

MOTION

6. Acknowledgement of First Nations' Role in Saving Lives during the Great Fire of 1886

At the Regular Council meeting on June 13, 2017, Vancouver City Council referred this matter to the Standing Committee on City Finance and Services meeting on June 14, 2017, to hear from speakers.

MOVED by Councillor Reimer
SECONDED by Mayor Robertson

WHEREAS

1. On June 13, 1886 a large fire destroyed most buildings in the newly-incorporated City of Vancouver leaving only three of the estimated 1,000 existent buildings;
2. The total number of lives lost is unknown, but over two dozen fatalities are estimated. Only two of the bodies recovered were identifiable, the rest described as "all burned to a crisp and barely recognizable as human remains";
3. The fire burned quickly, razing the city in less than 30 minutes. To survive, people rushed to Burrard Inlet where they crowded onto docked boats or they jumped into the water;
4. Many more people would have perished in the water if not for local First Nations families. Despite being forcibly removed from their homelands and crowded onto a small reserve across the Burrard inlet in Ustlawn, families—at their own peril—chose to bring their own canoes and boats across the inlet to rescue Vancouverites. They subsequently offered food and shelter until Vancouver was rebuilt;
5. The life-sustaining role these First Nations families played was not acknowledged at the time, nor is it well-referenced in historical accounts of the Great Fire of 1886.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Vancouver publicly thank the First Nations families who saved Vancouverites' lives in the Great Fire of 1886 and properly commemorate them;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT staff ensure that these First Nations families are appropriately recognized in City records and archives related to the Great Fire of 1886.

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