

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on December 11, 2024

1. Support for Japanese Canadian Interpretive Centre at Hastings Park

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. From the late 1800s Japanese "Issei" immigrants to British Columbia found employment in fishing, lumber, and farming contributing to the growth of the province's nascent resource industries. These Issei settled and established themselves in historic communities throughout BC's coast and in Vancouver notably around the False Creek and Hastings Mills at Fairview and Powell Street respectively;
2. By the late 1930's, Japanese Canadians had well established themselves in British Columbia, with local-born "Nisei" finding success and assimilation in business and education, even enlisting to fight for the Canadian Forces in World War I. With 90% of Japanese Canadians living in British Columbia and 32% of the total population living in Vancouver, the cultural heart was centered in the area of Powell Street, known as Paueru-gai or formerly referred to Japantown, which nurtured community and commerce, education, spirituality, and the legendary champion Asahi baseball team;
3. Following Canada's declaration of war with Japan on February 16, 1942, Vancouver City Council unanimously resolved that "*Vancouver City Council representing the citizens of Canada's largest Pacific Coast City implores the Federal Government to remove all residents of Japanese racial origin and enemy aliens to areas of Canada well-removed from the Pacific Coast.*"¹ Subsequently, the Canadian government decreed all persons of Japanese racial origin living within 100 miles of the Pacific Coast be forcibly removed, detained and incarcerated without evidence, charge or trial, and dispossessed of their property and assets, in the name of national security;
4. From 1942 to 1943, prior to their incarceration away from the coast, over 8,000 Japanese Canadians including many Vancouverites were confined in livestock barns and exhibition halls at the Pacific National Exhibition at Hastings Park. Hospital patients with tuberculosis were transferred into a ward next to healthy women and children and some patients died there. These residents of Japanese descent were unable to return to the City of Vancouver until 1949, four years after the end of World War II, and after most of their assets had been liquidated (up to 1952) and reimbursed pennies on the dollar;

¹ Landscapes of Injustice--Vancouver Archives Vol 44: Council Minute Book, 1942-1943
https://landscapesofinjustice.uvic.ca/archive/media/TINA/facsimile/cvan_s031_box_23-d_vol_39.pdf

5. In 1988, the Government of Canada formally apologized to Japanese Canadians for wartime atrocities. In 2013, the City of Vancouver apologized “*for its complicity, its inaction, and for failing to protect her residents of Japanese descent,*” pledging to “*do all it can to ensure such injustices will not happen again to any of its residents, thereby upholding the principles of human rights, justice and equality now and in the future;*”²
6. The historic Livestock Barns at Hastings Park still stand today and remain a powerful and painful testament to past injustices:

*For many Japanese Canadians, this was a terrible, fearful experience. They were forcibly removed from their homes, lost all of their belongings and many families were separated. The conditions at Hastings Park were extremely primitive and unsanitary. The primary memory for many people was the horrible smell, followed by the noise, the boredom and the terrible food.*³

7. Despite some formal acknowledgements and plaques, the experience of Japanese Canadians in Hastings Park continues to be largely unknown to the general public. Civil society groups including National Association of Japanese Canadians, Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Tonari Gumi, Powell Street Festival Society and others have advocated and fundraised for a permanent and comprehensive commemorative project at Hastings Park acknowledging the 1942-1949 incarceration;
8. In an agreement dated July, 2024 the Pacific National Exhibition (the PNE) have acknowledged the significance of their location in the context of the 1942-1949 internment, and wish to license the construction of an interpretative monument, ramp and display booth (collectively, the “Interpretive Centre”) within Hastings Park in a portion of the Livestock Barns for a nominal license fee and in perpetuity to the Japanese Canadian Hastings Park Interpretive Centre Society (the licensee); and
9. The *Japanese Canadian Hastings Park Interpretive Centre Society* (JCHPICS) have developed an architectural plan and cost schedule for renovating an Interpretive Centre in the Livestock Barn (\$2.7m - \$3.3m) with partial funding from the *Japanese Canadian Legacy Society* (JCLS). They are currently and actively seeking an additional \$1m grant from the JCLS by year end 2024, and moving forward will require supplemental fundraising within the Japanese Canadian community and financial sponsorship from the City of Vancouver and senior governments.

² Apology for the City of Vancouver’s Role in the 1942 Internment of Japanese-Canadians, 2013
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20130924/documents/motionb7.pdf>

³ Japanese Canadian Hastings Park Commemoration and Education Project |
<http://hastingspark1942.ca/>

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT Council approves in principle, a commitment to support a Japanese Canadian Hastings Park Interpretive Centre, located within Hastings Park in a portion of the Livestock Barns, and subject to senior government agreements, partial funding thereof;

FURTHER THAT in contemplation of any support or direct funding contribution, Council direct staff to work with the Japanese Canadian Hastings Park Interpretive Centre Society and PNE and report back with further considerations for decision in Q1 2025;

AND FURTHER THAT Council empowers the Mayor to write to the appropriate Provincial and Federal government Minister(s) and Ministries, the *Japanese Canadian Legacy Society* and any other identified funding partners to advise them of Council's support for a Japanese Canadian Hastings Park Interpretive Centre.

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