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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 6/24/2022 12:23:57 PM
Subject: Council briefing - June 27
Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - Commemoration Framework development update - RTS 14868 (2022-06-20).pdf

Good afternoon Mayor and Council,

We presently have an hour held in your calendars on Monday afternoon for a briefing on our ongoing work to develop a City-wide framework for commemoration and asset naming. As you may recall, we recently shared a comprehensive memo from Sandra Singh summarizing the context and current status of this project. I have attached that memo for reference.

Given the recent written update and in consideration of the intense demands on your time over the next five weeks, we are going to forego the staff briefing on this topic on Monday and will clear that time in your calendars.

However, should you have any questions regarding this work, Sandra and her team are available to provide additional information as may be helpful.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
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City of Vancouver
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

June 20, 2022

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Maria Pontikis, Director, Civic Engagement and Communications
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office
Theresa O'Donnell, Director of Planning, PDS
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering
Donnie Rosa, General Manager, Board of Parks and Recreation
Christina de Castell, Chief Librarian, VPL

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Commemoration Framework: Guiding Principles, Vision & Emerging Priorities

RTS #: 14868

PURPOSE

This memo provides an update on ACCS and Parks and Recreation (Park Board) efforts to develop a shared, city-wide Commemoration Framework.

BACKGROUND

Context

A Worldwide Reckoning in Commemoration

Today, cities worldwide are grappling with public calls to action to address inequitable and inaccurate representation in the commemorative landscape, from monuments to naming. As statues are toppling, cities are stumbling through complex and charged terrain, attempting to reorient commemorative approaches towards reconciliation, equity, and redress.

In response to public calls for action, cities are reviewing problematic monuments and commemorative place names, and developing frameworks to guide the creation, funding, and stewardship of new civic commemorative assets. Cities are endeavouring to reckon with difficult histories without reducing community representations to their suffering alone, and to foster connection between peoples while centring equity-denied communities most impacted by colonial violence and dispossession.

Definitions

“Commemoration” is an intentional act of acknowledging the memory of people, places, events and ideas. This can be public, private, national, local, tangible or intangible, monumental or modest in scale, temporary or permanent and can be represented in a range of forms, including monuments, memorials, plaques, artworks, places, ceremonies, and events.

“Civic Memory Practices” include commemoration in the public realm and reflect an institutional and collective interpretation of cultural values. Acts of public commemoration reflect community cultural values through how we collectively choose to remember and honour the past; these narratives are supported through the naming of streets, parks and other civic assets, and represented in monuments, memorials, and plaques.

Current Challenges

Existing City and Park Board policies are not equipped to support civic memory practices and commemoration that reflects organizational commitments to truth and reconciliation, decolonization, equity, or cultural redress. Currently, the City and Park Board guidelines on the donations of public art, monuments and memorials offer limited and imperfect guidance; and the related Council Committees — Public Art Committee and the Civic Asset Naming Committee — are not adequately resourced to deal with the complexities of this work.

In the absence of a comprehensive Commemoration Policy Framework, Vancouver’s reliance on donations favours communities that have funds and access to decision-makers, resulting in an incomplete and often inaccurate commemorative landscape that perpetuates historic and cultural erasure.

Policy Development Direction

The City’s 10 year culture plan, *Culture|Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts & Culture* (D3.G3.A3) and the *VanPlay Playbook: Vancouver’s Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan* (G.8.2) each contain actions directing City and Park Board staff to work together to develop a joint monuments and memorials framework.

The proposed framework in development and administrative policies will reflect City and Park Board commitments to decolonization and reconciliation, address pervasive patterns of erasing Host Nations’ and exclusion of equity-denied communities’ histories in the commemorative landscape, and support commemorative practices that foster a more equitable sense of belonging and connection across all communities.

DISCUSSION

Scope

The proposed framework in development will establish an overarching set of guiding principles, vision, and priorities to guide commemoration, and two administrative policies on (a) monuments, memorials, and plaques; and (b) naming and renaming, including Indigenous naming.

The framework will also inform subsequent work on wayfinding and signage, functional commemoration such as water fountains or street furniture, cultural heritage sites and assets, Indigenous design principles, memorial plantings, and events that are city-led, supported, and permitted. This policy will not include fundraising, sponsorship, and development programs.

The Park Board intends to suspend the development of new commemorative works, donations, and naming during the framework and policy development. Exceptions to this suspension include Host Nations' pilot park naming projects. City staff recommends a concurrent suspension. Ongoing work to thoughtfully address commemorative flashpoints will inform the work and be informed by the framework.

Work Program and Timeline

In March 2022, both City Council and the Park Board were provided memos outlining a four-phase development plan for a City and Park Board Commemoration Framework. The memo outlined the scope of work, Phase 1 preliminary work and a two-year work program. The plan will require a comprehensive Host Nations consultation and an equity-oriented public engagement process.

Phase 1 - Concept + Questions (Q1-Q2 2022): Completed

Staff have completed the following preliminary research, Host Nations consultation, and public engagement activities:

Research

- Literature Review: reviewed 30+ academic and professional sources from commemoration, heritage, public art, and Indigenous planning fields.
- Jurisdictional Scan¹: reviewed 20 cities' and 2 provinces' approaches, conducting interview with 5 jurisdictions and reviewing 100+ government reports and engagement materials, as well as news and academic sources.
- Inventory: staff undertook work to tag and categorize commemorative assets registered in the City's public art registry and the Park Board's commemorative registry.

¹ Staff interviewed peers in Toronto, Victoria (BC), Auckland, Los Angeles, and the province of Saskatchewan, and reviewed sources from Toronto, Victoria, Halifax, Auckland, Los Angeles, New York, Durham (NC), Richmond (VA), Chicago, Philadelphia, Charlottesville, Baltimore, New Orleans, and San Francisco.

Consultation and Engagement

- Host Nations Consultation²: Initiated referrals with all three Nations, conducted two meetings with staff representatives from the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, interviewed one Musqueam Nation member, and were included in 8 meetings with Nations on related commemorative issues and policy matters.
- Focus Groups and Interviews: conducted equity-oriented engagement with three focus groups organized by racial/ ethnocultural identity: Black/ African Descent (5); People of Colour (7); White (8); and 7 interviews with community members, historians, academics, artists, and related field professionals.
- City Council Advisories: presented to 9 Council Advisory Committees: Public Art, Civic Asset Naming, Arts and Culture, Urban Indigenous People, Racial and Ethnocultural Equity, Persons with Disabilities, 2SLGBTQ2+, and Families/Youth City Council advisory committees. The Seniors committee declined.

Research Summary

Equity-Centred Framework Development Approaches

Contemporary municipal commemoration frameworks are initiated in response to public calls to address problematic colonial memorials and inequitable commemorative landscapes.

Approaches fall broadly within three categories: (1) equity-focused forms of innovative community and artist-driven engagement with diverse publics, (2) research and public education initiatives that engage communities in exploring more accurate and diverse histories, and (3) pilot programs that aim to address inequitable representation in the commemorative landscape.

Cities invested significant resources to ensure more equity-oriented, comprehensive public engagement. For example, the City of Toronto invested \$500,000 in public engagement and the City of Los Angeles sought matching funds from foundation and university partners.

Renamings and Removals

Cities have considered deaccessioning commemorative works to colonial figures who advocated for colonial or racist policies or enacted violence or oppressive acts in order to address the harm that they cause to Indigenous nations and equity-denied communities.

Cities have not taken these actions lightly or quickly, and typically consider three options 1) rename/ remove; 2) retain with reinterpretive modifications; 3) take no action/ keep as is.

Criteria commonly used to evaluate options included the following:

- Merit (values alignment, principal legacy of the figure, historic accuracy, aesthetic value, and landscape fairness which evaluates harm to impacted communities);
- Impact (the degree of harm to Nations and equity-denied communities, opportunities for public learning); and
- Feasibility (civic authority, staff and financial implications, impact to City services, political support, public consensus—both for equity-denied communities, residents and businesses impacted by renamings, and the broader public).

² Consultation is used here to acknowledge that the Host Nations are rightsholders on these lands. Staff recognize that consultation can carry connotations of minimal, arms-length relationship. We use the term here with the intent to affirm, rather than minimize the role of the Nations.

Preliminary research findings informed the development of the first draft of the guiding principles, vision, and emerging priorities, which were tested in preliminary consultation with Host Nations and public engagement.

Consultation and Engagement Summary

Host Nations Consultation

Across the meetings with the Host Nations, common themes emerged: supporting Host Nations' commemoration, reckoning with colonial histories, naming and renaming, and process and protocols.

Nations reaffirmed the necessity to prioritize commemoration that centers their self-determination and cultural presence. Process and protocols are key, as they establish and renew the relationship between governments, peoples, and places.

Reckoning with colonial histories was a shared priority, but diverse perspectives were shared on which approaches best advance Host Nations' interests when considering renamings, removals, and reinterpretations of colonial commemoration. Opportunities for truth-telling should be centred in all of these approaches. Reckonings must centre victims and families and avoid triggering those already living with intergenerational trauma, while working to engage publics in a more complete understanding of our collective histories.

Naming and renaming can contribute to language continuity and revitalization efforts, but must be carried out with great care. Rushed processes in past naming work hindered opportunities for relationship building, learnings of history and languages, and public education.

In all work with the Nations, process and protocol is key. Rushed, under-resourced efforts cause harm and damage relations. Centring reciprocity, working to reduce burdens on the Nations, adequately resourcing City requests, and honoring protocols will build stronger relationships and advance goals of decolonization and reconciliation.

Public Engagement

Common themes and distinct issues arose from the focus groups, interviews, and committee meetings.

Across all groups, community members prioritized taking direction from the Nations on commemoration. People expressed support for trauma-informed approaches to truth-telling and public education. Additionally, participants expressed interest in reinterpreting existing commemorative works and creating new commemorative works that could challenge the normalization of White people as morally superior or the primary founders of this place, while also creating opportunities for people of European descent to explore their unique ethnocultural lineages and experiences. Across groups, communities expressed a desire for ethnocultural groups of all races to have equitable opportunities to see themselves reflected in a shared commemorative landscape.

As participants expressed interest in creating commemorative landscapes reflective of diverse histories, they sought to uplift equity-denied communities' brilliance but acknowledge pain. They supported increased representation of broad communities and movement without over-focussing on singular figures. Participants sought processes that supported shared conversations and strengthened connections across communities, particularly equity-seeking

communities who feel that they have been forced into competition with each other by City actions.

A significant priority was placed on the need for spaces where communities can gather, self-organize, celebrate, mourn, and commemorate, particularly culturally-safe spaces for equity-denied communities. Participants pointed to the value of temporary, experiential, and evolving forms instead of an exclusive focus on permanent, monumental forms of commemoration. Participants also expressed interest in functional commemorations that meet the daily needs of equity-denied communities.

Draft Guiding Principles, Vision, and Emerging Priorities

Host Nations consultation and public engagement offered high degrees of affirmation for draft versions of the guiding principles, vision and emerging priorities, while offering new points of emphasis, particularly on spaces to gather and commemorative forms. As such, staff adjusted the vision and emerging priorities to emphasize the importance of Host Nations protocols, the value of temporary works, the need for trauma-informed approaches, and a focus on avoiding tokenizing and ableist framing. The revised drafts of the foundational elements proposed are:

Guiding Principles

- Self-Determination
- Reciprocity
- Integrity
- Equity and Accessibility
- Learning and Unlearning
- Artistic and Cultural Practice

Vision

Civic memory practices reckon with difficult histories and combat erasure, equitably celebrate and honour significant figures and events, and make space to remember together.

Emerging Priorities

1. Make Space for Host Nations to Assert Self-Determined Memory Practices
 - a. Enable Host Nations' visibility
 - b. Protocols to guide commemorative processes
 - c. Shift permanence paradigms - temporary works as a portal to engagement across generations
 - d. Address naming as relationship-making and place-keeping
2. Reckon With Colonial History + Narratives Celebrating Conquest
 - a. Develop thoughtful approaches to contending with colonial names and monuments
 - b. Engage communities in relearning histories in trauma-informed ways
3. Centre Equity-Denied Communities Stories + Memory Practices
 - a. Uplift equity-denied communities' brilliance and complexity
 - b. Expand forms of commemoration to reflect diverse memory practices
 - c. Avoid ableist triumph narratives
4. Foster Belonging, Multiplicity, + Connection Across Communities
 - a. Prioritize commemorative space for ongoing memory-making
 - b. Support memorials that honour and heal

Framework Development Process: Consultation and Engagement Directions

Preliminary engagement offered key directions on the design of consultation and engagement to further test and explore the vision, values, and emerging priorities with the broader public.

Host Nations' consultation findings offered critical directions to plan for fulsome consultation and engagement in 2023. Consultation indicated that the importance of relational, comprehensive, funded consultation methods that will advance the Nations' self-determination.

Stakeholder engagement findings highlighted the need to design and resource an intersectional, culturally safer, trauma-informed approach. They point to important goals: to not rush sensitive work with equity-denied communities, to fund equity-denied communities to lead their own engagements, and to engage broader publics in critical explorations of civic memory practices.

Staff will explore significant collaborations with universities, art museums, artist-run centres, foundations, heritage organizations, and Indigenous and ethnocultural nonprofits.

Considerations of both immediate and long-term program investment will be integral to the development of a Commemoration Framework. To ensure reciprocity with the Nations, and adequate resources for equity-oriented engagement, staff will prepare a budget that may request support from operating and capital budgets for both City's Arts, Culture, and Community Services and Park Board's Decolonization, Arts and Culture department.

Financial Considerations

Staff will work within existing resource allocations for 2022. Ahead of the 2023 budget process, staff will work to determine if existing operating and capital sources are available to support the work, alongside partnerships with other institutions. If there is still a need for funding support, staff anticipate returning to Council and Park Board to recommend operating funding for Phase 3 consultation and engagement needs, subject to available funding sources and Council and Park Board approval. It is anticipated that a program to address incomplete commemorative landscapes, and support for Commemoration that centres Host Nations and equity-denied communities – without reliance on donations -- will require significant, dedicated investments.

NEXT STEPS

- Park Board are considering the draft framework at their meeting on June 20, 2022.
- ACCS staff will provide a briefing to Council on June 27, 2022.
- Staff will complete research, finalize inventories of City and Park Board commemorative assets, and work on developing partnerships.
- Staff will further work to develop a decolonial consultation and equity-oriented engagement process with partnership and budget proposals.
- Staff will return to the City Council and the Park Board for further direction and funding support in due course.

FINAL REMARKS

The draft Guiding Principles, Vision, and Emerging Priorities outlined in this memo will guide development of an overarching proposed Commemoration Framework and two administrative policies on (a) monuments, memorials, and plaques; and (b) naming and renaming, including Indigenous naming, to address systemic exclusion and foster a more equitable commemorative landscape. Requisite time and resources will continue to be needed to organize this work in thoughtful, effective, equity-oriented approaches. With time and care, Vancouver is positioned to address generations of erasure and exclusion within the commemorative landscape and

develop transformative commemorative practices that will position it as a leader in a rapidly changing and high-profile area of municipal planning.

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me directly at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca and we will provide response through the weekly Council Q&A.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandra Singh'.

Sandra Singh, General Manager
Arts, Culture, and Community Services
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