From Exclusion to Citizenship: Historical Discrimination Against Chinese People in Vancouver

Council Presentation
October 31st, 2017
Agenda

• Council motion
• Related civic initiatives
• Project Timeline
• Research findings in 4 key areas
• Draft apology
• Community engagement & forums
• Advisory recommendations
• Staff recommendations
1) Conduct research into the laws, regulations and policies of previous Vancouver City Councils that discriminated against the people of Chinese descent in the City of Vancouver from 1886 to 1947;

2) Consult with the Vancouver Chinese community, historians and Chinese community organizations on the research findings; and

3) Report back to council with recommendations on steps and actions in support of reconciliation, including a public acknowledgement and formal apology.
Related policies and initiatives

• City of Reconciliation
• Healthy City Strategy
• Vancouver Immigration Partnership
Timeline

2015 - Social Policy undertook preliminary consultations with local historians & experts

2016 - Hired research consultant
- Preliminary research compiled, assisted by City Archives & Vancouver Public Library

2017 - Formed Historical Discrimination Against Chinese (HDC) Advisory Group
- HDC formed small working groups on research and to draft apology
- Convened community forums
- Advisory Group finalized research, draft apology, and recommendations
Research findings in 4 key areas

1. Removal of voting rights

2. Exclusion from immigration

3. Restricting livelihoods through bylaws, licenses and labour regulations

4. Segregation in housing and public spaces
REMOVAL OF VOTING RIGHTS

• In 1886, Council disqualified the Chinese from voting in municipal elections
• As a result, Chinese were also denied entry into some key professions
• Chinese fought in the world wars which convinced the government to restore their voting rights
• Council restored voting rights in 1949
Council lobbied senior governments on discriminatory legislation such as Head Tax and the Chinese Immigration Act.
RESTRICTING LIVELIHOODS THROUGH BYLAWS, LICENSES AND LABOUR REGULATIONS

- Excluded Chinese from civic employment from 1890 until 1952
- Restrictive clauses with City contractors
- Costly fees to do business
- City Solicitors opposed discriminatory policies

The City hired its first Chinese worker in 1952.
SEGREGATION IN HOUSING AND PUBLIC SPACES

• Segregating from other population groups
• Proposal to remove Chinese and Japanese students from schools
• Crystal Pool – barring Chinese from public swimming pool
• Municipal Act of 1919 – restrict hiring ‘white waitresses’

In 1914, a resolution to remove Chinese and Japanese children from schools was brought to Vancouver City Council. The City Solicitor opposed the resolution and it was not enacted.

Chinese children and their parents were barred from the Crystal Pool which opened in 1928 and was segregated until 1945.
Draft apology

HDC working group drafted an apology and proposed a bilingual version.

The working group:

• reviewed past apologies and their impact
• drafted the apology including specific examples of past discrimination
• made reference to First Nations in recognition of the importance of reconciliation
Draft apology in English and Chinese

HDC Draft Apologies

12
Outreach – bilingual posters

You are invited to attend a
COMMUNITY FORUM:
Historical Discrimination Against Chinese People In Vancouver
This initiative is in response to a Council motion directing staff to:
• research on past civic laws, regulations and policies that discriminated against Chinese residents in Vancouver;
• consult with the Chinese community; and:
• recommend steps and actions in support of reconciliation, including a public acknowledgement and formal apology.
As space is limited, registration is required to attend the forum.
Please select one of the following:
Wednesday, May 17, 6 - 8 pm
Vancouver Public Library, Central Branch
350 West Georgia Street
Alma VanDusen and Peter Kaye Room
Wednesday, May 24, 6 - 8 pm
Vancouver City Hall, 453 West 12th Avenue
Ground Floor, Town Hall
Saturday, May 27, 10 am - 12 noon
SUCCESS Choi Hall, 28 West Pender Street
(conducted mainly in Chinese)
These forums will provide opportunities to inform interested public on the preliminary research findings and to gather feedback on potential steps and actions which can prevent discrimination against any individual or groups in the future.
RSVP: historical-discrimination-vancouver.eventbrite.ca
For more information: Phone 3-1-1 or email: hdc.info@vancouver.ca

On-site in Vancouver:
HDC 此

CITY OF VANCOUVER？HDC 此
Outreach – bilingual webpage

From exclusion to citizenship: historical discrimination against Chinese people in Vancouver

Chinese men in front of post office

Women standing in front of the Wong Wo Barbershop on East Pender Street

(PHOTO: N. Le Jeunesse, Vancouver Public Library 78382)
Community forums : May – October

Over 230 people participated in 4 community forums:

• Vancouver Public Library ( May 17)
• City hall ( May 24)
• SUCCESS Choir hall ( May 27)
• Chinese Benevolent Society ( October 21)
Community forum at VPL
Community forum at Choi Hall
Forum feedback

• Find ways to commemorate the history and contribution of the community
• Recognize the central role of Chinatown
• Create public awareness and reach out to the younger generation
• Work with other levels of government
• Acknowledge past discrimination and offer apology
Media reports – Sing Tao News and Ming Pao News
Community recommendations

Based on community input, the Advisory Group proposed 2 recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Acknowledge past discrimination and offer a formal apology

Recommendation #2: Strengthen relations with the Chinese Canadian community through legacy actions
Community recommendations

Area A: Priority Action
1. Establish a Legacy Working Group

Area B: Priority Actions
1. Publish HDC research
2. Work with schools to develop curricular materials
3. Enhance cultural programming
4. Designate space for story-telling
Community recommendations

Area B: Priority Actions (continue)

5. Strengthen communication and cultural competency
6. Convene public dialogues on anti-racism
7. Create annual scholarships
8. Support civic naming rights
Community recommendations

Area C: Conserve, commemorate and enhance living heritage and cultural assets

1. Initiate a process towards an UNESCO designation of World Heritage Site for Chinatown
2. Create a Chinatown Living Heritage & Cultural Assets Management Plan
3. Support Keefer Street Memorial Square Redesign
Staff recommendations

1. Adopt preliminary research report
2. Offer public acknowledgement and formal apology
3. Apology in Chinese delivered in dialect spoken by early Chinese immigrants
4. Direct staff to organize an Acknowledgement and Apology event
5. Staff to report back on Recommendation #2
6. Offer thanks to the HDC Advisory Group