



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

**To:** Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee      **Date:** September 20, 2021

**From:** Marie Fenwick, Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services      **File:** 11-7141-01/2021-Vol 01

**Re:** **Steveston Museum and Post Office Visitor Experience Improvements**

### Staff Recommendation

1. That the Steveston Museum and Post Office Visitor Experience Improvements as detailed in the staff report titled “Steveston Museum and Post Office Visitor Experience Improvements,” dated September 20, 2021, from the Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services be endorsed to guide the future planning and operations of the Steveston Museum and Post Office; and
2. That expenditures totaling \$354,000 for facility improvements with an annual operating budget impact of \$12,300 for ongoing operating costs and an annual municipal contribution of \$40,000 paid to the Steveston Historical Society for the period from 2022-2026 be considered in the 2022 budget process.

Marie Fenwick  
 Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services  
 (604-276-4288)

Att. 3

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
<b>ROUTED TO:</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>
Finance Department	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Facility Services & Project Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW</b>	<b>INITIALS:</b>	<b>APPROVED BY CAO</b>

## Staff Report

### Origin

This report responds to the following referral made on February 23, 2021 at Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee.

*That following completion of the current consultation on the services to be provided at the Steveston Museum, staff investigate: (1) amending the document titled "Steveston Museum, A Vision for Improving the Visitor Experience", dated September 25, 2020, to include the operation of a Post Office in both Options A and B; (2) a \$20,000 annual payment to the society by the City if and when Tourism Richmond vacates the premises, plus the additional minimum of \$5,000 fee for service for operating the Post Office if needed, as approved in the working agreement dated November 12, 2019; (3) a Living Wage to be paid to the postal workers as auxiliary staff, with the added responsibility of monitoring activities in the museum and eliminating the need for additional museum staff; (4) the reopening of the upper floor of the Post Office with the installation of a stair lift elevator for seniors and/or a video on the ground floor depicting the upper floor museum display for people unable to use a stair lift; and, report back.*

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #3 One Community Together:

*Vibrant and diverse arts and cultural activities and opportunities for community engagement and connection.*

*3.2 Enhance arts and cultural programs and activities.*

*3.4 Celebrate Richmond's unique and diverse history and heritage.*

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #6 Strategic and Well-Planned Growth:

*Leadership in effective and sustainable growth that supports Richmond's physical and social needs.*

*6.4 Recognize Richmond's history and heritage through preservation, protection and interpretation.*

### Analysis

#### Background

The City has worked collaboratively with the Steveston Historical Society (the Society) since 1979, to activate the Steveston Museum and Post Office at 3811 Moncton Street. Since opening, program activities have primarily taken place in the Northern Bank heritage building, including the operation of the historical Steveston Post Office. For approximately 10 years, the Northern Bank building also served as a home for a tourist Visitors Centre, operated by Tourism Richmond. In 2015, the Steveston Museum and Post Office was expanded with the opening of the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society (JFBS) building, containing exhibits about the Japanese Canadian community in Steveston.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Steveston Museum and Post Office was open daily throughout the year. While visitation from school groups and for public programs was increasing prior to the pandemic, drop-in visitation to the Tourism Richmond Visitors Services counter and for postal service has steadily declined in recent years. The facility temporarily closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and while the Post Office reopened in September 2020, the Visitors Centre has not resumed service.

Currently, the City has an operating agreement with the Steveston Historical Society to maintain open hours at the Steveston Museum, provide heritage programming in Steveston and operate the Post Office. Schedule B of this agreement outlines the terms for the operations of the Steveston Post Office, including the provision of up to \$15,000 in subsidy to support these operations. Schedule B will expire in April 2022, in advance of the expiration of the agreement itself.

The City also holds an agreement with Tourism Richmond for its Visitor Centre operations at the Steveston Museum and Post Office that expires in April 2022. Tourism Richmond provides \$10,000 annually to the Society for the use of this space. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tourism Richmond also supported the post office operations with in-kind contribution of staff time. With changing trends in how visitors access information, Tourism Richmond is investigating options for supporting visitors to Steveston in ways other than a permanent visitor services counter. Tourism Richmond has indicated they do not intend to remain in the Steveston Museum and Post Office at the end of the current lease agreement. Their departure will create a space, both physically and programmatically, in the Northern Bank Building and result in the loss of important revenue and staff support for the Society's operations.

Additionally, in 2020 through the process of developing the Steveston Heritage Interpretive Plan, the Steveston Museum was identified as a site with opportunity for further interpretation of Steveston history and heritage to address gaps in the current interpretive offer.

#### Steveston Museum: A Vision for Improving the Visitor Experience

In consideration of these factors, throughout summer and fall of 2020, staff worked with the Society and Tourism Richmond to explore other visitor experience concepts for the Steveston Museum and Post Office. The goal of this process was to establish a clearer identity for the Steveston Museum, to better support programming and increase visitation. The visitor experience concepts considered a different mix of services and the potential for new functions for the Steveston Museum, including new heritage programs and exhibits in the Northern Bank Building, the future provision of tourism visitor services and postal service.

With the identification of a range of potential visitor experience concepts, a consultation process was undertaken to get feedback from the public. Information about this process was provided in memos to Mayor and Councillors dated December 3, 2020 and February 8, 2021.

Public consultation took place from February to March 2021, using Let's Talk Richmond, onsite visitor surveys, and phone interviews with community stakeholders and tourism representatives. Initial consultation sought feedback on two potential concepts for Steveston Museum operations.

Shortly after the launch, the Let's Talk Richmond survey was amended to include a third open-ended option that allowed participants to share their ideas more broadly.

### Consultation Outcomes

Feedback received included 227 responses to the Let's Talk Richmond and onsite visitor surveys and nine stakeholder interviews. Additionally, feedback from prior engagement activities such as comments in the Museum's visitor survey tablet and a survey of Society members was included in the final review. The report *Steveston Museum: A Vision for Improving the Visitor Experience, Phase 2 Consultation*, provides details about the public consultation process and findings (Attachment 1).

While the findings of the community consultation and additional data review indicate a mix of preferences about the Steveston Museum and Post Office, six common themes were identified.

1. The facility provides a valued community service and neighbourhood meeting point.
2. A majority value the availability of heritage interpretation at the facility including community postal heritage, Nikkei stories, and the wider story of Steveston.
3. A majority of respondents favoured retaining current Post Office operations.
4. There is particular interest in Steveston's Nikkei heritage and support for a continued and expanded sharing of these stories.
5. There is a lesser, but still strong interest in the provision of visitor information services, though an openness to how and where this takes place.
6. There is an openness to the addition of retail to the space, if focused on unique Steveston products.

Analysis of this feedback resulted in the following guiding directions for future visitor experiences at the Steveston Museum and Post Office:

- Retain a mix of amenities that serve locals year-round.
- Continue to support on-going heritage programming, and improve and raise the profile of existing displays.
- Reframe Post Office operations as more than just a business, but a community-meeting place that celebrates local heritage and provides valued services.
- Continue to collaborate with Tourism Richmond to explore other options for delivery of visitor services throughout Steveston.
- Explore the potential for additional retail services including possible offerings, operational costs and potential revenues.

### Recommendations and Next Steps

Staff reviewed the consultation feedback with the Society and Tourism Richmond, which resulted in a number of proposed recommendations.

To increase visitation to the Steveston Museum and Post Office and best utilize the space formerly occupied by the Visitor Centre, the Society is proposing the provision of rotating cultural programming. The proposed program envisions a "pop-up artist program" in collaboration with the Richmond Arts Coalition, as the primary use, which would offer space on a temporary basis for

local artists and artisans to demonstrate, exhibit, and sell their work. This program supports the goals of the Steveston Museum and Post Office and the Society by:

- providing year-round activity to attract locals into the Steveston Museum on a regular basis;
- further establishing the Steveston Museum as a part of the local community;
- engaging and highlighting artists and craftspeople in the Steveston community;
- complementing the existing historical interpretation with stories of the modern Steveston community;
- addressing the need for space for local artists to show their work; and
- providing ongoing revenue to support the mandate of the Society.

This program would also provide the flexibility to offer other programming or rental space as opportunities arose. Currently, the Society is exploring potential grant opportunities to support this program.

To increase visitation to and awareness of the JFBS building, the following actions were identified:

- make the entrance off First Avenue accessible during summer season, with exterior improvements to increase its visibility;
- work with the community to establish an appealing, public facing name for the facility; and
- build relationships with the local Nikkei community to regularly offer public programming and rotate displays in the back room of the building.

Lastly, a refresh of the displays and interpretation in the Northern Bank building was recommended to:

- create a deeper understanding and sense of pride in place for local community;
- help post office patrons connect to the history of the building and post office; and
- tell the story of Steveston's community not found in other heritage places.

To support both the recommendations described above and continued post office operations, a design plan was developed (Attachment 2). The proposed design supports both the existing operations, including the post office, heritage displays and programming, with support for additional cultural programs in both the Northern Bank and JFBS buildings. Highlights of the proposed design include:

- replacing the Visitor Centre counter with furnishings to support flexible cultural program use;
- new historical displays (including digital displays) and interpretation on the main floor of the Northern Bank building;
- new signage and curb appeal elements to improve the exterior visibility of the JFBS building; and
- improved storage and furnishings for post office operation.

In discussions with the Society, it was determined that the upper floor of the Northern Bank building is required to support the Museum and Post Office's operations and Society administration. As such, staff recommend no to change the current use at this time.

There are no alterations or impacts to the structure of the building or its' heritage features planned in this design.

Staff engaged an exhibit design specialist to assist with costing of the proposed work. One time costing to implement design and construction is \$354,000 with \$12,300 in additional on-going operating costs to support regular display rotation in the JFBS building.

#### Steveston Historical Society Operating Subsidy

The Society has indicated a willingness to continue operating the Post Office as long as it remains financially viable for them to do so. In response to the feedback received through the consultation process and in light of the historical importance of the Steveston Post Office, it is recommended that the post office operations be considered as part of the Society's overall heritage programming of the facility.

Under the terms of the current agreements, the Society receives up to \$25,000 annually to support post office operations - \$10,000 from Tourism Richmond, \$10,000 from the City and an additional \$5,000 from the City if required. The Society relies on these funds to continue to ensure the financial viability of their operations. With Tourism Richmond ceasing operations at this location, and the City's current agreement set to expire in April 2022 a new agreement will be required to continue to support the Society.

After the expiration of the current Post Office agreement, the Society has requested an annual \$40,000 operating grant to support the on-going operations of the Steveston Museum and Post Office (Attachment 3). This funding would provide a steady revenue stream to allow the Society to maintain sustainable operations while paying post office staff market wages similar to other positions. It would also provide a foundation for the Society to seek additional external funding through grants and fundraising activities to continue to offer important heritage programs in Steveston.

Staff will bring forward proposed terms for a new agreement with the Society in first quarter of 2022 to reflect these changing operations.

This vision for the design and programming would establish the Steveston Museum and Post Office as a more unified heritage experience, engaging locals year-round and ensuring visitors have a clear understanding of the space as a museum-style experience.

#### **Financial Impact**

The financial impact of the recommended design and program is a one-time capital cost of \$354,000 with an annual operating budget impact of \$12,300 for ongoing operating costs and an annual municipal contribution of \$40,000 paid to the Steveston Historical Society for the 5-year period of 2022-2026. Should Council endorse the recommendations of this report, these funding requests will be brought forward for consideration as part of the 2022 budget process.

## Conclusion

The Steveston Museum and Post Office has been a valued hub in the heart of Steveston Village since 1979. The pending departure of Tourism Richmond from the facility in 2022 will require changes to how the space in the North Bank Building is used going forward. As a result of this significant change in operations, combined with the outcomes of a thorough public consultation process and extensive discussion with the Steveston Historical Society, staff recommend the changes proposed in this report. These changes are consistent with the direction in the draft Steveston Heritage Interpretive Plan.

These proposed changes seek to increase declining visitation and will support the on-going operation of the Steveston Museum and Post Office by the Steveston Historical Society in a manner that best serves the local Steveston community.



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- Att. 1: Steveston Museum: A Vision for Improving the Visitor Experience, Phase 2 Consultation
- 2: Steveston Museum and Post Office Proposed Design
- 3: Letter from the Steveston Historical Society



## Steveston Museum

A Vision for Improving  
the Visitor Experience

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### Phase 2 Consultation

April 12, 2021



doug munday design



## 1. Executive summary

### *Background*

The Steveston Museum has occupied the Northern Bank heritage building on the prominent corner of Moncton Street and First Avenue in historic Steveston Village since 1979.

For a number of years, the building has also hosted a Canada Post outlet operated by the Steveston Historical Society, and a Visitor Information Centre operated by Tourism Richmond.

In 2015, the historic Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society building was relocated next to the Northern Bank Building and is home to exhibits about the Japanese Canadian (Nikkei) experience in Steveston.

In recent years, visitor information services in Steveston Village have evolved and use of user-paid postal services has declined. Working with the Steveston Historical Society and Tourism Richmond, the City is exploring how best to continue to offer valued services to locals and visitors to Steveston.

In 2020, two potential concepts were developed for the purposes of seeking public input.

- A: Steveston and Nikkei Museum
- B: Steveston Postal Heritage Centre, with a separate Steveston Nikkei Museum

Feedback on these concepts and the services currently offered in the space was provided in interviews and through a survey on the *Let's Talk Richmond*.

### *What we heard*

Foremost and roughly equal in community interest were

- a) maintaining this central hub of village life, within its unique heritage building,
- b) accessing heritage interpretation, from community postal heritage, to Nikkei stories, to the wider story of Steveston, and
- c) maintaining a functioning Post Office as part of this mix.

The provision of information and orientation services to Steveston visitors was seen as valuable, but a lesser priority at this site.

This suggests the community's primary focus on engaging a local audience, providing a valued service and meeting place, ahead of outward facing messaging to Steveston visitors.

## 2. Evolution of the Steveston Museum, Post Office, and Visitor Information Centre

Currently, the Steveston Museum is considered to be a grouping of three distinct spaces. This includes the:

- 1) Northern Bank Building housing the Visitor Centre, Post Office and heritage displays;
- 2) adjoining Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society (JFBS) building with displays about Steveston Japanese Canadian history; and
- 3) adjacent Town Square Park.

Each of these spaces has a unique history in the community and differing functions. For the purposes of this project, the primary spaces considered were the Northern Bank building and the JFBS building.

### **Northern Bank Building**

The Northern Bank building is a municipally designated heritage site and is recognized as one of the earliest surviving structures along Moncton Street in Steveston and one of the first financial operations in the area. It was constructed in downtown Steveston in 1906 to house a branch of the Winnipeg-based Northern Bank and was used as a financial institution until 1963. The Northern Bank illustrates the rise of Steveston as a commercial and industrial centre in the early part of the twentieth century.

The building has value as Steveston's original and only bank, and as part of the pattern of commercial development along the main street. It is a reminder of the once thriving commerce in Steveston in the early part of the twentieth century when fishing, canning and agriculture were creating a boom in the local economy.

The Northern Bank building is the original location for the Steveston Museum, welcoming locals and tourists to learn about the history of the unique Steveston area since 1979. The entrance to this building is well used and is currently considered the main entrance for the site. Inside, visitors can find a recreation of the original bank office and the original bank safe (used as storage). There is also a small room at the back of the building with interpretation on Steveston's history.

The bulk of the main floor is used as a visitor's centre (operated by Tourism Richmond) and a Canada Post outlet (operated by the Steveston Historical Society). City, Society and Tourism staff use the upstairs as offices, meeting space and supply storage.

### **Japanese Fisherman's Benevolent Society Building**

The Japanese Fisherman's Benevolent Society (JFBS) building is located behind the Bank building from Moncton Street and facing 1st Ave. Built in 1900, the JFBS building was first used as the administration office for the Japanese Fishermen's Hospital (the first hospital built in Richmond) and the Japanese School. It was the primary health care provider for the community and was important as part of the infrastructure built in response to the typhoid fever epidemics that were an annual scourge of the community during the last years of the 19th Century. It is the only surviving structure of the original cluster of hospital, school and administration buildings.

After being moved to the Steveston Museum site in 2010, the building reopened to the public with exhibits telling the story of the Japanese Canadian community in Steveston. The four rooms of the building offer quality displays telling the unique and important stories of the history, culture and life of Steveston's Nikkei community. One room was intended to serve as a temporary exhibit but has not been changed from its original display on local martial arts.

Entry to the building is through the Steveston Museum's post office building.

### **Interpretive Programs at the Steveston Museum**

In addition to the heritage displays in both buildings, there are a number of heritage programs that, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, were delivered in these spaces by City and Steveston Historical Society personnel. In recent years heritage programming has included:

- The Steveston Heritage Sites Living History program offering costumed, in-person interpretation in the Bank building office each summer and in the JFBS building during special events.
- A school program centered on the experience of the Nikkei in Steveston, offered in the JFBS building. This unique program has been popular with teachers, with over 240 children participating in its first year.
- The Steveston Heritage Experience walking tour which showcases different heritage sites across Steveston to visitors and includes a stop in the JFBS building.
- The Walking Tour Vignettes program is offered to groups and based out of the Steveston Museum. Costumed guides take participants through Steveston village telling the history of its people and places.
- Self-guided walking tour brochures are also available for pick-up at the Museum.
- The Steveston Museum also participates with a variety of programming for annual special events such as Doors Open Richmond, Steveston Salmon Festival (Canada Day), Culture Days, and Winter in the Village.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Steveston Museum was open daily throughout the year with no admission fees. Future programming will be determined as the pandemic lifts and guided by the future mix of services offered at the Museum.

### **Postal Service at the Steveston Museum**

While not an original use of the Northern Bank building, the Steveston Museum has come to be synonymous with the Steveston Post Office. The first Steveston Post Office was established in Steveston on May 1, 1890. Over the past 131 years it has moved to over 15 different locations.

In 1972, Canada Post closed the outlet. With support from community, the post office was re-opened in the Steveston Museum in 1979. At this time, the facility was conceived of being both a community museum and an operating post office outlet. Displays of local history were installed on the main and second floors and a postal

service counter was built. Steveston Historical Society volunteers operated the facility with minimal staff, caring for the displays and managing the postal service.

In 2006, Canada Post sought new locations to offer postal service in Steveston as it felt the service provided at the Steveston Museum was not on par with the requirements of its other locations. As a result of this, an additional Canada Post outlet was opened in Steveston two blocks away in the Super Grocer store. With additional support from the City and Tourism Richmond, the Society was able to address Canada Post's concerns. The outlet at Super Grocer remains active.

From 2012 to 2017, Tourism Richmond operated the post office, but in 2018 the license with Canada Post was transferred back to the Society. Currently, the paid staff of the Society operate the outlet with support of a subsidy from the City.

The post office has been located in the Steveston Museum since 1979, making this its longest location and, for most current residents of Steveston, the only location they have known. The outlet at the Steveston Museum continues to be outside of Canada Post's usual operating requirements, which limits the flexibility of how services are offered.

### **Visitor Centre at the Steveston Museum**

The Visitors Centre at the Steveston Museum was established as a seasonal operation in 2007. It was intended not only to provide visitor information services but also bring in additional revenue to support the Historical Society's operation of the post office. At this time the visitor services counter was installed and Tourism Richmond began paying the Society rent. This was expanded to year-round service in 2012 and has continued like this until 2020 when the counter was closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to the visitor centre operated at the Steveston Museum, Tourism Richmond operates a kiosk in Steveston on Bayview Street which is open seasonally. The Steveston Museum operation supports the kiosk with senior staff and storage space.

### 3. Process for community consultation

*A Vision for Improving the Visitor Experience* – a concept report outlining two options for improving the visitor experience and profile of the Steveston Museum site – was completed in September 2020. Please refer to the report for more information on this discussion. The concepts identified included:

- **Concept A: Steveston and Nikkei Museum**

A single museum linking the experience in the current Northern Bank and Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society buildings to provide an introduction to "the Steveston story" at the centre of Steveston Village.

The Museum would be a focus for local pride in Steveston heritage and culture -- a stepping off point for visitors exploring the village. Exhibits and programs would provide an overview of the history of the Steveston area and introduce stories not currently told in other facilities. A museum host would greet visitors and provide information about Steveston's history and current amenities in Steveston Village. Changing local displays, engaging public programs or small gatherings would be possible in the program rooms of each building. The current Visitor Centre operations would be re-imagined and Post Office service discontinued.

- **Concept B: Steveston Postal Heritage Centre, with a separate Steveston Nikkei Museum**

Each building would provide a unique, separate experience.

*Steveston Postal Heritage Centre (name to be determined)*

Current post office services would continue in the Northern Bank building, supported by modest displays celebrating the history of communications and postal service contributions in Steveston. A modest retail service would sell items related to early communications and Steveston heritage. Changing local displays or gatherings would be possible in the small program room. Visitors services in Steveston would be re-imagined and in-person visitor information services at this location would be minimal.

*Steveston Nikkei Museum (name to be determined)*

The exhibits and programs in the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society building would continue in their current form, though with a distinct identity and a direct entry off First Avenue. Stories currently told there include: Japanese Canadian experiences in Steveston from the arrival of the first Nikkei, or people of Japanese descent. Their many contributions to Steveston, from fishing and farming to cultural arts. The Japanese community's internment during World War II and the postwar return of some Nikkei to Steveston.

Using the concepts presented in this report, the City of Richmond undertook community consultation to gather feedback on the desired services offered at the Steveston Museum. Feedback was gathered in the following ways:

- 1) An online survey was conducted via *Let's Talk Richmond* (LTR),** from February 11 to March 14, 2021, presenting illustrated descriptions of the two concepts, and asking which would best meet the needs of respondents and their families.

The following groups were asked to invite their stakeholders to participate in the LTR survey:

- Richmond Heritage Commission
- Britannia Shipyard National Historic Site Society
- Steveston Historical Society
- Richmond Museum Society
- Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society
- Steveston Merchants Association
- Steveston Community Society
- London Heritage Farm Society
- Tourism Richmond stakeholders
- Lower Mainland Teachers on the 'Museum and Heritage' contact list

227 responses were received to the LTR survey.

- 149 respondents (66%) were Steveston residents and 59 (26%) were frequent, monthly visitors from Richmond or Metro Vancouver.
- Most reported visiting the Museum and Visitor Centre within the past two years (75%), though only half (52%) visited the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society building in the same period, and few (21%) had attended a school or public program in the past two to five years.
- 50% had used Visitor Information Counter in same period.
- 42% were monthly or more frequent users of Post Office.

- 2) Nine video interviews were conducted with a variety of Steveston stakeholders.** Interviewees represented the perspectives of community members, heritage advocates, Post Office users, local merchants, and the tourism industry.

- 3) Background data was reviewed,** to better understand the evolution of the services at the Steveston Museum and the visitor experience of these services.

This data included:

- Survey of Historical Society members and community, 2019
- Data from visitor feedback tablet in Steveston Museum, 2018-2020
- Historical narrative of the Steveston Post Office provided by Harold Steves
- *Richmond's Postal History* by Bill McNulty

## 4. Analysis of community feedback

The findings of the community consultation and data review indicate a wide mix of preferences about the Steveston Museum. A number of respondents expressed a desire to keep the space as it is, while others felt that the current arrangement is confusing and does not do justice to the heritage of Steveston or the building.

While responses were wide-ranging, six common themes were identified and summarized below. (A more extensive compilation of support data is provided in a separate Appendix.)

### **.1 The facility provides a valued community service and neighbourhood meeting point, within a unique heritage setting.**

The Steveston Museum is well frequented by local residents, who value it as a village hub, and as an important part of and reflection of the community. Many commented on the friendly staff and great service as strong contributors to this.

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*"I can't overstate how important I think it is to myself and the Steveston community to have this post office in this space. It's a place for small businesses to package and send goods, for individuals to connect with others in the community in passing, to carry on the tradition of sending a letter, drawing, or Christmas card and catch up with others in the community, and of course, to maintain the heritage of the postal service in Steveston."*

*"I've often thought of the Steveston Museum as a community 'hub', both in its historic use as a bank / doctor's office, and more recently as a post office."*

*"The service from the Postal staff is what keeps me coming back. They offer a welcoming, friendly experience."*

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Many also noted the Post Office's and Bank building's central role in the development and history of the Village.

There is reluctance to shift towards a function perceived as primarily for seasonal visitors, leaving little reason for locals to gather there.

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*"I'd still like to use the small Steveston Post Office for services. Otherwise it would simply become just a tourist attraction."*

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## **.2 A majority strongly value heritage interpretation at the site, suggesting a combined provision of services.**

Most LTR respondents by far rated “museum-style displays of Steveston’s heritage” as ‘very important’ or ‘must haves’ (190 of 222 responses, or 86%), when ranking potential services. Next most valued were: “in-person orientation services for visitors” (61%), “postal services” (56%), and “live programs” (55%).

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*“I see the museum as a way of communicating with the past and so to understand our present. At the same time, the museum must be a living entity that continues to collect our experiences to tell our future generations of our existence, and how we live today.”*

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Respondents’ identification of the most appealing features of their preferred option shows a strong interest in heritage interpretation, regardless of the option chosen (respondents could check as many as applied).

The most appealing features included:

- viewing changing cultural displays (52% of all respondents selected this)
  - learning about Steveston’s story, diverse cultures and communities (24%), and learning about Steveston’s Nikkei history (42%)
  - an interest in stamps and postal history (37%)
  - a place that helps me explore Steveston (22%), and where I’d bring visiting friends and family to share stories of Steveston with them (21%)
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*“The community has changed a lot over the years (especially the past ten years) and I think these stories would help people who are new to the community understand the significance of their new home.”*

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## **.3 A strong majority of respondents favoured retaining the Post Office.**

More than twice as many LTR respondents preferred Option B Steveston Postal Heritage Centre (69%) over Option A Steveston and Nikkei Museum (29%).

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*“I chose [the Postal Heritage Centre], not because I don’t value the suggested plans for Option A, but because I believe part of the building... should be incorporated into the daily, current lives of the people who live in this community.”*

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Interviewees were in favour of complementing postal services with related interpretation of local history, and perhaps a small gift shop, in order to maintain relevance and usefulness to the local community.



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*"I would like to keep the current postal section within the museum – it makes it a living place and draws people in where they can also enjoy the heritage displays."*

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Note that 42% of LTR respondents identified themselves as monthly or more frequent users of the Post Office.

#### **4. There is particular interest Steveston's Nikkei heritage, and support for a continued and expanded sharing of these stories.**

Japanese Canadian themes and exhibits in the JFBS building received the highest positive responses in the visitor feedback survey conducted in 2018-20.

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*"[Our favorite experience during our visit was] learning about [Japanese Canadian] history in Steveston / Canada. (I'm a U.S. born Chinese American.) We were surprised [Japanese Canadians] were interned and relocated."*

*"...learning about this history and [Japanese Canadian] people in Vancouver and Richmond."*

*"...learning about internment (which is very under discussed); thank you for sharing and showing integration of [Japanese Canadian] culture."*

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Numerous LTR respondents and interviewees commented on the importance of the Japanese Canadian community in Steveston, from the early days of the village through internment to the present, and of presenting their experience as an integrated part of the Steveston story, along with that of other settler and Indigenous cultures.

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*"Given the significant influence and historical contributions of the Japanese diaspora in Steveston, there clearly needs to be a dedicated Nikkei museum to celebrate the accomplishments and remember the challenges and hardships faced by Japanese Canadians."*

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Among those interviewed, it was generally agreed that the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society building and exhibits need renewal and much greater prominence, and should have a distinct identity from rest of the Museum and Postal facility.

Additionally, several comments in the LTR survey indicate respondents may have chosen Option B because it specifically illustrated an increased prominence for the JFBS building. Other comments indicated a sense that the space was overlooked, highlighting the need for a more welcoming entrance, and better communication of open hours, and of the experiences and stories available within.

**5. There is a lesser but strong interest in the provision of visitor information services, though an openness to how and where this takes place.**

Providing visitor orientation to Steveston and to its heritage sites – at a minimum with the village map feature illustrated in Option A – was seen as an important if secondary function by those interviewed.

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*"[We] need places for visitors, and [for] locals to take their visitors to get an introduction to our history and current activities and facilities of interest to see and do on their visit."*

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A majority of LTR respondents (61%) also ranked "in person services providing orientation for visitors" as 'very important' or 'must have', as noted above.

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*"[The Visitor Information counter] provides a valuable service, but it takes up too much valuable space – need another central spot."*

*"Where would Tourism Richmond re-locate to if they do not operate from this location? I do feel that having a visitors information center in Steveston is valuable asset to our community."*

---

Still, interviewees typically felt that seasonal visitor orientation services were less important to local residents, and that a successful operation will rely on day-to-day foot traffic year-round. Residents will need a practical reason to visit, whether for postal services, retail opportunities, or other events.

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*"This facility needs to serve the residents of Steveston, not just occasional visitors. Keeping the heritage/education component is also critical."*

---

All but one of those interviewed favoured a combination of services, including a functioning Post Office, interpretation celebrating the history of Steveston, and orientation information for visitors.

**.6 There is an openness to the addition of retail to the space, if focused on unique Steveston products.**

Ninety-eight of 227 respondents (43%) indicated they'd "like to shop for unique Steveston gifts and local arts and crafts items" at the facility.

---

*"Would a gift shop help generate some revenue for the space?"*

*"I [would] love to see it expanded to include more arts and crafts, and supplies, while also creating a space for local artists to share their work."*

*"Selling souvenirs to not only generate monetary gains but also remember the history of Steveston."*

---

**Considerations**

Given the key points of community input above and the review of existing data, following are key considerations to deliver the most valuable and effective services within the limited available spaces of the two buildings.

- **Target audience:** *The data collected will help guide the identification of the primary target audience as local residents or visitors. Given the small public space available in this building, this is important to inform further consideration of services and messages delivered.*
- **Heritage interpretive displays and programming:** *Themes within the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society building will remain focused on Steveston's Nikkei community. The focus for heritage interpretation in the limited available spaces within the Bank building should be re-examined.*
- **Post Office:** *Of the various services considered, postal operations have the least flexibility in spatial and operational requirements, within the limited space of the Bank building. Additionally, the space requirements for postal service have increased due to the increase in volume of large packages.*
- **Visitor Services:** *Visitor information services could have greater flexibility in their delivery – in-person or stand alone, located within the Bank building or elsewhere, and with a smaller or larger scale of physical presence and support.*

## Summary and recommendations

- .1 The facility provides a valued community service and neighbourhood meeting point, within a unique heritage setting.
  - *Retain a mix of services at the Steveston Museum that serve locals year-round.*
- .2 A majority strongly value heritage interpretation at the site.
  - *Explore the potential for refreshing displays in the Bank building and continue to support on-going heritage programming.*
- .3 A strong majority of respondents favoured retaining the Post Office.
  - *Consider how to reframe Post Office operations – more than just a business, a community meeting place that celebrates local heritage and provides valued services.*
4. There is particular interest Steveston's Nikkei heritage, and support for a continued and expanded sharing of these stories.
  - *Identify possible actions for increasing the profile of the JFBS exhibits.*
5. There is a lesser but strong interest in the provision of visitor information services, though an openness to how and where this takes place.
  - *Review options for Tourism Richmond's delivery of visitor services throughout Steveston.*
- .6 There is an openness to the addition of retail to the space, if focused on unique Steveston products.
  - *Explore the potential for additional retail services – possible offerings, operational costs and potential revenues.*

## Appendix: Support Data

A.1 Data from visitor feedback tablet in Steveston Museum, 2018-2020

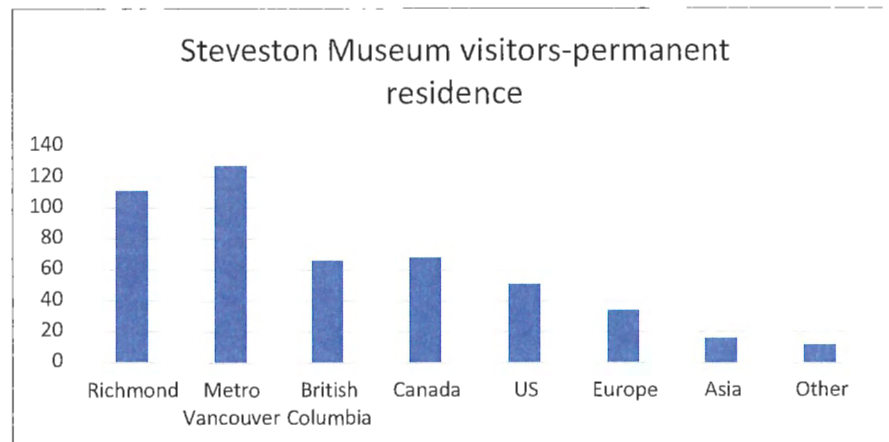
A.2 Summary of community interviews, 2020

A.3 Let's Talk Richmond survey results, 2020

### A.1 Data from visitor feedback tablet in Steveston Museum, 2018-2020 (CITYHALL-#6567093-v1-SHS-Visitor\_Survey\_results\_2018-2020)

Responses were entered by visitors on tablets installed at the rear of the Bank building in July 2018. 514 responses were collected over July-Sept 2018, July-[undated] 2019, Jan-Feb 2020. (Note some possible duplications of entries, which may be from multiple members of the same group. No data on respondents' ages, except in 2020.)

Visitor origin (Steveston Museum visitors – permanent residence)



What was your favorite experience during your visit today? What could be improved?

- **Highest positive responses to Japanese Canadian themes and exhibits in the JFBS building** (102, = 27% of 371 who noted a favourite): learning about Japanese Canadian community in Steveston, internment, martial arts exhibits; visitors from Asia expressed interest in “knowing about people who have the same root as mine.”

This is interesting, given relatively low visitation and awareness of JFBS building and exhibits, at least anecdotally (lack of data, beyond first 7 months of operation, 2015)

- **Next greatest interest in Bank building history** (35): looking in bank vault, using typewriter in bank office, historic cheque-writing workshop.
- **Similar proportion (30) noted favourite experience involving historic artifacts and photographs:** old artifacts, pictures, “old stuff”.
- Numerous mentioned enjoying videos, and friendly and informative staff.

**A.2 Feedback from community interviews**

	Opt.A Steveston Museum	Opt.B Postal Heritage Centre	Other	JFBS
1		<b>Option C: A + B – functioning PO, plus orientation info for tourists</b>	<i>Issue is who's going to run it. City should run it. Get Society out of it.</i>	Needs to change, update; hasn't changed since beginning
2	Like option A, telling holistic heritage story, with VC function; an overview of Steveston			Like separate entity for JFBS, distinct entrance. Should have its own history, staff, volunteers.
3	Success with Visitor Info Ctr there the bldg. for visitors to find out more about the village. Like people around map with heritage sites.	Begin with B, story to be told about postal heritage in Steveston, with entry map where someone greets you and invites you to explore. Then morph to A?		JFBS bldg needs more prominence. Separate Nikkei Museum, allow it to have its own identity.
4	Like map of community, 3D model	The PO <u>is</u> the Steveston Museum	Prefer a combo of both A & B; keep PO; celebrate history of Steveston, Museum, PO	Should be run independently from rest of facility, with own identity.
5		Pref for PO – theme of postal service, ships, river, tram, <u>communications</u> – with invitation to visit other sites		Vastly under promoted, recognized. Entrance to JFBS has to be more prominent.
6	Still see museum as a hub for all Steveston heritage, and for tourism. Live links between sites.	Still see functioning PO as being dynamic part of the museum.	Coordination between heritage facilities – a role we could play.	
7	Visitor orientation – less important for locals. Would like to see the museum get more viewing, be more well known.	PO a cute, boutiquey thing to have in the village. Would be sad to see it go.		
8	Challenge with A = more focused on visitors; peak in summer only. Relies on traffic outside of day to day activity.	Pref more for B than A. Like PO; something that creates a need to go there.	PO – would have no need to go in if not there; need something to draw, like merchandize for time/season, or an event	Have been in JFBS bldg; didn't find much interesting; not likely to go back.
9	See museum as central point, hub, taking you out into townsite. Network of iBeacons?	Pref PO to be there; PO a gathering place, people run into each other.	SHS should be catalyst for involving community, providing programming. A comprehensive plan is needed [for all Steveston sites].	Poor signage, nothing to indicate further displays through rear of Bank bldg. if redevelop front of building, need to better link.

### **A.3 Let's Talk Richmond survey results**



# Project Report

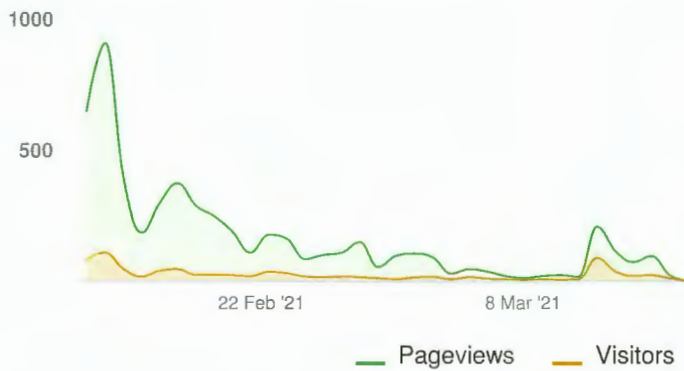
11 February 2021 - 16 March 2021

# Lets Talk Richmond

## Re-envisioning the Steveston Museum



### Visitors Summary

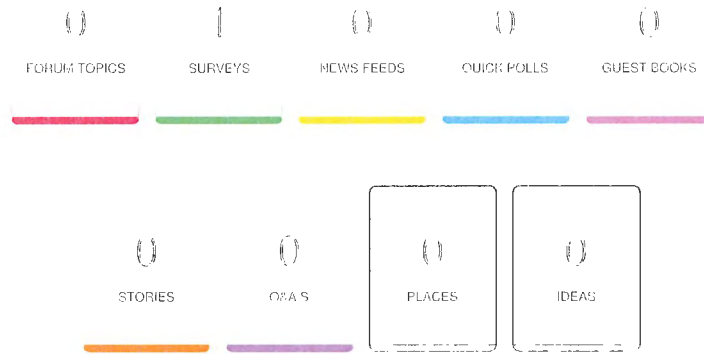


### Highlights



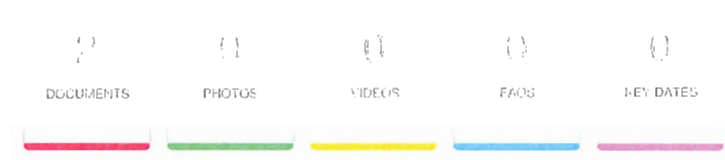
Aware Participants	732	Engaged Participants	221		
Aware Actions Performed	Participants	Engaged Actions Performed	Registered	Unverified	Anonymous
Visited a Project or Tool Page	732	Contributed on Forums	0	0	0
Informed Participants	478	Participated in Surveys	221	0	0
Informed Actions Performed	Participants	Contributed to Newsfeeds	0	0	0
Viewed a video	0	Participated in Quick Polls	0	0	0
Viewed a photo	0	Posted on Guestbooks	0	0	0
Downloaded a document	44	Contributed to Stories	0	0	0
Visited the Key Dates page	0	Asked Questions	0	0	0
Visited an FAQ list Page	0	Placed Pins on Places	0	0	0
Visited Instagram Page	0	Contributed to Ideas	0	0	0
Visited Multiple Project Pages	256				
Contributed to a tool (engaged)	221				

## ENGAGEMENT TOOLS SUMMARY



Tool Type	Engagement Tool Name	Tool Status	Visitors	Contributors		
				Registered	Unverified	Anonymous
Survey Tool	Re-envisioning Steveston Museum	Archived	468	221	0	0

## INFORMATION WIDGET SUMMARY



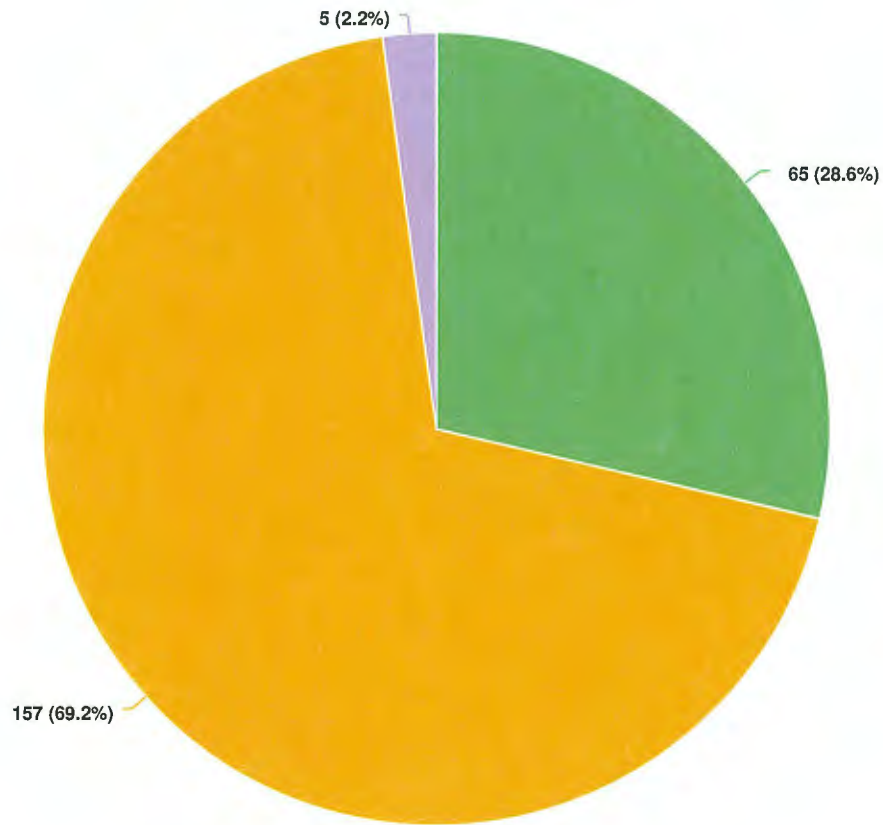
Widget Type	Engagement Tool Name	Visitors	Views/Downloads
Document	Statement of Significance from Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Soci...	38	40
Document	Statement of Significance from Northern Bank Conservation Review - ...	35	35

## ENGAGEMENT TOOL: SURVEY TOOL

### Re-envisioning Steveston Museum

Visitors <b>468</b>	Contributors <b>221</b>	CONTRIBUTIONS <b>227</b>
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The option that would best serve me, my family, my community and Steveston visitors is:



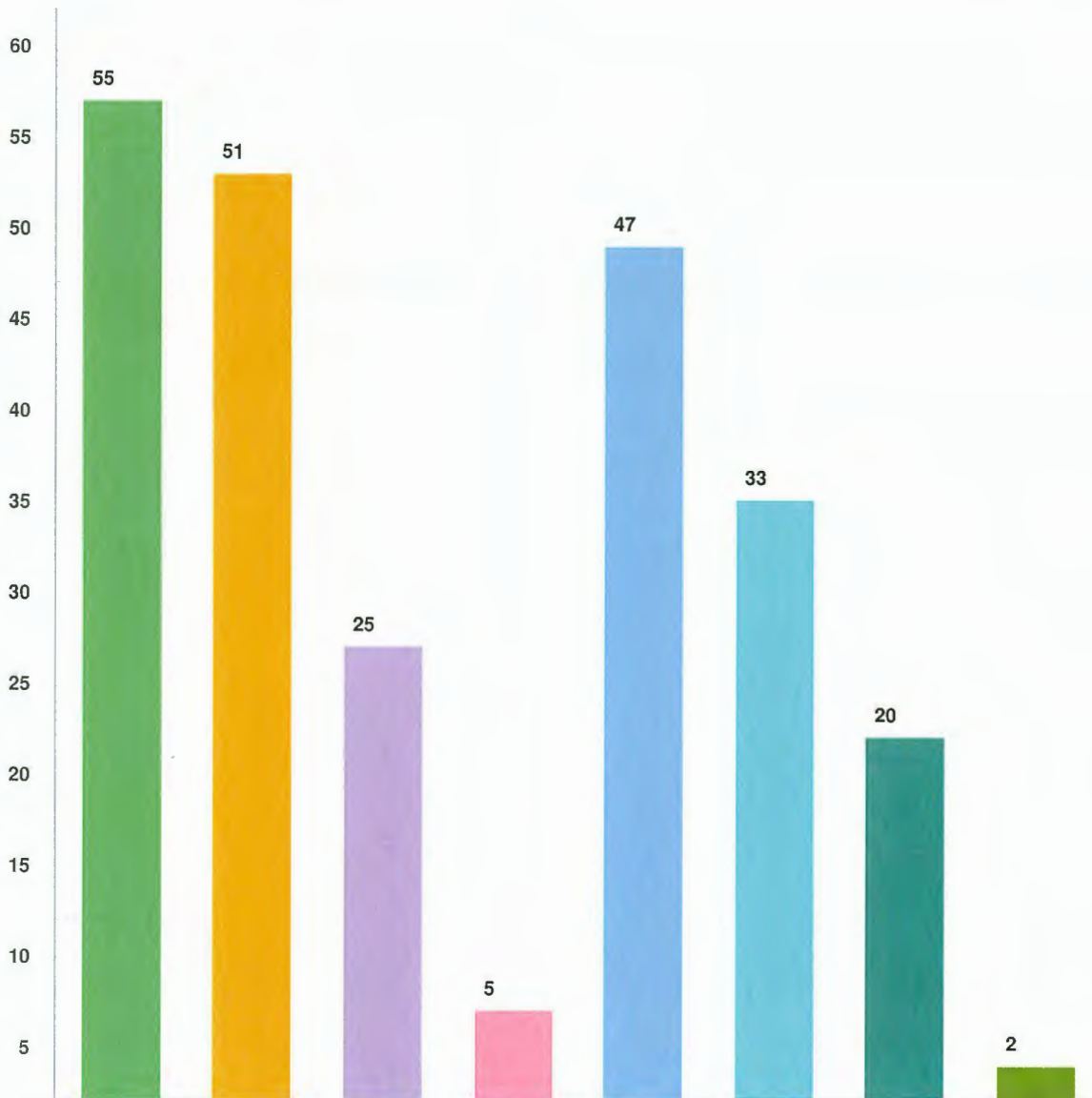
#### Question options

- Option A: Steveston and Nikkei Museum
- Option B: Steveston Postal Heritage Centre and separate Steveston Nikkei Museum
- Option C: Neither Option A or Option B suits my needs

Mandatory Question (227 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

**Why? Option A features appeal most to me and my family because (check all that apply):**



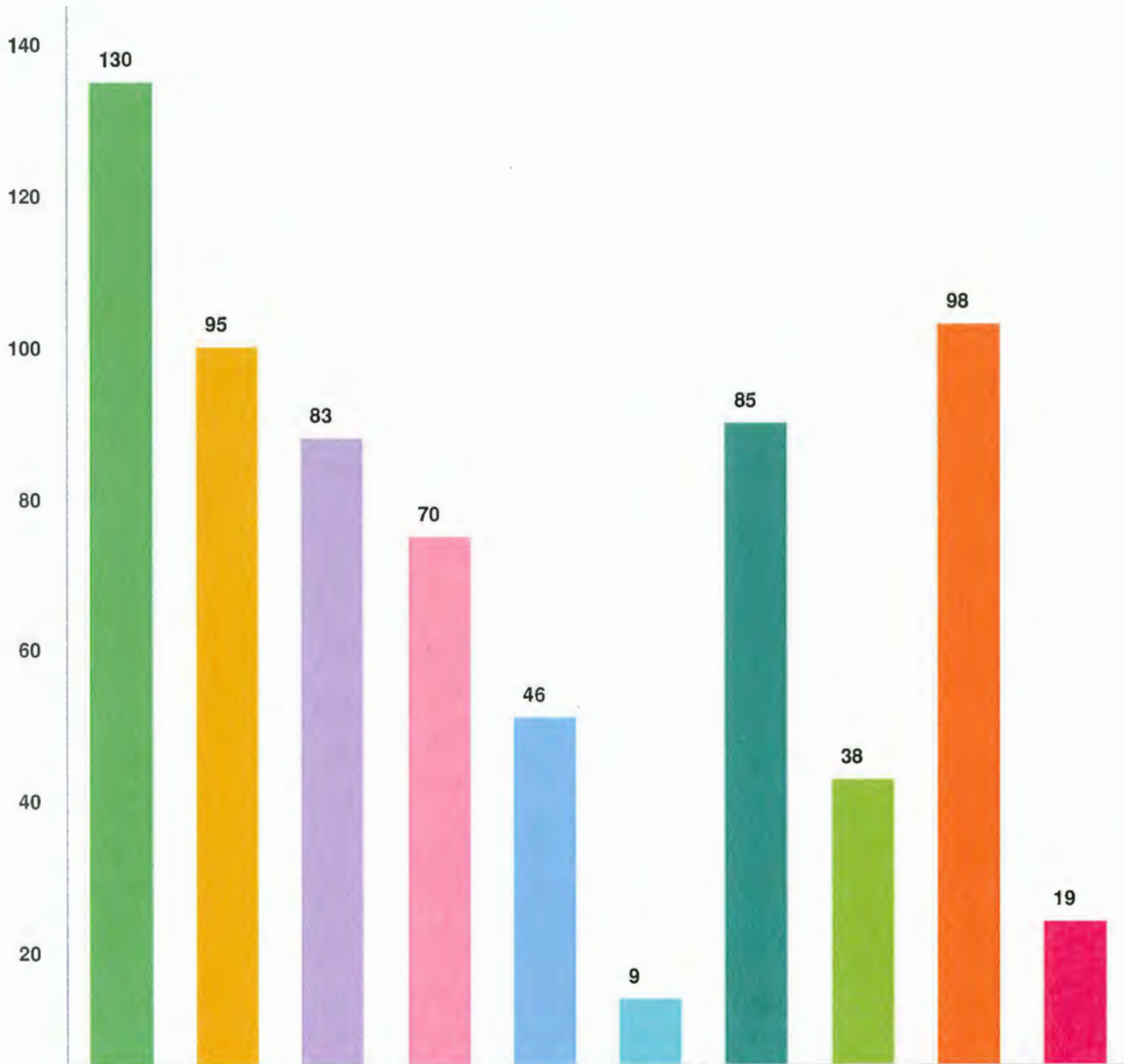
**Question options**

- I'd like to learn more about Steveston's story, and the diverse cultures and communities who've lived and worked here.
- I'd like to visit a place that helps me explore Steveston, where I can find out what's going on at heritage sites around the Village today.
- I'd like to come to the Museum for a guided tour or program.
- I'd like to bring my school class here.
- I'd like to bring visiting friends and family here, to share the stories of Steveston with them.
- I'd like to view changing cultural displays (eg. art shows, craft fairs...)
- I'd like to participate in heritage activities and demonstrations.
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (65 response(s), 162 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

Why? Option B features appeal most to me and my family because (check all that apply):



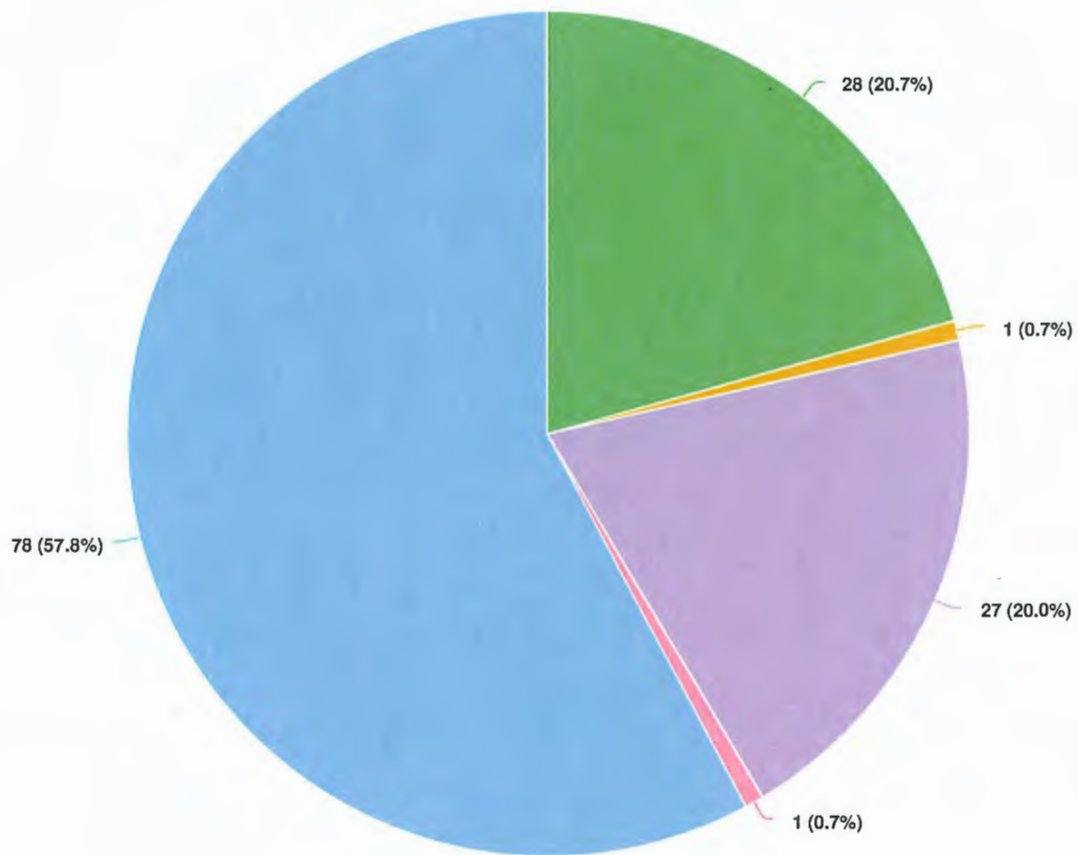
**Question options**

- I'd like to send and receive mail and parcels here.
- I'd like to learn more about Steveston's Nikkei history.
- I'm interested in stamps and postal history, and the role of the post office in Steveston's growth.
- I love everything to do with reading and writing letters: typewriters and telegraphs, calligraphy and fine writing implements, fancy stationery and envelopes, stamps and postal marks from around the world.
- I'd like to come to the Museum for a guided tour or program.
- I'd like to bring my school class here.
- I'd like to view changing cultural displays (eg. art shows, craft fairs...)
- I'd like to participate in heritage activities and demonstrations.
- I'd like to shop for unique Steveston gifts and local arts and crafts items.
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (157 response(s), 70 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

**I didn't select the other option because:**



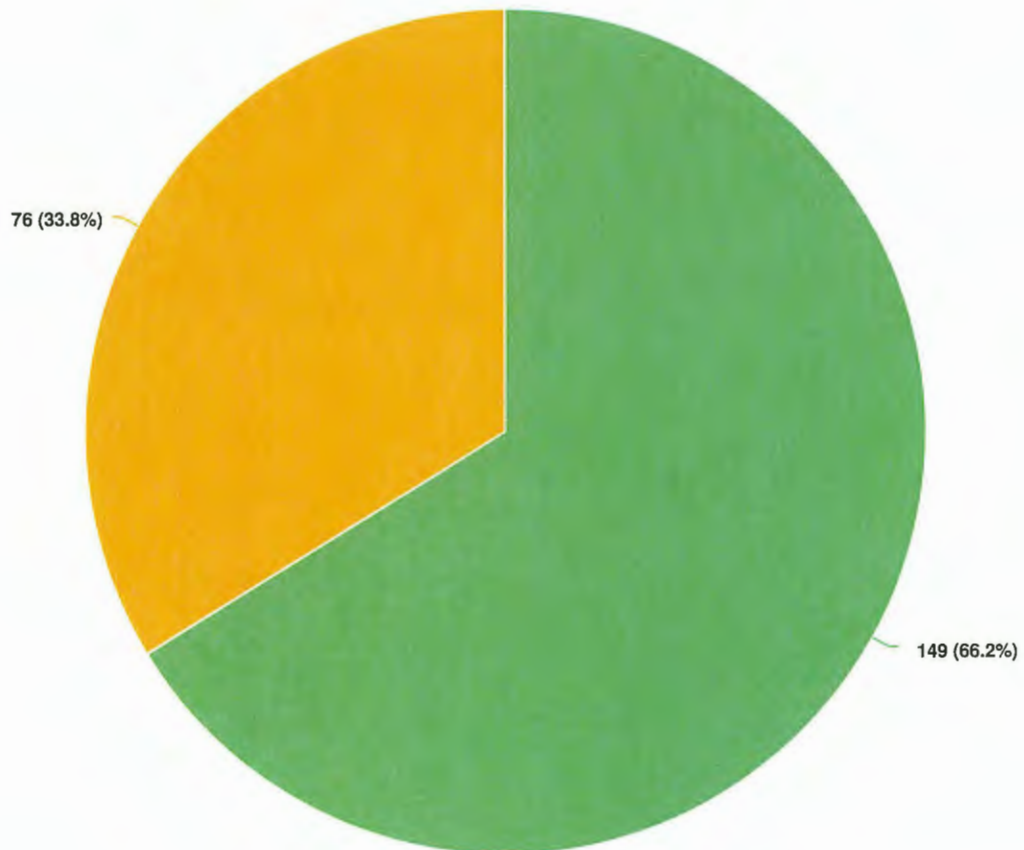
**Question options**

- I wouldn't likely use any of the services offered.
- History exhibits and heritage programs don't interest me.
- I rarely go to a post office.
- I rarely visit Steveston.
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (135 response(s), 92 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

### I live in Steveston:



#### Question options

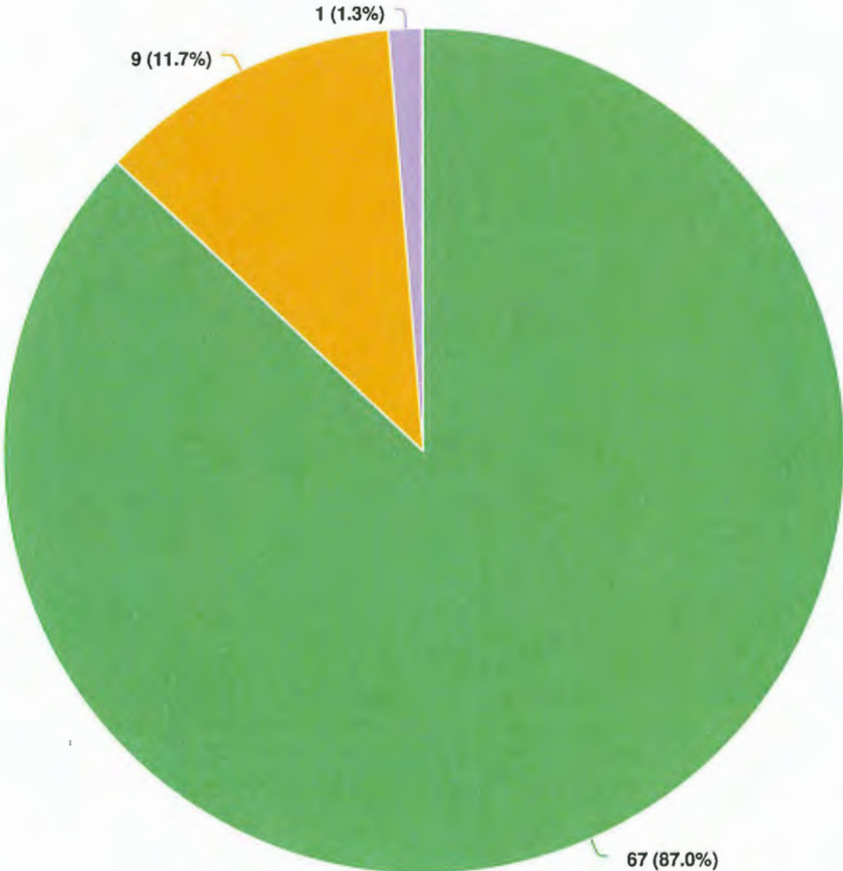
- Yes
- No

*Optional question (225 response(s), 2 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*



I live in:



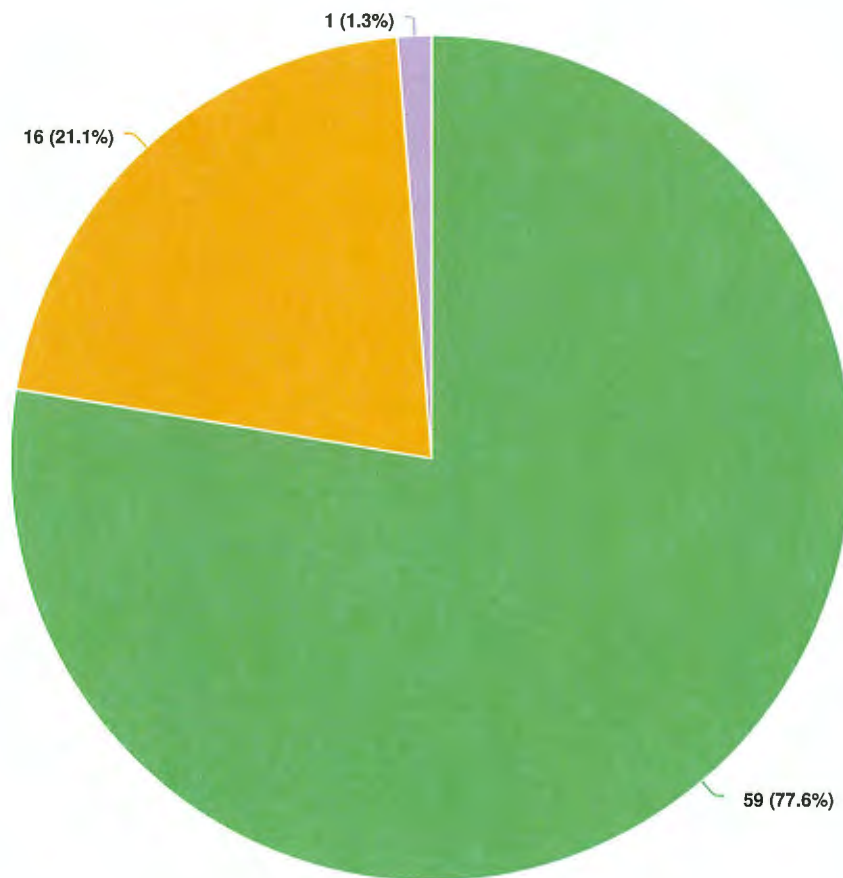
**Question options**

- Richmond
- Metro Vancouver
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (77 response(s), 150 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

### I visit Steveston:



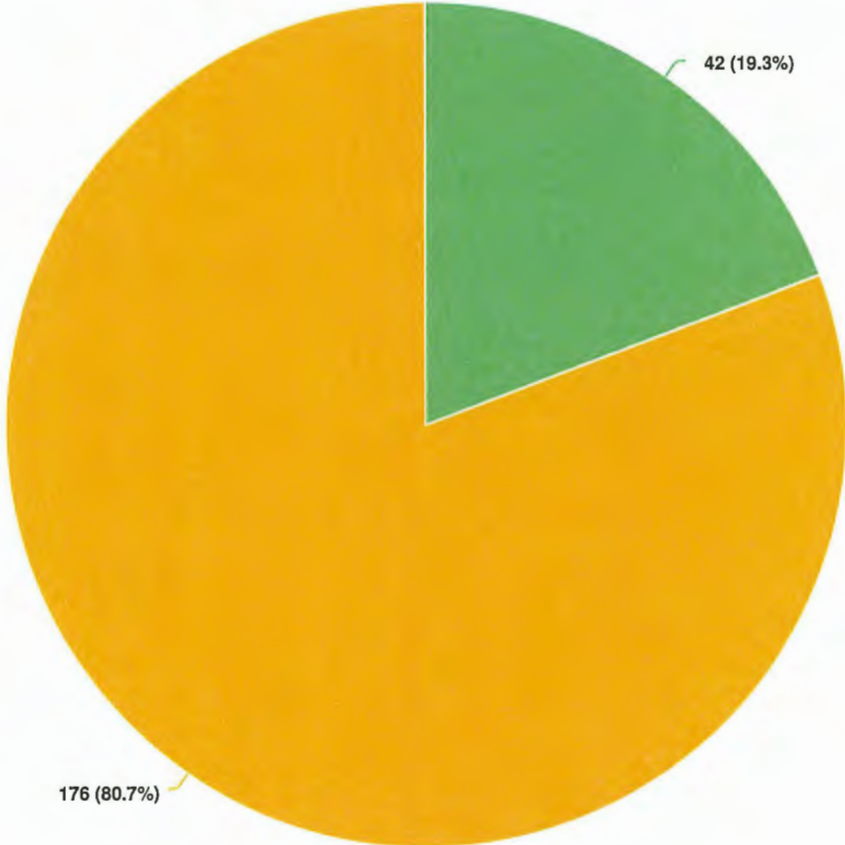
#### Question options

- Frequently (once or more per month)
- Occasionally (once or more per year)
- Rarely (less than once per year)

Optional question (76 response(s), 151 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

I work in Steveston:



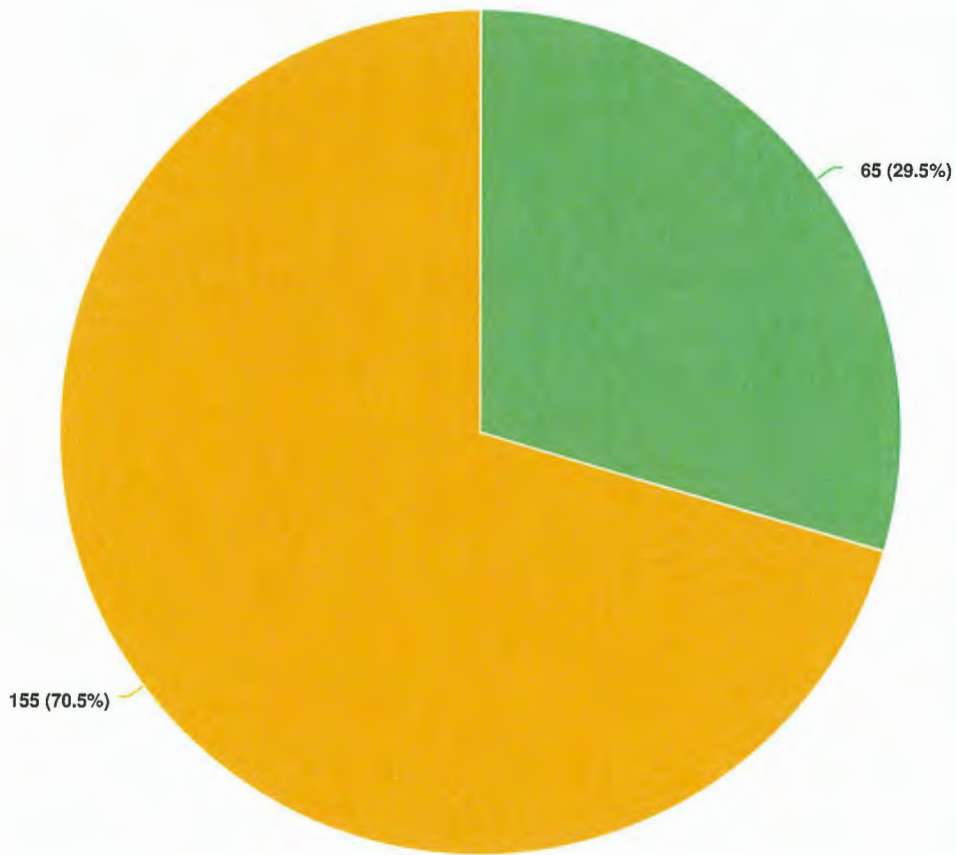
**Question options**

- Yes
- No

*Optional question (218 response(s), 9 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**I have family with school-aged kids:**



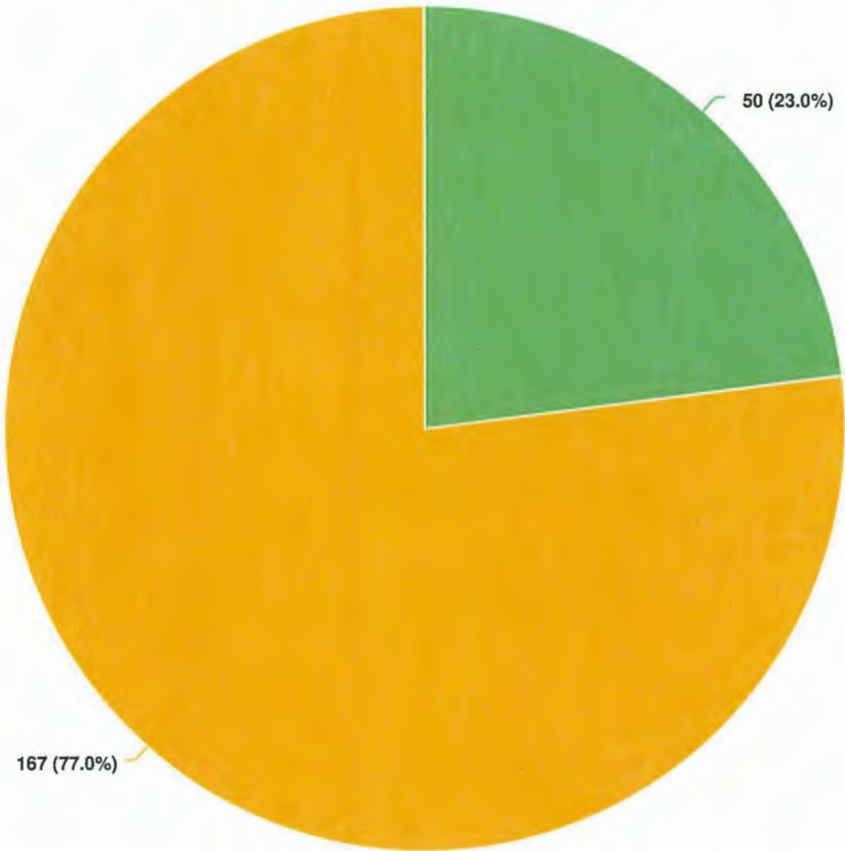
**Question options**

- Yes
- No

*Optional question (220 response(s), 7 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**I work or volunteer as an educator:**



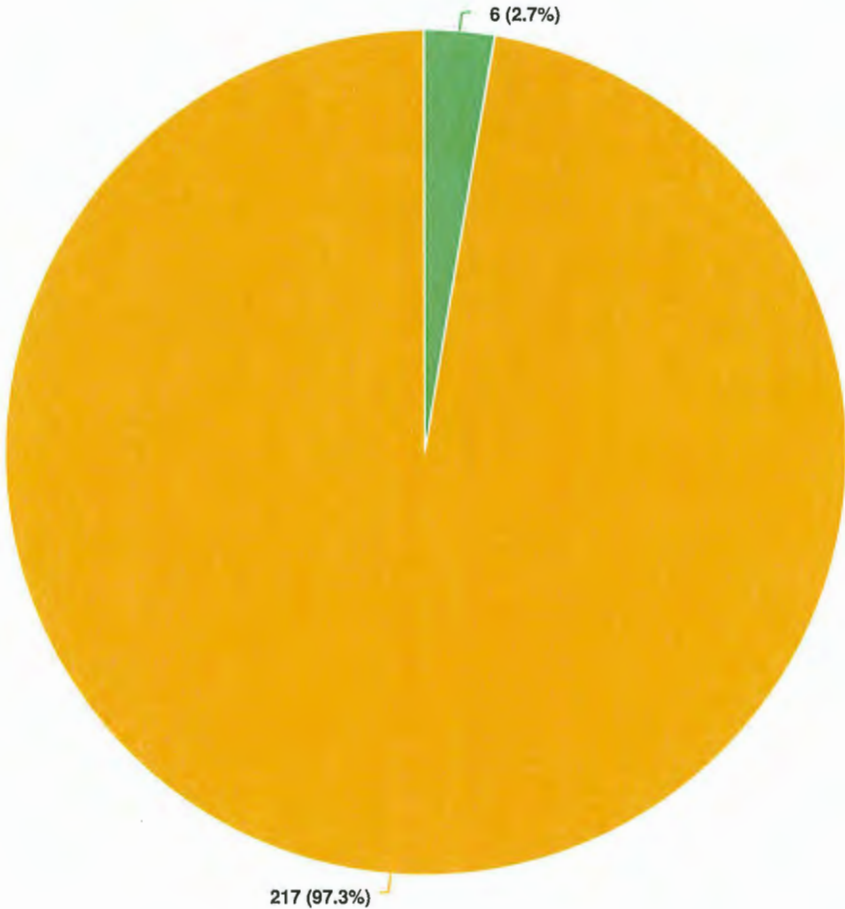
**Question options**

- Yes
- No

*Optional question (217 response(s), 10 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

I am responding on behalf of a Steveston organization:



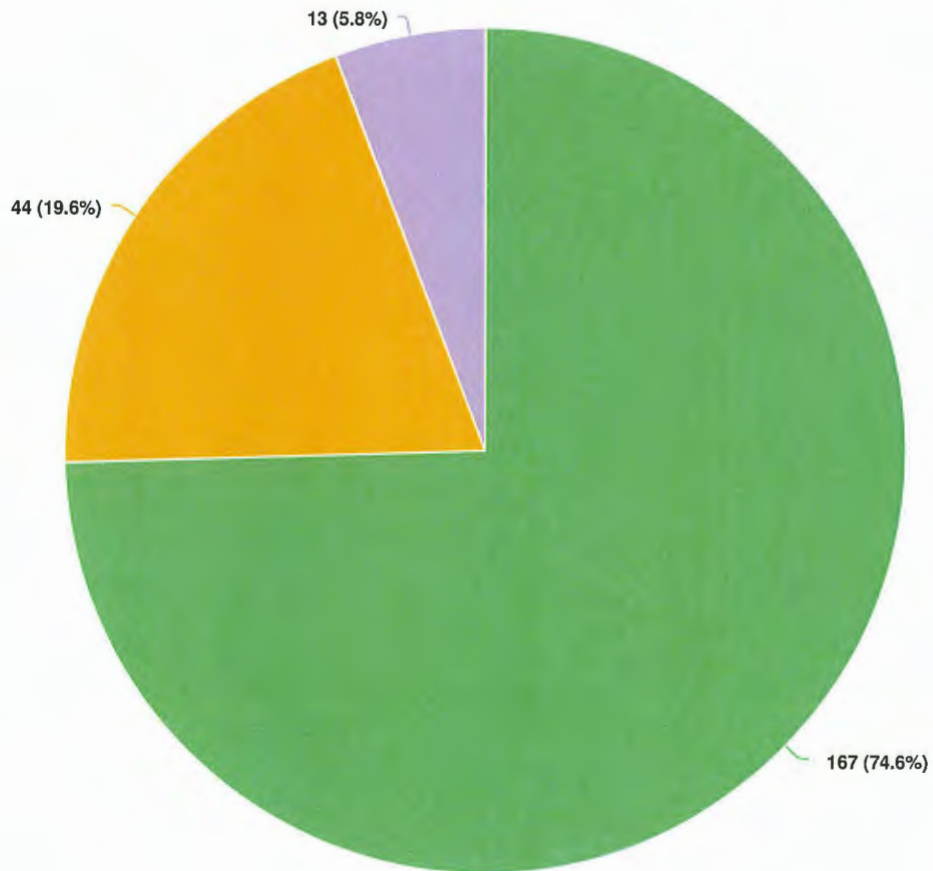
**Question options**

- Yes
- No

*Optional question (223 response(s), 4 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**I have viewed the museum displays at the Steveston Museum and Visitor Centre:**



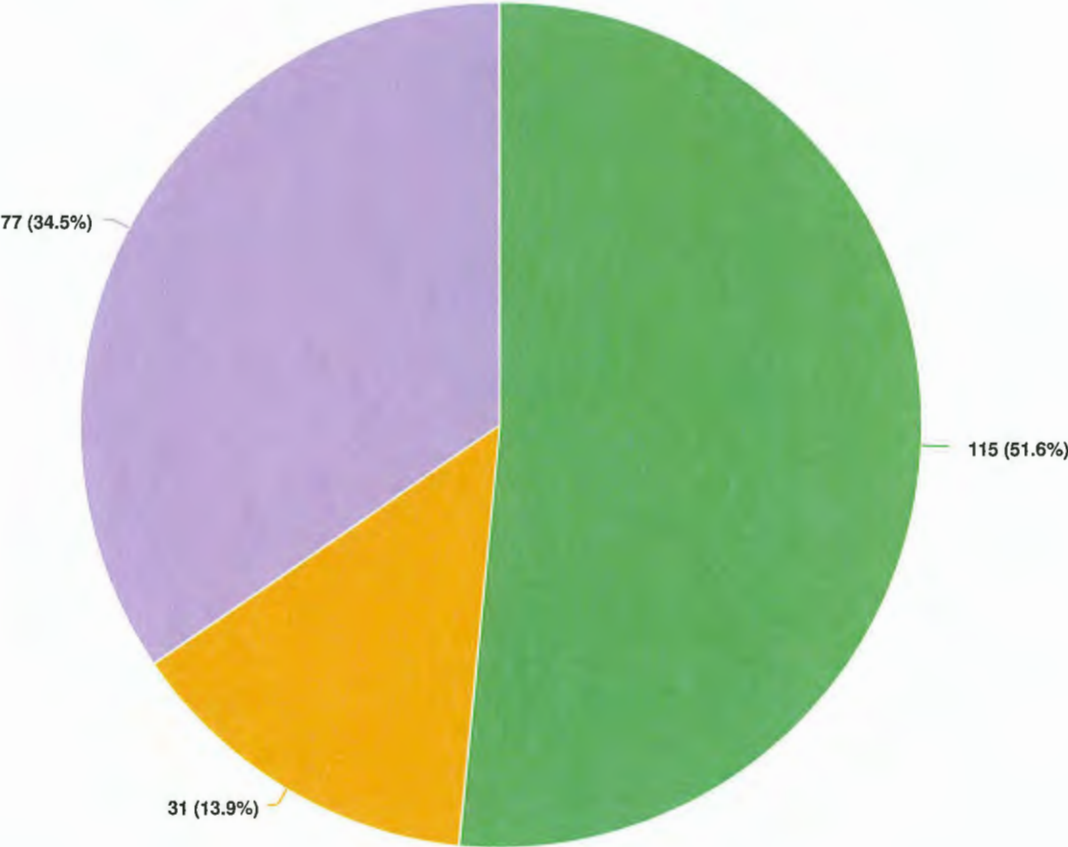
**Question options**

- Within the past 2 years
- Within the past 5 years
- Never

*Optional question (224 response(s), 3 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

I have viewed the museum displays in the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Association building:



Question options

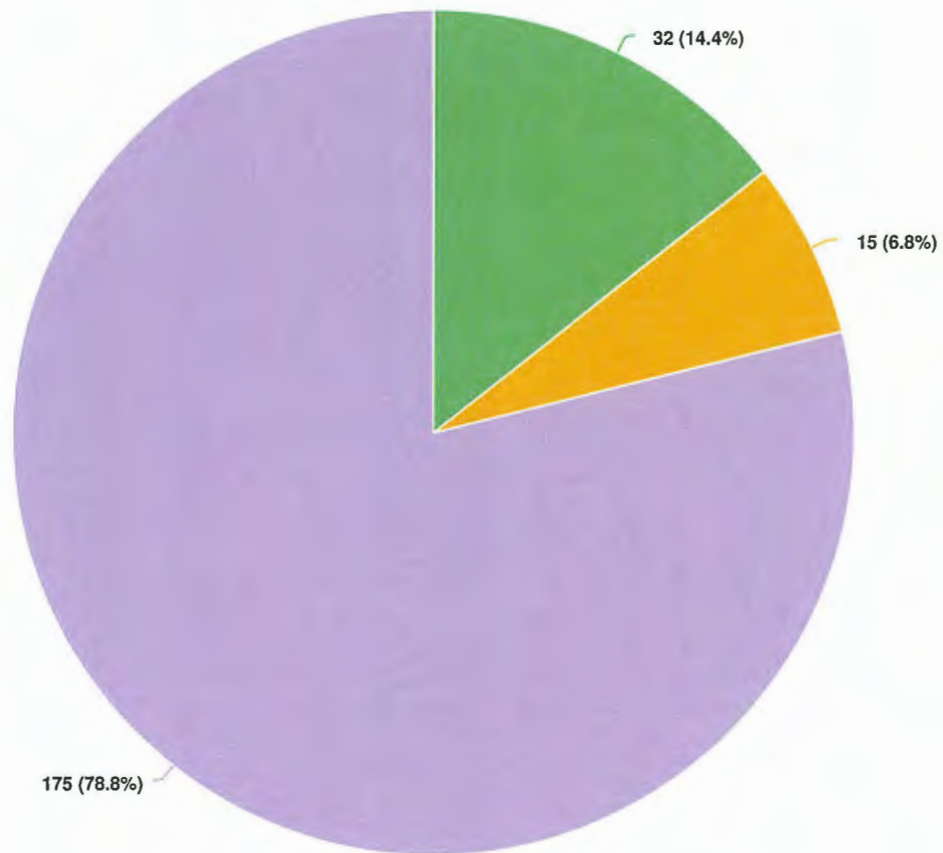
- Within the past 2 years
- Within the past 5 years
- Never

Optional question (223 response(s), 4 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question



**I have attended a school or public program at the Steveston Museum:**



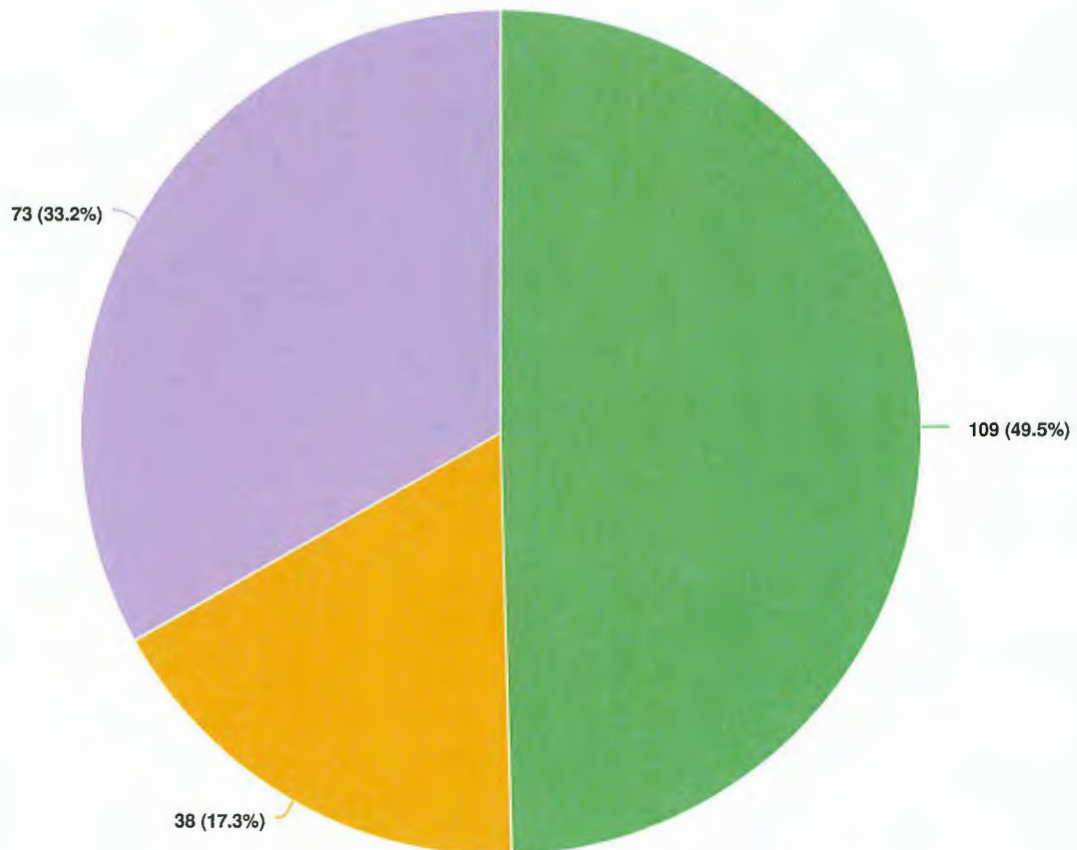
**Question options**

- Within the past 2 years
- Within the past 5 years
- Never

*Optional question (222 response(s), 5 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**I have used the visitor information counter inside the Steveston Museum:**



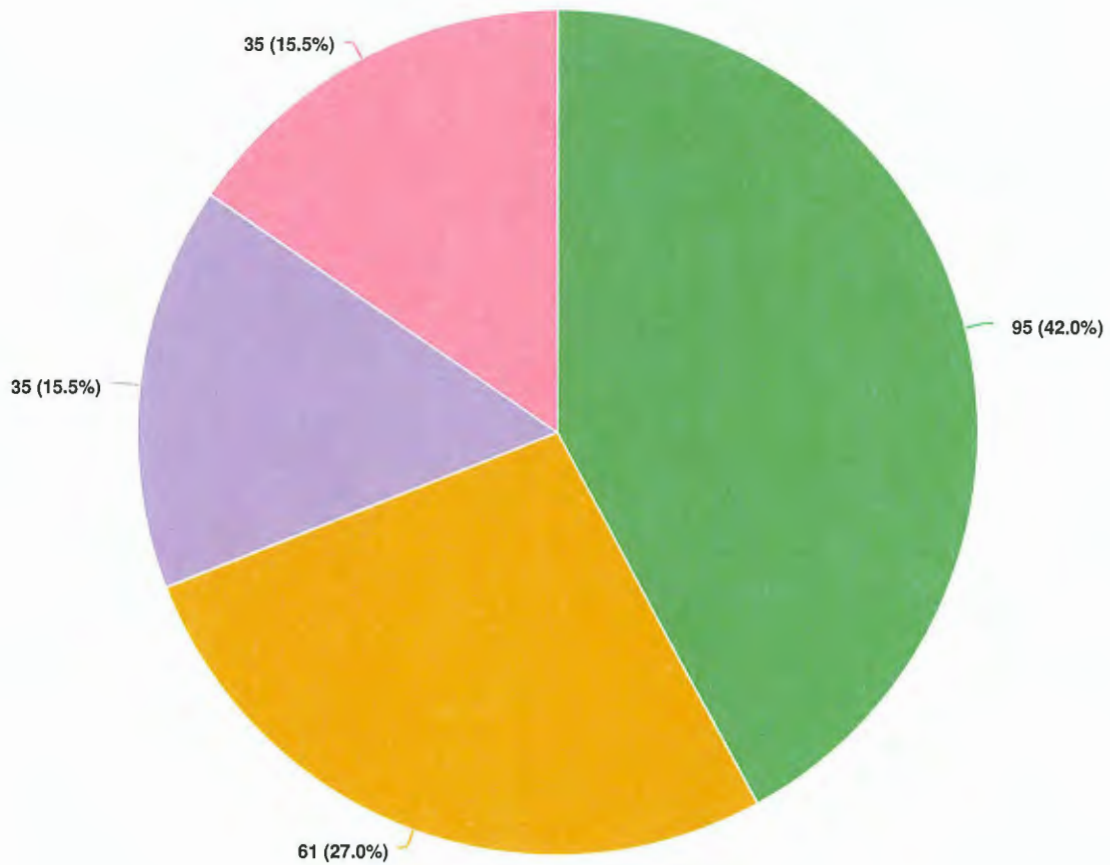
**Question options**

- Within the past 2 years
- Within the past 5 years
- Never

*Optional question (220 response(s), 7 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

**I use the postal outlet inside the Steveston Museum:**



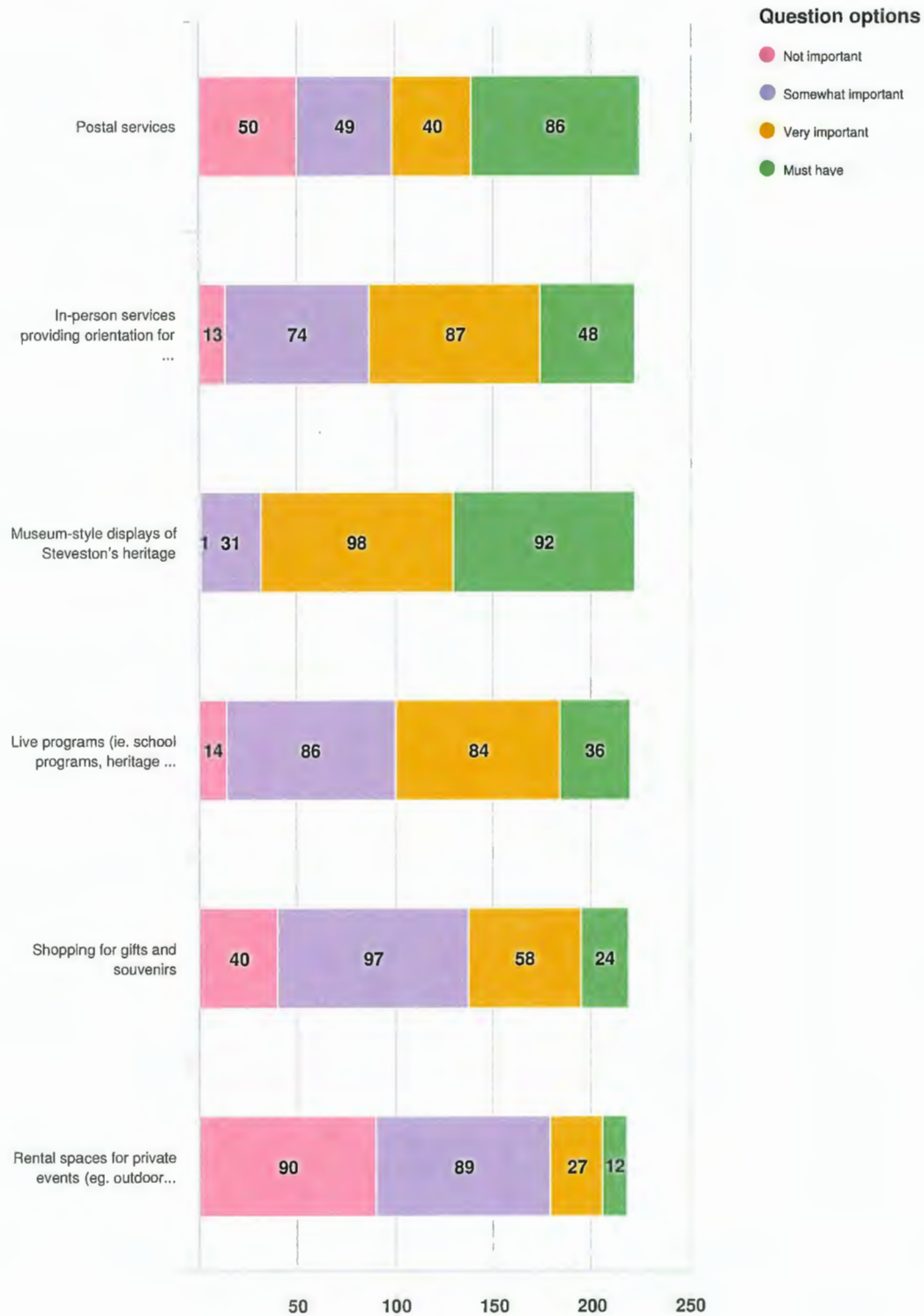
**Question options**

- Frequently (once or more per month)
- Occasionally (once or more per year)
- Rarely (less than once per year)
- Never

*Optional question (226 response(s), 1 skipped)*

*Question type: Radio Button Question*

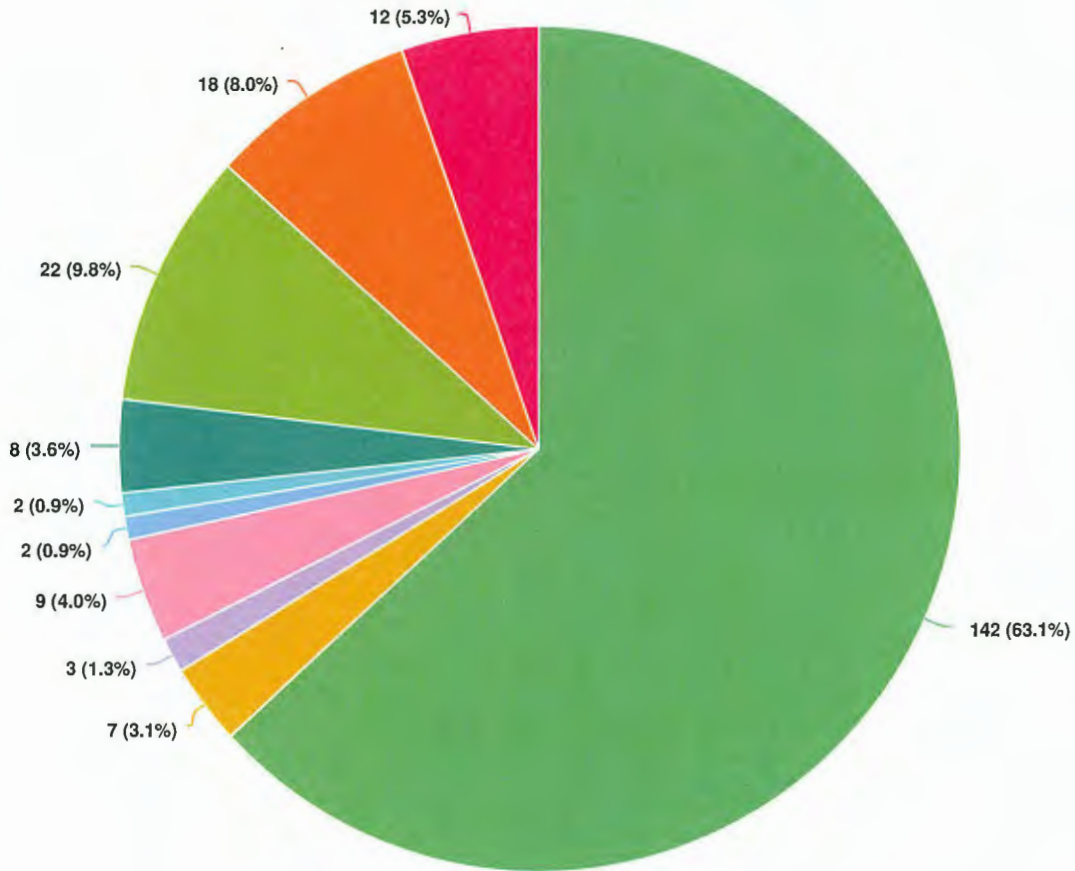
**In general, the importance to me and my family for each of the following at the future facility would be:**



Optional question (226 response(s), 1 skipped)

Question type: Likert Question

### I heard about this engagement opportunity through:



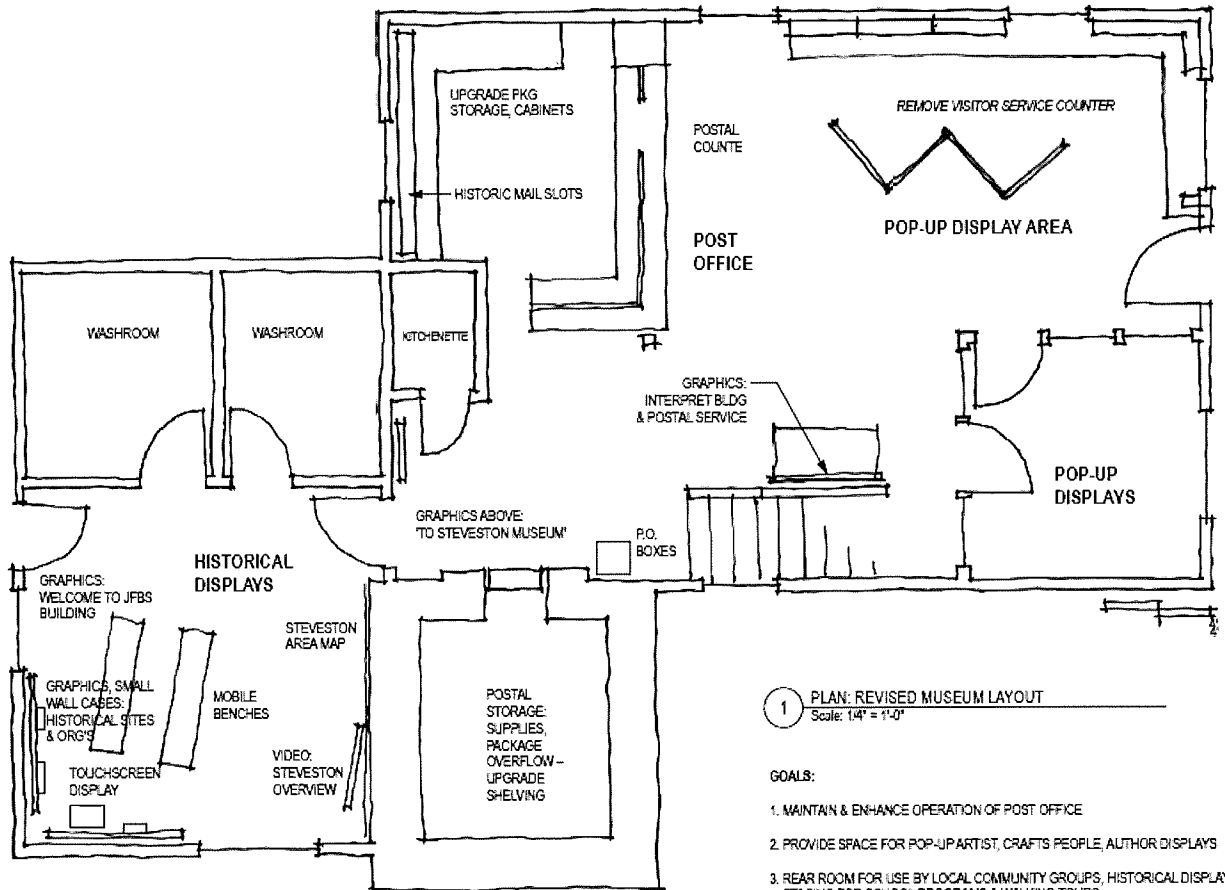
#### Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Story in local newspaper
- Word of mouth
- Through a Richmond community organization
- A poster at a local business or City facility
- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- The City of Richmond's website (Richmond.ca)
- An email from LetsTalkRichmond.ca

Optional question (225 response(s), 2 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Attachment 2: Steveston Museum Proposed Design



September 27, 2021

Dear Mayor and Council:

Please find enclosed request for your support in the future plans of Steveston Historical Society ("SHS").

When reading the following, it is important to consider these main goals of SHS:

- That we remain an EQUAL partner in all negotiations and future relationships
- That any solution proposed for the future continues the tradition that although the building is a museum, it has more importantly been an information hub for the village
- That any solution proposed keeps the building active and alive while also offering heritage aspects
- That we appeal to residents of the community and visitors
- As a Charitable organization any profits would be used for the betterment of the precinct and/or the sustainability of the organization and its programs

SHS has been redeveloping a plan to repurpose the front of the building and we have crafted a mission statement to showcase the below highlights. To better guide our decisions and planning, the goal of SHS is to carefully balance the following responsibilities when considering future ventures:

- Historical significance
- Economic viability
- Community benefit

Tourism Richmond (our tenant) has decided to not return in the same capacity. Hence, we have been developing an updated business plan for the building with the following principles in mind:

- Repurpose the front of the building to incorporate a pop-up artist space
- Provide the Postal Service that the community has embraced
- Further solidify the space as an active part of the Steveston community
- Engage the local arts and craftspeople within the community as exhibitors within the space
- Provide ongoing revenue for SHS which would be reinvested into the site and its programs
- Provide historical interpretation of Steveston
- SHS would continue to maintain museum function with new installation to interpret the building history as well as Steveston's history

To continue the viability of the Post Office and for the above plan to be successful, we would appreciate your monetary support in the value of \$40,000 annually.

Thank you for your continued support of SHS and our programs. We look forward to our continued partnership in these next stages.



Kind regards,

Linda Barnes, Co-Chair  
Steveston Historical Society