

Sir John A. Macdonald  
 “We’ve Got You Covered.”



## MEAC at Climate Action Webinar

Maliha Mahjabin

On May 19th, the Macdonald Environmental Action Council (MEAC) presented at the TDSB Students Taking Climate Action webinar over Zoom and brought attention to the climate action that students across the TDSB are taking to help the environment. Several members of the TDSB’s EcoSchools team and Sustainability Office, including Trustee Manna Wong, Ms. Jenn Vetter, and others, attended the webinar along with more than sixty students across the school board. MEAC’s presentation was one of three presentations at the webinar where eighth-grade students from Virtual Elementary School LC4 and the Toronto Youth Environmental Council also presented.

MEAC hosted a two-part presentation which began with a Jamboard that discussed the effects of COVID-19 on the environment. Attendees had the opportunity to answer questions presented on the Jamboard such as, “How has COVID negatively affected the environment?” and “How can we prevent this?” Adam Ristau, an MEAC presenter explained, “The increase in the need for things like masks and other single-use supplies add to landfills, especially when they are disposed of improperly.” He continued, “Mask and glove manufacturers should use more environmentally friendly materials. There can also be more awareness for proper waste management ... For example, the City of Toronto has online resources for where waste is supposed to go.”

The second part of MEAC’s presentation was about environmental lifestyle changes. The council analyzed the impact that coffee cups have on the environment as each disposable coffee cup takes thirty years to break down, whereas using a reusable mug is a sustainable alternative to coffee cups. The importance of lifestyle changes, whether big or small, inspired the council to participate in an eco-challenge. Vice-President of MEAC, Cody Dawood, said, “We did this challenge to commit to seven days of changes in lifestyle habits and to educate ourselves on environmental issues. Our goal was to learn more about sustainable living and to adopt sustainable habits into our lives.”

Members of the council had different reactions to this challenge. Mohamad Sinjab said, “During the week of the eco-challenge, I came across several items I was improperly disposing of. Things like bubble wrap, packing peanuts, and clothes hangers were all items that I once believed to be recyclable. However, they were not. It was an eye-opening experience because pictures and logos of proper recycling may not apply to certain items.” President of MEAC, Humza Naushad, shared, “I think that my family and I can all be more diligent and see how much energy we are wasting around our home. We can work towards minimizing [energy waste] by shutting down certain electronics or using LED lights around the home.”

MEAC encourages all students to take steps to help create a positive impact on the environment. Students can take actions like biking to places instead of driving, using reusable items and so much more. It is also important to take environmental action through policy change such as signing petitions, contacting political representatives, and holding businesses accountable for any harmful actions. To end the webinar, Manna Wong concluded, “I am so inspired by you folks; and rest assured, I will be stealing many of your ideas to share with my community beyond school settings.”

To get started, calculate your carbon footprint and find out more about how you can help the environment Blackscots! <http://www.carbonfootprint.com>

## Children's Mental Health Week

Sachi Taploo

Children’s Mental Health Week is recognized from May 3rd to May 9th in Canada. But, why is mental health so important and why should it be recognized? Let’s dive a little deeper to find out!

This year, I had the opportunity to volunteer for the Youth Mental Health Ambassadors (YHMA) program. Its goal is to educate people on the importance of mental health and to end the stigma around it. To get expert advice on mental health, I spoke with Katie Li, one of the program directors at the YMHA, who answered questions regarding Children’s Mental Health Week and mental health in general.

*Why is it important that we have a week to recognize children’s mental health?*

“Approximately one in five youth in Ontario deal with mental health problems. Many of these problems start to develop during childhood. They worsen over time but can be treated if they are found early. So, it’s important, especially for adults, to be aware of the signs that can help determine whether or not youth are showing symptoms of mental health challenges. Just like physical health challenges, if left untreated, one mental health challenge can lead to another.

If we teach youth how to cope with mental health difficulties early on, they will be better equipped to overcome life and health challenges later in life!”

*What is the difference between mental health and mental illness?*

“Mental health and mental illness are often used interchangeably. This is incorrect. Health is everything related to our ability to overcome difficulties put in front of us. Similar to how physical health refers to things we do, such as eating or exercising, to prepare our immune system to fight off diseases, mental health is like our emotional well-being, the coping skills library, our stress management skills, and so on, that helps us overcome difficulties that affect us mentally.

There’s no single definition of being healthy; it’s more like a continuum. Mental illness, like physical illness, is the actual disorder and conditions that affect how we think, feel, and behave, despite our healthy habits.

Some people may have healthy habits but are naturally more prone to have difficulties overcoming certain problems. Other people may have bad habits but may luckily still be free of any mental illnesses. For example, not all people who eat McDonald’s every day will die of obesity or get a heart attack because the ability of their health system is stronger than others.”

*Why is it important to advocate for mental health awareness and what can we do to end the stigma?*

“It’s very important to advocate for mental health awareness! I once heard from a pharmaceutical student that she admires the fact that I study psychology, because it’s difficult for her to do. She prefers to educate herself on something “real”. Mental health, while different from psychology, is misunderstood in the same way.

Because people feel they can’t touch or see thoughts, emotions, and feelings, they believe it must not be “real”. For a long time, many people have thought that mental illnesses are terminal. They think it is incurable and would rather focus on physical illnesses. Ridiculous, but unfortunately true. So, there’s this stigma that whatever mental health problem or mental illness you’re dealing with won’t get better.

There’s also a lot of bias rooted in our culture and language (for example, “she’s crazy”). To end mental health stigma we must start with:

1. Expansive education on the truth of mental health. The same way we have physical health classes at school, we should also have a proper course on mental health.
2. Discussions about it! The more we talk about things openly, the more opportunities we have to raise awareness. The more people open up about mental health, the less afraid we are to face it.
3. A joint effort from the government, educational institutions, and the research community. We need to come up with ways to disseminate research results and turn them into easy, understandable public knowledge.”

In conclusion, mental health advocacy is extremely important, especially during these unprecedented times. Hopefully, after reading this article, you were able to strengthen your understanding of mental health! Be sure to check out these links for mental health resources: [mentalhealthliteracy.org](http://mentalhealthliteracy.org) & [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)!



# Holidays and Awareness

## Asian Heritage Month

YiLin Luan

May 2021 marks the nineteenth year of Asian Heritage Month in Canada. The Government of Canada declared Asian Heritage Month as “an opportunity for all Canadians to learn more about the many achievements and contributions of Canadians of Asian descent who, throughout our history, have done so much to make Canada the amazing country we share today.”

Asian Heritage Month is about showcasing Asian culture, traditions, art, and history in Canada. This includes events, shows, interviews, and articles centred around Asian history education. This year, the Toronto Public Library is hosting a series of events regarding Asian Heritage Month, including a panel of Asian heritage artists, a history lesson on Chinese cuisine in Toronto presented by professor Leo Chan, and an art exhibit displaying the work of poet Patria Rivera and painter Joe Rivera.

Schools across Canada celebrate Asian Heritage month. The Toronto District School Board has recognized this month since 2007. According to a TDSB Parent Student Census in 2017, 40% of students have an Asian-Canadian background. Virtual celebrations of Asian Heritage Month, as well as speakers who talk about their experience being Asian-Canadian are hosted during this month. Guest speakers discuss topics such as traditional clothing, anti-Asian racism, and books they have authored.

Sachi Taploo, a grade ten student, shares her thoughts about this month: “It’s extremely important to recognize Asian Heritage Month, especially during these times where the Asian community is facing so much hate and racism. As a member of the Asian community, I personally haven’t been a victim of a racist attack. However, it’s heartbreaking to see others suffer so much hatred. It’s important to honour and commemorate the achievements made by members of the Asian community, so don’t forget to celebrate!”

Let’s appreciate that we live in a very culturally diverse country and are able to experience kindness from people all around the world. Happy Asian Heritage Month, Mac!

Toronto Public Library Asian Heritage Month:  
<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/fetured/asian-heritage.jsp>



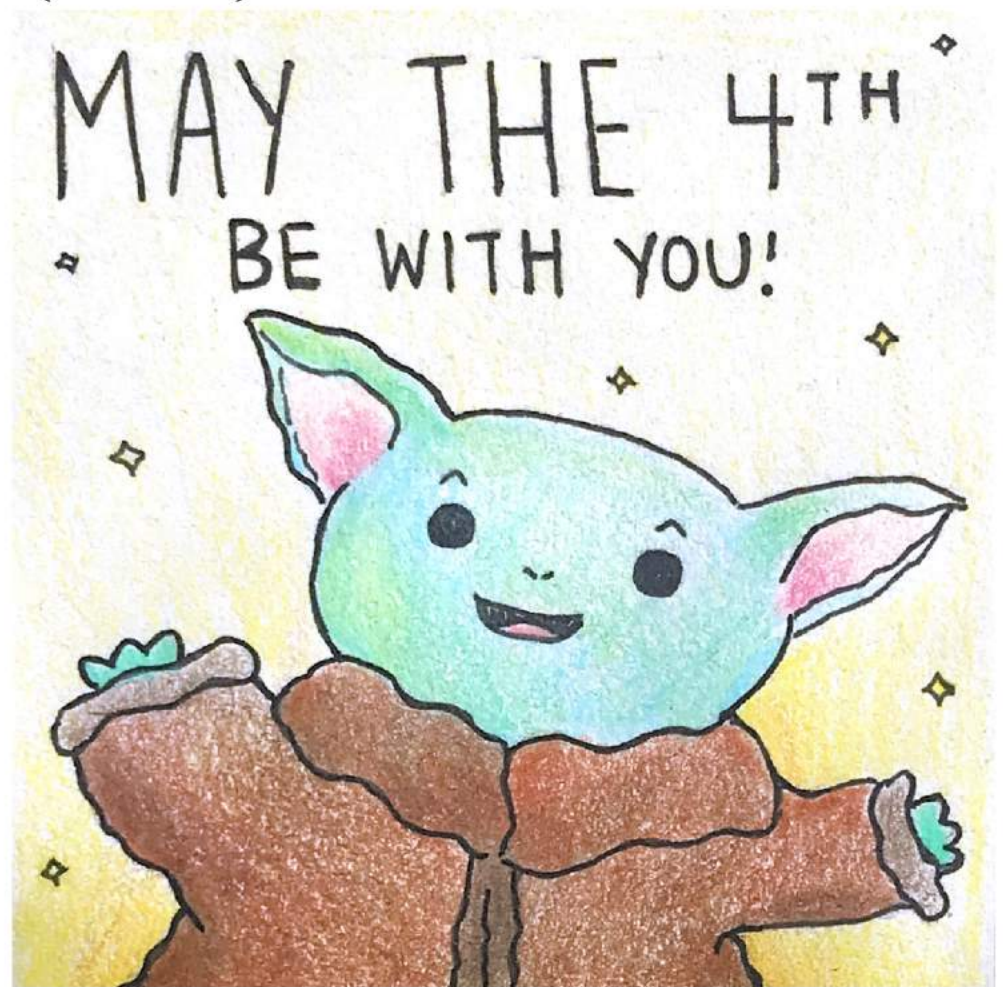
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## Mother’s Day

Claudia Poon



## Star Wars: May the Fourth (Force) Be With You



## Vaccines



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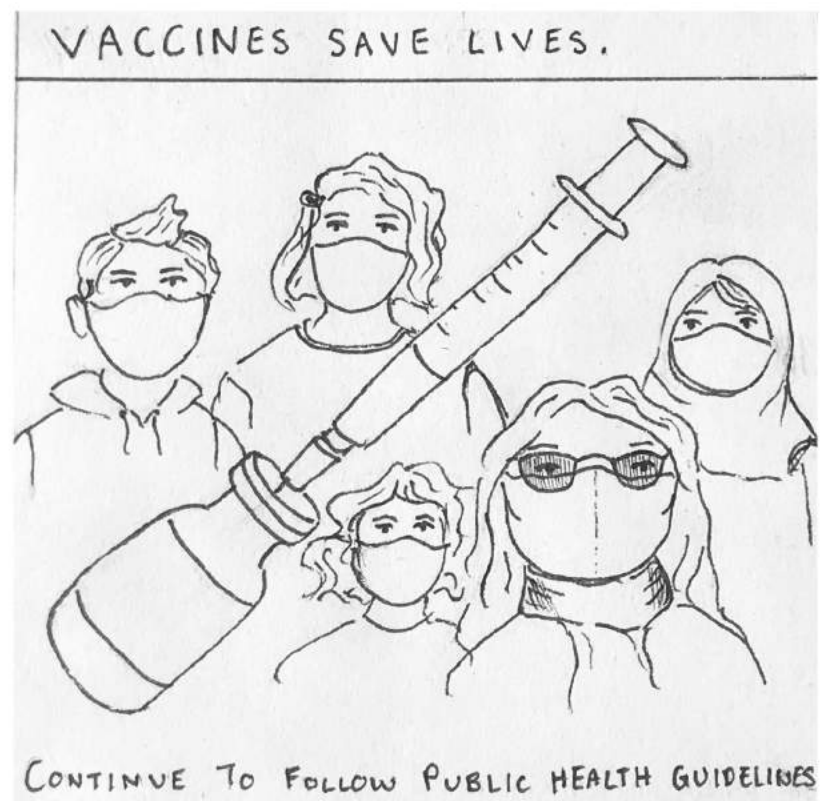


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