City of New Westminster

R E P O R T

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

To:	Mayor W. Wright and Members of Council in Committee of the Whole	Date:	October 31, 2011
From:	Lisa Spitale, Director of Development Services	File:	#168573
Subject:	Chinese Reconciliation Process Progress Report		

RECOMMENDATION

THAT *Council receive this report for information.*

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the progress made in implementing the steps and actions in support of reconciliation with the Chinese community as contained in the Council Report of June 28, 2010.

SUMMARY

On June 28, 2010, Council received and unanimously endorsed a report containing 10 steps and actions in support of reconciliation with the Chinese community. The first two steps called for a public acknowledgement that City actions contributed to past injustices involving the Chinese community and a formal apology, in both English and Chinese, to the Chinese community for these injustices.

On September 20, 2010, the Mayor, at a Special Meeting of Council, publicly acknowledged that, based on a review of City records covering the period from 1860 to 1926, the City acted in a discriminatory manner towards the Chinese community. The Mayor then formally apologized to the Chinese community for City actions which contributed to discrimination and exclusion.

The City is actively working towards the other steps in support of reconciliation with the Chinese community, including creating a memorial on the New Westminster Secondary School site and exploring appropriate uses for the former Chinese Benevolent Association site at 824 Agnes Street. It is also augmenting the research and developing ways of demarcating the boundaries of the former Chinatowns and documenting and possibly protecting Chinese artefacts that have been unearthed during excavation work.

BACKGROUND

On May 21, 2009, Bill Chu, Chair and Founder, Canadians for Reconciliation Society, forwarded an e-mail to the City on the past policies of the BC Provincial Government towards the Chinese. This e-mail also made several references to the past policies and practices of the City of New Westminster.

At the Council meeting of June 1, 2009, Mr. Chu made a presentation. As part of this presentation, he requested that the City enter into a reconciliation process with the Chinese community.

At the Council meeting of July 13, 2009, Council approved the following motion:

> *Reconciliation with the Chinese community:*
>
> ***WHEREAS** Canadians for Reconciliation Society had made a presentation to Council on past treatment of the Chinese community in New Westminster;*
> ***WHEREAS** the City of New Westminster has created a Multiculturalism Advisory Committee and pursued policies that are opposed to all forms of racism and discrimination; and*
> ***WHEREAS** the Chinese community is an important part of the multicultural fabric of the City of New Westminster;*
> ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** staff research the history of racism and discrimination against the Chinese community and any role the City played in these events with attention paid to issues identified by Canadians for Reconciliation Society; and*
> ***BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the City conduct a consultation process with all Chinese groups and peoples involved in the City as to appropriate measures to be taken to address these long standing issues.*

The subsequent process involved the following three phases:

Phase 1: Research and Documentation

The first phase involved extensive research on the history of racism and discrimination against the Chinese community in New Westminster and the role, if any, that the City played in these events. This research, which took eight months to complete and covered the period from 1860 to 1926, indicated that the City discriminated against its Chinese community in two primary ways – i.e., restricting employment opportunities and making requests to the senior levels of government. Based on the research findings, Council directed City staff to enter into a discussion with the Chinese community around possible steps and actions in support of reconciliation.

Phase 2: Consultation

The second phase involved a consultation process with the Chinese community. This process included a public forum, an on-line feedback form to solicit input, and meetings with organizations which represent larger constituencies. The City's Multiculturalism Advisory Committee also played a role, as it reviewed the feedback form results and made a number of suggested actions for Council's consideration. In total, about 150 people were involved in the process.

Based on the consultation, the vast majority of participants felt that reconciliation was warranted, with many noting that it is a process and that its primary objective is the restoration of a relationship. Close to 50 suggestions were made in support of reconciliation; however, there were 10 suggestions that resonated with seven or more participants and were cited by organizations that represent larger constituencies.

Phase 3: Implementation

On June 28, 2010, Council received and unanimously endorsed a package of steps and actions in support of reconciliation with the Chinese community. In all, ten steps and actions were endorsed. For information about the steps and actions, as well as the progress made in implementing them, refer to the section entitled "Progress Summary." Given that some of the steps and actions were dependent on grant funding, other levels of government or partnership building, no timeframe was specified as to implementation.

EXISTING POLICY/PRACTICE

The City's Official Community Plan (1998) includes the following goals under Quality of Life Issues:

- *foster multicultural understanding and promote harmonious intercultural relations;*
- *continue to work towards meeting the cultural needs of the community; and*
- *promote New Westminster as a healthy community and encourage diversity at the neighbourhood scale and the provision of complete communities.*

In November 2007, Council established a Multiculturalism Advisory Committee (MAC). The purpose of this body, which has been meeting on a monthly basis since its inception, "is to promote multiculturalism and intercultural relations within the City of New Westminster and to foster engagement by all citizens in civic affairs and community life." One of its primary objectives is "to foster an awareness about and understanding of the City's multicultural population."

As a first task, the MAC revised the City's Multicultural Policy (drafted in April 1996). The revision cited diversity as a source of enrichment and strength and made specific reference to not condoning racism or discrimination. The MAC also developed a detailed implementation plan in support of the revised policy.

On October 20, 2008, the City, on behalf of ten other agencies, successfully applied for funding under the Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program. The key deliverable was a Community Partnership Development Charter which incorporated a shared vision, indicators of success and an action plan in support of creating a more welcoming and inclusive community.

Based on the Charter, the City coordinated a process whereby member agencies worked together to develop a proposal titled 'Reach Out New West … Greet, Inform, Connect.' This proposal and two subsequent proposals under the same funding stream have been approved for a total of $385,000. The initiatives include a Community Gateway (Welcome Ambassador) Project, an Immigrant Mentorship Program, a Newcomers' Guide to New Westminster and a Cultural Youth Popular Theatre Project. The Community Gateway and Mentorship initiatives have recently received an additional $100,000 in legacy funding.

On March 21, 2009, the City met with key representatives of the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) of Vancouver. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues which had arisen regarding the Chinese community in New Westminster and to identify areas where the City and the CBA could collaborate in the future.

On June 25, 2010, the City held a meeting of all settlement and integration agencies which provide programs and services in New Westminster. The purpose of this meeting was to share information and to explore ways of enhancing inter-agency collaboration and service coordination.

On December 4, 2010, the City provided organizational assistance and a venue in support of the 'Celebration of Opportunities' event, which raised awareness among new immigrants about available programs, services and supports in New Westminster.

The City also funds the Multicultural Festival, which annually involves over 20 cultural organizations and attracts over 10,000 people. It also established a Multicultural Awards Program, which recognizes the efforts of individuals and organizations for their work with newcomers and fostering understanding, acceptance and positive relations among people of different cultural backgrounds.

PROGRESS SUMMARY

The following provides a progress summary on the implementation of the ten steps and actions in support of reconciliation with the Chinese community:

- ***Make a public acknowledgement that City actions contributed to past injustices involving the Chinese community in New Westminster.***

- ***Make a public apology, in both English and Chinese, to the Chinese community for these injustices.***

  On September 20, 2010, the Mayor, at a Special Meeting of Council, publicly acknowledged that, based on a review of City records covering the period from 1860 to 1926, the City acted in a discriminatory manner towards the Chinese community. The Mayor then formally apologized to the Chinese community for City actions which contributed to discrimination and exclusion and pledged to work together in a spirit of friendship, community and co-operation to build stronger bonds and lasting relations.

  Based on a review of the above cited records, City staff identified bylaws that they deemed to be discriminatory and/or exclusionary in nature. City staff then prepared a Report to Council which documented the bylaws and recommended that Council repeal them. On February 14, 2011, Council unanimously voted in favour of a motion to repeal the bylaws in question.

- ***Review the current use of the Chinese Benevolent Association site on Agnes Street and explore more appropriate and respectful uses for the site.***

  City staff have held discussions to explore future uses for 824 Agnes Street. In 2009, a temporary off leash dog area was created on this property, as well as an adjacent property at 823 Carnarvon Street, as part of a Downtown Nuisance Abatement Strategy. The intent of this strategy was to deter criminal activity and loitering from occurring.

  Based on the above discussions, City staff will seek Council's approval to retain the services of a landscape architect to work with the City and the Chinese community to explore appropriate uses for 824 Agnes Street. This work item will be placed in the City's 2012 Capital Plan. The uses could include a Chinese garden and historic artefacts and interpretative signage to tell the story of Chinese settlement in New Westminster, including the former Chinatowns. A process will be established to solicit input, including a possible design charette. Discussions could also occur with

the City's Chinese sister city of Lijiang, and its many Chinese friendship and economic and cultural relationship cities.

- ***Use the recently located land use maps which demarcate the boundaries of the former Chinatowns in Downtown New Westminster to inform ground altering excavations within these boundaries, with the purpose of unearthing and protecting historical artefacts related to Chinese settlement.***

  The City is currently in the process of developing a Post 1846 Historic Artefact Recovery Policy. This policy will identify potential 'sensitive' sites which may contain historic artefacts in the ground. If artefacts are unearthed, museum staff will attend to determine if an archaeologist should be brought in to assist in artefact documentation and possible recovery. Regarding identification, the sites will be mapped on the City's GIS system. As part of the Chinese Reconciliation Process, a number of archival land use maps showing the location of the former Chinatowns and Chinese buildings (see appendix #1) were located. This information will inform the identification of potential sensitive sites.

- ***Work with the Province and the School District to explore opportunities for a memorial at the former Chinese cemetery site and explore ways to erect plaques or signage at the sites of the former Chinatowns in Downtown New Westminster.***

  As part of the negotiations related to a new secondary school on the New Westminster Secondary School site, a memorial is embedded in the legal framework with School District #40 (New Westminster). The City and the School District will both contribute up to $125,000 towards the memorial. Regarding its design, a process will be established to gain input.

  Regarding recognizing the former Chinatowns, discussions have been held with the City's Museum and Archives regarding ways of demarcating the sites, including installing interpretative signage and hanging banners on lampposts (see appendix #2). As part of the Downtown Mosaic Public Art Project, funded by the former New Westminster Community Development Society, one of the mosaic tiles will depict the history of Chinese settlement. There is the possibility of additional mosaic tiles dedicated to this subject matter if other sources of funding can be realized.

- ***Explore ways to further augment the research that has been completed to date, including incorporating a Chinese perspective. These ways could include accessing grant moneys and working with academic institutions and cultural organizations.***

  The City contacted Henry Yu, Director of the Initiative for Student Teaching and Research in Chinese Canadian Studies, University of British Columbia. The purpose

of the contact was to identify potential grants and to explore possible partnership opportunities with regard to further augmenting the research. Professor Yu indicated that granting bodies and academic institutions may not be too receptive, as the research is focused on the past and is rooted in the negative. He also questioned how much new information could be gleaned from the ethnic media. Professor Yu felt that the research, if conducted, should focus on how the Chinese were an integral part of the community, both then and now; how much progress has been made; and what stills needs to happen. Regarding impacts, he felt that they could best be addressed through oral histories, which would be more suitable for a museum exhibit. He also felt that there may be students who could take on aspects of this work as part of their research projects.

City staff have continued to review City records to identify polices, practices and regulations that were discriminatory and/or exclusionary in nature. This research covers the period from 1927 to 1950 and the results will be posted on the City's website. Efforts will also be made to translate key pieces of information in Chinese.

- ***Explore ways of developing a museum exhibit showcasing the Chinese Reconciliation Process and the results of the research and consultation.***

  The City's Museum and Archives, as part of its Neighbourhood Exhibits series which is planned for the new Downtown Civic Facility, is interested in profiling the City's former Chinatowns. This exhibit could explore the history and culture of these neighbourhoods through historic artefacts, newspaper clippings, photos and stories. It could also explore the factors which contributed to their demise and document the Chinese Reconciliation Process, including the City's historic apology to its Chinese community. In the interim, the City could consider a temporary or virtual exhibit. With regard to developing the exhibit, there would be opportunities for the Chinese community to make a contribution, as well as the City's Chinese sister city of Lijiang, and its many Chinese friendship and economic and cultural relationship cities.

- ***Store the information related to the Chinese Reconciliation Process on the City's official website, possibly under Social Planning, and explore ways of translating this information into Chinese. This information would include the research and consultation findings and would serve as an educational resource and reference for other jurisdictions.***

  Background reports, presentations and research findings are available under Social Planning on the City's official website. The official acknowledgement and formal apology are available in both English and Chinese. Efforts are underway to access grant funding and/or retain the services of an intern student to translate key information into Chinese. The City has received numerous inquiries about the process

and the research findings. On April 21, 2011, it also hosted about 40 Grade 10 students from Windermere Secondary School in Vancouver. The students met with the Mayor and learned from City staff about the process and research findings.

- ***Work with the School District to explore opportunities for school curriculum development related to the contributions of the Chinese community in New Westminster and the Chinese Reconciliation Process.***

  City staff, in consultation with the School District, held discussions with Citizenship and Immigration Canada about conducting a research and documentation project to inform relevant sections of the school curriculum. More specifically, the project would review and adapt the curriculum to be more reflective of the history, settlement, heritage and contributions of the different cultural communities, including the Chinese, in New Westminster. Given the development of three new schools and a major proposal under the Neighbourhoods of Learning project, an application was not submitted to undertake the project. City staff, in consultation with the School District, will continue to explore grant opportunities related to curriculum development.

- ***Continue to consult with the Chinese community around the implementation of the reconciliation steps and actions and to explore opportunities to work together on their implementation.***

  Several of the above cited steps and actions will include active consultation with the Chinese community. As examples, the memorial on the New Westminster Secondary School site and the commemoration at 824 Agnes Street will be seeking input into the design and content. Discussions could also occur with the City's Chinese sister city of Lijiang, and its many Chinese friendship and economic and cultural relationship cities.

<u>Other Actions</u>

Based on a request for feedback into the City's Street Naming Process and Potential Place Names, the City's Multiculturalism Advisory Committee (MAC) made a request "that Council authorize a review of the list of potential place names and that this review consider multicultural factors and other sources of information (that identify contributions made by cultural and ethnic individuals and/or communities) in researching potential place names in the policy." On April 11, 2011, Council unanimously endorsed a motion in support of the MAC request.

The City is exploring becoming a signatory to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Declaration of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination. To become a signatory, the City must develop a plan of action to

implement the commitments to reduce racism and discrimination as contained in the Declaration. As part of the consultation in support of reconciliation with the Chinese community, the Chinese Canadian National Council requested that the City become a signatory to the Declaration.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are many potential social and economic benefits to the City resulting from the Chinese Reconciliation Process. These benefits include enhanced relations with the Chinese community, both within and outside New Westminster, and stronger economic ties, which could assist the City in securing contracts with Chinese companies and in appealing to Chinese tourists.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Development Services Department has worked closely with the Museum and Archives and the Public Library, as well as other City Departments, as necessary.

CONCLUSION

The Chinese Reconciliation Process has been well received by the Chinese community. The steps and actions in support of reconciliation are based on the research findings and are consistent with the consultation results. Their implementation should lead to enhanced relations and stronger economic ties with the Chinese community. As stated in the original Council motion of July 13, 2009: “the Chinese community is an important part of the multicultural fabric of the City of New Westminster.”

John Stark
Senior Social Planner

Approved for Presentation to Council

Lisa Spitale,
Director of Development Services

Paul Daminato,
City Administrator

Appendix #1:
Boundaries of the Former Chinatowns in New Westminster

Appendix #2:
Possible Ways of Demarcating the Former Chinatowns in New Westminster