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ASIAN HERITAGE

**Motion to Declare May as Month of
Recognition Adopted**

Speech by:

The Honourable Vivienne Poy

Thursday, December 6, 2001

THE SENATE

Thursday, December 6, 2001

ASIAN HERITAGE

MOTION TO DECLARE MAY AS MONTH OF
RECOGNITION ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Poy, seconded by the Honourable Senator Carney, P.C.:

That May be recognized as Asian Heritage Month, given the important contributions of Asian Canadians to the settlement, growth and development of Canada, the diversity of the Asian community, and its present significance to this country.—(*Honourable Senator Poy*).

Hon. Vivienne Poy: Honourable senators, I know it is late in the day. I will take but a few minutes of your time.

First, I should like to thank Senator Carney for seconding the motion to recognize the month of May as Asian Heritage Month. As well, I wish to thank Senators Finestone, Oliver, Kinsella, Taylor and LaPierre for contributing to the debate on this issue.

Throughout Canada's history, Asian Canadians have contributed to Canada's economic, social and cultural development. Senator Carney, a British Columbian, has testified to the present day importance of Asian Canadians to the vitality and dynamism of her province.

Senator Finestone looked at the global impact of Asian culture, stressing that many aspects of Asian culture already permeate our day-to-day lives as global citizens. Senator Finestone also stressed that this motion before the Senate is intended to address the present as well as the future. As she noted, it reflects to the world what Canada is and what it will become.

In the last few weeks, perhaps we have had a sense that the world has grown smaller and less secure. In this environment, the

hallmarks of multiculturalism, tolerance and respect for diversity of our many cultures have come under attack in some quarters. I suggest to honourable senators that these values are more important now than ever if we are to emerge from this crisis as a strong and united country.

I agree with Senator Oliver that, like the Black population of Canada, which annually celebrates Black History Month, Asians also come to Canada from many different countries. We know that people from such diverse communities as Somalia, Jamaica, America, Haiti and Ethiopia do come together each year to celebrate Black History Month. Asian Heritage Month would allow Asians to celebrate and share our commonalities while respecting our differences.

I should also like to thank Senator Kinsella, who noted that equality does not mean being the same. It is our very diversity as a nation that gives us strength, but we can only benefit fully from our rich heritage if we respect one another's traditions. As Senator Kinsella emphasized, the proclamation of Asian Heritage Month must be coupled with sufficient resources so that Canadian school children are educated about the contributions Asians have made to this country.

Finally, I wish to thank Senators Taylor and LaPierre, who have added their very personal reflections on the historical contributions of Asians to Canada in the face of discrimination. Senator Taylor mentioned how Japanese, Sikhs and Chinese were involved in the social and economic development of Western Canada, and how they remain an important part of the community to this day. Senator LaPierre expressed his commitment to racial tolerance and its importance to the well-being of our country.

Honourable senators, this motion would formally acknowledge the contributions Asian Canadians have made and continue to make to Canada's growth and development as a multicultural nation. As such, I would ask my honourable colleagues for their support.
