

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

**DATE:** 2016 October 26

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**FILE:** 1650 01  
*Reference: Interpretive Plaques*

**SUBJECT: REMEMBERING WORKING PEOPLE: PLAQUES AROUND THE  
PROVINCE PROJECT**

**PURPOSE:** To authorize the nomination of historic events and locations that recognizes the history of working people in Burnaby.

---

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** Council be requested to approve the expenditure of up to \$5,000.00 (inclusive of GST and/or PST) to fund the production of plaques under BC Heritage Centre's *Remembering Working People: Plaques Around the Province Project*, as outlined in this report.

**REPORT**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on 08 June 2016, the Community Heritage Commission requested that staff prepare a report nominating the following events as part of the BC Labour Heritage Centre's new *Remembering Working People: Plaques Around the Province Project*:

- i) Barnet Lumber Company Mill Workers Strike, 1931; and
- ii) Japanese Workmen Railway Disaster at Lost Creek, 1909.

The purpose of the project is to identify and catalogue existing memorials to working people in British Columbia and through a nomination process install a series of bronze plaques to recognize significant people, places or events. This report outlines the scope of the project and provides details of the two events and locations being proposed.

**2.0 REMEMBERING WORKING PEOPLE: PLAQUES AROUND THE PROVINCE  
PROJECT**

At the end of 2015, the BC Labour Heritage Society announced a new *Remembering Working People: Plaques Around the Province Project* to fulfill their goal of increasing public awareness

To: Community Heritage Commission  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: REMEMBERING WORKING PEOPLE: PLAQUES  
AROUND THE PROVINCE PROJECT  
2016 October 26..... Page 2

of the history of working people in British Columbia in a permanent way. The criteria for the nominations include:

- Defining events, actions, episodes, movements, or experiences that played a significant role in the history of the labour movement and working people in British Columbia;
- Groups and individuals that made a lasting contribution to labour and working history; and
- Places that hold a direct association with a significant aspect of BC or Canadian labour history.

A nomination may be submitted by any person for events, groups, individuals or places that demonstrate the contributions of working people to the history of British Columbia, and the proposed location for the plaque should be accessible to the public and contribute to an understanding of the foundation laid by working people in the province's history. Each plaque, which will be produced by the BC Labour Heritage Centre, will measure 18" x 29" and be individually crafted and cast in bronze for longevity.

### **3.0 PROPOSED NOMINATIONS**

Staff identified a total of five different events, individuals or places for possible nomination, and the Commission supported the nomination of two of these events:

*i) Barnet Lumber Company Mill Workers Strike, 1931*

In 1931, some 800 employees of the Barnet Lumber Company Limited wanted to strike in protest against wage reductions, but management closed the mill and locked out the employees. According to the workers, they were threatened with a 20 per cent wage cut which would have brought some of their wages down to 19 cents an hour. Formerly known as the North Pacific Lumber Company and originally one of the largest lumber producers in the British Empire, the mill employed Japanese, Chinese and East Indian labourers. After the lockout, the manager, Mr. Reid, passed away, and the mill closed later that year. Many of the men remained unemployed until World War II.

The proposed location for this plaque is at the Barnet Marine Park, 8382 Burrard Inlet.

*ii) Japanese Workmen Railway Disaster at Lost Creek, 1909*

In the early hours of November 28, 1909, 43 people were travelling by train from Vancouver to do some repairs on the road when the train went down a hole near Lost Creek, a tributary of the Brunette River. Twenty-two workmen, mostly of Japanese descent, were killed in the crash. The crash was attributed to heavy rains which had undermined the embankment. Rescue efforts were hampered by the darkness, continuing rains, the steep banks of the ravine and the torrent of water which continued to pour through the creek. Very few personal accounts of the wreck were subsequently published

To: Community Heritage Commission  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: REMEMBERING WORKING PEOPLE: PLAQUES  
AROUND THE PROVINCE PROJECT

2016 October 26..... Page 3

and newspaper editors apparently made no effort to bridge the language gap with the survivors. A coroner's inquest eventually concluded that the accident was attributed to the storm and recommended that a night track-walker be employed during severe rainstorms.

It is proposed to locate this plaque along the Central Valley Greenway near the junction of Lost Creek and the Brunette River.

#### 4.0 COSTS

The cost of producing each plaque will depend on its size and complexity, but it is estimated to cost between \$3,000 to \$5,000 each. Nominators are requested to contribute at least one-third of the cost of each plaque. Based on these considerations, and subject to final approval of the nomination, an amount of up to \$5,000.00 is being sought for the production and installation of the plaques. The City's contribution to the project will be funded from the 2016 budget of the Community Heritage Commission.

#### 5.0 CONCLUSION

BC Labour Heritage Centre's latest project will increase the public awareness of the history of working people in Burnaby by highlighting two often overlooked historic events. Following Council approval, staff will proceed with the nominations of these two events as outlined in this report. The design for the plaques would be the subject to final review and approval by the Community Heritage Commission and Council.



for: Lou Pelletier, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

HL:sa

Copied to: City Manager  
Director Engineering  
Director Finance  
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services  
City Clerk