

**COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION**

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: COMMEMORATING DIVERSE COMMUNITY HERITAGE IN BURNABY**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT Council receive this report for information.

**REPORT**

The Community Heritage Commission, at its meeting held on 2020 June 18, received and adopted the attached report outlining an approach to recognize the histories and contributions of the diverse settlement and Indigenous communities in Burnaby. Arising from discussion, the Committee **AMENDED** the recommendation to send the report to Council for its information.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor C. Jordan  
Chair

Councillor P. McDonell  
Vice Chair

Copied to:	City Manager Director Planning and Building Director Corporate Services
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**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

**DATE:** 2020 June 10

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**FILE:** 1650 20

**SUBJECT: COMMEMORATING DIVERSE COMMUNITY HERITAGE IN  
BURNABY**

**PURPOSE:** To outline an approach to recognize the histories and contributions of the diverse settlement and Indigenous communities in Burnaby.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** this report be received for information purposes.

**REPORT****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

At the 2019 June 24 meeting, Council received a report from the Community Heritage Commission (CHC) that requested support for a project to research the history of Chinese migration to Burnaby, and the contributions of Chinese Canadians to the development of the community.

Council approved the report's recommendations, and acknowledged the value of a project to research and share the contributions of Chinese Canadians to the history of Burnaby. Members of Council also highlighted the importance of recognizing additional settlement communities' histories in Burnaby, as well as Burnaby's Indigenous history. Arising from the discussion, staff were directed to report to Council on the feasibility and advisability of developing a strategic plan to recognize the histories and contributions of settlement communities and Indigenous communities in Burnaby.

This report responds to Council's direction, noting that the City has a strong policy framework to support an inclusive approach to historical research and commemoration, and that work is underway in several City departments to advance understanding and recognition of the community's diverse history. Special projects for research and commemoration have been advanced to Council through the Community Heritage Commission, and implemented through the City's heritage program. A review of the Official Community Plan will provide an opportunity to review the City's heritage program and its approach to research and commemoration of community histories.

**2.0 POLICY SECTION**

The following Council-adopted policies support work to research and share the diverse stories of Burnaby's settlement communities, and Indigenous histories of Burnaby:

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Equity policy, approved by Council in 1994 and recently updated, which states that “The City has a duty to its citizens to set a positive example and foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect.”

Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy, approved by Council in 2011, includes a primary goal of “Community Inclusion.” This goal is particularly concerned with ensuring the City is “welcoming of all cultures, identities and abilities,” with focus on “principles of economic and social security and justice.”

In addition to the policies noted above, commemoration of diverse community heritage and Indigenous histories supports a number of goals and sub-goals of the *Corporate Strategic Plan*:

- ***An Inclusive Community***
  - Celebrate diversity – Create more opportunities for the community to celebrate diversity
  - Serve a diverse community – Ensure City services fully meet the needs of our dynamic community
  - Create a sense of community – Provide opportunities that encourage and welcome all community members and create a sense of belonging
- ***A Thriving Organization***
  - Organizational culture – Ensure that our core values are reflected in our policies, programs and service delivery

### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

The City’s existing policy framework supports work to research and share diverse stories of Burnaby, including histories of settlement communities and Indigenous histories. Related research and programming is taking place in several City departments and work units as part of their core operational work.

In addition to ongoing operational work, there is an established practice of advancing historical research and commemoration projects to Council through the Community Heritage Commission when there is opportunity and capacity for major projects that fall outside the regular work of staff. The impetus for the CHC to recommend a special project to Council is frequently an opportunity to leverage funding support from a grant program. For example, Council’s support of the Burnaby 125 Heritage Marker program through the Gaming Reserve Fund enabled the City to apply for Province of BC “Canada 125” funding, which increased the project budget from \$60,000 to \$117,500, allowing for an increased scope of work.

Recommendations to support special projects are also advanced when there is interest from partners and/or community members. For example, a partnership between the City and the Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies program at the University of British Columbia created capacity for a project focusing on Chinese Canadian history. This work is also supported by Chinese Canadian community organizations and local community members.

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The CHC has the capacity to continue advising Council on advancing historical research and commemoration projects, and their two year work plan indicates the CHC will “research and advise council on opportunities to undertake collaborative projects to advance awareness of Burnaby’s cultural history, and Indigenous histories of Burnaby” as part of their work.

#### **4.0 RECENT WORK RECOGNIZING DIVERSE SETTLEMENT HISTORIES AND INDIGENOUS HISTORIES IN BURNABY**

Researching, preserving, and sharing stories of Burnaby’s diverse settlement communities and Indigenous histories is part of the operational work of several departments. Historical research and preservation are core to the mandates of the Archives, Burnaby Village Museum, and the Planning Department’s Heritage Program. These three work groups share responsibility for public interpretation and generation of knowledge about history, in collaboration with other work areas, including the Burnaby Public Library and Burnaby Art Gallery. Staff across several departments in the City are responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action on behalf of the City.

Staff undertake this work in collaboration with the community, and ensure that relationships between community members and the City are fostered and trust is built. For example, the research for the *Indigenous History in Burnaby Resource Guide* was the result of relationships built between Museum staff and Indigenous community members over several years.

Cross-departmental staff working groups have implemented several special projects over the past decade, enabling the research of, and access to, community histories to be accelerated through project-based funding approved by Council on the recommendation of the CHC. Recent examples include:

- **Installation of a heritage marker commemorating the Great Northern Railway disaster of 1909:** the marker identifies a site nominated by Council in 2017 for commemoration as part of a provincial BC Labour Heritage Centre program marking sites significant to the history of working people. This marker identifies the site of the railway accident that took the lives of 23 railway workers of Japanese descent, and is located adjacent to the place the accident occurred, at the outlet of Lost Creek on the Central Valley Greenway.
- **The Burnaby 125 Heritage Marker program:** to commemorate Burnaby’s 125th anniversary in 2017, the City fabricated and installed 12 heritage markers and produced five video vignettes featuring important Burnaby people and places. Staff conducted original, community-based research to uncover new stories of diverse community members, including the story of South Asian human rights activist and local businessman Kapoor Singh Siddoo, the history of the diverse workforce at the North Pacific Lumber Mill at Barnet, the stories of Japanese Canadian political prisoners who served time at Oakalla for resisting internment, and the history of Burnaby’s Chinese Canadian market gardens. The project generated community partnerships, original research, and donations of artifacts and archival material that have significantly increased the capacity of the City to interpret the community’s diverse history.

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In addition to special projects, research and commemoration of diverse histories and recognition of Burnaby's Indigenous histories takes place as part of the regular work of staff. Examples from the past two years include:

- **Burnaby Village Museum Interpretive Plan:** the Museum adopted an interpretive plan that identifies key interpretive themes to guide research, exhibition, and programming. Goals include being inclusive of Burnaby's diverse population, both past and present, and include historical and contemporary First Nations stories. These interpretive goals are reflected in the program and exhibition focus of the Museum, which have included development of an Indigenous Learning House and Indigenous learning programs, re-development of the Chinese herbalist shop exhibition, and the introduction of a Chinese market garden display.
- **Neighbourhood History Series:** In fall 2018 and 2019, this series of public presentations and tours organized by the Burnaby Village Museum and Burnaby Public Library included several lectures and walking tours on Burnaby's diverse history and Indigenous history in Burnaby. Topics included Japanese Canadian and Indigenous political prisoners at Oakalla, Chinese Canadian histories, tours of the Ismaili Centre and Al Salaam Mosque & Islamic Education Centre, and lectures on Indigenous history and decolonization.
- **Indigenous History in Burnaby Resource Guide:** This comprehensive resource on the history of Indigenous peoples in the area we now know as Burnaby was developed by the Burnaby Village Museum in consultation with four local Nations, and released in fall 2019.
- **Burnaby Art Gallery Indigenous Engagement Strategy:** the strategy includes collecting work of contemporary Indigenous artists, and collaborating with Indigenous artists and curators to create exhibitions and publications. Through this work, the Gallery seeks to reflect the diversity of Indigenous artists and cultural practitioners in the region and province through meaningful and sustained relationships. This work builds on the Gallery's history of collaborating with Indigenous artists on exhibitions and programs.
- **Burnaby Village Museum "Visiting Storage":** Indigenous baskets and archaeological specimens were re-catalogued with additional information, and re-housed to make it easier for Indigenous community members to view their cultural heritage objects that are in the care of the City.
- **Asian Migration Research & Interpretation Project:** This partnership between the Burnaby Village Museum and UBC's Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies (ACAM) program was initiated in the summer of 2018, and continued in the summer of 2019. It enables UBC ACAM students to contribute to the development of Asian Canadian history programs for Museum visitors.
- **National Indigenous Peoples' Day:** Since 2014, Council has proclaimed and recognized June 21 as National Indigenous Peoples' Day. An annual event is held at Civic Square, and organized by the Burnaby Public Library in partnership with the Burnaby Intercultural

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Planning Table. The event recognizes and celebrates the many accomplishments and contributions of Indigenous peoples.

- **Burnaby Indigenous Week of Learning:** In 2019, the Burnaby Village Museum launched a week-long educational session in partnership with the Burnaby School District, and with support from Vancity Credit Union. The learning sessions featured educational sessions led by local Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers, and educators who provided programming to approximately 500 fourth and fifth grade students.
- ***Across the Pacific* Exhibition:** Staff at the Museum augmented research generated by the Burnaby 125 project to produce the *Across the Pacific* exhibition of Chinese migration, featured in summer 2019. The exhibition presented stories of local Chinese Canadian history, and included photographs and objects from personal collections that had never been previously displayed. The exhibition was presented in three written languages.
- **Responding to TRC Action #77:** The City of Burnaby Archives responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call for all levels of government to provide records and data related to its relationships with Indigenous peoples to the National Centre for Reconciliation by reviewing their records and providing copies of findings. This work was initiated in 2015, and is ongoing as new record sets are added to the holdings.

## 5.0 OTHER INITIATIVES

### 5.1 Indigenous History in Burnaby

Council has provided direction to acknowledge Indigenous territory, and as part of the City's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action, staff have been working toward raising awareness of ancestral and ongoing Indigenous presence on the land that is now known as Burnaby. Recent initiatives include development of staff guidelines for territory acknowledgement at City events and in civic documents.

At the 2019 November 18 Council meeting, implementation of a framework to further implement the TRC Calls to Action was approved. The framework includes initiating government-to-government relationships. Once established, these relationships will guide the identification of further processes, projects, and efforts to advance reconciliation on a corporate level. Further work at the City to recognize and interpret Indigenous history in Burnaby will be incorporated into this framework.

### 5.2 Diverse Community Heritage in Burnaby

#### 5.2.1 Diverse Heritage Staff Working Group

The diverse heritage staff working group includes staff representatives from the Library, Museum, Archives and Planning Department with responsibilities for collecting, researching, and engaging with community on Burnaby's cultural heritage. The informal working group shares information about departmental initiatives, grows and extends existing programming, and develops new

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collaborative programming to engage community members with stories of Burnaby’s diverse cultural history through the regular work programs of the group members.

### 5.2.2 Heritage Policy Review

The Community Heritage Commission two-year work plan identifies review of the City’s heritage program to inform an update of the heritage section of the Official Community Plan (OCP). The heritage goal adopted in the 1998 OCP is “to provide opportunities for increased awareness and the conservation of the City’s unique natural, cultural, archeological and built heritage”.

In preparation of an OCP update, staff is reviewing the City’s heritage programs to include development of a strategy for research, commemoration, and engagement with Burnaby’s history and heritage. The strategy and subsequent OCP review are opportunities to advance corporate strategic goals through the City’s heritage programs, including goals related to building an inclusive community.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

As outlined in the Policy Framework section of this report, the City’s existing policies provide direction to recognize the contributions of diverse communities to the development of the community. Council has also provided direction to acknowledge Indigenous territory, and as part of the City’s response to the TRC Calls to Action, staff are working toward raising awareness of ancestral and ongoing Indigenous presence on the land that is now known as Burnaby.

The City’s policies for inclusiveness and diversity guide the work of historical research and commemoration undertaken by staff in many departments. Staff will be undertaking strategic planning to further advance this work, through implementation of the TRC Calls to Action and through the review of the heritage program in preparation for review and update of the heritage section of the OCP.



E.W. Kozak, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

LC:sa  
cc: City Manager  
City Clerk