

B.4

MOTION ON NOTICE

4. "The Mayor of Chinatown"

MOVER: Councillor George Chow

SECONDER: Councillor Heather Deal

WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver has erected a plaque entitled "The Mayor of Chinatown" to commemorate the late Foon Sien Wong, in the Spring of 2010 in Kitsilano (southwest corner of Creelman Ave and Walnut St), in cooperation with Kitsilano Memories Project, and Mr. Larry Wong who initiated it - (Appendix 1);
2. Parks Canada has recognized the late Foon Sien Wong as a person of national significance, as recommended by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and designated by the Minister of the Environment;
3. Parks Canada will commemorate Foon Sien Wong by erecting a monument in the form of a bronze plaque on a concrete pedestal in Vancouver's Chinatown by July 7, 2011, with wording as per Appendix 2;
4. The City of Vancouver will celebrate its 125th Anniversary in 2011.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT City staff assist Parks Canada in finding a suitable location in Chinatown for the monument in consultation with the community, in time for its unveiling on July 7, 2011.
- B. THAT City staff work with Parks Canada to explore the feasibility of attaching display panels to the concrete pedestal in order to provide more background information on the achievement of the late Foon Sien Wong.

* * * * *

THE MAYOR OF CHINATOWN

by Larry Wong



Wong Foon Sien - submitted by Larry Wong

Wong Foon Sien was always busy meeting people who needed his help and counsel. He came to be called the "unofficial Mayor of Chinatown," and was the recipient of many awards. He lobbied the federal government to ease the political restrictions that made it difficult for Chinese individuals to immigrate to Canada. For eleven years he made annual visits to the Immigration Minister to plead for changes.

His first success was to correct the imbalance of Chinese men to women by having the men post a bond for their Chinese fiancées. By the time he retired in 1960, his efforts had helped to lay the groundwork for the formulation of the Immigration Act of 1967. With its points system, the Act ranked independent immigrants according to age, education, labour and language skills, and resources in an equitable manner.

Wong Foon Sien's was the only Chinese family to live on Walnut Street in Kits Point in the 1950's. There, he raised his two daughters and one son in a two-storey house. After a busy day at the office of the Chinese Benevolent Association in Chinatown he would return home to relax with his family.

The Kitsilano Memories Project celebrates the centennial of the neighbourhood, and is supported by the Community Public Art Program of the Office of Cultural Affairs, City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation's Neighbourhood Matching Program. For more information, visit: vancouver.ca/kitsilanocc

 CITY OF
VANCOUVER

Kitsilano
Celebrating
100 years

WONG FOON SIEN

(ca. 1899-1971)

This journalist, labour activist, and community leader was instrumental in the campaign for less restrictive immigration policies following the 1947 repeal of a law that had prohibited the entry of Chinese immigrants since 1923. His persistent lobbying allowed hundreds of families of Chinese origin to reunite in Canada. He also acted as a conciliatory force within Vancouver's polarized Chinese-Canadian community and fostered a rich communal life. By devoting his time and effort to various civil and human rights organizations, Wong Foon Sien encouraged the development of a more tolerant society.

(601 spaces)

WONG FOON SIEN

(v. 1899-1971)

Ce journaliste, militant ouvrier et leader communautaire fut une figure clé de la lutte pour l'assouplissement des politiques d'immigration une fois abrogée, en 1947, la loi interdisant l'entrée d'immigrants chinois depuis 1923. Son lobbying tenace permit de réunir au pays des centaines de familles d'origine chinoise. À Vancouver, il agit comme une force conciliatrice au sein d'une communauté sino-canadienne divisée en plus d'y favoriser une vie associative riche. Wong Foon Sien consacra temps et efforts à divers groupes promouvant les droits civils et les droits de la personne, aidant à l'essor d'une société plus tolérante.

(632 espaces)

Statement of Commemorative Intent:

The Committee and the Full Board recommended Wong Foon Sien for designation because:

- he was a leading figure of the campaign for less restrictive immigration policies toward Chinese in the decade following the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1947, therefore contributing to the reunification of hundreds of Chinese families in Canada;
- he was an ardent activist for the recognition of the rights of the Chinese-Canadian community and other minorities, being actively involved in a number of civil and human rights organizations, and as such, contributing to the development of a more tolerant society; and,
- through his work as a journalist, a labour activist and a community leader acting as a neutral force within a politically polarized community, he contributed to the development and maintenance of strong community organizations as well as to the welfare of the Chinese community of Vancouver.