

SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF
AFRICAN DESCENT – COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH**

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council receive the report for information.

REPORT

The Social Planning Committee, at its meeting held on 2021 March 02, received and adopted the attached report providing an update on community-based research being conducted in relation to the City's endorsement of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor C. Jordan
Chair

Councillor J. Keithley
Vice Chair

Copied to:	City Manager Director Planning & Building Director Corporate Services Director Engineering Director Finance Director Human Resources Director Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Director Public Safety & Community Services Chief Information Officer Chief Librarian Fire Chief OIC-RCMP City Solicitor
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TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

DATE: 2021 February 18

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

FILE: 1750 20
Reference: BIPT

SUBJECT: UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF
AFRICAN DESCENT – COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH

PURPOSE: To provide the Committee and Council with an update on community-based research being conducted in relation to the City’s endorsement of the U.N. International Decade for People of African Descent.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the Social Planning Committee direct this report to Council for information.

REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Social Planning Committee, under the New Business portion of its Open meeting held on 2020 June 16, received a motion requesting the City of Burnaby to formally recognize the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (the ‘Decade’), and to develop an action plan to implement the objectives of the Decade. Staff reported back to the Committee and Council in 2020 September, proposing that community-based research be undertaken to better understand the current experience of Black community members and/or People of African Descent in Burnaby, as a first step in implementing the intent and aims of the Decade.

After receiving Committee and Council approval for this approach, staff worked with community partners the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table and the Burnaby Together: Organizing Against Racism and Hate Network to develop a community-based research project, as outlined below. This report presents this project framework for the information of the Committee and Council.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

Conducting community-based research related to the United Nations International Decade for Persons of African Descent is supported by the following policy context:

- *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

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of all cultures, identities and abilities”, and focuses on “principles of economic and social security and justice”.

- **Equity Policy**, approved in updated form by Council in 2020, which includes explicit reference to sustaining and enabling equity of all community members, including those with diverse ethno-cultural identifications.

In addition to the policies noted above, the proposed community research project is supported by 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

3.0 BACKGROUND

On 2017 February 7, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent (resolution 68/237) citing the need to strengthen national, regional and international cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society.

As proclaimed by the General Assembly, the theme for the International Decade is ‘People of African descent: recognition, justice and development’. The main objectives of the International Decade are to:

- Promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent.
- Promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies.
- Adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks [...] on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to ensure their full and effective implementation.

4.0 LOCAL CONTEXT

The City of Burnaby has long been committed to the pursuit and support of social and economic justice, and the full inclusion of all community members. This has been enshrined in policy since the 1990’s including the Healthy Community Policy (1991) and the original Equity Policy (1994). More recently this commitment has been solidified through the Social Sustainability Strategy (2011), the Corporate Strategic Plan (2017), and the updated Equity Policy (2020).

The focus on inclusion has been actioned through a myriad of programs and initiatives – for example:

- The City is a member of the UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (2012).

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- The City is a founding member of the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (2007).
- The City is a founding member of the Burnaby Together: Organizing Against Racism and Hate Table (2017).
- The City is a founding member of the Burnaby Inter-Faith Network (2014).
- An Access Advisory Committee has provided advice and input to the City on access and inclusion issues related to persons with disabilities since 1988.
- Burnaby City Council formally recognized that Burnaby is on unceded Indigenous territory in 2019 June and approved beginning Government-to-Government relations with local First Nations in 2019 November.
- After a multi-year collaborative process, the Indigenous History in Burnaby Resource Guide was published in 2019¹.
- The City assisted in the establishment of Burnaby Pride, and provides financial and logistical support for an annual Pride event(s) which celebrates and provides visibility in relation to Burnaby's diverse LGBTQIA2S+ community².
- Burnaby Public Library is expanding the scope of its public programming, with explicit focus on equity, e.g. International Women's Day Event (March 2020), National Indigenous Day Event (June 2019), Introduction to Disability Justice Workshop (December 2019). Methods for continuing this work within the realities of physical distancing are being developed. The library is also working to expand its collection with a focus on BIPOC³ authors.
- Shadbolt Centre for the Arts is expanding the depth and breadth of its offerings with a focus on supporting and showcasing local, diverse performers and artists, including those identifying as BIPOC.
- For a number of years the Burnaby Art Gallery (BAG) has focussed on expanding the diversity represented by its permanent collection, and has presented a number of exhibitions featuring and/or curated by BIPOC artists. The BAG has also repatriated a decommissioned totem poles in the City's possession, and is working to repatriate a second totem pole in Summer 2021.
- Burnaby Village Museum has created an Indigenous Learning House and Matriarch's Garden on Museum grounds, and is working to expand its research and collections to further represent the full diversity of Burnaby's history – for example, *Across the Pacific*, a newer (2019) exhibit exploring the history and legacy of Chinese-Canadians in Burnaby since the late 1800s.

Specifically in relation to supporting the full and equal inclusion of Black community members and/or People of African Descent, the City has undertaken some efforts including:

- Providing subsidized City-owned office space to the local non-profit organization the National Congress of Black Women. The Congress focusses on programming for youth including leadership programs and social justice/anti-racism symposiums.

¹ A copy of the Guide can be found at:
<http://www.burnabyvillagemuseum.ca/assets/Documents/Teachers~Guides/Indigenous%20History%20in%20Burnaby%20Resouce%20Guide.pdf>

² LGBTQIA2S+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersexual, Asexual, Two-Spirited and 'other'

³ BIPOC: Black, Indigenous and People of Colour

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- Offering grants, via the Festivals Burnaby Granting Program, to organizations and groups providing programming to recognize Black History Month (annually in February) including family-oriented programming.
- Organizing public library programming and resources compiled in recognition of Black History Month.
- Proclaiming Black History Month via Burnaby City Council.
- Developing public library resource compilations related to ‘Black Lives Matter’.
- Supporting the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table to host public dialogues and education events including the recent ‘Developing Anti-Racism Skills and Competencies for Systemic Social Change’ (February 2021), which was hosted in recognition of Black History Month.

5.0 COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH PROCESS

Prior to the direction of Council noted above to undertake community based research into the current experience of Black community members and/or People of African Descent in Burnaby, staff had been involved in the development of a research project to investigate the experiences of racialized newcomers in Burnaby, initiated by the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT). This project is set to begin in 2021 Spring and will examine the obstacles, opportunities, and experiences that racialized newcomers from all backgrounds face in Burnaby, as well as consider and recommend ways in which identified barriers can be dismantled.

This work is being undertaken with the leadership of respected local researchers Dr. June Francis (lead) and Dr. Kristina Henriksson. Dr. Francis is a Director of the Institute for Diaspora Research and Engagement at Simon Fraser University, where she is an Associate Professor in the Beedie School of Business. As Co-Chair of The Hogan's Alley Society's Board of Director, she also leads an organization whose mission is to advance the social, political, economic and cultural well-being of people of African Descent through the delivery of housing, built spaces and programming. Dr. Henriksson is an experienced consultant, knowledge mobilizer, challenge-based learning and engagement specialist and is also an Adjunct Professor at SFU Beedie School of Business. Dr. Francis and Dr. Henriksson are the co-founders of The Co-Laboratorio (Colab Advantage Ltd.).

The pre-existence of the BIPT research project presented an opportunity for the City to combine its Council-directed research efforts into the experience of Black community members and/or People of African Descent in Burnaby, with that of the BIPT project to examine the experiences of racialized newcomers. Statistically in Burnaby, many Black community members and/or those of African Descent, are also newcomers. While this does not reflect the full diversity of the Black community in Burnaby, which includes individuals who have lived in B.C. or Canada for generations, or who have moved to B.C. from other parts of Canada, Dr. Francis, Dr. Henriksson, members of the BIPT, and staff have determined that there is a significant overlap between the potential study participants of the study groups (i.e. racialized newcomers and Black community members and/or those of African Descent) to warrant combining efforts. As such, the project scope has been expanded, and the respective research questions will be asked and implemented in an integrated manner throughout the process.

The combined research process will include a relevant literature scan, key informant interviews, a series of participatory focus groups, and several ‘co-laboratories’ where the researchers will work with

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community members to identify solutions or mitigations for key findings. A final research report will be compiled, and shared with funding partners, community members, and Council. The timeline for the project is still being refined based upon available funding, but is anticipated to conclude in the Spring of 2022.

Funding for the combined research process includes contributions from Burnaby Family Life (which is the administrative lead of the BIPT), from Simon Fraser University, and from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Funding applications to Canadian Heritage (Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program) and the Provincial Immigration Policy and Integration Branch (Multiculturalism Grants) have also been submitted.

Funds for the City’s contribution to this project have been requested within the 2021 One-Time Funding Stabilization Reserve Requests as a component the Sustainability Projects for Planning and Building. These requests are included in the Planning and Building Department’s Provisional Operating Budget to be approved by Council.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

Building upon Burnaby’s long-standing commitment to social and economic justice and its ongoing focus on inclusion for all community members, it is recommended that the Social Planning Committee direct this report to Council for information. This report outlines an approach for undertaking a community-based research process to investigate the experiences of Black community members and/or those of African descent, as previously directed by Council.



E.W. Kozak, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

RM/sa

cc:	City Manager	Fire Chief
	Director Engineering	Chief Librarian
	Director Corporate Services	Chief Information Officer
	Director Finance	OIC - RCMP
	Director Public Safety and Community Services	City Solicitor
	Director Human Resources	City Clerk
	Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	