

DATE OF MEETING FEBRUARY 21, 2024

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SUBJECT JAPANESE CANADIAN HERITAGE SITE PROPOSAL FOR THE NANAIMO WATERFRONT

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide information and request support for a collaborative funding application to the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society for the establishment of a Japanese Heritage Site along Nanaimo's waterfront.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council support a joint grant application between the City of Nanaimo and the Central Vancouver Island Japanese Canadian Heritage Society for funding up to \$400,000 from the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society to create a Japanese Canadian Heritage Site along the Nanaimo waterfront.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society's BC Heritage Sites Fund is to assist local communities in promoting public awareness of pre-war and wartime Japanese Canadian history through interpretive heritage projects at sites of their ancestral communities and other places of historical significance. Nanaimo is recognized by the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society as a "Predetermined BC Heritage Site" and as a result, the proposed project is eligible to receive 100% funding of eligible project costs up to the maximum grant amount of \$400,000. The 7 Potatoes and City of Nanaimo (the City) have been collaborating on a draft application to fund a heritage site along the Nanaimo waterfront.

The Central Vancouver Island Japanese Canadian Heritage Society (7 Potatoes) is a non profit organization dedicated to celebrating and promoting a better understanding and appreciation of Japanese heritage and culture on Central Vancouver Island. The 7 Potatoes hosts and participates in many community cultural events and has a history of community partnerships including recent work with the Nanaimo Museum and Nanaimo Archives to research the local history of the Japanese community and establish a permanent exhibit at Nanaimo Museum opening in 2024. 7 Potatoes also raised over \$40,000 which was donated to the City for a collaborative program to plant Japanese cherry blossom trees in Nanaimo parks and open spaces. The group is also working with the City on improvements to Room 6 of the Beban Park Social Centre utilising funds from a similar grant, and desires to create a Japanese heritage site along the Nanaimo waterfront.

In the early 1900's Japanese Canadian fishermen caught herring off Nanaimo shores and packed them in salt to export to Japan, China and other areas of Asia. By the 1920's Nanaimo was known as the Herring Capital of the World. Despite the thriving Japanese Canadian

community that lived on Central Vancouver Island prior to 1942, there is little public interpretation or acknowledgement to indicate the community ever lived in the Nanaimo area nor of any acknowledgement of the displacement, internment and dispossession of Japanese communities across the province by the BC Government.

On 2022-MAY-21, the BC Government acknowledged the historical wrongs perpetuated against Japanese Canadians in BC during the 1940s and made a pledge to support a community-built legacy initiatives package recommended by the National Association of Japanese Canadians BC Redress Project, and administered by the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society. The Japanese Canadian Legacies Society is a British Columbia-based society set up to oversee the implementation of the legacy initiatives created under the umbrella of the National Association of Japanese Canadians.

DISCUSSION

Nanaimo's City Plan outlines several goals and policies focussed on empowerment, reconciliation, inclusivity and cultural-enrichment in order to ensure that Nanaimo feels welcoming and safe to all those who choose this city as home. Policies strive to learn from the past, acknowledge the truth of past wrongs, and commit to working together respectfully and collaboratively towards a common future. The Integrated Action Plan also identifies working with the Japanese Heritage Society to create an interpretive landscape and signage feature in a public space as an immediate project (Priority #140).

Nanaimo's waterfront walkway is a high profile and accessible park and trail system. Staff and 7 Potatoes are working to identify the best sites to achieve the project goals in a feasible high traffic area that would not impact archeological or sensitive areas. Once the grant is approved, Staff and 7 Potato Society will return to Council with appropriate sites for consideration.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Once a site is confirmed, a conceptual design with a total proposed project cost of the maximum grant amount of \$400,000 will be detailed. If the grant application for the proposed project is successful, staff will return with a Report to Council requesting approval to proceed and identifying next steps and the project process.

If the grant application is successful the funds would be paid directly to the City in pre-set drawdown stages (tranches). The City would undertake the work with cultural advice and community project management services provided by 7 Potatoes. The City would be responsible for any potential cost overruns.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council support a joint grant application between the City of Nanaimo and the Central Vancouver Island Japanese Canadian Heritage Society for funding up to \$400,000 from the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society to create a Japanese Canadian Heritage Site along the Nanaimo waterfront.
 - The advantages of this option: Proceeding with the application supports reconciliation desires with the Japanese community as identified in the integrated action plan priorities. A potential future project also helps to create some incremental improvements and additional gathering space along the waterfront.

- Options for how to proceed with this application have been discussed with the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society and 7 Potatoes expressed a preference to have money come to the City of Nanaimo directly but supported a joint application. This ensures quality and safe public space design but also ensures a culturally meaningful community project and partnership.
- The disadvantages of this option: Collaborating on the delivery of this project will require the dedication of considerable amounts of staff time and could have budgetary implications. Delivering a collaborative partnership project could be considered to present benefits but also additional risks.
 - Financial Implications: If the application is successful, staff will return with a Report to Council requesting approval to proceed and identifying next steps, the project process and any future budget implications.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council not support a joint grant application between the City of Nanaimo and the Central Vancouver Island Japanese Canadian Heritage Society for funding up to \$400,000 from the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society to create a Japanese Canadian Heritage Site along the Nanaimo waterfront.
- The advantages of this option: Staff can focus on other projects and the City is exposed to limited risk
 - The disadvantages of this option: Relationships with the Central Vancouver Island Japanese Canadian Heritage Society may become jeopardized, however, staff can attempt to achieve priorities in City Plan and the integrated action plans through other projects. No improvements to update the Nanaimo waterfront will occur through the current Capital Plan.
 - Financial Implications: No implications.
3. That Council provide alternative direction to staff regarding submission of an application to the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society.

SUMMARY POINTS

- A thriving Japanese community once lived along Nanaimo's waterfront until Japanese displacement, internment, and dispossession practices were enacted in 1942.
- Funding is available up to \$400,000 through the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society to create Japanese Heritage Sites in public spaces.
- The City of Nanaimo and 7 Potatoes can collaborate on an application to receive funding and create a Japanese Canadian Heritage Site along Nanaimo's waterfront.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Letter from the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society confirming eligibility. |

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