

DATE OF MEETING FEBRUARY 21, 2024

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**SUBJECT CENTRAL VANCOUVER ISLAND JAPANESE CANADIAN
LEGACIES SOCIETY, HERITAGE AND RECONCILIATION GRANTS
SOCIAL CENTRE – ROOM 6**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To update the Finance and Audit Committee on the Central Vancouver Island Japanese Canadian Society (7 Potatoes) grant application to the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society (JCLS) for renovation of Room 6 (the room) at Beban Social Centre into a Cultural / Performing Arts Space.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve a five-year Licence of Use Agreement (with option for three subsequent renewals) with 7 Potatoes for use of Room 6 in the Beban Social Centre, conditional upon approval of the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society grant application and subsequent renovation.

BACKGROUND

The Nikkei community thrived in Nanaimo prior to 1942, however there are no Japanese Canadian Cultural Centres on Vancouver Island. As the largest organization of Japanese Canadians on Vancouver Island north of Victoria, 7 Potatoes has been working with the City of Nanaimo to create a space for their community.

Early in 2023, the JCLS announced infrastructure grant opportunities. 7 Potatoes contacted City of Nanaimo staff to see about constructing a cultural facility within the City of Nanaimo. Staff worked with 7 Potatoes to build a cost estimate and soon realised the cost of a stand alone facility was outside of the financial capacity of the grant and 7 Potatoes.

Upon further review of 7 Potatoes' needs and how they could align with the City Plan (through An Empowered Nanaimo – Truth and Reconciliation), the idea of renovating a space to serve 7 Potatoes, as well as assist in meeting community cultural space needs, was developed.

DISCUSSION

Beban Park Social Centre Room 6 (Built in 1976) is located at on the northeast side of the building and previously has been used as a pottery studio and most recently as a meeting room.

If successful, a JCLS grant would be used to renovate the room to include a small kitchen, sounds dampening (to enable Taiko drum practice), lockable storage and Japanese cultural

displays. 7 Potatoes is eligible for a grant of up to \$250,000 and a cost estimate project budget has been proposed (Attachment A).

The proposed renovations, as well as location in the building, would complement many programs and events hosted in the Social Centre. The proximity to the main stage and auditorium provides opportunities for a practice or rehearsal room for many large scale events, as well as additional bookable community space for cultural and performing arts programs.

7 Potatoes intends to use the space for up to 20 hours a week for programming new Japanese Canadian cultural activities including *Taiko* drumming, *Ondo* dancing, *ikebana* flower arranging, Indigo *Shibori* textile dyeing, Japanese language classes, *Sado* Japanese tea ceremony, and *Shodo* Japanese Calligraphy. In addition to the activities there are also plans for Japanese Canadian cultural gatherings such as Nanaimo Japanese Choir practice, *Fujinkai* (ladies) group meetings, *Komorebi* Japanese Canadian book club and sharing circles, virtual meetings between 7 Potatoes and sister-city officials in Saitama, and 7 Potatoes board meetings.

If 7 Potatoes is successful in their grant application, the allocated funding would be turned over to the City of Nanaimo as Project Manager for the renovation process.

7 Potatoes would like to enter into a five-year (with three renewals) Licence of Use Agreement (Attachment B) with the City of Nanaimo for use of the room of up to 20 hours a week, to be utilised for Japanese Canadian cultural gatherings and programs.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve a five-year Licence of Use Agreement (with option for three subsequent renewals) with 7 Potatoes for use of Room 6 in the Beban Social Centre, conditional upon approval of the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society grant application and subsequent renovation.
 - The advantages of this option: The renovation to the room in the Social Centre will provide a community cultural performing arts rehearsal space as well as space for the 7 Potatoes to have Japanese Canadian Cultural gatherings and programming.
 - The disadvantages of this option: N/A
 - Financial Implications: If the JCLS grant application is successful, the 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan will be amended to include the renovation project with funding provided by the 7 Potatoes.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee not recommend that Council approve a five-year (with three renewals) Licence of Use Agreement with 7 Potatoes for use of Room 6 in the Beban Social Centre, conditional upon approval of Japanese Canadian Legacies Society grant application and subsequent renovation.
 - The advantages of this option: N/A
 - The disadvantages of this option: The loss of additional community cultural performing arts space as well as a space for 7 Potatoes to gather and offer Japanese Canadian cultural programming.
 - Financial Implications: N/A
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee provide alternate direction.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Nikkei community thrived in Nanaimo prior to 1942, however there are no Japanese Canadian Cultural Centres here on Vancouver Island. As the largest organization of Japanese Canadians on Vancouver Island north of Victoria, 7 Potatoes has been working with the City of Nanaimo to create a space for our community.
- If successful, a JCLS grant would be used to renovate the room to include a small kitchen, sound dampening (to enable Taiko drum practice), lockable storage and Japanese cultural displays.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Budget - Japanese Canadian Society Proposed Room 6 Improvements at Beban Park

ATTACHMENT B: Licence of Use Agreement

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