



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **\$59,800 OTF Grant Provides Pandemic Recovery to Arts Programs**

**Scarborough, ON** – On Friday, the Hon. Raymond Cho, MPP met virtually with the Canada International Children’s Art Foundation (CICAF)’s Board members so that he could hear how a \$59,800 Resilient Communities Fund grant awarded by the provincial government’s Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) has made a difference. The grant, awarded in 2023, has enabled the group to continue implementing various initiatives connecting Asian-Canadian children together through art, with a new emphasis on improving their mental health through art therapy post-COVID-19.

“Our government is proud to support the Canada International Children’s Art foundation through the OTF grant, reflecting our shared commitment to fostering cultural identity and mental well-being in our community while creating a nurturing environment where every child can flourish,” said the Hon. Raymond Cho, MPP for Scarborough North. “The Scarborough community is inspired by the incredible work of the Canada International Children’s Art Foundation in supporting Asian-Canadian children and youth through arts. I thank the Foundation for their dedication to providing art therapy and tailored programs that address the unique challenges faced by our young people, especially during the pandemic and beyond.”

COVID-19 adversely impacted children from low-income Chinese Canadian families as they faced surging anti-Asian racism which then increased a sense of social and cultural anxiety. CICAF has been training and developing 50 volunteers to provide special attention and tailored art training programs as a form of early prevention and intervention to support children and youths from low-income Chinese Canadian families. Also, the project has been running three-month tailored art training courses for 42 children to learn art and build mental health resilience. By being responsive to the community feedback, the project has restored after-school art programs to include art healing approaches. Thanks to the \$59,800 OTF grant, Asian-Canadian children and youths in Toronto will continue to thrive in an environment where they can enjoy art learning, express themselves and embrace their cultural identity with healthy well-being.

“Non-profit organizations are an important and valued part of Ontario communities,” said Neil Lumsden, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. “Countless people rely on their services to find jobs and lead healthier, happier lives. Funding from the Resilient Communities Fund will help these non-profits to adapt and grow – ensuring that they are able to continue to assist those within our community who need them the most.”

“In addition to how COVID-19 led to disruptions within CICAF,” said Ziona Zhou, Executive Director, CICAF. “We also noticed that many children, youths and adults in our community were suffering from mental health issues. We wanted to not only restore our art programs but also provide volunteers and instructors to implement integrated art therapy techniques in our art training and after-school programs, to remedy the declining mental health in our community’s children and youth. OTF’s support has been and will be instrumental to let us reach the level of success we hope for.”



Just last year, CICAF celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> Canadian International Art Festival, which had over 5000 children attend yearly. Its mission statement is to provide a public outlet and platform for Asian-Canadian children to develop a diversified cultural art learning experience so they can not only share their talents and heritage but also embrace their cultural identity and inspire others to improve personal and collective well-being. Since the advent of the pandemic, CICAF has furthered its efforts to promote mental health through artistic approaches for youths and seniors, especially low-income family members. More information and links to join their programs can be found on their official website, [cicaf.ca](http://cicaf.ca).

The Ontario Trillium Foundation's (OTF) mission is to build healthy and vibrant communities across Ontario. As an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada's leading granting foundations, last year, OTF invested over \$110M into 1,022 community projects and partnerships. Visit [otf.ca](http://otf.ca) to learn more.

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