



City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

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**To:** General Purposes Committee

**Date:** December 6, 2001

**From:** Malcolm D. Brodie  
Mayor

**File:**

**Re:** Intercultural Relations Advisory Committee

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### Recommendation

That staff recommend an appropriate committee membership make-up, and prepare Terms of Reference, for the establishment of an Intercultural Relations Advisory Committee, and bring forward a report on the above no later than the February 18, 2002 General Purposes Committee of Council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm D. Brodie', written over a diagonal line.

Malcolm D. Brodie  
Mayor

## Report

### Origin

Our population consists of people of diverse religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, economic, educational and geographic experiences. Communication is essential to foster understanding among all people. By fostering understanding, we will strengthen our ability to find common ground and move forward together.

To help foster this understanding, I indicated in my address on October 29, 2001, when sworn in, that one of my first priorities would be to recommend to Council that we re-establish an Intercultural Relations Committee.

### Analysis

#### Previous Council Actions

In 1990, Council established a Coordinating Committee on Ethnic Relations, which consisted of ethnic agency staff, volunteers, community workers and city staff. Their task was to encourage understanding and acceptance, the promotion of equal opportunity and participation, and public education. This Committee was established at a time when Richmond was receiving the highest share of new immigrants in the Lower Mainland, and was to provide leadership to the community, and advice to Council on the development and implementation of multicultural policies.

On March 25, 1991, Council approved the following Multicultural Policy:

#### Richmond City Council:

- Values both cultural diversity and a multicultural community as a source of enrichment and strength
- Supports the right of all persons to freedom from cultural/racial discrimination
- Supports the rights of all persons to equal opportunity and participation in community affairs
- Is committed to ensuring that municipal bylaws, policies and programs, service delivery, and employment practices address these principles
- Is committed to implementing this policy and directs municipal staff, boards, commissions and committees to meet these principles in carrying out their duties
- Encourages all community groups to adopt similar policies for their organizations.

The City established employment opportunities to encourage Cantonese and Mandarin speaking staff in all Community Centres, and the RCMP adopted a policy of recruiting officers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. It was also determined that translations into the Chinese language when critical issues such as the "megahomes" controversy came before Council, helped to dispel misunderstanding in the Chinese community.

By 1995, Council had established an *Intercultural Relations Advisory Committee*, which was to educate the mainstream population, and help them become more aware of the cultural traditions of the various ethnic groups in the community. Its Terms of Reference are attached. A program of "neighbourhood block parties" came out of this initiative. In the ensuing years, other measures

included a street banner program to celebrate multiculturalism; diversity training for City staff; a compilation of staff with second language abilities was prepared and made available to help with translation; displays on the Official Community Plan were placed in the Aberdeen Mall; surveys were conducted with the help of the Chinese media; the Gateway Theatre presented plays with multicultural themes.

Many other Richmond agencies also made significant outreach efforts: The Richmond Hospital provided improved signage, ethnic menus and programs to reflect culturally-friendly health care education. The School Board made huge adjustments with numerous ESL programs. Of note also was the all-out effort of our Library staff to provide Internet services and reading materials for all the people of Richmond.

By 1997, considerable progress and achievements towards the integration of ethnic groups into the mainstream of Richmond communities was evident. There were fewer issues referred to the Intercultural Relations Advisory Committee, and meetings were not held as frequently as in the past. When a survey on all Advisory Committees of Councils was conducted, it was noted that there were very few applicants for vacancies on the Committee. At the regular Council meeting of December 11, 2000, it was moved and seconded that the Advisory Committee on Intercultural Relations be disbanded.

#### Current Issues

The tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> had a significant impact on world events, and on Richmond. Our community quickly rose to meet the immediate challenges and demonstrated a caring and concern for each other, and for the hundreds of people who were stranded at the airport. The terrorist attack also resulted in fear and mistrust of some ethnic minorities in our community. Efforts to dispel any apprehension and foster understanding resulted in community meetings and extra vigilance from the RCMP for signs of disturbances involving the ethnic groups.

In recent events, including our civic by-election and the group home discussions, distinct cultural perspectives played an important role in the public debate. We should all be encouraged by the respectful way in which people with different backgrounds and different perspectives vigorously discussed important common issues.

In the *Final Report and Recommendations of the City of Richmond Group Home Task Force* (dated October 31, 2001), the Task Force recommendations included "establishing a Cultural Relations Committee to promote harmony within the City's multicultural community."

#### **Financial Impact**

Aside from the staff support accorded all Advisory Committees of Council, there are no other financial impacts. If the Committee requires funding for special events they may wish to undertake, this request can be brought forward for Council's consideration as the need arises.

#### **Conclusion**

Civic participation is firmly rooted in all parts of our community. To help ensure that Council maintains its mandate of a civic government that is committed to inclusiveness, the elimination

of discrimination, the promotion of understanding among peoples of diverse backgrounds and experiences through education, the adoption of sound policies and practices on ethnic issues and liaison with local ethnic groups and organizations, the establishment of a new Intercultural Relations Advisory Committee is recommended.

This new Advisory Committee will allow us to bring together community members who are willing to help all of us understand the different cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic perspectives. This Committee can serve as a resource to our civic government. It can help us strengthen our ability to communicate with people about our various perspectives. It will enable us to reach out to seek input of people from all parts of the community, so that we continue to have one community rather than a collection of fragmented groups.

Malcolm D. Brodie  
Mayor

GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER

for more information contact:

Charan Gill, Chair  
or Patricia Whittaker, co-Chair  
Advisory Committee on Intercultural Relations  
c/o City of Richmond  
Parks & Leisure Services Department  
7577 Elmbridge Way  
Richmond, BC V6X 2Z8

If you wish to attend a meeting please  
call staff contact:

Marg Elfstrom  
Community Development Officer  
Telephone: 276-4107



CITY OF RICHMOND

ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE  
ON  
INTERCULTURAL  
RELATIONS

**TERMS OF REFERENCE  
FOR THE  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON  
INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS**

**Purpose**

To promote harmonious intercultural relationships in Richmond.

**Functions**

1. To respond to intercultural issues when requested by Council.  
To recommend to City Council policies which promote harmonious relationships between the different cultures in Richmond.
3. To respond to and resolve incidents involving intercultural conflicts.
4. To develop public consultation processes which create understanding and acceptance between different cultures.
5. To facilitate intercultural education and awareness programs and activities.
6. To encourage the development of networks between the community and service agencies dealing with intercultural activities.

**Composition**

The Committee will be made up of eight members of the public appointed by Council, and one member of the Youth Advisory Committee, plus one Councillor, one School Trustee, and one member of the Chamber of Commerce. Committee members appointed from the public will be Richmond residents or in exceptional cases, non-residents with a significant and long standing interest in the Community.

**Term**

The initial term for one third of appointed members was until December 1996; one third of the members was until December 1997; and one third will be until December 1998. The terms, after December 1996, will be on a three year appointment. The Council, School Board, and Chamber of Commerce appointees will be appointed on an annual basis.

**Resources**

Staff support and liaison will be provided through the Parks & Leisure Services Department. Additional request for resources will be submitted through the budget process and will be tied to the annual work program.

**Governance**

The Committee will select its own chairperson on an annual basis. A co-chair will also be selected to act in the chair's absence. Meetings will be held on a monthly basis and all meetings will be open to the public.

The Committee will appoint sub-committees as is necessary. Membership in the sub-committees is not restricted to appointed members. The sub-committees will report to the Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee will make recommendations and report to Council through the Community Services Committee.

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following Multicultural Policy:**

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