

## ODE TO VIVIAN JUNG

A collaborative cento poem  
by Tecumseh Elementary School, Division 6 Students  
and Fiona Tinwei Lam

At the segregated Crystal Pool,  
crystal clear waters,  
crystal clear rules.  
Shimmering, shining pool of dreams  
for those of the right race:  
the Parks Board permitting  
only two hours a week  
for Asians and Blacks to swim.

It started small:  
like a bright star shining,  
Vivian waited in line,  
ready to learn,  
needing a life-saving certificate  
to become a teacher.  
Pool staff tried to turn her away.  
“You can’t enter here!”  
But she knew she was right.  
Born in Merritt, BC,  
she too had sung *Oh Canada*  
all her life.

Her coach and fellow students refused  
to enter the pool without her.  
Those friends, those allies  
fighting for the rights  
of all Asians and Blacks,  
united in courage,  
the courage to say  
“We are equal.”  
They didn’t back down.  
Doors that were closed  
were then flung wide open!

Diving board springing,  
unfiltered laughter.  
*Splash!*

Vivian jumped off the diving board  
into refreshing freedom,  
into equality so clear and clean.  
The pool gleaming, sparkling, glittering,  
now accessible to everyone.

Imagine the pride she felt--  
Exclusion from pools no more!  
When she broke the colour ban,  
she broke down rigid minds,  
made a whole city know she was right,  
and swam into teaching for 35 glorious years.

What a wonderful teacher she would become!  
An inspiration:  
First Chinese Canadian teacher  
hired by the Vancouver School Board,  
coaching girls volleyball teams  
to City Championships,  
sharing her love of softball, dance and phys ed  
at Tecumseh Elementary for decades.

How can we solve inequality?  
Thank you, Vivian and allies,  
for showing us the way!