

# Combating Xenophobia and Stigma against the East Asian Community during COVID-19

Sheridan Inclusive Communities Lunch and Learn Series

July 15, 2020

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Sheridan would like to acknowledge that all three of its campuses are on, what has been for thousands of years, the Traditional Territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Anishinaabe Nation, the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

It is our collective responsibility to honour and respect those who have gone before us, those who are here, and those who have yet to come. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work and learn together on this land.

# AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Research Overview - Understanding Lived Experiences During COVID-19 | Chinese Diaspora Communities in the GTA
3. Conversation with Sheridan Student and Staff
4. Audience Q&A
5. Poll and Wrap-up

# INTRODUCTION



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Vice President of Inclusive  
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## CONTEXT

### Research in the Context of COVID-19

COVID-19 remains a significant and ongoing threat to residents of the Greater Toronto Area

#### COVID-19 in Canada

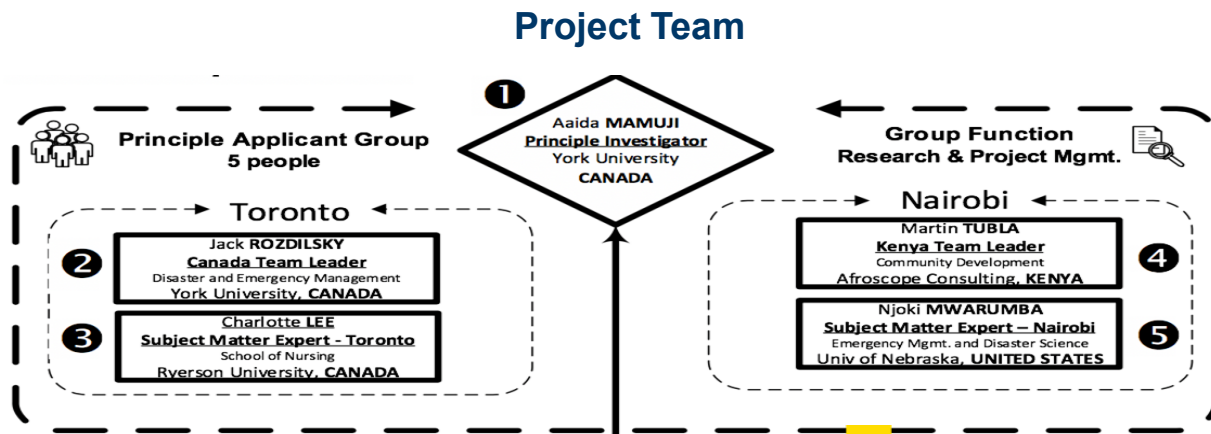
| Confirmed cases | Deaths |
|-----------------|--------|
| 108,155         | 8,790  |

#### COVID-19 in Ontario

| Confirmed cases | Deaths |
|-----------------|--------|
| 36,839          | 2,722  |

# RESEARCH OVERVIEW

- Funded by Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- Project Title: ***Destigmatizing Chinese Communities in the face of 2019-nCoV: Emergency Management Actions to Address Social Vulnerability in Toronto and Nairobi***



- A diverse Chinese community exists in Canada
  - *Note that 'Chinese Community' implies a diaspora of persons with roots in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, etc.*
- Nationally, Chinese Canadians are one of the largest ethnic groups in the country
  - *In the 2016 census, 1.8 million people of Chinese origin*
- Chinese Canadians have settled primarily in urban areas, particularly in Vancouver and Toronto
  - *Immigration experiences are widely varied, depending on the decade of arrival, socio-economic status, etc.*

Several Chinese and Asian ethnic enclaves exist in the Greater Toronto Area's Communities:

- Within the city of Toronto: *Chinatown on Spadina, Scarborough and North York*
- Significant populations in Toronto's surrounding cities and suburbs: *Markham, Mississauga and Richmond Hill*

## Impact of COVID-19 on the Chinese Community

- **Impact on everyone** include: social isolation, loss of income, shift of work to home, struggles to keep healthy, etc.
- Increased stress due to loss of family members and friends who experienced COVID-19 in Asia
- Misplaced fears directed towards specific businesses leading to loss of customers and income
- The emergence of discrimination towards people and places falsely conflated with the “Wuhan Flu”



Wuhan Noodle Restaurant in Markham  
(Feb 5, 2020)

## Stigma resulting from COVID-19

TORONTO | NEWS

### 'We are being singled out': Chinese-Canadian community confronts discrimination amid coronavirus outbreak



**Phil Tsekouras** Multi-Platform Writer, CTV News Toronto  
@PhilTsekouras | [Contact](#)

Published Wednesday, January 29, 2020 4:06PM EST  
Last Updated Wednesday, January 29, 2020 8:34PM EST



Coronavirus live updates: Ontario parents petition schools to 'quarantine' students whose families travelled to China

@Premium content

OPINION | COMMENTARY

### Abolish Asia's 'Wet Markets,' Where Pandemics Breed

Consumption of wild meat appears to be to blame for the Wuhan virus, as it was for SARS in 2003.





## Mostly Microaggressions

What we heard from research participants:

*“I think a lot of people are more on edge when they see a person who looks Chinese. I should be more careful.”*

*“He shouted at me, ‘you have to go back home, you brought the virus.’”*

*“I was more worried about bumping into racist people and getting insulted by them than getting infected by the virus.”*

## Compounding Issues

- Fear of the virus vs. fear of racism
- Perception of the Chinese government
- China and the Western World
- Sub-cultures and dynamics within the Chinese Community itself



## De-Stigmatizing the Chinese Community

Public officials and high-profile individuals made attempts to destigmatize the community



Mayor of Markham had lunch at **Wuhan Noodle 1950 Restaurant** (Feb. 4)



## De-stigmatization campaigns

**Stop the Spread** Campaign - “Viruses Don’t Discriminate, Humans do” by the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice (Mar. 3)

## Learning from the Community: Timeline

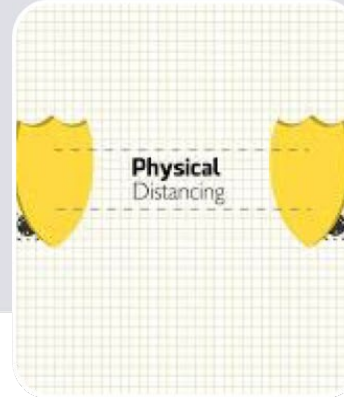


## Learning from the Community

### Early actions taken by members of the Chinese Community



Mask  
Wearing



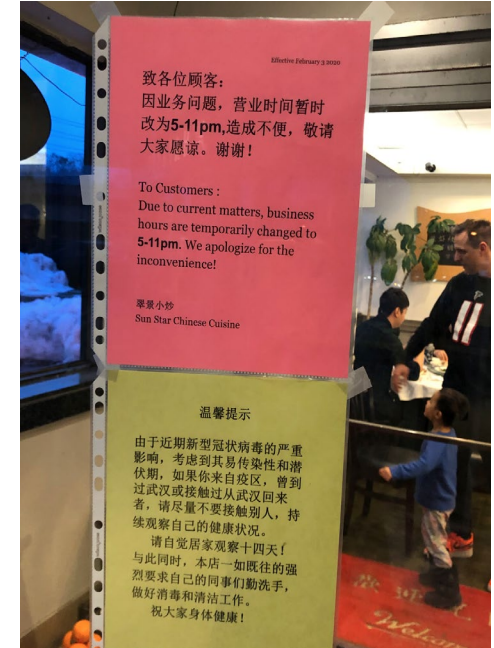
Physical  
Distancing



Petitions to  
Officials

## Learning from the Community

### Early actions taken by local Chinese businesses



Businesses being proactive

## Learning from the Community: Response to Actions

- Stigma and micro-aggressions by those wearing masks
- Some school boards banned children from wearing masks at school
- Petitions did not directly influence official public health actions taken
- Loss of business was considered to be solely a form of discrimination towards Chinese business owners
  - Responsible public health actions by members of the Chinese community dismissed



## CONCLUSIONS

- The Chinese community in the GTA is not homogeneous
- Chinese Canadians adopted protective & risk awareness actions long before official physical distancing was implemented
- Emergency managers and public health authorities need to engage with and listen to communities more
- Efforts must be taken to destigmatize the Chinese community
  - Learning from the community is one way to make this happen!




## IN CONVERSATION

As a member of the East Asian community, what has been your experience both at Sheridan and within your community during COVID-19?




How has media (and social media, specifically) impacted  
the quick spread of information (and misinformation)  
about COVID-19?



How can East Asians better educate themselves on how to respond to stigma and discrimination against them?

How can people within the broader community educate themselves and be “upstanders” to tackle microaggressions and discrimination against East Asian faculty, students and staff?



It is said that members of East Asian communities were aware of the dangers of COVID-19 and were more prepared before the pandemic became a problem in Canada but were not actively consulted to share their knowledge. How can leaders leverage the cultural competency and knowledge of different groups to inform future pandemic (and otherwise)?



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