

THE CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF WHITE ROCK
CORPORATE REPORT



DATE: April 29, 2024
TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: John Woolgar, Director, Recreation and Culture
SUBJECT: Komagata Maru Recognition

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council receive for information the corporate report dated April 29, 2024, from the Director of Recreation and Culture, titled "Komagata Maru Recognition;" and

1. Approve the recommendation of the Public Art and Culture Advisory Committee; and
 2. Direct Staff to work with the Public Art and Culture Advisory Committee and the White Rock Museum and Archives Society to create a Heritage Interpretive Signage Plan for Council's consideration.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society (Society) have approached many cities across British Columbia to request recognition of the Komagata Maru Incident. Those cities who have chosen to do so have recognized the incident in a variety of ways. The Society presented to Council on October 16, 2023, to ask that the city consider recognizing the Komagata Maru Incident, specifically requesting that Komagata Maru Way be added to Marine Drive.

The Public Art and Culture Advisory Committee met on April 10, 2024, and recommended the following:

*Motion Number 2024-PACAC-025: It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED***

THAT the Public Art and Culture Advisory Committee:

1. *Receive for information the corporate report dated April 10, 2024, from the Director of Recreation and Culture and the Manager, Cultural Development titled "Komagata Maru"; and,*
2. *Recommend that Council move forward with Option 3, Interpretive History Panel, as outlined in the corporate report.*

*Motion **CARRIED***

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
2023-378 October 16, 2023	THAT Council refer the information provided by the delegation from the Komagata Maru Society to the City's Public Art and Culture Advisory Committee for Consideration.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The Descendants of the Society presented to Council on October 16, 2023, to ask that the city recognize the Komagata Maru Incident, specifically asking that Komagata Maru Way be added to Marine Drive. The Society has approached cities across British Columbia to recognize this historical incident. Those cities who have chosen to do so have recognized the incident in a variety of ways.

Historical Context - Komagata Maru Incident

In 1914, many Canadians were hostile to immigration from non-European countries. In 1908 the federal government made two provisions that were barriers to immigration from India. The first required that all immigrants arrive in Canada by a continuous journey from their country of citizenship. Since there were no ships that made a continuous journey from India to Canada, these restrictions effectively blocked Indian immigration. The second provision required Indian Immigrants to possess \$200 upon arriving in Canada.

The Komagata Maru set off from Hong Kong April 4, 1914, and arrived off the coast of B.C. on May 22. On July 23, two months after the ship arrived, it was escorted out of Canadian waters and returned to India. Upon arrival, British authorities suspected the passengers were revolutionaries and there was an altercation leaving 16 passengers dead and more than 200 imprisoned. In response to a call for the government of Canada to address historic wrongs involving immigration, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made a formal apology for the Komagata Maru incident on May 18, 2016.

On Site Commemoration

The Komagata Maru incident has been recognized with a monument listing the names of those who were on the ship and an interpretive plaque at Harbour Green Park in Coal Harbour in the City of Vancouver. This was chosen due to its proximity to the original site where the ship was docked. Funding for this monument was provided by the Federal Government to the Vancouver Park Board and the Khalsa Diwan Society.

Commemorative and Interpretive Signage Policy (175)

The City of White Rock adopted a commemorative and interpretive signage policy in 2023 in response to requests from organizations and community members to commemorate an event, person, or group.

The policy outlines criteria that will be considered by Council when a decision to recognize an event, occasion, organization, or person is brought forward. These criteria include:

- The event, occasion, organization, or person has made a significant contribution to the community.
- The addition of the commemoration is deemed to be of lasting value to the community for social, cultural, historical, educational, or aesthetic reasons and will serve to enhance the existing community amenity of the proposed location, within the context of the current use of the area.

- The addition is considered in the context of the number of existing commemorative signs, interpretive signs, public artwork, and other objects in the area.

Please see Appendix A for the Commemorative and Interpretive Signage Policy (175)

OPTIONS

Staff conducted research of how other Canadian cities have recognized the Komagata Maru Incident, as well as other significant historical injustices, and have listed the following options for consideration.

1. Street Signage

Some cities, including Vancouver, Abbotsford and Surrey have added “Komagata Maru Way,” or “Komagata Maru Place” to an existing street name. The streets were often chosen for their connection to a neighbourhood, the location where the ship was stationed, to cultural places of significance, or a Gurdwara.

2. Naming of Civic Assets

Some cities have chosen to name a civic asset in memory of the incident. The City of Brampton officially opened a park and named it in memory of the Komagata Maru passengers. The City of New Westminster passed a motion in 2021 to rename the Q Docks to the Komagata Maru Docks.

3. Interpretive History Panel (RECOMMENDED)

Through established heritage interpretive programs, cities like Delta, Richmond, Surrey, and New Westminster have chosen to incorporate the history of the Komagata Maru into larger interpretive themes around community building, racism, and discrimination. If this option is chosen, it is recommended that a Heritage Interpretive Signage Plan be developed for the City prior to the installation of an interpretive history panel for the Komagata Maru. The Heritage Interpretive Signage Plan would be expected to be completed in 2025.

4. Dedication

The City could choose to direct the Society to the City’s Parks Dedication Program, Friends of the Pier plank program or the White Rock Museum and Archive’s train plaque program. These programs would allow the community to recognize and memorialize the event.

City of White Rock Parks Dedication Program

- Bench Dedication - \$6800

Please note that the Parks Dedication Program is currently under review.

Friends of the Pier Plank Program

- Individual Plank - \$1000

White Rock Museum and Archive’s Train Plaque Program

- Individual Plaque - \$1000

5. Do Not Recognize the Komagata Maru Incident

Council may choose to not recommend any formal recognition of the Komagata Maru incident.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If Council chooses the recommended Option 3 of an interpretive history panel for the Komagata Maru, staff will explore costs and funding would be proposed for the 2025 budget.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The City's proposed Heritage Interpretive Signage Plan will capture the stories of White Rock and highlight its residents and their rich history. This plan and the history panel signage about the Komagata Maru Incident would be developed with community stakeholder consultation.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS

The Recreation and Culture Department would work closely with the White Rock Museum & Archives Society to develop a Heritage Interpretive Signage Plan and with Engineering and Municipal Operations to install the Komagata Maru interpretive history panel signage.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Community: We foster a livable city with connected residents, enjoying distinctive places and activities.

CONCLUSION

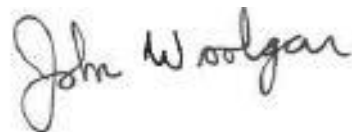
Cities have chosen a variety of ways to recognize historical social injustices. This has taken the form of through temporary works of art and/or museum exhibitions to more permanent fixtures such as dedications, street signage, naming of civic assets, plaques, or interpretive signage. Some cities have also chosen not to formally recognize events that may have already been addressed through larger provincial and federal monuments. The creation of a Heritage Interpretive Signage Plan for the City would allow staff to work with community stakeholders to determine the stories and themes that are historically significant to White Rock, representative of all its peoples. This plan would also ensure appropriate recognition of the Komagata Maru incident.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by:



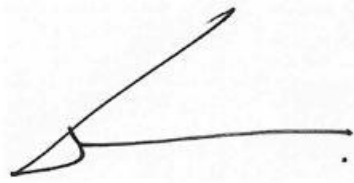
Rebecca Forrest
Manager, Cultural Development



John Woolgar
Director of Recreation and Culture

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

I concur with the recommendations of this corporate report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of connected strokes that form a stylized, somewhat abstract shape. The signature is written on a light-colored background.

Guillermo Ferrero
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix A: Commemorative and Interpretive Signage Council Policy (175)