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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)

Date: 8/9/2024 7:33:43 AM

Subject: Joy Kogawa House - apology

Attachments: City of Vancouver Statement Joy Kogawa - Final.pdf
KH Website Frequently Asked Questions.pdf

Good morning Mayor and Council,

I am writing to share the attached statement of apology that I will be issuing on behalf of City staff for the failure to acknowledge of documented history of sexual abuse by Gordon Goichi Nakayama - an issue that emerged as part of work on the Joy Kogawa House. This apology is being offered following engagement with impacted members of the community.

The background on this matter is as follows:

- The City of Vancouver has been the title holder of the [Joy Kogawa House](#) since 2016, when ownership of the house was transferred from the Land Conservancy of BC. The house is leased to the Historic Joy Kogawa House Society which operates the facility;
- In July 2022, City staff put forward a report for Public Hearing recommending Council approve a Heritage Revitalization Agreement and Development Permit for the Joy Kogawa House in commemoration of Joy Kogawa's legacy as a poet, novelist, and activist;
- Staff withdrew the report prior to the public hearing following advocacy from the Japanese Canadian community when it became evident that the house also represents a painful reminder of the sexual abuse perpetrated by Joy Kogawa's father and previous owner of this building, [former Anglican Priest Gordon Goichi Nakayama](#);
- City staff acknowledge that we inadvertently contributed to erasing the experiences of many survivors and their families, predominantly from the Japanese Canadian community.

The attached statement will be posted on the City's website and will also be shared on the Historic Joy Kogawa House Society website and community newsletters on or after August 15th. Additional information is provided in the attached FAQ document.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Branislav Henselmann, Deputy General Manager, ACCS at branislav.henselmann@vancouver.ca.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
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10/22/2024



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwəta+ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

This statement will be posted on the City's website (news section) and will also be shared the Society website and community newsletters.

Audience: Japanese Canadian Community in Vancouver

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Content Warning: The following statement includes references to child sexual abuse. Links to support resources are included below.

Statement of Apology related to Gordon Goichi Nakayama Sexual Abuse and the Joy Kogawa House

August 2024

Today, the City Manager, Paul Mochrie shared the following statement of apology on behalf of the staff of the City of Vancouver:

“The City of Vancouver has been the title holder of the [Joy Kogawa House](#) since 2016, when ownership of the house was transferred from the Land Conservancy of BC.

In July 2022, City staff put forward a report for Public Hearing recommending Council approve a Heritage Revitalization Agreement and Development Permit for the Joy Kogawa house. The aim was to support its long-term preservation and implement necessary safety and accessibility upgrades.

City staff withdrew the report prior to the public hearing following advocacy from the Japanese Canadian community and paused the heritage designation process. It became evident that the house, while celebrating Joy Kogawa’s literary contributions, also represents a painful reminder of the sexual abuse perpetrated by her father and previous owner, [former Anglican Priest Gordon Goichi Nakayama](#). His admission of guilt in 1994 is now widely acknowledged.

The City was unaware of Gordon Goichi Nakayama’s abuse when it purchased the property in 2016. Had this been known, City staff would have endeavoured to address it much earlier.

Joy Kogawa’s legacy as a poet, novelist, and activist stands distinct from her father’s reprehensible actions. Nevertheless, City staff acknowledge that by not including Gordon Goichi Nakayama’s sexual abuse as part of the house’s history in the 2022 Council report, City staff inadvertently contributed to erasing the experiences of many survivors, and their families, predominantly from the Japanese Canadian community.

For this omission, City staff extend a heartfelt apology to the survivors of Gordon Goichi Nakayama’s abuse, and their families. City staff recognize this was a missed opportunity to publicly acknowledge the lasting harm caused by Gordon Goichi Nakayama as part of the full truth and history of the Joy Kogawa House.

While the City remains committed to facilitating cultural use of the House and permitting necessary renovations, staff will continue to pause the heritage designation process. This pause aims to prioritize restoration efforts in collaboration with the survivor community in a trauma-informed way.

City staff are committed to including the history of Gordon Goichi Nakayama's abuse in all future reports and documentation concerning the house. City staff also commit to ongoing, open dialogue with the Japanese Canadian community. For more information about the City's work on the Joy Kogawa House, please refer to our [Q&A document](#)."

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE HOUSE

Acclaimed author Joy Kogawa is best known for her novel *Obasan* (1981), based on her family's story of the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II. She has worked extensively to educate the public about this dark period in Canadian history and the need for government redress.

In 1942, six-year-old Joy and her family were forcibly displaced from their home (now known as the Joy Kogawa House) under the War Measures Act. The Canadian Government authorized the confiscation of property from nearly 22,000 Canadians of Japanese descent, leaving them dispossessed.

From 2005 to 2006, Ms. Kogawa lent her support to a community campaign that saved her childhood home from demolition. To preserve it as a cultural and historic asset, the City purchased the property in 2016, when the previous owner – The Land Conservancy of BC – was undergoing bankruptcy proceedings. Currently, the house is managed by the non-profit organization Historic Joy Kogawa House Society. Among its purposes, the Society operates as a place of community-based literary creation and connection and aims to preserve the home as a centre of cultural heritage, healing and reconciliation.

RESOURCES

Sexual Assault Support Resources:

[Healing Fund for Japanese Canadians](#)

- For those directly and indirectly harmed by the clergy sexual abuse of the former Anglican Priest Gordon Goichi Nakayama.
Email: jcworkinggroup@gmail.com

[Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre](#)

- 24 Hour Crisis Line: 604-255-6344
- Workshops and Resources: 604-255-6228

Japanese Canadian Cultural Redress Support Resources:

[Japanese Canadian Legacies Society - Japanese Canadians Survivors Health & Wellness Fund](#)

- For Japanese Canadians displaced and mistreated by the BC Government during World War II. Outreach works in BC and the Territories: <https://jcwellness.org/outreachworkers/bcteam/>

August 2024

City of Vancouver Kogawa House Q&A

What is the City of Vancouver's relationship to Joy Kogawa House?

The City of Vancouver is the owner of the property at 1450 W 64th Avenue in the Marpole neighbourhood, also known as Joy Kogawa House. To preserve a cultural and historic community asset, the City purchased this property in 2016, when the previous owner – The Land Conservancy – was undergoing bankruptcy proceedings. Visit kogawahouse.com/wp/about-the-house/ to learn more about the history of the Joy Kogawa House.

Who operates Joy Kogawa House?

The City of Vancouver subleases the House to a non-profit operator, The Historic Joy Kogawa House Society.

What is the City's role as a facility owner?

As the facility owner, the City is primarily responsible for working with the house's operator on capital responsibilities and physical safety of the house, including life cycle replacement, capital maintenance of major structure and base building systems.

What is currently happening at Joy Kogawa House?

In July 2022, the City of Vancouver staff put forward a report recommending Council approve a Heritage Revitalization Agreement and Development Permit for the Joy Kogawa House. The report was withdrawn due to community advocacy related to the omission of the sexual abuse of children by Gordon Goichi Nakayama – Joy Kogawa's father and previous owner of the house.

In an effort to address this oversight, City staff are working with the house's operator, Historic Joy Kogawa House Society, to coordinate statements of apology and commit to open dialogue with survivors of Gordon Goichi Nakayama's abuse, the Japanese Canadian community in Vancouver.

In order to ensure the safety and accessibility of the house, the City has authorized necessary renovations and upgrades to proceed, while continuing to pause the heritage designation process.

What is the future of Joy Kogawa House?

While the City will support cultural use of the House and facilitate required renovations, City staff will continue to pause the heritage designation process to prioritize restoration efforts with the survivor community in a trauma-informed manner.

City staff are committed to including the history of Gordon Goichi Nakayama's abuse in all future reports and documentation about the house, in addition to on-going, open dialogue with the Japanese Canadian community.