



City of  
**Burnaby**

Office of the City Clerk

B. Zeinabova, City Clerk  
E. Prior, Acting Deputy City Clerk

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS DATE: 2021 APRIL 27  
PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE  
COMMISSION

FROM: ACTING DEPUTY CITY CLERK FILE: 02410-20

SUBJECT: **COMMEMORATION OF THE KOMAGATA MARU**  
(ITEM NO. 7.7., MANAGER'S REPORTS, COUNCIL 2021 APRIL 26)

Burnaby City Council, at the Open Council meeting held on 2021 April 26, received the above noted report and adopted the following recommendations contained therein:

1. THAT Council issue a proclamation in May 2021 to mark *Komagata Maru* Remembrance Day.
2. THAT Council support recognition of the *Komagata Maru* with an interpretive sign, as outlined in *Section 4.2* of the report.
3. THAT a copy of the report be forwarded to the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society.
4. THAT a copy of the report be forwarded to the Executive Committee of Council, the Community Heritage Commission, and the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission.

As per recommendation no. 4, a copy of the report is attached.



Eva Prior

Acting Deputy City Clerk

Copied to: Director Planning and Building  
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services

Our Vision: A world-class city committed to creating and sustaining the best quality of life for our entire community.

**TO:** ACTING CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2021 April 20

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING **FILE:** 77000 05  
DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION AND *Reference:* SFU  
CULTURAL SERVICES

**SUBJECT:** COMMEMORATION OF THE *KOMAGATA MARU*

**PURPOSE:** To provide recommendations for the commemoration of the *Komagata Maru*.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** Council issue a proclamation in May 2021 to mark *Komagata Maru* Remembrance Day.
2. **THAT** Council support recognition of the *Komagata Maru* with an interpretive sign, as outlined in *Section 4.2* of this report.
3. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society.
4. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Executive Committee of Council, the Community Heritage Commission, and the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission.

**REPORT****1.0 BACKGROUND**

At its 2020 January 09 meeting, Council referred correspondence from Mr. Raj Singh Toor of the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society to the Executive Committee. The correspondence was subsequently received by the Executive Committee on 2020 February 05, at which time Mr. Toor appeared as a delegation. On behalf of the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society, Mr. Toor requested that Council consider commemorating the history of the *SS Komagata Maru*, a ship that brought prospective immigrants from Punjab, India to Canada in 1914. The ship and its passengers were denied entry, and after two months most of the passengers were forcibly returned to India. The event, known as the Komagata Maru incident, has become a significant touchstone in the history of racial discrimination in Canada.

The Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society have advocated for commemoration of the event in communities across Canada, and request that the City of Burnaby participate by naming a civic asset, such as a park or street, in recognition of the event.

**To:** *Acting City Manager*  
**From:** *Director Planning and Building*  
*Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services*  
**Re:** *Commemoration of the Komagata Maru*  
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At the time of the incident in 1914, Burnaby was home to South Asian community members. Many South Asian migrants in that period worked in the lumber industry, and data from the 1911 census identifies men from India working in sawmills throughout Burnaby, and several employed in land clearing. Burnaby historian George Green noted a camp of Asian and South Asian workers existed at present day Gamma and Albert in the early 1910s, made up of workers who harvested “shingle bolts” from stumps to sell to shingle mills. There were many small shingle mills in Burnaby (particularly along Burrard Inlet) which would have employed South Asian workers. In other parts of British Columbia, shingle mills were sometimes owned by South Asian entrepreneurs, and that may have been the case in Burnaby.

The North Pacific Lumber Mill at Barnet employed both Muslim and Sikh workers from India between 1911 and the mid-1920s when new mill owners introduced a “white-only” employment policy. The mill was closed permanently during the Great Depression in the 1930s, and ownership of the site reverted to the Municipality. The mill site was purchased by businessman Kapoor Singh Siddoo, and re-opened in 1938. Siddoo continued the earlier tradition of hiring Asian, South Asian, and European workers at the mill.

Siddoo came to Canada from Punjab, India in 1885 and became a successful businessman. He was also a moderate political activist and pacifist who spent decades pressing for better treatment of South Asian people in Canada. He was commemorated by the City of Burnaby in 2017 with a Burnaby 125 plaque at Barnet Marine Park, and installation of a Stop of Interest sign at Barnet as part of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure’s highway signage program.

#### **4.0 COMMEMORATION OF THE *KOMAGATA MARU***

##### **4.1 Commemoration and Acknowledgement**

Formal apologies for the Komagata Maru incident were made by the Government of BC in 2008, and the Government of Canada in 2016. The City of Vancouver made a formal apology in 2020.

In 2012, a federally funded monument was unveiled at Coal Harbour in Stanley Park, on the shore where the ship had been anchored. The site also includes a complementary Komagata Maru Memorial, which was developed by the Khalsa Diwan Society in cooperation with the Vancouver Parks Board.

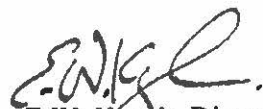
The Descendants of the Komagata Maru have approached local governments in Canada to request they consider commemorating the incident. Several have done so, through naming initiatives, installation of commemorative signage, and by proclaiming Komagata Maru Remembrance Day.

In 2019, the City of Brampton, Ontario opened a brand new park, which they named Komagata Maru Park. Also in 2019, the City of Surrey assigned “Komagata Maru Way” as a commemorative name to a portion of 75A Avenue and installed storyboards in nearby R.A. Nicholson Park to interpret the story of the *Komagata Maru*, and the history of Surrey’s earliest South Asian residents. In 2020, the City of Delta approved installation of two storyboard signs commemorating the *Komagata Maru* at the North Delta Society Heart Plaza.

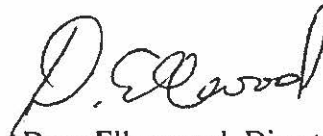
To: *Acting City Manager*  
From: *Director Planning and Building*  
*Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services*  
Re: *Commemoration of the Komagata Maru*  
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## 5.0 CONCLUSION

This report responds to a request made from the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society for the City of Burnaby to recognize and commemorate the significance of the Komagata Maru incident. It recommends that Council issue a proclamation in May 2021 to mark Komagata Maru Remembrance Day, and support installation of an interpretive sign nearby the shore of Burrard Inlet in Burnaby to raise public awareness of the significance of the Komagata Maru incident and the historical presence of South Asian community members in Burnaby. It is further recommended that copies of the report be forwarded to the Executive Committee of Council, the Community Heritage Commission, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission, and to Mr. Raj Singh Toor of the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society.



E.W. Kozak, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING



Dave Ellenwood, Director  
PARKS, RECREATION AND  
CULTURAL SERVICES

LC:sa

cc: Director Corporate Services  
City Clerk