

**MEMORANDUM**

June 15, 2020

**TO:** Mayor & Council

**CC:** Sadhu Johnston, City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Paul Mochrie, Deputy City Manager  
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Rena Kendall-Craden, Civic Engagement & Communications Director  
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting 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  
City Leadership Team

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

**SUBJECT:** Addressing Anti-Racism: Initial Next Steps

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**PURPOSE**

This memo summarizes the City's ongoing efforts to address equity, inclusion, and anti-racism. It also describes specific next step actions arising from the renewed sense of urgency to address systemic racism in Vancouver.

**BACKGROUND**

The global pandemic of COVID-19 coincides with the ongoing opioid epidemic and has revealed the pervasive impacts of marginalization, exclusion and systemic racism on Indigenous, Black and people of colour (IBPOC) communities and individuals in Vancouver.

Further, the atrocities of George Floyd's murder at the hands of police in Minneapolis and the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet in Toronto have ignited a widespread public outcry calling for justice and have highlighted Canada's own history of anti-Black racism, which continues to this day. At the same time, the fatal police shooting of Chantel Moore in New Brunswick underscores the ongoing violence inflicted on Indigenous lives, particularly those of Indigenous women and girls.

The City of Vancouver has a longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. As a City of Reconciliation, Vancouver acknowledges the unceded territory of Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-

Waututh, and works in direct relationship with each local Nation. The City also works on a wide range of issues and priorities with the diverse urban Indigenous community, with a focus on community resilience and self-determination.

In recent years, Council has issued a formal apology to the Japanese-Canadian community for discrimination and dispossession during World War II and to the Chinese community for historical discrimination and is taking significant action to address recognition of the importance of the future vitality of Chinatown. As well, Council acknowledged historical and ongoing discrimination against people of South Asian descent and supported work on Punjabi Market revitalization, supported staff's work to complete an Equity Framework, directed the scoping of a colonial audit, moved to direct staff to create a citywide Anti-Racism strategy, and endorsed staff's recommendations and assigned budget to begin work with community to address anti-Black racism. Council also approved *Culture | Shift*, which presents a significant policy and action focus on Reconciliation and equity.

In recent weeks, the City has issued formal statements denouncing xenophobia, hate, the rise of anti-Asian racism during COVID-19, anti-Black racism, and the ongoing harms of colonialism on local First Nations and urban Indigenous peoples. These statements have named systemic racism and begun to acknowledge the different historical roots and specific impacts systemic racism has on Indigenous people, Black and African diaspora communities, and people of colour in Vancouver. The City issues public statements formally (e.g., information bulletins, correspondence, etc.) and informally (e.g., social media, in meetings, etc.). Statements are important because they publicly declare support or decry a situation, express intention, and express a position. At the same time, statements alone are not sufficient and the community and staff want to learn more about current actions and next steps.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Current Work**

Below is some brief information on actions currently underway across the City. Please note that advancement on most of the 2020 ACCS workplan initiatives were significantly impacted by staff deployment to the COVID emergency response. At the same time, within the COVID response there was significant effort to ensure support for historically under-represented racialized communities. Please also note that this is not an exhaustive list and is intended to highlight examples of the range of work currently being undertaken.

#### Indigenous Community

- *MMIWG and Red Women Rising reports*: The work on identifying the City's response to the Calls for Justice arising from the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry was put on hold temporarily while the staff assigned worked in the EOC on COVID response, but is restarting now that our Planner has returned from her temporary reassignment to the EOC.
- *Urban Indigenous response to COVID*: Staff are working to support Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Committee in their leadership of identifying urban Indigenous response to COVID. Recognizing the limitations of the City's financial situation, Social Policy assigned our Indigenous Planner to support MVAEC in its work in this area.

- *Indigenous Healing and Wellness:* Council approved an additional grant to MVAEC for 2020 to accelerate their work on an Indigenous-led healing and wellness strategy, which will support the City in targeting support and investments to priorities set by the community.
- *Colonial Audit:* Staff are working on proposed scoping for the Council-directed colonial audit of City operations.

### Historic Discrimination and Redress

- *Chinatown Transformation:* Staff continue to work with the community on the plan for Chinatown arising from the Council apology for historic discrimination on Chinatown Transformation and are supporting the Province's work to create a Chinese Canadian Museum.
- *Hogan's Alley:* An inter-departmental team continues consideration of next steps on Hogan's Alley, including how to move forward with Hogan's Alley Society, on the recognition of displacement from this area of NEFC and the contributions of the Black community to the vitality of Vancouver.
- *Punjabi Market:* Work on the revitalization of Punjabi Market, recognizing the impact of historical discrimination on this key cultural and economic district.
- *Apology to South Asian Community:* Our 2020 budget included funding to support work with the South Asian community on a potential apology to the South Asian community for historic discrimination.
- *Historic Discrimination toward people of Japanese descent:* There are also early discussions happening around Japantown.

### *Anti-Racism Actions*

- *Advocacy:* The City was the organization that brought the alarming increase of anti-Asian racism experienced by our residents to the Province's attention and liaised with the Province on follow-up actions.
- *Public Campaign: Day of Action Against Racism:* The City declared May 29 as a Day of Action Against Racism, issuing a multi-lingual proclamation and participating in a province wide campaign to raise awareness and encourage individuals and organizations to take a public stance against racism.
- *Anti-Black Racism:* Council assigned 2020 funding for staff to work with the Black and African diaspora community on anti-Black racism. This work was delayed due to COVID response, but staff are now regrouping and plan to reach out and start this work.
- *Anti-Racism Action Plan:* While a broader anti-racism strategy was identified for the 2021 ACCS workplan, staff are bringing this work forward with direction from Council and will reallocate existing resources to advance this broader strategy. The next section describes some initial next steps in this work.

### *Internal Systems Change*

- *Equity Framework:* Staff are assertively working on the development of the City's first Equity Framework and accompanying tools, such as the Intersectional Lens Toolkit. Staff plan to bring the Framework forward in the fall as a matter of urgency. The Equity Framework is an internal systems change framework with the goal of supporting staff across the organization to implement an equity and intersectional lens on all areas of City work and decision-making.

- *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer*: Just before COVID impacts, the City Manager created the position of Equity and Diversity Officer in the City Manager's Office. This is a significant move that sends a clear message about the importance of this work in the City as an organization. Recruitment for this position is in progress.
- *EDI in the EOC*: An Equity and Inclusion team has been embedded with the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to support community resilience, help lower barriers to accessing timely, critical information and work to ensure historically underrepresented groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic are part of the COVID-19 emergency response.

As well, it is important to note that recent major Council approved policies, such as *Culture/Shift*, have embedded Reconciliation and equity into their core commitments and actions. As well, while still very much in the early stages, Vancouver Plan has identified a senior Equity Lead as a key leadership position and staff are committed to keeping commitments to Reconciliation and equity as key lenses on the work moving forward.

### **Addressing Anti-Black Racism**

Over the past few days, staff from across ACCS and the City broadly have asked the City to make a statement regarding recent anti-Black racist events in the US and here in Canada and condemning anti-Black racism, as well as reiterating the actions the City is committed to taking to address racism, hate, and xenophobia and to stand in solidarity with our racialized communities.

Anti-Black racism in Vancouver was publicly named and acknowledged by City Manager Sadhu Johnston in his December 2018 email to staff in which he expressed support for Black staff and communities (See Attachment A). From this recognition of the importance of speaking openly about and addressing anti-Black racism in Vancouver, staff prepared a budget request for the 2020 budget to work with the community on anti-Black racism, which was approved. Work has been delayed due to the COVID response, but staff will re-engage with this work now that the first phase of pandemic response is behind us.

While the actual initiative around Anti-Black racism was waiting for the 2020 budget approval and allocation, in 2019 staff initiated several pieces of work to set the stage for the anticipated efforts:

- 2019 and early 2020, ACCS piloted anti-Black racism and white privilege awareness training with a group of leadership staff from ACCS and PDS to name and address the realities and consequences of individual and institutional racism. Further roll-out has been paused due to COVID but will be reviewed as a part of the continuing work to address anti-Black racism and also as part of the implementation of the Equity Framework.
- As part of the Scholar's program, Social Policy engaged a UBC student to do some research and analysis on anti-Black racism in Vancouver, resulting in the report: *Addressing Anti-Black Racism in Vancouver*: <https://sustain.ubc.ca/about/resources/towards-healthy-city-addressing-anti-black-racism-vancouver>

As well, work with Hogan's Alley Society (HAS) and the Black and African diaspora community on Hogan's Alley has been persistent, although not as rapid as the community had hoped for and/or expected. Staff met with some community members in January to hear feedback on City work and

approaches to Hogan’s Alley and had been seeking to set up a meeting with Hogan’s Alley Society in February to discuss an MOU and next steps when COVID arose and all attention turned to pandemic response. We recognize that the length of time and lack of clarity around the challenges of the NEFC development process has been difficult for the community and has resulted in a loss of confidence and trust in the City’s intentions. Staff are committed to working with HAS - and through them the broader community - to advancing the vision for redress set out in the NEFC Plan. Now that staff are able to turn some attention back to regular operations, we have identified the high importance and impact work to advance, including Hogan’s Alley, and staff are planning to reach out to HAS in the very near future to discuss next steps and an MOU.

Most recently, Sadhu issued a note to all staff about Black Out Tuesday and the City paused all our social media channels on Black Out Tuesday to give space for Black voices. The City also posted our statement regarding Black Lives Matter on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

In recognition of the need for public discussion on anti-Black racism, staff are also planning to host a CoV Town Hall for the Black and African diaspora community. Staff are hoping for a date at the end of June and will be seeking to engage community facilitation to support the dialogue. More information will follow soon.

**Anti-Racism Next Steps**

In addition to our ongoing work on the Equity Framework, which takes a race forward approach, and supporting Intersectional Toolkit, staff have also outlined some plans for how to start the discussion with community members, groups, and leaders on anti-racism actions.

The following activities have been mapped out as first steps to working with the community to develop meaningful anti-racism actions. Please note that our anticipation is that out of the proposed joint working group – and in consultation with Council Advisory Committees as per Council direction – we will detail out a fuller anti-racism action plan. Please note that these steps were being mapped out as Council was discussing the motion “Standing Up to the Rise in Anti-Indigenous, Anti-Black, and Anti-People of Colour - including Anti-Asian - Racism and Hate Crimes” and staff will incorporate this further direction from Council moving forward.

| <b>COMMUNITY FOCUSED EFFORTS</b>   |   |
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| <b>Activity</b>  | <b>Details</b>  |
| <b>Town Hall meeting with the Black and African diaspora communities</b> | <p>Staff are working to establish this Town Hall and will seek to engage community leaders as co-facilitators.</p> <p>The purpose is to begin the process of listening to community to identify issues and how best to take action on anti-Black racism, including the important step of taking the time to hear and acknowledge (witnessing) the experiences of the community.</p> <p>Staff are hoping to have this scheduled for the end of June.</p> |
| <b>Community-City joint anti-racism</b>                                  | Staff will be reaching out to community organizations to seek to  |

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| <p><b>working group</b></p>                | <p>establish a joint anti-racism working group with representatives of Indigenous and racialized community organizations in Vancouver to develop and implement specific anti-racist and equity actions.</p> <p>The working group would engage Council Advisory Committees as appropriate.</p> <p>Recognizing the inter-connected experiences of community members in terms of public systems, the City will inquire with other public entities as to their potential participation, which will likely vary based on their own existing initiatives and tables.</p> <p>Suggested initial topics for working group consideration are based on priorities that have already been raised by community leaders and representatives and include: racialized data, culturally safe reporting, and supports for targeted/victimized individuals.</p>                         |
| <p><b>Safe reporting</b></p>               | <p>While staff hope to have the joint working group noted above discuss this topic, there are several important considerations in this area of work which seeks to improve effectiveness of systems in place to protect, care and support targeted/victimized individuals and increase confidence in the reporting systems.</p> <p>As well, it is important to ensure that redress/accountability mechanisms are known and easily accessible and that targeted/victimized individuals are supported in navigating reporting processes.</p>   |
| <p><b>Advocacy</b></p>                     | <p>Staff will seek a meeting with the Human Rights Commissioner to discuss the role of the HRC or other Provincial entities in support and advocacy for targeted/victimized individuals.</p> <p>Staff will propose that Mayor and Council correspond with the Premier, seeking Provincial support for:</p> <p>Mental Health Supports: Specialized culturally-safe Mental Health supports for people who have ongoing trauma from incidents of racism or cumulative impacts of racism</p> <p>Advocacy Supports for targets/victims: Consideration of formal role at the Provincial level similar to the role that Offices of the Legislature play (e.g. Seniors Advocate; Children’s advocate). Perhaps the recently reestablished Human Rights Commission could play this role.</p> <p>The joint working group to advise on further discussions of these topics.</p> |
| <p><b>Expanding anti-racism public</b></p> | <p>Staff will continue the public anti-racism campaign from the</p>  |

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| <p><b>awareness campaign</b></p>   | <p>EOC and develop and expanded distribution plan for anti-racism digital assets and resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Printing and distributing posters in visible locations in neighbourhoods starting with Chinatown</li> <li>• Utilizing COV's transit shelter and promotional advertising (similar to Stay Home, Stay Put campaign)</li> <li>• Distribution to all BIAs, COV-funded community organizations, VPL, Park Board, COV owned spaces, etc.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>INTERNAL CITY EFFORTS</b></p>  |   |
| <p><b>Activity</b></p>   | <p><b>Details</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Town Hall with city staff</b></p>  | <p>EEO and ACCS will convene a Town Hall for City staff to provide an opportunity for employees to discuss racism/discrimination within the employment context, the efficacy of existing policies/processes/mechanisms, and to identify short and long-term actions for change/improvement.</p> <p>Recognizing that Town Halls such as this are a start to dialogue and not every employee will feel comfortable openly raising concerns in this context, the smaller group staff affinity sessions organized by the Equity Team pre-COVID will be re-established and consideration of structures to support staff dialogue and learning are a part of the imminent Equity Framework.</p> |
| <p><b>Review of CoV employee reporting and mental health supports</b></p>  | <p>The EEO – soon to be Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Office in the CMO – in partnership with ACCS's equity team will review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporting protocols</li> <li>• Review EFAP program and confirm supports for staff and seek to expand/enhance if insufficient</li> <li>• City-wide Mental Health Strategy (EOC): take steps to ensure culturally appropriate supports are in place for racialized staff</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Anti-racism and diversity learning and training refresh</b></p>  | <p>EEO/EDI will review suite of training and learning resources offered at City, including reviewing Provincial training program to see what we can learn.</p> <p>Develop specific anti-Black racism learning module based on completed ACCS pilot program.</p> <p>Embed required training as part of Equity Framework implementation.</p>  |
| <p><b>Stratagem Virtual conference attendance (July 2020)</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.welcometostratagem.com/">https://www.welcometostratagem.com/</a></p> | <p>Stratagem is an equity-focussed conference organized by local EDI consultant and activist Cecily Blain and is one of the pre-eminent conferences on equity, diversity, and inclusion.</p> <p>The City will be sending 50 employees to this conference as</p>   |


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|  | part of our ongoing commitment to equity and anti-racism work, both within our organization and in partnership with communities. |
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**FINAL REMARKS**

As municipalities across the country reckon with their role in perpetuating systemic racism and what they can do to address anti-racism, the City of Vancouver has a duty to intensify our efforts to address past harms and move towards meaningful actions that centre the voices and values of Indigenous, Black, and people of colour community members.

Stable, consistent, and ongoing work between the City and the community is required to build the strong trust-based relationships and partnerships that are needed to advance the sustained, lasting changes demanded of us. Reconciliation and decolonization principles such as acknowledgement of historical and current wrongs and structural inequities, bearing witness to lived experiences, working together with community to develop solutions, providing sufficient sustained resources and establishing robust accountability measures will support the goal of moving toward a more equitable and just Vancouver.

If Council has any further questions or needs additional information, please feel free to contact Sandra Singh directly at [sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca).



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



## **Attachment A**

**From:** Johnston, Sadhu  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 12, 2018 4:20 PM  
**To:** All Staff (COV) - DL  
**Subject:** Anti-Black Racism in Vancouver

Greetings Colleagues,

Vancouver is situated on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples and prides itself as being one of the most diverse cities in the world. While we have much to celebrate, we also must acknowledge that racism still exists in our city.

We know that racialized discrimination and threats of violence create trauma that results in psychological, physical, spiritual, social and economic harm, and reduces life chances. We have recognized this in our work on Reconciliation with Indigenous communities and in our historic apology to the Chinese community, and in our longstanding awareness of and active responses to antisemitism. This same commitment to dignity and equity can be seen in our work to address discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community.

From past to present – and most recently in the last few weeks – incidents of anti-Black racism in Vancouver have been reported by members of the Black community. These incidents involve hate speech and threats of racialized violence against black youth. We must acknowledge that anti-Black racism exists in Vancouver and consider what action we can implement within our work as the City to address this issue.

As the impacts of racism faced by Black communities become more visible to the wider residents of Vancouver and to City staff, and we begin to better understand unconscious bias and how it manifests in society, we have an opportunity to address anti-Black racism and the disproportionate traumatic impact these incidents have on Black youth and members of the Black community.

Through the work of many people involved in Hogan's Alley and a number of other community-driven initiatives, we continue to deepen our understanding of the experiences and values of Vancouver's Black community. As we end the year and look forward to celebrating Black History Month in February, it is a good time to reflect on how these activities contribute to recognizing the history and importance of the Black community in Vancouver, how anti-Black racism and racial bias continues to impact this community, and what further action the City might take to address this inequity.

In the next year, facilitated by ACCS, City departments will be working together to develop an Equity Framework that will seek to deepen the City's commitment to equity for those impacted by intersecting barriers to full participation in society and to reaching their full potential. Within the context of this work, we will initiate efforts to address anti-Black racism as a societal issue, reaching out to other public

sector partners, community organizations, and people with lived experience to better understand the Vancouver context and to find Vancouver responses. We see this as complementing both our work on Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and on the Chinatown revitalization efforts arising from last year's historic apology to Vancouver residents of Chinese descent.

To our staff who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of colour and to our wider community, I affirm that as a City we condemn all acts of hate speech and racialized violence. We condemn racism and will continue working to eliminate it in all its forms in our city.

*Further information: Questions, comments, or interest about the equity work can be directed to Sandra Singh, General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services at [sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca).*

Best,

Sadhu