing, dynamic, and expansive process of defining, redefining, and decolonizing.

You will not find a singular, straightforward representation of anti-racism in this report. Instead, we offer you insights and stories from Asian diasporic community organizers, who can tell us what is meaningful, culturally appropriate, and relevant anti-racism work.

As Jen Sunshine, the co-artistic director of Love Intersections, a media arts collective made up of queer artists of colour dedicated to using collaborative art making and relational storytelling to address systemic

racism, said in our interview, “Anti-racism has to entangle a diversity of tactics—it doesn’t always look the same. On the ground, in school, online, in communities, it can shift and adapt to different contexts.”

She emphasizes, “Anti-racism work is any organizing against or critiquing of white supremacy, colonization, and capitalism.”

In this feast, we present you three dishes representing the three most prominent themes in our interviews:

1. ARTS AND CULTURE
2. REPRESENTATION
3. BUILDING INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS

Arts and Culture

Community-engaged arts and culture offer opportunities for those involved to connect, explore their emotions, histories and identities; introduce new ideas, and communicate without spoken or written language. “There’s so much that the arts can say which words cannot,” said Armor Valor Corrales of Sulong UBC, a student group dedicated to educating, organizing, and mobilizing Filipino and allied students in support of the national democratic movement in the Philippines.

It can also be an effective tactic for educating and mobilizing communities not actively engaged in social justice or equity work. Kaira Fenix, Sulong UBC’s Propaganda Officer, noted that arts and cultural work are always political. They noted, “As mass activists, we use arts and culture to engage those who aren’t the type to dig into books and theory and to ignite our communities’ passion for anti-racist and anti-imperialist political action.”

Groups in this project with an arts and culture mandate include: Love Intersections, Sliced Mango Collective, 5X Festival, Sher Vancouver, Powell Street Festival Society, Kathara Pilipino Indigenous Arts Collective Society, Chinatown Today, and Cold Tea Collective.

Five out of seven of the Filipinx organizations we surveyed in this project work primarily in the arts and culture sector. The Southeast Asian Cultural Heritage Society (SEACHS), for example, uses the arts to address issues related to reconciliation and environmental sustainability. Similarly, Sliced Mango Collective (SMC), a Filipinx youth organization focused on building community and culture, started with an arts-based mandate.

In the case of SMC, engagement with the arts naturally evolved into advocacy. One of their programs, *In Between The Lines*, was a writing workshop designed as an opportunity for participants to “unpack a lot of the internalized racism that we have,” said SMC Co-Founder Anne Claire Baguio, and navigate relationships with their cultural identities. In March 2021, they launched *Slice of Support*, an advocacy campaign addressing the redevelopment and displacement of the Filipinx food hub in Vancouver’s Joyce-Collingwood neighbourhood, one of the community’s only dedicated cultural spaces for the Filipinx community. This initiative was part of the creation of the Joyce Street Action Network (JSAN), a coalition of grassroots organizations focused

on neighbourhood social issues that convened shortly after the *Slice of Support* campaign. SMC has since been sustaining their advocacy work alongside their arts programming.

Participants in this project named three categories of arts and culture programming that support community building and equity:

1. CREATING ART.
2. SHARING ART.
3. CONNECTING THROUGH FOOD.

CREATING ART

With artistic creation and cultural production, artists and community members alike can explore histories and stories from themselves and others, finding ways to connect and creative avenues for expression. This can be a healing process as it can be accessible to community members without formal training or education.

5X Festival, which calls itself “the essential festival & digital community elevating South Asian youth culture” on their website, is a Vancouver-based “multi-day, multi-venue festival covering music, visual art, fashion, and culture.” The festival has a youth artist in residence program, which places youth at the centre of cultural production and carves out a unique space for South Asian artistic voices. Harpo Mander, 5X Festival’s General Manager, said the residency combines artistic creation and education. Through providing a platform to create and showcase art, the festival empowers youth to engage with civic issues.

Said Mander:

We cater to a young audience, and there’s no youth-led movement in Surrey, especially if you’re annoyed with what’s happening politically, socially, in your community in Surrey. So we’re trying to be that space.

Speaking about the organization’s Storytelling Circle program, Powell Street Festival Society’s Programs Coordinator, Samantha Marsh, said:

It’s a challenge to know how to speak and to find the confidence to speak around issues of advocacy. Perhaps we can feel like we’re not informed enough to speak out, but enabling people with the confidence and skills to feel empowered enough to be an advocate wherever they are on their spectrum of learning is really important... The circles have been safe spaces for people to learn, speak, [and] listen. They are intergenerational, so learning from elders and hearing what their path has been is important for advocacy work.

As EliminateHate’s Executive Director Audrey Wong shared how her organization uses filmmaking as a platform for introducing skills and ideas related to anti-racism advocacy:

Being a part of the Vancouver Asian Film Festival means we attract people who don’t have experience in advocacy and

social change, but want to speak up still. It is about giving those creators and their talent the space to present their story and normalize the representation of Asian Canadians.

The University of British Columbia’s Asian Canadian and Asian Migration (UBC ACAM) Studies Program also employs filmmaking as a way to explore race and identity. Created as part of UBC’s efforts to redress the historical discrimination that led to the forced removal of Japanese Canadian students during World War Two, ACAM is part of the building of a dynamic and sustainable Asian Canadian community initiative at the university³. “Anti-racism work is a part of our birth story,” said ACAM Program Manager Szu Shen. “Instead of white, Eurocentric ways of learning and relating to one another, we uplift the voices and experiences of racialized, specifically Asian students and faculty.” The program’s filmmaking course equips students with the skills to tell stories specific to their families or their understanding of Asian Canadian and Asian diasporic communities.

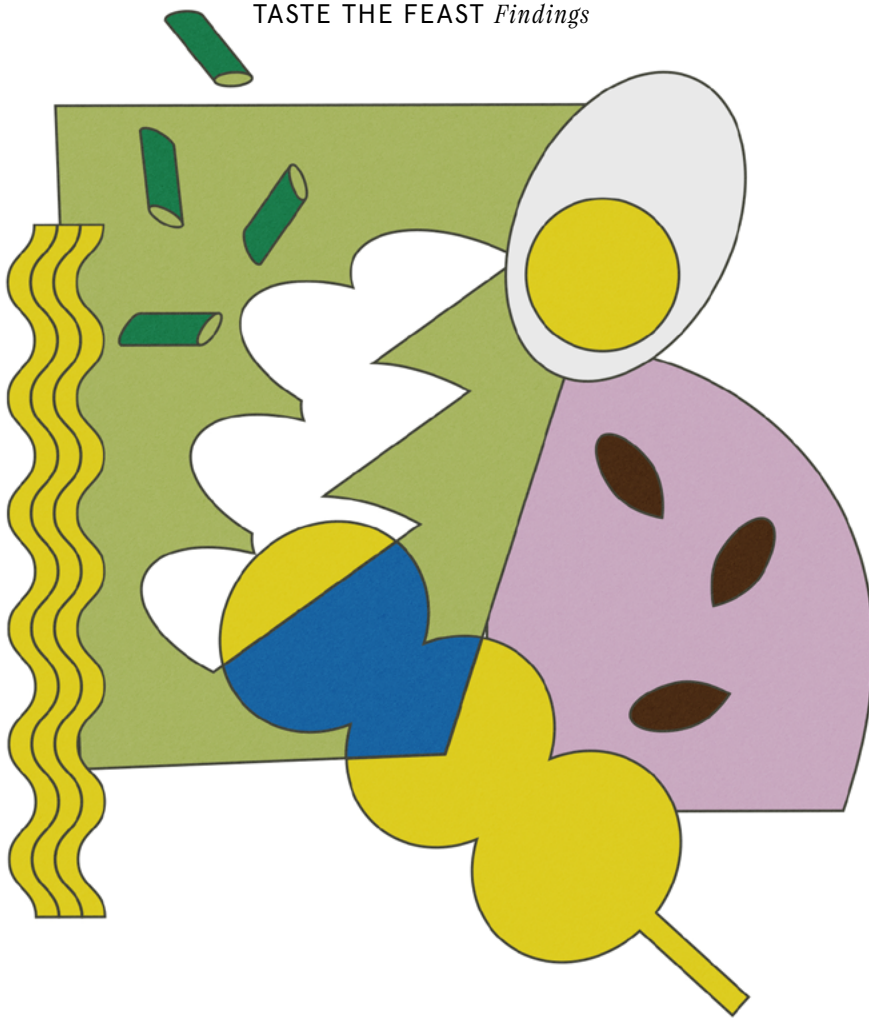
SHARING ART

Festivals, screenings, and performances created by Asian diasporic community groups use arts and culture to hold space for the nuances and intersections of people’s lives. Organizations such as Love Intersections and Sher Vancouver provide nuanced representation of queer Asians that engender a sense of belonging for others who share that identity.

Sher Vancouver, a social, cultural, and support organization for LGBTQ South Asians and their friends, families, allies, and supporters, produces films and podcasts about issues related to their mission. For Karn Singh Sahota, Sher Vancouver’s Outreach Manager, documentaries representing the stories of South Asian individuals exploring and coming to terms with their sexuality and/or gender identity can reduce the alienation and discrimination experienced by individuals in similar circumstances.

³ For more information on how ACAM was founded, see [here](#).

⁴ Intersectional’ or ‘intersectionality’ is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 as a way to describe simultaneous racial and gender oppression, in particular, experienced by African-American women.



Sahota said Sher Vancouver’s programs related to films and filmmaking provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ people who are still closeted to gather. By screening their films, they can access the “...strength to be able to fight systems that were put in place, that put people of color, of different sexualities down. But when you kind of come together it gives you strength to be able to move forward...”

Through diverse intergenerational and intercultural stories through art and documentaries, Love Intersections makes space for self-defined, intersectional⁴ Asian identities.

Their renowned films *Amar*, about a queer, deaf, south Asian youth; and *Yellow Peril: Queer Destiny*, about queer Asian drag artist Maiden China, have inspired discussions around the world about what it means to be a part of the queer community and Asian diaspora.

The work of Sher Vancouver and Love Intersections represent and demonstrate the complexities of Asian diasporic beliefs and identities, holding a mirror for audiences to reflect on their own understanding of themselves and the people around them.

CONNECTING THROUGH FOOD

Kathleen Zaragosa, co-founder of Sliced Mango Collective and an ACC Project Community Coordinator, noted, “The primary gateway of understanding our culture is through food.” In our research we also heard multiple examples of organizers leveraging relationships to cultural foods to start critical conversations related to justice and equity.

Powell Street Festival’s Paueru Gai⁵ Dialogues was a series of nine online events that took place in 2021, where racialized artists and activists shared their perspectives on current social issues. The second in the series was called “On Food & Culture for Community Building.” Host erica hiroko isomura facilitated panelists Carmel Tanaka, Kage, and Ingrid Mendez de Cruz to share stories on “how they use food to build relationships across differences, create inclusive food and garden spaces for community, and support agricultural migrant workers who grow the food that so many of us eat.”

Marsh of the Powell Street Festival Society discovered that participants instantly engaged with the topic of food: “It was an easy access point for people who might

⁵ ‘Paueru Gai’ is the Japanese translation of Powell Street. For more information about the dialogue series, visit the Powell Street Festival Society’s website [here](#).

not know much about food advocacy, immigration, or how immigrants are thrust into unfair working conditions in agriculture industries.”

Love Intersections also employs food as an invitation to talk about anti-racism. On their online live talk show, Hot Pot Talks, the hosts and guests share their experiences and relationships to food, family, and cultural traditions. The hosts are Asian and most guests are BIPOC, with the exception of some white allies, and everyone on the show engages in dialogue about anti-racism.

MINIMIZING BARRIERS TO FUNDING

Adopting an arts and culture mandate can be a strategic workaround for organizations to access support from government and other sources of funding. While funding for work that is explicitly about social change is relatively inaccessible, grants for arts and cultural work are more available to Asian diasporic communities. Arts and culture are core to the missions of several South Asian and Filipinx organizations in this project.

However, funding for arts and culture comes with strings attached. Such programming can be seen as non-threatening to systems of power. Storytelling, multicultural forums, education, filming, art, and cultural festivals for and by racialized communities can easily adapt to funders’ concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion because they are seen to contribute to multiculturalism without dramatically challenging the status quo.

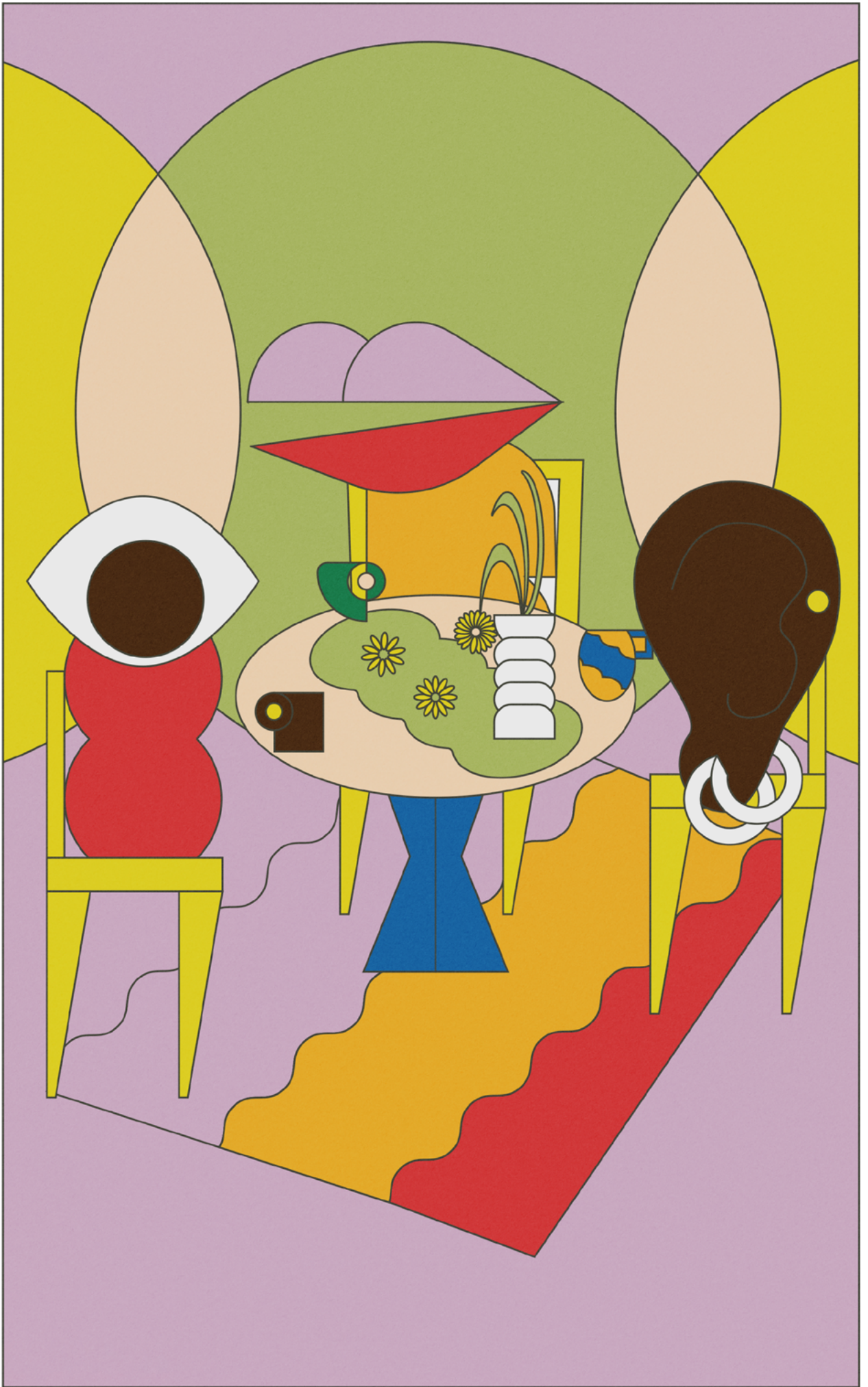
“The trade-off is the need to frame ourselves as a needy marginalized community to gain said support,” said Filipinx organizer William Canero. That may mean conforming to certain ethnocultural images that “other” Asian diasporic communities. Furthermore, delivering arts and culture programming does not guarantee access to arts and culture funding. For instance, Helen Ma, the Co-Lead and Senior Planner of

the City of Vancouver’s Chinatown Transformation Team, said traditional Chinese art forms are often not legitimized as art:

Chinatown often has a hard time accessing funding in mainstream structures. For example, a lot of arts and culture programs focus on the arts, but when a lion dancing group applies, they don’t qualify for the kinds of “art” that they deem fundable.

Sometimes, organizations are forced to choose a single focus—arts and culture or anti-racism—when applying for grants. In reality, the communities accessing programs offered by Asian diasporic organizations with an arts and culture mandate may also benefit from other types of services. Love Intersections is often contacted by community members who need direct services, such as in-person group workshops for people who want to connect and meet with others in a shared space.

“We need more funding focused on intersections, not just finding different categories and territories to fit within. These funders who create grants need to understand more about the complexities within communities,” said Nicolas Yung, an organizer for the Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative.



Representation

The meaning and implication of the term *representation* can change in different contexts and for different groups. For the organizations we engaged in this project, the fight for systemic representation—as in, visibility and full participation in society and decision-making—are often embedded in the organizations’ missions. It encompasses communities’ desire to be seen and heard as ourselves, to have a seat at the table of power, or to create our own table! Behind the desire of representation is the quest of empowerment and self-determined creation. Through creating our own voices, arts, and images, we invent a space for our communities, from within or outside the mainstream system, we hope to open a pathway to deconstructing ways of being that centre whiteness. Through getting more members of the Asian diaspora elected, we hope to further racial equity through policy and legislation.

Asians in North America have been fighting for representation for generations—in arts, in media, in the workplace, and in the political sphere. Ten organizations in this project mentioned the importance of increasing representation of Asian people, and its connection to anti-racism work. Being seen and heard in all realms of public life, as well as efforts to reclaim our cultural heritage and authentic identity, is seen by many as central—or at least, a starting point—to anti-racism.

Historically and currently, Eurocentric and colonial structures, policies, and cultures have excluded and misrepresented racialized communities: the Chinese Head Tax⁶, Japanese Canadian internment during the Second World War⁷, and denial of voting rights to South Asian people⁸ are just a few examples.

These historical, systemic discriminations and exclusions against our ancestors live in our communities’ memories, bodies, emotions, and cultures. While carrying these traumatic histories and their contemporary variations, we have always been struggling for fairness, justice, and equity.

Accordingly, representation has been the primary focus for many Asian diasporic community organizations and initiatives. Such organizations are interested in representation in government, boardrooms, politics, arts, entertainment, media, culture, sports, technology, and more. Among the participating groups in the ACC Project, organizations and projects that prioritize

representation include: The Youth Forum for Asian Representation, an event aimed at developing leadership in Asian diasporic youth; Dr. Hari Sharma Foundation, which promotes education regarding South Asia and South Asian presence in Canada and supports the development of cultural activity within the South Asian community; the National Pilipino Canadian Cultural Centre; Action for Chinese Canadians Together, a national organization dedicated to enhancing civic engagement and leadership amongst Chinese Canadians; and EliminateHate.

EliminateHate (E8), the advocacy arm of the Vancouver Asian Film Festival, aims to “educate, empower, and eliminate” anti-Asian racism using arts, film, and media. According to Audrey Wong, the Executive Director of E8, “repetitive representation” of Asian Canadians as “average, everyday, normal people in Canadian society” can counter stereotypes about Asians as perpetual foreigners and outsiders to mainstream society. Their efforts are driven by the axiom “repeated, non-stereotypical representation makes what was foreign, familiar.”

6 The ‘Chinese Head Tax’ was a per person fee instituted by the Canadian government to limit immigration from Asia starting in 1885. This occurred after nearly 17,000 labourers were brought over from Southern China to work deadly jobs, building the Canadian Pacific Railway across Canada. See [here](#).

7 In 1942, based on racist and xenophobic fears of Japanese invasion after the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the Canadian government detained and dispossessed people of Japanese heritage in British Columbia, putting them in ‘Japanese internment camps’ in places east of the Rocky Mountains. See [here](#).

8 According to “The Battle for the South Asian Right to the Vote” written by Satwinder Kaur Bains and Sharanjit Kaur Sandhra, in April 1907, South Asians were denied to vote in Vancouver due to the amendments to the “Municipalities Incorporation Act”. See [here](#).

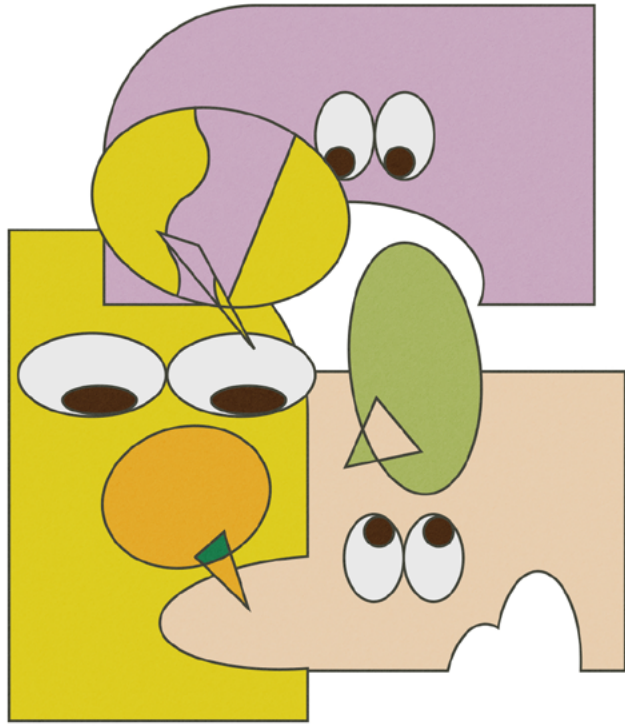
Representation has the power to “deconstruct the idea that everyone has to act a certain way,” said Sahota of Sher Vancouver. For instance, images and stories of queer and trans Asian people in media have the power to disrupt racism, cisnormativity, and heteronormativity. With an intersectional lens, one can see that achieving representation and visibility looks different for every Asian diasporic identity.

Certain Asian diasporic communities are better represented than others in arts, culture, media, government, and corporate leadership. The lack of representation of Filipinx people in non-profit and corporate leadership positions was emphasized in the roundtable Filipinx organizers. Community organizer Lara Honrado lamented, “Even if we had one! They could never fully rep[resent] our community, but at least there would be one of us.”

In this section, we discuss the difficult dynamics that come with increased Asian representation in the age of mainstreamed diversity and inclusion. In particular, we look at how the model minority myth creates a double bind for Asians in positions of power. The question is: does more representation lead to more power in leadership, decision-making power, and autonomy for Asian diasporic communities?

In our conversations with community organizers, we heard about the following challenges related to representation:

1. REIFYING THE MODEL MINORITY MYTH.
2. UNITY AT THE COST OF HOMOGENIZATION.
3. REPRESENTATION ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH.



REIFYING THE MODEL MINORITY MYTH

Through the advocacy and activism of racial justice organizers across North America, representation of Asians has increased in all sectors. While this progress was hard won, several organizers we interviewed expressed mixed feelings about what this means for the larger movement for justice and equity. While Asian people in positions of power are important, individuals in those roles can reinforce the idea that Asians have “arrived,” when in fact that power can be tenuous, restricted, and conditional.

The term *model minority myth* refers to the persistent stereotype that paints Asian Canadians and Americans as inherently successful and problem-free, particularly compared to other racialized communities. The stereotypes associated with the model minority myth paint Asians as polite, conformist, “good immigrants” who work hard, contribute to society, and don’t make waves by being disruptive or extraordinary.

Those who have a seat at the table can be made to feel as if representation is enough and that they should just be thankful to have the opportunity. Community members can go to great lengths to maintain their “seats” or the appearance of solidarity with other marginalized communities represented at the table; these behaviours and choices often reify the minor minority myth. Ironically, many arrive at those positions with the desire to make social change.

Being in the few seats at the table given to racialized people can be complicated, isolating, and even disempowering. Honrado noted how such positions often demand code switching and managing emotions around experiences of racism and white fragility, a phenomenon where white people feel uncomfortable or react defensively when conversations about racism and inequity take place. Even when they are hired to advance anti-racism in an organization, organizers said they often felt that they needed to act differently to fit into the dominant culture and keep their jobs.

Hua foundation’s Executive Director, Kevin Huang, offered insight about how his organization has leveraged their access to institutions, including government, funders, and post-secondary, to further their anti-racism work. He noted, “In Chinatown, we’re seen as young radicals but we’re still invited to be in the room. Recognizing that we need advocates that are more outspoken, but as an organization, we’ve figured out a role that we can play due to our history, our experience and us as individuals being comfortable playing these roles.”

The people that make up Hua foundation live in liminal spaces, with hyphenated identities, often bridging gaps in language, generations, and systems. As members and representatives of the Asian diaspora community, they are conscious about not reifying the model minority myth. They work within and outside of systems to address

issues in different contexts, acknowledging that different issues require specific tools, strategies, and people to address them.

UNITY AT THE COST OF HOMOGENIZATION

Given limited spaces for representation in media, *how* the Asian diaspora should be represented is a contested topic. Some see power in representing a unified voice with shared experiences and cultures. Others see the value in highlighting the specific stories with an intersectional lens when there are opportunities to represent Asian identity in media and other platforms.

The few instances of Asian representation in media have historically painted Asian communities as all the same, lumping East Asian, South Asian and Filipinx people into one category. This universalizing of Asian experiences and identity is sometimes driven by racism and at other times, it comes from within the community, out of a desire to express solidarity. Even organizers engaged in anti-racism work are unlearning narratives about Asians as a monolith or unified community with shared political interests.

This, of course, obscures and erases the differences between communities and identities within those communities. As one organizer noted, “Addressing community needs solely based on just race, or just class-based analysis alone, never does a community justice. We have to engage on a holistic level with the material realities of our community members and what we learn through theory and our studies.”

Tim Lam, Editorial Advisor and former Editor in Chief for Cold Tea Collective, a media platform and community “sharing the real stories, perspectives, and experiences of the next generation of the Asian diaspora in North America,” said, “We’re constantly trying to get better at talking about the Asian diasporic experience while not generalizing it.” Recognizing that there is a need to represent shared and specific experiences, he added, “There is collective power in unifying around our shared experiences and stories as a community, but at the same time, we also want to honor the specific and unique stories we have as individuals and avoid flattening our community with generalizations.”

REPRESENTATION ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

This is a truth that more of our communities have accepted since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding increase in anti-Asian racism, particularly in Vancouver, which Bloomberg called the “Anti-Asian Hate Crime Capital of North America.” Despite significant gains in representation, our communities remain vulnerable to violence rooted in white supremacy and colonialism. Increased representation has not resulted in significant gains in social or political power, or self-determination.

This realization prompted some of the organizers interviewed to take a more political and explicitly anti-racist approach to their work. They are also pushing for greater accountability in the community to rise up against racism and forcefully demand equity. For the most part, these organizers are part of youth-led organizations.

Reflecting on how her organization has changed, Jen Sungshine of Love Intersections, said “In the past, we really only had one goal in mind—to provide just some nuanced representation of queer Asians. The goal was simple.

“We weren’t tackling capitalism or white supremacy.”

In recent years, Sungshine and her colleagues have been invited to speak at the anti-Asian racism panels and it inspired them to be more critical: “...as we evolved and understood our role and place in our community, we realized that we need to be responsible for the work. We grew more accountable to our philosophy.”

Cold Tea Collective re-evaluated their role and mission in 2020. “In 2019, we were more hesitant and a little apprehensive to talk about issues of racism up-front. We were less actively and intentionally anti-racist. The major events of 2020 were a clear reminder that to better support our community with our journalism, we had to have the courage to write stories about systemic racism

directly in ways we’ve never done before. And not just about the Asian community but also other racialized communities.” For Lam and Cold Tea Collective, in order to effectively challenge racism, they need to move from a “passive” to an “active” stance.

With their new commitment to anti-racism, Lam noted, the team’s consciousness about the limits of representation has expanded:

Media representation on screen and in pop culture can be powerful, and I’m not taking away from that experience for people, but it is equally if not more important to understand, ‘what is happening to regular people on the ground? Our neighbors who live next to us?’ What does political representation mean? Community organizing? Those issues need representation and coverage in the media too and empowerment can also come from that.

9 “This Is the Anti-Asian Hate Crime Capital of North America” (2021) by Natalie Obiko Pearson. See [here](#).

Building Intergenerational Relations

Communication and understanding amongst community members of all ages are fundamental to finding the solutions we need in community. This work occurs in small and big ways, from conversations at home to community dialogues and meetings. It also currently happens through storytelling projects highlighting the nuances of our varied life experiences of immigration or living in Canada. Despite differing value systems, languages, and lived experiences, finding common ground and empathy across generations cultivates the capacity to exchange resources and ways of knowing.

TO MEET AT THE SAME PLACE

The first step in facilitating dialogue and connection between generations is knowing where different parts of our community are congregating, in person or online. Different generations *hang out* in different media spaces. Notably, older generations generally gravitate towards traditional media like TV and radio, while younger generations are more adept with digital technology, social media, and accessing information online. This reinforces boundaries between generations. Harpo Mander, the General Manager of 5X Festival, said:

The community really trusts these media corporations: radio stations, media personalities. [...] At a community level, it's been really hard to get that sort of same support and recognition and visibility [for 5X] and to really just get our parents to show up and be like, Oh, look at these kids. They're putting on a[n] awesome music festival.

Instead of mediated connections, Alysha Mahil, a Exhibition Development Assistant for The Reach Gallery in Abbotsford, noted the value of reaching out to community members “where they’re comfortable,” like going to the parks where Punjabi uncles sit and play cards. Heritage neighbourhoods or ethnic enclaves such as Punjabi Market and Vancouver’s Chinatown are important places to our community elders and where we can share space with them and hear their stories.

Organizations whose services and programs build intergenerational relations often do their engagement and organizing in heritage neighbourhoods.

In the Lower Mainland, South Asian community activism thrives in places of worship such as gurdwaras and mosques. They are where community members of all ages congregate to pray, to be of service to the community, and to celebrate religious festivals together. These spaces serve the spiritual and religious needs of communities while also providing the conditions for traditions and knowledge to be shared between generations.

Vancouver’s Chinatown has many cultural businesses and community spaces. It is also the place that has inspired intergenerational organizing by the Chinese community from the Freeway Fight¹⁰ in the 1960s, to the battle against 105 Keefer¹¹ in 2017.

And without an area formally recognized as their own, the Filipinx community in Vancouver has created and sustained cultural gathering spaces around food businesses and Catholic churches. Filipinx organizer William Canero said, “We’ve been building [...] and creating community without the support of [the] provincial, local, and federal government for the longest time.” Joyce Street is the primary example of this with a constellation of Filipinx food businesses operating a block away from St. Mary’s Parish.

¹⁰ The Freeway Fight occurred in the mid- to late-1960s and was led by Chinatown and Strathcona activists. They fought and won against city planners who proposed a freeway that would have demolished these neighbourhoods. See [here](#).

¹¹ 105 Keefer is a development proposal for high rise condo towers in Chinatown. The public hearing and succeeding events brought hundreds of community members to voice their support or opposition of the proposal, which many compared to the activism of the Freeway Fight. See [here](#).

A recent redevelopment proposal threatening to displace many of the small businesses that make up the Joyce Street community is what compelled Sliced Mango Collective (SMC) to launch their Slice of Support campaign. SMC Co-Founder Anne Claire Baguio described these food businesses as a place where recent Filipinx migrants and younger generations can feel at home and learn about their cultures from elders.

TO OVERCOME LANGUAGE BARRIERS

There is a lot of potential in intergenerational relationship building, but language barriers and lack of language interpretation—or language justice—are major barriers to communication and understanding between generations. In the words of Nelson Mandela, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.” When building relationships with our elders, how can we talk to their hearts without speaking their languages?

A number of community organizations are working to fill this gap. The Lower Mainland has a number of Chinese and Japanese language schools. Upcoming programming produced by the National Pilipino Canadian Cultural Centre (NPC₃) includes two-way Tagalog-English language workshops, combining skills-building with intergenerational exchange between younger Tagalog learners and elders learning English to take the IELTS test.

Several of the participating organizations build intergenerational relationships by organizing youth to help low-income seniors meet their basic needs through meal delivery programs, vaccine clinics, volunteer translation services, and in-language communications, and other language and cultural supports. These include the NPC₃, Tulayan, and Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice (Yarrow).

Yarrow is an organization supporting youth and low-income immigrant seniors in Vancouver’s Chinatown and Downtown Eastside. They combine service provision for seniors and grassroots organizing. In working with seniors, youth who work for and volunteer with Yarrow get a first-hand view of how different systems of oppression affect elders in their community, and they have opportunities to talk about them together.

Operations Manager Beverly Ho said, “As staff, we have conversations around race and racism, and also with our seniors. A lot of the anti-Asian racism that our seniors face, we don’t face because we’re younger and able-bodied, and speak English fluently. A lot of intersections like race, gender, class, ability come into play.” *Yarrow created Speak My Language 聽我說吧*, five multilingual radio documentaries detailing the experiences of elders facing healthcare barriers in BC, to share their experiences and lessons learned from their intergenerational and multilingual organizing.

WITH A SHARED CULTURE AND DIFFERING VALUES

Youth organizers identified generational differences as a major challenge when trying to mobilize their communities against racism. They spoke about the challenges of reconciling their values related to justice and equity with the values they learned at home.

“Anti-racism has to be a conversation, but what if [older generations] are not willing to participate in the conversation?” asked Sliced Mango Collective co-founders Anne Claire Baguio and Kathleen Zaragosa.

As a youth-focused organization, their question is related to the work of building intergenerational relations. Many elders, they said, do not necessarily share their commitment to tackling inequities, prioritizing family and collectivism instead.

Elders who were victims of state violence and fled from their homelands because of dangerous political situations can be fearful of speaking truth to power in Canada, and share that worry for their children and grandchildren. As well, activism can be perceived as disrupting family and community harmony. In many Asian cultures, people are expected to prioritize what benefits the group over oneself. Choosing activism can be seen as brazen and individualistic.

In her experience, Zaragosa said, the Filipinx community endorses the *bahala na* mindset, which roughly translates to “whatever happens, happens.” It touts determination in the face of uncertainty, but also a kind of complacency or acceptance that does not serve her community members. In response to traumas experienced by the Filipinx community at home and abroad, the ‘what is just is’ attitude normalizes what should not be. Filipinx values like *tiyaga* (resilience) and *sipag* (diligence) glorify tolerating injustice, instead of standing up to it.

These generational differences in politics, values, and risk tolerance are the product of having lived experiences in different historical contexts. Youth organizers raised in Canada have not been through the hardships of political precarity or immigration the same way that elders have not experienced growing up in a society that centers whiteness. Sammie Jo Rumbaua, one of the directors of Tulayan Filipinx/a/o Diaspora Society, noted youth Filipinx leaders are just beginning to gain traction in “teaching all the -isms,” referring to educating community members about different systems of oppression.

Despite the challenges, youth organizers are committed to overcoming these barriers and sharing their knowledge about organizers and social justice, so that they can address racism from a shared starting point. To them, this work is foundational and allows them to learn from their elders, too.

Cross-Community Engagement, Learning, and Solidarities

In Interviews, most community leaders and organizers expressed a desire for more cross-community collaboration. They recognized the potential and necessity of building trust and bonds between different racialized communities and shared the successes they have had in cross-community engagement.

Through arts, festivals, workshops, and multidisciplinary conversations or showing support during turbulent times, organizations we talked to have taken various approaches to engage and collaborate with each other.

In this section, we focus on how Asian diasporic communities have fostered cross-community collaboration through arts, their efforts to stand in solidarity with Black and Indigenous communities, and the formidable challenges and barriers involved.

ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTION THROUGH THE ARTS

A majority of cross-community engagement we observed occurred in the form of arts, festivals and multidisciplinary conversations. Arts, culture, and festivals are not only accessible ways to collaborate but also institutionally acceptable ways to share, communicate, and build connections. Some have also used mutual goals—such as reclaiming heritage status, for example, Punjabi Market and Chinatown—to build relationships.

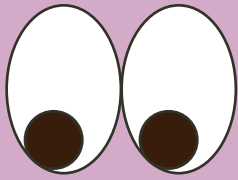
Hamida Oandeku works with the Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative (SRO-C) to educate tenants about Black, Indigenous, and Asian diasporic communities. Every culture needs celebration, said Oandeku in a group interview with organizers from the SRO-C.

“Acknowledging someone is like, I see you, and just shows that you care [...] we all experience [racism] but we don’t clearly understand our different experiences of racism.”

For Kathara Pilipino Indigenous Arts Collective Society (Kathara), working with local Indigenous peoples and nations, such as the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) nation, through arts, culture and dance is built into their mandate. Their approach prioritizes and practices reconciliation between racialized settlers and people of the local First Nations, through events such as KAPWA FEST 2018: The Art of Our Relations. KAPWA FEST was a month of events and workshops exploring varied art forms and traditions, from songwriting and storytelling to martial arts and healing practices. It brought together 35 Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island to share and learn diverse cultural and artistic practices

William Canero, one of the directors on Kathara’s board, said the festival is a project they are especially proud of because of how it immersed and engaged community members in cultural exchange. He spoke to the impact of finding similarities despite ethnic differences during a breathwork exercise including Waray people of the Philippines and the Squamish Nation. Canero reflected:

When we’re doing anti-racism work, I feel like it’s always a lecture at you, or a seminar, and you never actually get to practice what that might look like. [...] I’m at the point in my life [where] I no longer want to be theorizing about anti-racism. I want to be doing the practice, exact[ing] it onto the land.



Community Group Highlight

POWELL STREET FESTIVAL SOCIETY*

The Powell Street Festival Society's work to connect different racial communities connected to the Downtown Eastside demonstrates what is possible when working in trauma-informed, intersectional, and reciprocal ways.

The Powell Street Festival started in 1977 and has since become one of the largest and longest-running community arts festivals in Canada. Its signature event is the Powell Street Festival, a free two-day event, held in both outdoor locations and indoor venues within Vancouver's historic Japanese Canadian neighbourhood.

The festival is modelled after *matsuri* (Japanese cultural festivals). It includes dance, music, film and video, visual arts, martial arts demonstrations, an amateur sumo tournament, children's activities, food and craft vendors, and walking tours of the historic neighbourhood, craft vendors. Primarily, The festival provides a platform for Japanese Canadians to perform, display their work and gain recognition.

The response of Japanese Canadian organizers to historical discrimination and the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War Two is the inspiration for the organization's current values.

Paueru Gai, also known as Powell Street, in Vancouver serves as an important site of community building for Japanese Canadian and immigrant diaspora in North America. The festival is "for not only the Japanese Canadian community but for all the Downtown Eastside," said Samantha Marsh, Powell Street Festival's Program Coordinator. In the spirit of community and care, their programming committee conducts community consultation and holds town halls to connect with knowledge keepers, and to gain greater insights on accessibility and community needs. Equally important, the festival is dedicated to cultivating a trauma-informed process that is both caring and empowering. For example, they offer cultural workers, staff, and volunteers six weeks of online training to build skills and knowledge about de-escalation, disability justice, and the Downtown Eastside (DTES). This provides safety and

accountability for the festival community, including those involved with putting on the festival and those attending it.

The organization collaborates with local, national, and international organizations, artists, and communities to advance equity and well-being for all. As Marsh noted in the interview, "It's about fighting against systems of oppression. It's about sexism, discrimination against drug use, homelessness, education, access."

The Festival facilitates engagement between communities through their programming and provides spaces for their communities and neighbours to "learn from not just other racialized communities but also from communities that are being discriminated against for other reasons."

Powell Street Festival Society's Advocacy and Outreach Committee also builds capacity in the DTES community through year-round programming. They host a series of events which incorporate capacity building opportunities for peers, distribution of food and useful resources for DTES residents, and cultural activities and prompts that share Japanese Canadian history and culture. Their program partners include Downtown Eastside-based organizations such as WePress, the Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre, Aboriginal Front Door Society, Carnegie Community Centre, Watari Vancouver, Hogan's Alley Society, WISH Drop-In Centre Society, DTES Neighbourhood House, First United Church, the Vancouver Japanese Language School, and others. The Festival also shares equipment and infrastructure, such as tents, signage, space, with their partner DTES and Chinatown organizations.

Through using "Japanese Canadians' history of displacement to advocate for other racialized and displaced communities to fight against the stigma of homelessness and discrimination," the Powell Street Festival demonstrates a way to build trust and relationships across communities that bypasses and divests from narratives of scarcity. Their approach to collaboration shows us how the divisions between communities living in the same neighbourhood can be mended through anti-oppression, capacity building, reciprocal relationship building and care.

* For more in depth information on other community groups, see our Community Catalogue.

IN SOLIDARITY WITH BLACK AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Since the global protests against racism and police violence led by Black Lives Matter in 2020, there has been a more conscious and intentional effort in local Asian diasporic communities to be in solidarity with Black and Indigenous people.

In June 2020, an intergenerational group of Chinese Canadians came together and wrote an open letter on anti-Blackness in our communities. *A Letter to Chinese Canadians on Anti-Black Racism* addressed the privilege of Chinese Canadians being seen as model minorities and the privilege of having greater access to opportunities. The authors of the letters also committed to unlearning their internal biases against Blackness, Indigeneity, and other racialized identities.

Another notable act of allyship from the Chinese community came from Chinese for Black Lives, a group of grassroots Chinese feminists and queer activists. The group canvassed Asian-owned shops and restaurants, distributing posters in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese explaining systemic racism against Black and Indigenous communities and why people of Chinese descent should support Black Lives Matter (BLM) and decolonization. They visited more than one hundred stores in Vancouver and Burnaby.

The group noticed there was resistance at first. “The sense of competition is strong in our communities; some thought [that] Black Lives Matter takes away power from Asian lives,” said Suki Xiao, a Community Coordinator for this project and an organizer with Chinese for Black Lives. However, “Many business owners and staff ended up better understanding the issue because of in-person Q&A and putting up posters in their stores to show support for BLM [...] in a sense, we acted as an in-person bridge.”

Yarrow held multiculturalism forums to talk about and show the variety of organizing in the Chinatown and DTES neighbourhood, including Indigenous harm reduction organizers, Black abolition organizers, Southeast

Asian organizers, Bidders Project, and others. The forums helped them “think outside the Chinese community in Chinatown and its individual issues,” said Rachel Lau, the Programs Manager for Yarrow.

Tim Lam of Cold Tea Collective said their team “wanted to be able to act in solidarity with other communities” in their journalism. They’ve published articles about how to be allies to the BLM movement and talk to your parents about BLM, historical examples of solidarity between Asian, Black and Indigenous communities, what it means to be a settler of colour on unceded Indigenous lands, and examined the ways that anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism show up in our own communities.

5X Festival’s General Manager, Harpo Mander, recalls, “During BLM protests, we pressured the municipal government to pull out of the Canada Day celebrations. We connected with a lot of the Black organizations in Surrey. We showcased Black businesses in Surrey instead... [and] invited Black artists to our festival, too! We are still in touch!”

12 “A Letter to Chinese Canadians on Anti-Black Racism” (2020) by various authors. See [here](#).

BARRIERS TO CONNECTION

The current divisions between communities are largely the result of historical conflicts and the impacts of colonialism, on this land in on our home countries, that perpetuate distrust, conflict, and segregation. For example, the imperialist history between Chinese and Japanese communities continues to be a barrier for Chinese and Japanese elders and immigrants to connect with each other.

Similar deep-seated tensions between communities are part of the reality of organizing in the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona/Chinatown area in Vancouver. Brooke Xiang, the President of Chinatown Today, noted that they have not been successful at engaging with some Vietnamese community groups or the Black community around Hogan's Alley. Xiang suspects that this is because of the complex relationships between the Chinese and Black and Vietnamese communities locally. They also acknowledge that more work can and should be done in the future to build relationships with these and other communities.

Similarly, despite their physical proximity, there is a chasm between the Indigenous and Chinese communities in the neighbourhood. Although the Vancouver Chinese New Year Parade¹³ and the Women's Memorial March¹⁴ are usually only weeks apart, there is little or no collaboration or partnership. Yung, an organizer with the SRO-C believes both groups are not ready yet:

They both march on Hastings, essentially on the same route. It makes me question, [...] How can two groups have such a dramatic shift in energy and be so geographically close but not engage with one another? We came up with an idea to do a collaboration, but it didn't happen. When I approached the Indigenous elder to do a collaboration and include Chinese tenants, they said that they had to work through their own trauma and did not have the ability to help Chinese tenants at the same time.

On the other hand, Chinese communities did not feel that they had enough knowledge on settler colonialism to help and have meaningful engagement.

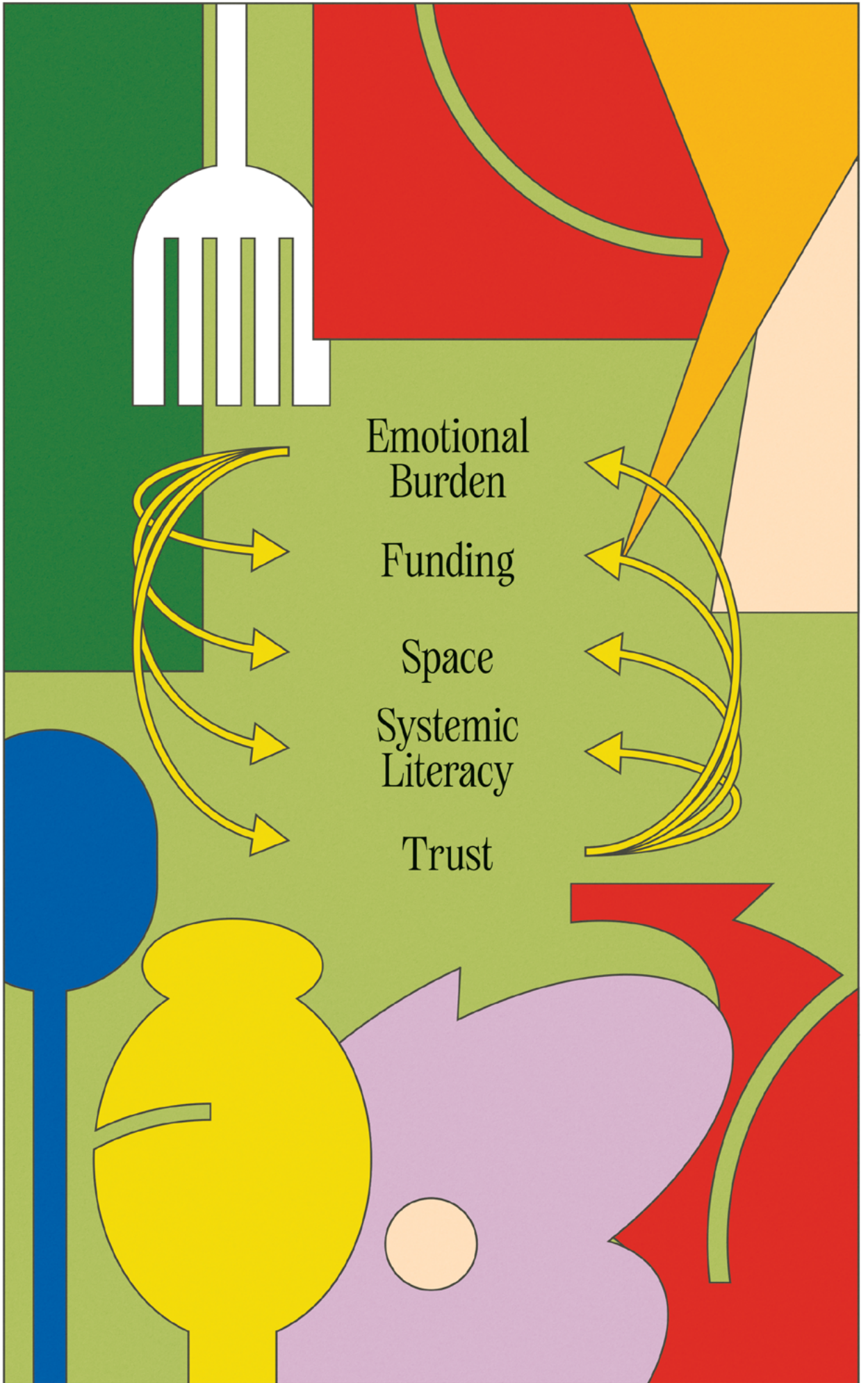
Others named a lack of resources and time to connect with other organizations and communities as a barrier to cross-community engagement. Needing to prioritize work, organizations default to serving their own ethnic communities indefinitely. Referring to the relatively small amount of funding given to BIPOC organizations, Audrey Wong of EliminateHate said, "We have a small pool of resources granted to us, and that can create competition." Funding accessible to BIPOC organizations is usually for one-off projects that are not conducive to long-term relationship building.

This competition, or scarcity narrative, can be commonly used by those in power to dictate false senses of urgency and competition between multiple marginalized groups and their access to a limited amount of resources.

Samatha Marsh of the Powell Street Festival Society said, "When we think about community building, it has to be reciprocal. It takes time and trust and those relationships need to be fostered to be able to make progress."

13 The Vancouver Chinese New Year Parade is an annual event celebrated by groups who walk through Chinatown, coinciding with Lunar New Year. It is organized by the Chinatown Business Improvement Association.

14 The Women's Memorial March is an annual event which began in 1992, hosted by the families and loved ones of missing and murdered Indigenous women to grieve, remember, and seek justice for violence against Indigenous women and girls.



Emotional Burden

Experiencing racism is emotional. Anti-racism work is also emotional. Emotional labour is a term first introduced by Arlie Hochschild through the lens of gender, that explains the unpaid efforts of women to manage, suppress and display one's feelings during work, regardless of their emotional state—for example, needing to perform service work with a smile. Other scholars assert that emotional labour is not only gendered but also racialized. Anti-racism work requires emotional labour because of the unpaid management of emotions that one must do to maintain a publicly palatable image when navigating white spaces.

In spaces that are designed for white people, racialized bodies are the “border[s] that feel”, say Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey in *Thinking Through the Skin* (2001).¹⁶ Feelings of being excluded, marginalized, stigmatized, and living in political precarity exist in our nerves and bodies, lingering through generations. As writer and psychotherapist Resmaa Menakem writes in *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (2017), “our very bodies house the unhealed dissonance and trauma of our ancestors.”¹⁷ He also illuminates in an interview, “Trauma in a person decontextualized over time can look like personality. Trauma in a family decontextualized over time can look like family traits, trauma decontextualized in a people over time can look like culture and it takes time to slow it down so you can begin to discern what's what.”¹⁸

Yet there are few spaces to reflect on difficult emotions from racialized trauma. Instead of receiving support to heal, many of us have been bearing these emotional

burdens alone. “We never, ever, ever talk about mental health. There is so much shame and it's normal to try to hide it,” said Filipinx organizer Lara Honrado.

In interviews, organizers also mentioned experiencing guilt and shame, feeling that they are “not doing enough.”

For Rachel Lau of Yarrow, witnessing the injustices community members experience and knowing that they cannot do more as community organizers and volunteers “takes an emotional toll.... Even off the clock, we're thinking about the seniors we serve.”

Similarly, Beverly Ho, Yarrow's Operations Manager, noted:

A lot of [the seniors we work with] have been in and out of the hospital, and there is no support for seniors who do not speak English. We are often listed as the next of kin or emergency contacts for our seniors. It's hard to mourn our seniors when they pass away, or to have any work-life balance when we are their first line of support.

This continuous care-taking and emotional work after working hours is unrecognized and unpaid labour, which takes a considerable toll. Tools such as healing workshops and counselling would support anti-racism work in Asian diasporic communities, but they are usually inaccessible because their organizations are under-resourced. Hamida Oandeku, a Black organizer working in Chinatown, noted, “What we deal with is a lot. We need support to deal with grief. We want to have people to talk to about what we're going through, but we're expected to figure it out alone.”

15 From Arlie Hochschild and works on “emotional labour.” See [here](#).

16 From Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey in *Thinking Through the Skin*, 2001. See [here](#).

17 From Resmaa Menakem in *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, 2017. See [here](#).

18 Interview with Resmaa Menakem on *Talk Easy with Sam Fragoso*, 2020. See [here](#).

Participants told us expressing, processing, or even feeling emotions and grief related to racism does not always feel safe. Fear, anger, distrust, grief, and exhaustion in racialized people is often labelled inappropriate, offending, and inconvenient. Oandeku said:

In a white world, they want you to be what they need you to be... If you have an opinion about it, and you get angry about it, then you're the "angry black woman". But if you don't say anything, then you're passive aggressive and not very smart, and so forth. Sometimes speaking aggressively is not an anger thing, it's just how we talk [in my culture...] but others get offended and think that you're trying to cause chaos."

CONSULTATION FATIGUE

During the pandemic especially, our exhaustion has been exacerbated by requests from the government, at all levels, for consultation and interviews. We call this *consultation fatigue*.

When we reached out to Project 1907, a grassroots and volunteer-run organization that aims to "elevate Asian voices that are underrepresented and undervalued in mainstream political, social and cultural discourse" and "break cycles of racism and discrimination and create space for healing by recognizing, reclaiming and reframing our histories," they kindly declined our invitation due to lack of capacity. In her email response to our invitation, Ellen wrote:

We have already participated in many consultations and engagements at all levels of government, and provided all of them with community-sourced data and recommendations. We have also shared our wisdom and voices in so many other ways including through countless panel discussions, speaker series, workshops, roundtables, forums, steering committees, written reports and more. We'd love to see the government do more labour up front, including attending community conversations in a listening capacity or doing their own research or "community literature reviews". They can then check back in with community groups to confirm what they have heard, instead of coming to us with the same questions time and time again. This would feel like a much more respectful, equitable—and less performative and extractive—engagement process to us. Meeting organizations where our capacities are at will also allow for the addition of more grassroots voices to these kinds of conversations.

Repetitive consultations do not serve our communities; they wear us out, leaving our communities with even less time and capacity to do what we really need to do for and with our communities.

Organizations that participated in this project often receive more requests than they can realistically or practically accept. The relatively recent surge in diversity and inclusion initiatives places more demands on organizations representing or serving communities that are multiply marginalized. Jen Sunshine of Love Intersections shared, "We're quite tired of constantly being the only queer Asian organization that others want to reach out to." Sunshine adds, "I would love to have more queer Asian organizations out here to collaborate with [...] It's a lot of pressure to constantly be organizing because we're the only [one]."

Funding

When being asked what challenges they have experienced in doing anti-racism work, among community organizations who participated in interviews or the roundtable, 72% cited the lack of funding as a primary challenge.

Studies show racialized and Indigenous organizations in Canada are vastly underfunded.¹⁹ “We were never given the tools to succeed [...] It would be so much easier if we had funding,” said William Canero, an organizer who works with various Filipinx organizations in the Lower Mainland.

Beverly Ho, the Operations Manager for the Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice (Yarrow), shared a similar frustration. She said it has been hard for the organization to find consistent funding as a non-profit organization. The lack of funding results in staff burnout, which limits the impact of their community work.

Most funding for anti-racism works comes from grants. However, foundations, donors, and government funders mostly choose to give to qualified donors (organizations that can issue official donation receipts or a public body performing a function of government) or registered non-profit organizations. This preference or mandate puts BIPOC organizations at a disadvantage when accessing funding because most do not have the resources to meet the bureaucratic demands of setting up and running a charity.

As a result of being under-resourced, only six of the 32 participating organizations in this project are staffed by people who work for the organization full-time; none of them are Filipinx- or South Asian-led²⁰. Most organizations we interviewed rely heavily on the work of volunteers who are also juggling multiple jobs and/or full-time studies. Community organizing takes time away from their paid work or education, which puts them at an economic disadvantage. Relying on volunteers also means that organizations lack the stability needed to continue developing. As staff and board members come and go, momentum can be hard to keep up. The emotional

burnout experienced by community organizers, mentioned in the previous section, is also exacerbated by the lack of stable and adequate funding.

Chinatown Today is in that boat. Xiang, the organization’s president, told us:

We have five board members, who are all volunteers, who work full-time jobs or who are students—sometimes both. We end up cutting corners, and we can’t hire folks to do the work properly. It’s detrimental to the impact that we can have, and the relationships that we can potentially build.

This section describes how funding shapes the efficacy and development of Asian diasporic community organizations doing anti-racism work.

THE TROUBLE WITH GRANTS

The majority of organizations represented in this project named different challenges related to receiving financial support, particularly, grant funding. While they recognized that grants make much of their work possible, they also spoke about their inaccessibility, and how the very nature of grants limits the work they are able to do and the impact they are able to have.

For the most part, grant programs are designed to achieve certain outcomes on restrictive timelines, while restricting agency and autonomy. Grants incentivize community organizations to do anti-oppression work as quickly and as cheaply as possible, without essential supports such as language accessibility, wellness-related budgets, and cultural worker training, which our communities need to thrive. Care, communication, and patience are often sacrificed to prioritize the data collection and reporting to access grant funding.

¹⁹ From “Will eliminating ‘direction and control’ close the funding gap?”, *Philanthropist Journal*, 2022. See [here](#).

²⁰ With the exception of one Filipinx-led organization. Some organizational leaders also serve broader communities than that of just their own cultural community.

Organizers applying for funding are often asked to “prove” anti-Asian racism with statistics and data—a task both irrelevant and taxing. This requirement establishes a double standard for racialized community organizers for funding and adds the burden of conducting original research to access necessary resources.

As Nicolas Yung, an organizer for the DTES Single Room Occupancy Collaborative noted:

Funding requirements have become more harsh, particularly on data collection. Funders ask [to] who[m] you actually provide services, to prove who you help, and need specific names and data – there is so much data collection.

Community organizers who work for non-profit organizations usually find themselves caught in a cycle of writing applications, executing projects, drafting reports, meeting deadlines, and feeling anxious in between. And they are exhausted. Like many of the participating organizations, Love Intersections would benefit from funding for research and long-term projects. Instead, they are “constantly responding to calls for [grant] applications,” said Jen Sunshine, the organization’s co-artistic director. Several organizers remarked about the inaccessibility of grants. They are often complex, even for people who are fluent in reading and writing English, often requiring many days of work to complete without any guarantee of funding.

The organizations in this project primarily receive project grants, which are one-time grants only for expenses related to a discrete project. They usually cannot be used to pay salaries, purchase equipment, or pay overhead such as rent and utilities. Harpo Mander, the General Manager for 5X Festival, noted that project grants in arts and culture prioritize compensating artists without honouring the work of people behind the scenes: “We get a lot of project funding to put into the pockets of artists and people we work with, but there is an undervaluing of the people that create the capacity to do these kinds of things.”

Operating grants, on the other hand, usually support organizations over the course of a year or more, to cover day-to-day expenses and to develop their capacity. There is more flexibility with how operating grants can be used. Without operating grants, also known as “core

funding,” organizations usually cannot hire full-time staff, afford office space, or access professional development. They also go without critical administrative support, such as grantwriters and community-based accountants who understand the nuances of arts and activism.

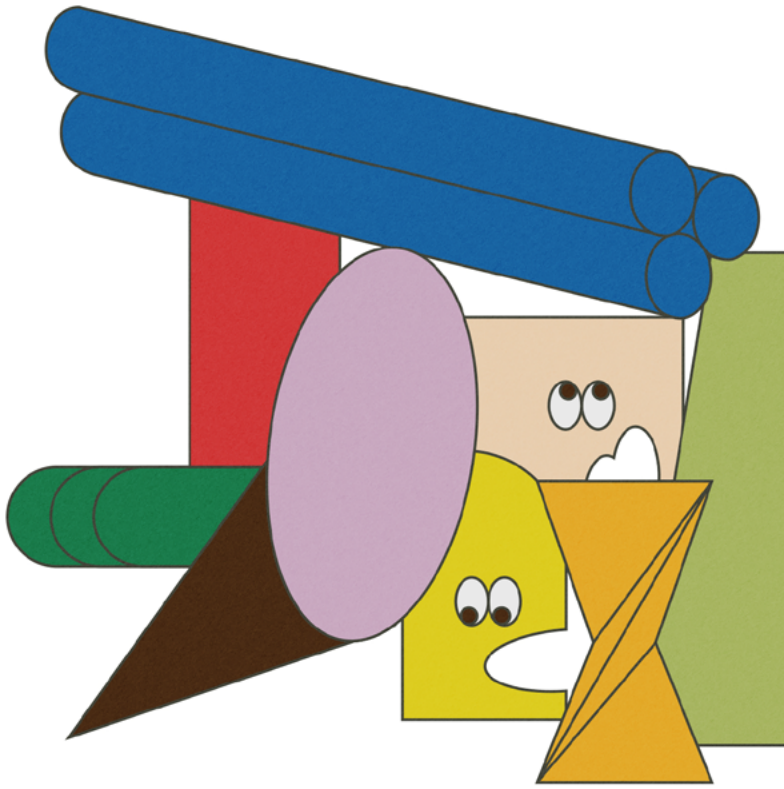
Rachel Lau, Yarrow’s Program Manager, explained why the lack of consistent operating funding is detrimental to their work:

We are always running out of time because there’s so much [time] required it takes to maintain a non-profit [...] By the time we actually do all of the [administrative tasks,] we always ask ourselves, “How much time do we have left to actually serve the communities that we set out to serve?” We have so little time to serve the community we set out to serve, after compliance for grant applications is met. There’s this constant need to prove that our work is legitimate, that we deserve resources for the work that need money for the work we’re doing, to maintain status. It takes away from the work we want to be doing.”

Simply put, project grants cannot adequately support Asian diasporic organizations to build capacity. Limited resources also limit the scope of the anti-racism work they can do.

Even well-funded organizations recognize the limitations of the current funding models. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is one of the country’s largest and oldest social service agencies providing support to newcomers to British Columbia. It is significantly more established and consistently funded than other organizations represented in this research project. However, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. CEO Queenie Choo noted that grant funding hampers collaboration between like-minded organizations. “Grants can be so subscriptional,” said Choo. “We need to provide flexibility between organizations in partnership, so we are not locking ourselves into silos, so long as we provide outcomes together. We need to create synergy to achieve common outcomes.”

Lack of Spaces to Gather



South Asian and Filipinx organizers cited a lack of physical spaces for their communities to gather as one of the major challenges in their anti-racism work. Our communities need physical spaces to cultivate safety and care for these stories and conversations to happen. Organizers doing anti-racism work need spaces in which community members can fulfill their particular cultural needs, cultivate connections with one another, and learn more about their histories and traditions.

Heritage neighbourhoods are invaluable to their community members. When Sliced Mango Collective (SMC) created a digital toolkit to empower advocacy against development in around Joyce Street which would displace several cornerstone Filipinx businesses, they amassed roughly 2,000 interactions over three weeks. SMC Co-Founder Anne Claire Baguio recounted the impact of the campaign as a testament to just how important of a community space Joyce Street is for the local Filipinx community, having been established over multiple generations without government or institutional support.

Museums are spaces that have started to include the histories of some racialized communities—often by hiring people to tell and curate their own community’s stories. These small steps towards diversity and inclusion that museums and art galleries have made have come through strategic actions by hiring people like Alysha Mahil, an Exhibition Development Assistant for The Reach Gallery.

However, ultimately these institutions do not easily allow for spontaneous or natural congregation or community building, often due to needing “cultural

and linguistic translation to bring community together.” They can be “uncomfortable to lots of South Asian people—they’re seen as very white, inaccessible spaces,” said Mahil.

In lieu of gathering in person, a number of South Asian-led projects, such as 5X Festival, Sher Vancouver, and South Asian in the Valley²¹, primarily build and engage with their communities online. South Asian in the Valley was an online exhibition of The Reach Gallery featuring community-submitted photos, videos, and stories sharing experiences of being South Asian in Abbotsford.

Building community online can increase access, however, “In community engagement, not everybody’s comfortable online,” noted Mahil.

Truly accessible cultural spaces create potential for creativity to grow; an empty room can house a dance practice, or a creative writing workshop, or a film screening. Our communities need physical spaces where we can reliably find members of our own community, to foster openness and engagement with our elders and youth alike. Our communities need opportunities to see each other, to connect face to face.

21. ‘South Asian in the Valley’ is now called ‘Des Pardes’. See [here](#).

Inequitable Distribution of Power Among Asian Communities

It is important to note that the Chinese community's history on these lands is the oldest of any of the Asian diasporic communities. As a result, they have more representation in politics and local leadership, and as a community, have more access to social and economic capital.

In this research, we noticed how proximity to various forms of power lends the community privilege. This can be seen through the disproportionate representation of people of Chinese descent in the organizers we interviewed and the number of organizations representing Asian diasporic community interests that are led by people of Chinese descent. The most well-resourced organizations in this research project are led by people of Chinese descent. Similar patterns are seen in Asian representation in media, boardrooms, and other leadership roles.

This power can be used responsibly to lift up other Asian diasporic communities, or it can reproduce systems of oppression. In a team reflection, Kimberley Wong, the Project Manager for the ACC Project noted that dominant power structures "degrade our ways of forming community."

In some instances, where well-resourced organizations are dependent on funding from donors, the donors can shape strategic and programming decisions. The

restrictions they put on their donations can perpetuate inequities, such as classism and anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. We also noted how fear of repercussions for speaking up on political issues, such as race, sustains the model minority myth.

When Chinese for Black Lives organizer and ACC Community Coordinator Suki Xiao's reached out to independent Chinese merchants and business owners to speak up against Asian hate, many feared that their customers would be unhappy if they became more overtly political. Several stores run by Chinese Canadians who openly supported Black Lives Matter movement were hesitant to publicly address anti-Asian racism.

One business owner told Xiao, "We [Chinese people] have been so weak, so powerless, not standing up against violence."

One organizer also spoke to the correlation between the Chinese community's relative class privilege and its support of policing as a means to secure safety. With more economic status, the community becomes more accepting of pro-police narratives that promote surveillance of Black and Indigenous people.

Administration and Governance

One research participant, who works with Pacific Canada Heritage Centre – Museum of Migration, spoke to the need for more administrative capacity among Asian diasporic community groups. They said, "We aren't going to change colonial capitalist structures overnight, so we need to start somewhere and learn the skills to build capacity."

Skill sets such as how to run a board and leadership training are necessary in community organizing.

Xiang (Chinatown Today) adds, "Having conversations with other non-profits on how to approach this kind of work would also help."

Tokenism

Anti-racism work often overlaps with diversity and inclusion initiatives, which makes tokenism a common challenge. *Tokenism* is the practice of doing something—usually hiring or including someone from a minority group—to give the appearance of equality. In anti-racism work, this often shows up as underfunding and undermining racialized organizers, or engagement with racialized communities, while the organization or institution gains esteem for its diversity and inclusivity.

Engaging racialized people in tokenistic ways without prioritizing emotional safety, offering ways to debrief, and other types of care can leave them feeling exploited and disempowered, and breeds distrust. The lack of necessary supports is often the result of chronic undervaluing of meaningful anti-racism work. Addressing systemic racism is a long game that requires sustained funding and culture change. It takes more than just installing racialized people in visible positions to *do the work*.

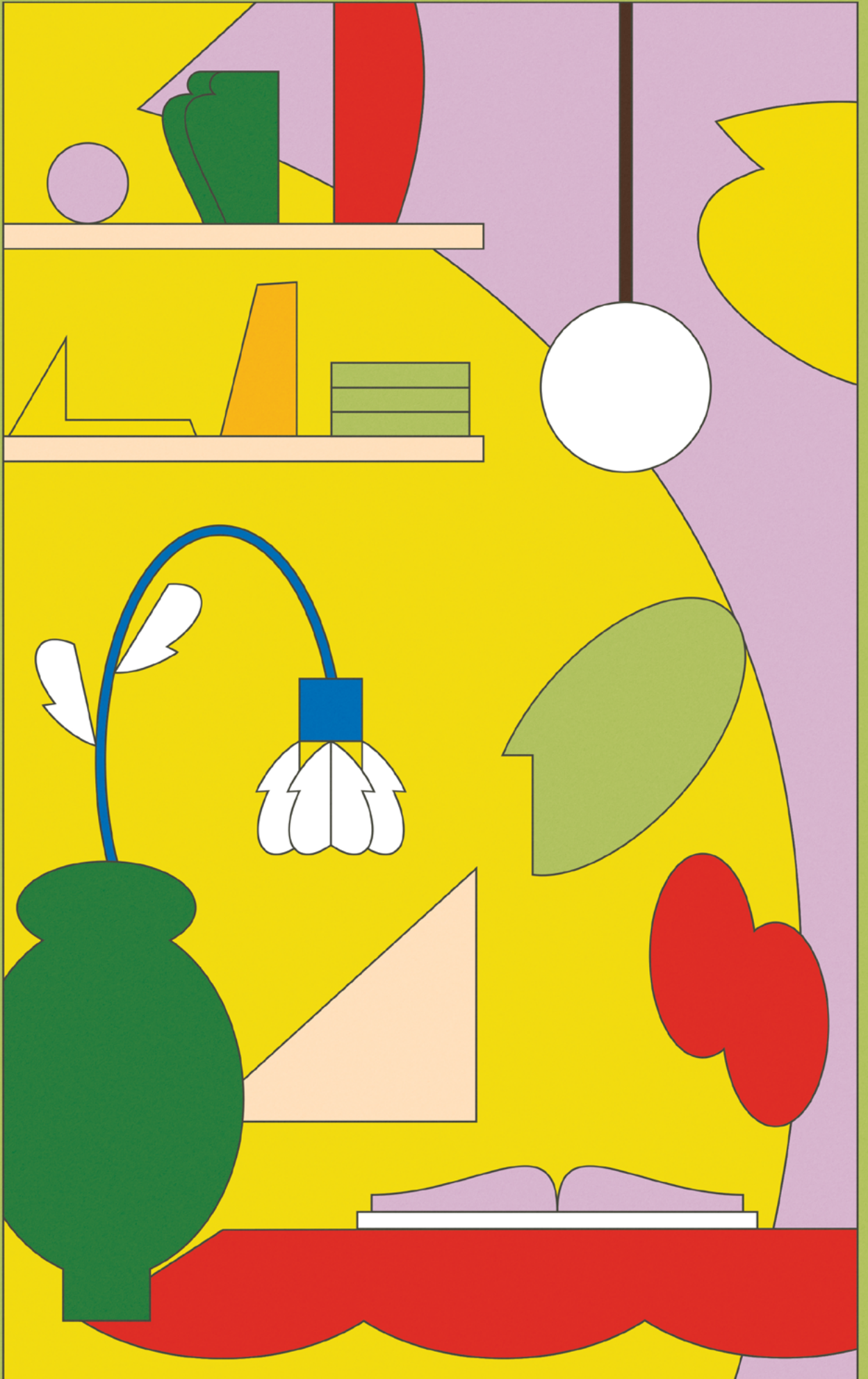
Tokenistic inclusion does more to serve the institution than the racialized communities, and its function relies on Asians in those positions to fulfill model minority stereotypes. This is a major barrier to progress in anti-racism work. “Anti-racism is about shifting and taking power. Any effort is only going to be as durable and impactful as the power that it shifted,” said organizer Lara Honrado.

Tokenism can create unsafe spaces because optics—instead of justice and equity—are prioritized. Some organizers mentioned how their abilities, talents, and experience were dismissed by those who labelled them as “diversity hires.” The dynamic creates an impasse for

organizers: they are hired to represent and/or work for racial justice while their peers treat their qualifications as unfair advantages.

The Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative Society, also known as the SRO Collaborative (SRO-C) is an Indigenous-led organization dedicated to organizing Single Room Occupancy (SRO) tenants in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and Chinatown. The SRO-C recently formed a BIPOC committee when they were able to access grant funding for cross-community anti-racism work in the DTES. However, organizers Nick Yung, Hamida Oandeku, and Kara Ashkewe, as representatives of the Chinese, Black and Indigenous communities respectively, said they were not given the necessary resources to “do the work we intend to do” because the cost and amount of resources were underestimated. The formation of the committee, they felt, due to this lack of planning and resources, was a tokenistic move from the organization to attempt to support broader anti-racism efforts.

Still, not all people of colour share the same views on what tokenism looks like and what is harmful because it is tokenistic. For some communities, being denied visibility, representation, and power for so long, being included in tokenistic ways can *feel* like enough. Honrado noted, in her experience, some racialized people are “very comfortable with *tokenism* [as] the status quo.” Averting tokenism, and therefore shifting power, is the hard part, added Honrado.



Section III. Recommendations

Recommendations

Based what we heard from the research participants, we present three key recommendations that would benefit Asian diasporic communities and increase their capacity to do anti-racism work:

1. LOWER BARRIERS TO GRANT FUNDING AND INCREASE OPERATING/CORE FUNDING FOR ASIAN-LED ORGANIZATIONS.
2. CONTINUE COMMUNITY HEALING.
3. DEVELOP CULTURAL SPACES FOR ASIAN DIASPORIC COMMUNITIES.

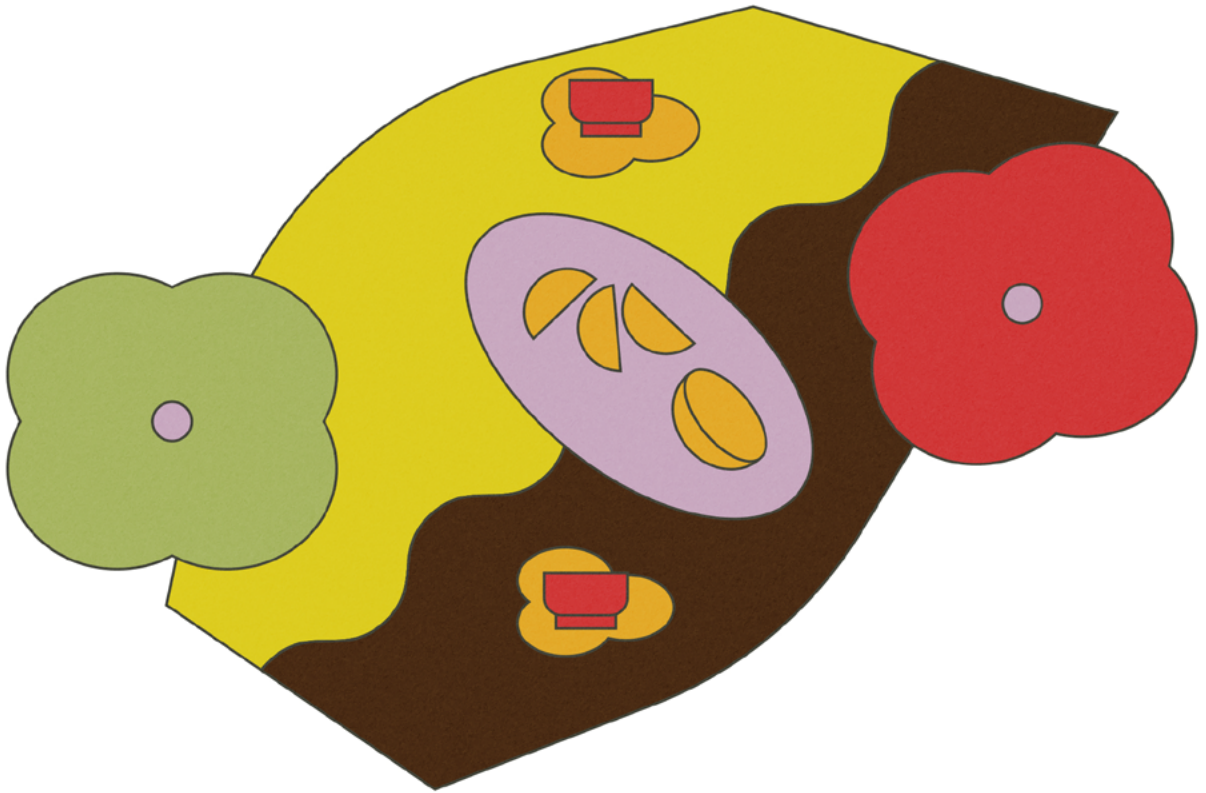
Grant Funding

Limited access to appropriate and equitable funding is an ongoing challenge. While funding is not the answer for everything, it is essential and foundational, especially since justice is not a profit-making business! Community organizers rely on grant funding, donations, and sponsorship to resource their work. Changing how financial resources are distributed and made accessible can empower organizers and community members.

The following are recommendations for funders of anti-racism work who are invested in seeing greater impacts:

- I. INCREASE MULTI-YEAR OPERATING GRANTS TO ASIAN DIASPORIC AND OTHER BIPOC ORGANIZATIONS.
Multi-year operating grants enable organizers and their organizations to prioritize the work that we are supposed to do for and with our communities. Operating grants aid capacity building. They allow our organizations to hire full-time staff, provide professional development and training, hire administrative support, and access office and cultural spaces that are necessary for our work.
2. EMBRACE ARTS, CULTURE, LANGUAGE JUSTICE, AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING SERVICES AND PROGRAMS.
Funding agencies should recognize the vital and foundational role of arts, culture, language justice, and intergenerational community building in achieving racial justice.
3. DECREASE REQUIREMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION IN GRANT APPLICATIONS AND REPORTING.
Without being handled with care, transparency, and prioritizing communities' safety, data collection can cause distrust, trauma, and harm.
4. STREAMLINE GRANT APPLICATION AND REPORTING PROCESSES AND INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY.
Equity in grants includes decreasing the burden on grantees, particularly small, under-resourced organizations. The administrative work of grant applications and reports decreases organizers' capacity to do community work. Funders striving for equity should also develop and offer multilingual tools and resource kits to increase our communities' access to funding. It is also their responsibility to reach out to more organizations serving racialized communities and find out what they need to apply and secure funding.
5. FUND ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY SUPPORTS IN PROGRAMS.
Sustainable equity and anti-racism work is not possible without language accessibility (e.g., translations and interpretations), trauma-informed therapies and other wellness supports, mentorship programs, or training. Including mandatory budget lines for these expenses affirms their essential role in anti-racism work.

Collective Healing



To progress anti-racism work for and by Asian diasporic communities in BC, healing for individuals and communities is needed. Healing can come in many forms, such as caring for one another, finding ways to communicate challenging emotions and ideas, and learning to listen to and honour diverse perspectives.

We need to understand our struggles as interrelated. We need to acknowledge that different communities have different levels of access and capacity. We need to unlearn and deeply question our own positionalities. We need to be critical of the systems of oppression we have internalized and are subject to.

In this project, we heard that we long to care for, communicate, and connect with other organizers, generations, and communities. We must develop solidarities with intention and focus. We need to rebuild trust.

This can begin with watching movies and documentaries, starting book clubs with friends, or simply sharing stories over family gatherings. These are opportunities to dig a little deeper and start hard, honest conversations—maybe ones we’ve been yearning to have for generations.

We believe that we are united against racism, and we can only win if we can work with each other in loving ways.

“Ask those who have been harmed, *how they would like to heal.*”

**—Kimberley Wong
ACC Project**

Develop Cultural Spaces

Creating dedicated spaces for members of the Asian diaspora can facilitate a range of anti-racism work, including fostering intergenerational bonds, creating and enjoying arts and culture, providing education and cultural training, and building cross-community connections.

We desire spaces that are cognizant of our cultural values, places of belonging that see us for all that we are, and all that we can be. They can be sites where we create emotional space to acknowledge and collectively process the injustices we face, where we offer each other radical care.

They could be offered to anyone needing a place to host casual gatherings, or to share food and traditions with others.

These spaces should be accessible, available to any community members irrespective of age, class, gender, sexuality. They should be designed by communities for communities.

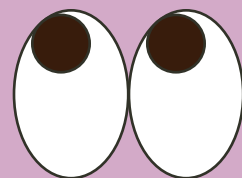
As noted in the Building Intergenerational Relations section (p.19), dedicated cultural spaces for Asian diasporic communities are essential infrastructure for healing, dialogue, and education.

Did You Know?

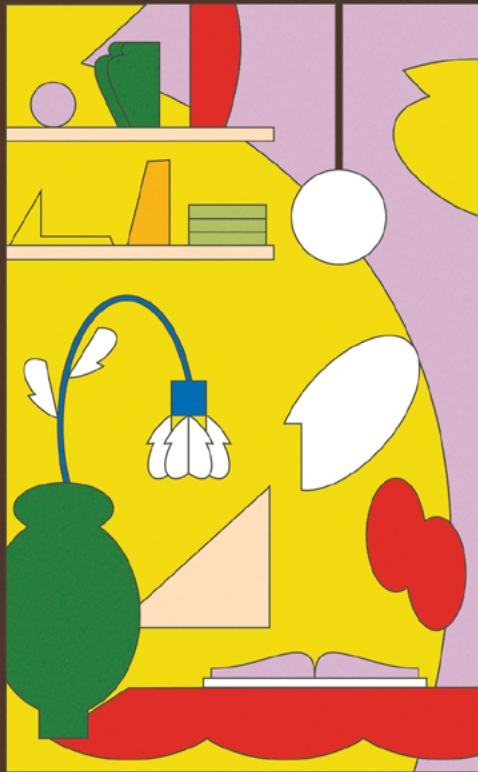
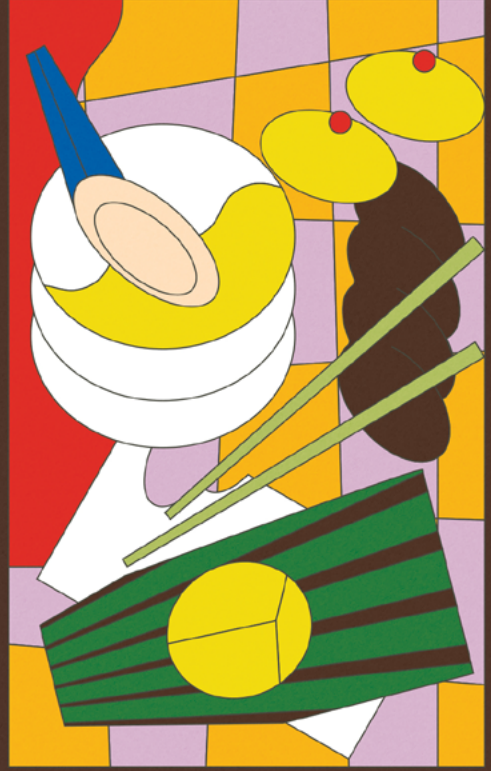
RACE-BASED DATA

The lack of access to disaggregated data about Asian diasporic communities locally has been a longstanding desire among organizers. Asians are not a monolith, and as we've seen in the contents of this report, different ethnocultural communities go through different struggles in respect to their different cultural histories. Community leaders need disaggregated data to better understand the impacts of systemic racism within their own communities. Race-based data would enable organizations to more accurately develop and deliver solutions that meet their community's particular needs, and better explain the needs of their communities to funders.

In BC, steps are being taken to generate and distribute disaggregated race-based data. The Anti-Racism Data Act, passed on June 2, 2022, introduces "a system to securely collect and safely analyze demographic information on race, ethnicity, faith, gender, sex, ability, income and other social identity markers."²² The data will reveal inequities and gaps in service specific to different communities. It will also empower communities to hold the provincial government accountable to its commitment to racial equity.



22. For more information on the "Anti-Racism Data Act", see [here](#).



Section IV.
Appendix

Research and Writing Team

Joty Gill she/her/hers

Joty is a second-generation Punjabi student currently residing in Surrey, BC. She has experience working in curatorial and exhibit design projects centered on migration history and trans-national identity building and in visual mediums, including film, television, and theatre. Joty's support of community-centered programs for translation services, elderly care, and faith based activism lend strongly to her work on this project. She approaches this project with a desire to not only understand and learn from community organizers about their work, but also about their hopes, dreams, and visions for the future. She completed her BA degree at the UBC in 2020, and will begin graduate studies in the Fall of 2022. She joined the ACC Project in November 2021.

Victoria So | 蘇美馨 she/her/hers

Victoria is a second-generation settler with ancestral roots in the 番禺 (Punyu/Panyu) district in Guangdong, China. In her role as a Community Coordinator on this project, she approaches this work as a member of the Chinese Canadian community and as a History and Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies (ACAM) undergraduate student at UBC. Victoria recognizes that the process of learning and unlearning happens everywhere—from intimate yet boisterous family dinners to university classrooms and reflections with friends and colleagues. Working with and within Asian Canadian communities as a UBC Initiative for Student Teaching and Research in Chinese Canadian Studies (INSTRCC) Research Assistant has given her opportunities to listen and learn from individuals, reinforcing a community-oriented lens in her work. Since joining the ACC team in November 2021, she has primarily worked with community members of Cantonese descent representing their respective community organizations.

Suki Xiao | 肖斯琦 she/her/hers

Suki is a settler living as a queer woman of colour, an international student, and a Chinese feminist activist. She often finds herself navigating different spaces, systems, and communities, like an outsider in between, never truly belonging to one. An intersectional approach helps her to understand the experiences of discrimination, political

violence, and systems of oppression. She is heavily influenced by the wisdom of Black feminist scholars, such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, and Kimberlé Crenshaw. She is also indebted to the collective knowledge created by Chinese queer feminist youth activists. She joined the ACC team in September 2021 as someone who has experience working within the Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrant, international student, and queer communities in China and North America.

Kathleen Anne Ravalo Zaragosa she/her/hers

Kathleen's family roots are based in Oas, Albay, a small town in the Bikol region of the Philippines. She identifies as a middle-class, able-bodied, cisgender, and heterosexual woman, but largely draws her expertise for this project from the lens of being her family's child—a second-generation immigrant settler, born on these lands for better opportunities while having been raised in the traditional standards of Filipinx culture. She has experience working within the Filipinx community in Vancouver, as an alumnae from the interdisciplinary UBC Cognitive Systems program and as a grassroots volunteer with the youth organization Sliced Mango Collective. She has worked on the ACC Project since September 2021.

Kimberley Wong | 黃壯慈 they/them/theirs and she/her/hers

Kimberley is a queer and neurodivergent Cantonese femme whose work mirrors the intersections of their identity. Their ancestors come from Hoisan County in Southern China—some came as indentured labourers, and all were subject to the Chinese Head Tax upon entering Canada. This knowledge shapes the way they walk through neighbourhoods, exist in spaces of power, navigate professional and community relationships, and more. They see anti-racism, equity, and anti-oppression work as inherently tied to the traumatic and somatic responses of the body. In their role as Project Manager for the Asian Community Convener Project, they learn reciprocally from a young team of Asian diasporic women to do work that centres the agency, self-determination, and relationship strengthening within and between their communities.

Credits and Acknowledgements

The writing, reflection, and work that is detailed in this report was drafted by individual team members, but it is truly a product of our collective knowledge and experiences as Asian women working together.

Community Coordinators

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vancouver
foundation

Vancouver Foundation

Participants (listed alphabetically by organization)

1. Harpo Mander, **5X Fest**
2. Teresa Woo-Paw, **Action for Chinese Canadians Together (ACCT)**
3. Brooke Xiang, **Chinatown Today**
4. Helen Ma, **Chinatown Transformation Team**
5. Sarah Ling, **Chinese Canadian Historical Society**
6. Suki Xiao, **Chinese for Black Lives Vancouver**
7. Tim Lam, **Cold Tea Collective**
8. Nick Yung, Hamida Oandeku, and Kara Ashkewe, **DTES SRO Collaborative**
9. Harinder Mahil, **Dr. Hari Sharma Foundation**
10. Kevin Huang, **hua foundation**
11. Saleha Islam, **Islamic Relief Canada**
12. Rumiko Kanesaka, **Japanese Garden Society**
13. William Canero, **Kathara Pilipino Indigenous Arts Collective Society, Southeast Asian Cultural Heritage Society (SEACHS), National Pilipino Canadian Cultural Centre (NPC3), and Joyce Street Action Network (JSAN)**
14. Jen Sungshine, **Love Intersections**
15. Leonora Angeles, **National Pilipino Canadian Cultural Centre (NPC3)**
16. Lara Honrado, **Ouano Foundation**
17. Wendy Yip, Winnie Cheung, and Pat Parungao, **Pacific Canada Heritage Centre - Museum of Migration (PCHC-MoM)**
18. Samantha Marsh, **Powell Street Festival Society**
19. Ellen, **Project 1907**
20. Gulzar Nanda and Bobby Sanghera, **Punjabi Market Regeneration Collective**
21. Queenie Choo, **S.U.C.C.E.S.S.**
22. Karn Singh Sahota, **SHER Vancouver**
23. Anne Claire Baguio and Kathleen Zaragosa, **Sliced Mango Collective**
24. Alysha Mahil, **South Asian In The Valley**
25. Kaira Fenix and Armor Valor Corrales, **Sulong UBC**
26. Sammie Jo Rumbaua, **Tulayan Filipinx Diaspora Society and Joyce Street Action Network (JSAN)**
27. Szu Shen, **UBC Asian Canadian Asian Migration Studies**
28. Audrey Wong, **Elimin8hate**
29. **TKTK1**
30. Rachel Lau and Beverly Ho, **Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice**

List of Interview Questions

1. What is your name?
2. Can you spell it out for me?
3. How do you prefer us to pronounce your name?
4. What pronouns do you use?
5. What is the mission statement of your work/the organization you are representing?
6. Who makes up your team?
7. How many people are full-time staff?
8. How many contractors do you employ?
9. How many volunteers do you have?
10. What roles are there in your organization? Can you tell me about that structure?
11. What is your role in the organization?
12. What municipality/ies or region(s) does your organization serve?
13. Which languages do you operate in/with most frequently?
14. What racial or ethnic community/ies does your organization serve?
15. How would your organization define "anti-racism"?
16. Does your own definition of anti-racism resonate or differ from this? How?
17. Is there one project that you're especially proud of that addresses or combats systemic racism?
18. Are there other anti-racism initiatives or projects that your organization is working on, or have done in the past? Can you tell us more about these initiatives?
19. Do you have key partner organizations in this work, and if so, who are they?
20. Does your organization report and collect data on hate crimes, and if so, how? When did they start?
21. Does your work engage with other racialized and other equity deserving communities, and if so, how and why?
22. What are some of the challenges that you encounter in your work?
23. What support have you received in doing this work?
24. What kinds of support does your work need to succeed in the future?

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