CITY OF VANCOUVER

RACIAL AND ETHNO-CULTURAL EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

September 10, 2026

A meeting of the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee was held on Thursday, September 10, 2026, at 5:46 pm, in the Cascadia Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall, and via electronic means.

PRESENT:	Steph Kallstrom, Chair Harjyot Banwait Young Joe Lydia Tang Naina Varshney
ABSENT:	Victoria Barclay (Leave of Absence) Alexandra Gunn Pavandeep Toor (Leave of Absence)
ALSO PRESENT:	S/Sgt. Chad McRae, Vancouver Police Department April Sumter-Freitag, Social Planner, Social Policy and Projects; Staff Liaison
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE:	Stefanie Panesar, Meeting Coordinator

WELCOME

The Chair acknowledged we are on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples. We thank them for having cared for this land and look forward to working with them in partnership as we continue to build this great city together.

Leave of Absence Requests

MOVED by Lydia Tang
SECONDED by Harjyot Banwait

> THAT the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee approve leaves of absence for Victoria Barclay and Pavandeep Toor, for this meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Lydia Tang
SECONDED by Harjyot Banwait

> THAT the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee approve the minutes from the meeting of Thursday, July 23, 2026, as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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VARY AGENDA

MOVED by Lydia Tang
SECONDED by Harjyot Banwait

> *THAT the Committee vary the agenda to deal with item 4. Liaison Updates, prior to item 2. Motion – Language Access VPD.*

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
AND BY THE REQUIRED MAJORITY

For clarity, the minutes are recorded in chronological order.

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1. Inclusive Playground Design Presentation

Staff from the Park Board provided a presentation and responded to questions.

4. Liaison Updates

All liaisons present provided updates and responded to questions and comments.

2. Motion – Language Access VPD

After discussion by the Committee, the motion “Advancing Language Access in Vancouver Police Services” was

MOVED by Young Joe
SECONDED by Lydia Tang

> WHEREAS
>
> 1. The Race and Ethno-Cultural Equity (RECE) Advisory Committee recognizes that equitable access to public services requires meaningful communication with all residents, including people with limited English proficiency (LEP);

2. Vancouver is one of Canada's most linguistically diverse cities, and many residents rely on languages other than English when accessing public services;

3. Language barriers may prevent LEP residents from reporting crimes, seeking police assistance, understanding police procedures, accessing victim services, participating fully in investigations, and exercising their legal rights;

4. Effective language access requires more than conversational proficiency in another language and should be supported by qualified interpretation and translation practices that promote accuracy, impartiality, confidentiality, informed communication, and equitable access to policing services;

5. Advances in artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted interpreting and translation technologies have created new opportunities to improve timely access to language services, particularly when qualified human interpreters are not immediately available, but these technologies require appropriate policies, safeguards, human oversight, and evaluation to ensure accuracy, privacy, confidentiality, and equitable outcomes;

6. Bilingual employees who have not had their language proficiency formally assessed and who have not received interpreter training should not be expected to assume the role of professional interpreters, as interpreting requires specialized skills, ethical standards, and role boundaries that differ from the responsibilities of police officers;

7. Relying on bilingual police officers as interpreters may place both officers and community members in difficult situations due to role conflict, power imbalances, and the absence of professional standards governing interpretation;

8. Police officers increasingly interact with a range of language access resources, including in-person interpreters, remote professional interpreters, and AI-assisted interpreting technologies, and require training to use these resources appropriately, effectively, and in accordance with legal, ethical, operational, and privacy requirements;

9. The Vancouver Police Department is governed by the Vancouver Police Board, which has the authority to establish policies governing the Department;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity (RECE) Advisory Committee recommends that Vancouver City Council direct the Mayor to write a letter to the Vancouver Police Board requesting:

A. Development and adoption of a comprehensive Language Access Policy for the Vancouver Police Department to ensure meaningful access to policing services for residents with limited English proficiency.

B. Consultation with immigrant, refugee, Indigenous, and ethnocultural communities, professional interpreters, language access experts, technology specialists, and relevant community organizations in developing the policy.

C. Consideration of including, at a minimum:

- standards for timely access to qualified interpretation services, remote interpreting services, and translation of essential public information;
- guidance that distinguishes bilingual communication from professional interpretation and recognizes that bilingual language ability alone does not qualify an employee to act as an interpreter;
- procedures limiting the use of bilingual police officers as interpreters unless they have demonstrated language proficiency, received appropriate interpreter training, and are acting within a clearly defined policy that addresses ethics, confidentiality, impartiality, and role boundaries;
- guidance on the appropriate use of AI-assisted interpreting and translation technologies, including circumstances in which qualified human interpreters should be preferred or required, standards for human oversight, and processes for evaluating the accuracy, reliability, privacy, security, and effectiveness of AI-enabled language access tools;
- staff training on working effectively with professional interpreters, remote interpreting services, and AI-assisted interpreting technologies, including when each is appropriate, their respective limitations, privacy and confidentiality considerations, culturally responsive communication, and effective communication with residents who have limited English proficiency; and
- mechanisms for ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and community feedback regarding language access services and the use of emerging language access technologies.

D. Written response to Vancouver City Council within 12 months outlining consideration of this recommendation, any actions taken or planned to improve language access, and, where applicable, an anticipated timeline for developing and implementing a Language Access Policy.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Advisory Committee Annual Report – 2026

MOVED BY Lydia Tang
SECONDED BY Harjyot Banwait

THAT the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee approve the annual report for the period of January 1 to November 1, 2026, as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. Subcommittee Updates

None.

6. New Business

The Committee expressed their thanks to the staff liaisons, Council liaison, external liaisons, guests, staff presenters, and clerks for their time this Council term.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Young Joe
SECONDED by Lydia Tang

THAT this meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The Committee adjourned at 7:07 pm.

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