

Joseph Y. K. Wong, M.D., C.M.

Dr. Joseph Y. K. Wong is a family physician, a community leader and a philanthropist. For over 40 years, he has devoted his life to humanitarian and social justice causes, serving and advocating for the weak, the voiceless, and the underprivileged.

Dr. Wong was a key organizer of the 1979 nationwide movement against CTV for its racist episode, "Campus Giveaway," which portrayed Chinese Canadian students as foreigners taking the place of real Canadians in professional schools such as medicine and pharmacy. The campaign kept up its intense protests for six months until CTV apologized and admitted that the segment of its W5 program was "racist in tone and effect." Later, Dr. Wong was elected as the first National President of the Chinese Canadian National Council (for Equality), which birthed from the movement. He remains as an active leader for social justice, equity and anti-racism.

In 1982, he joined the Board of the United Way of Greater Toronto where he helped with the multicultural transformation of the organization to reflect the increased diversity in the GTA community. This transformation was so successful that it changed not only UWGT but also its funded agencies and became known as the most progressive affirmative action taken by a major NGO in North America. Dr. Wong served as the Chair of the Board from 1990 to 1992 and has been an Honorary Chair since 1994, the first person of color to hold this position.

Upon witnessing the suffering of Chinese Canadian seniors living in nursing homes due to cultural and language barriers, Dr. Wong dreamed of creating a culturally appropriate facility for Chinese Canadian seniors in which they would feel at home during the most difficult time of their lives. This dream was realized in 1994 when the first Yee Hong Geriatric Centre was built after years of fundraising and overcoming insurmountable systemic barriers at a time when the government refused to recognize the needs of Chinese seniors. Today, Yee Hong is the largest not-for-profit geriatric care centre in North America and an international model of quality care emulated around the world.

Inspired by the Jewish community's resolve to preserve the history and lessons of the Holocaust, Dr. Wong founded ALPHA Education in 1997 to promote the learning and preservation of WWII history in Asia. ALPHA Education has worked with every school board in the GTA and organized many study tours, seminars, workshops, and classroom lectures for teachers and students on Asian history and anti-Asian racism. Its work has successfully convinced the Ontario Ministry of Education to include WWII in Asia as part of the Canadian history curriculum. In the meantime, ALPHA's Wong-Avery Asia-Pacific Peace Museum, the first of its kind in the world dedicated to humanity education using the history of the Asia-Pacific War as background, will be opened to the public in early 2023.

While advancing racial equity, diversity and inclusion, Dr. Wong has led many humanitarian campaigns and received numerous awards and honours for his impactful leadership and contributions locally, nationally, and internationally. He is a recipient of the Order of Canada, Award of Merits from the City of Toronto, Honorary Doctorate from the University of Toronto, Human Relations Award from the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, Power of Humanity Award from the Canadian Red Cross, the CivicAction Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Scarborough Walk of Fame.