

Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society



Japanese Tea House at the Esquimalt Gorge Park

January 23, 2019

The Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society believes that the McLoughlin Amenity Funds provides the Township of Esquimalt with an unprecedented opportunity to address an historical wrong regarding the Japanese Garden and Tea House that was located on the Gorge prior to WWII. This history will be described by Jordan Stanger-Ross and Kaitlin Findlay in the following delegation. The VNCS is proposing that the Township of Esquimalt use part of the McLoughlin Amenity Funds to build a commemorative Japanese Tea House at the Esquimalt Gorge park adjacent to the restored Japanese Garden. We envisage this building would be a multi-use building that provides:

- food services,
- meeting rooms,
- information displays and
- an auditorium for larger gathering.

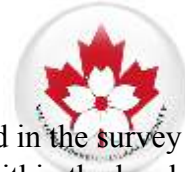
Such a facility would provide multiple benefits.

- It would make the Esquimalt Gorge park a destination attraction.
- It would increase usage of the park.
- It could be used as an extension of the Esquimalt Recreation Centre to provide cultural, recreational, health and sporting services to the north end of the Township.
- It could accommodate other park improvements such as additional wash rooms facilities.
- It could be used to promote the historical importance of the site such as First Nations and Japanese-Canadian history.
- It will enhance the existing Japanese Garden by supporting programming related to the Japanese Garden.
- It could also make the Esquimalt Gorge Park a tourist attraction drawing more people to the park and more revenue to the community.

Relative to the Township's strategic priorities this facility addresses many of the aspects of the first priority to “Enhance the health and livability of the community.”

Over the spring and summer of 2018 the Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society in collaboration with the University of Victoria Landscapes of Injustice Project, conducted an information campaign to make the general public aware the historical background of the Japanese Tea House and Garden at the Esquimalt Gorge Park and to promote the building of a commemorative Japanese Tea house at the park. We issued a press release, had articles published in the University of Victoria The Ring publication and the Times Colonist, had interviews on the radio, had an information table at the Esquimalt Farmers' Market and sent out fliers to the residents of Esquimalt. The response and feedback we received was

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overwhelming positive. No doubt that positive response was reflected in the survey results. As would be expected there is very strong support for this initiative within the local Japanese-Canadian community; support that could include a financial element given the right conditions.

The Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society has a twenty year history of working with the Township of Esquimalt in creating a very popular Japanese Cultural Fair that attracts many people to the Township. We have also worked with the Township on a number of Japanese cultural events at the Gorge Park. We look forward to working with the Township of Esquimalt on another successful initiative to bring a commemorative Japanese Tea House to fruition.

Respectfully submitted
Tsugio Kurushima
President
Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society