

RICHMOND INTERCULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Presentation to Community Working Group
Thursday, January 15th, 2004
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RIAC Mandate

The mandate of the RIAC, is to "enhance intercultural harmony and strengthen intercultural co-operation in Richmond" through responding to intercultural issues referred to it by Council or the community.

Richmond's Diverse Multicultural Population

59% of Richmond residents are a 'visible minority,' with 40% being of Chinese heritage.

54% of Richmond residents are immigrants, with over 23,800 newcomers between 1996 and 2001.

44% of Richmond residents indicated English as their mother tongue.

Community Consultation Process

An initial mandate of this Committee from Council was to "hold public consultations to discuss with the community, a vision, ideas, opportunities, issues and partnerships that need to be addressed to enhance intercultural harmony."

This consultation process involved three phases:

- Phase 1 involved conducting a Stakeholder Consultation held in October 2002.
- Phase 2 involved a Public Consultation held in February 2003.
- Phase 3 involved the implementation of focus group sessions with residents of Richmond conducted during October and November 2003.

Results from Community Consultation

Communication Issues

Language barriers and signage that impair communication across cultures

Lack of meaningful information readily accessible to diverse residents on issues such as community events, governance and electoral procedures.

The term 'multicultural' tends to refer to immigrant or visible minority groups and perpetuate stereotypes, divisiveness and 'otherness'. Intercultural describes a dependence on each other.

Awareness and Attitude Issues

A lack of recognition of and appreciation for the common values and goals that connect all residents of Richmond.

The common assumption that newcomers are choosing to come to Canada as their primary motivation rather than choosing to leave their former country results in unrealistic expectations toward newcomers.

Immigrants coming to Richmond for purposes other than permanent residency, such as 'astronaut' parents, contributes to prejudicial views toward certain cultural groups

Administrative and Service Issues

Cultural diversity is viewed as a peripheral issue rather than a core aspect of City life.

The perception that the City has not been a positive role model in implementing equitable representation

A lack of participation by immigrants in the political system.

Underemployed residents due to foreign credentials not being accepted while Immigration actively recruits for those skills and credentials.

Community Conflict Issues

Some level of ghetto-like separation of the community along ethnic lines

Tensions existing *within* certain cultural groups

Incidents of racism and discrimination that continue to occur in Richmond

Current Service Providers (by no means encompasses all providers)

Multicultural Concerns Society
SUCCESS
Richmond Filipino Society
Religious Facilities

Current Services Available in Richmond

Immigrant Services (SUCCESS, Multicultural Concerns Society)
Faith Organization
Senior Programs
Language Training Programs

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FOR PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES TO CONSIDER

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services and staff have close connections with the communities in Richmond and would therefore be an excellent avenue to facilitate many of the issues and concerns identified. Community centres already address some of the needs, however a common intercultural philosophy needs to be a core value in all decision making. Below we have identified some of the areas Parks, Recreation and Culture can be directly involved in to enhance intercultural harmony and strengthen intercultural co-operation in Richmond

Ensure that information about community activities is available for newcomers and residents, and presented in a manner that appreciates the needs and communication skills and traditions of different cultural groups

Research and address the understanding of, and barriers faced by, different cultural groups observed in the participation of City events and services.

Facilitate the development and co-ordination of intercultural events focused on the concepts of learning about, participation in, and celebration of Richmond's diverse multicultural community.

Research and develop opportunities for community-based dialogues or forums on current issues that face the community as a whole and use opportunities to build intercultural interaction and awareness.

Develop outreach mechanisms to encourage individuals from variety of ethnic populations to apply for available employment opportunities.

Consider hosting, in partnership with community settlement service agencies, welcoming events for newcomers to Richmond.

Develop programs to identifying and support youth that may be struggling with adapting to life in Richmond.

Work with the School District and partners to support the development of programs that eliminate culturally based bullying and discrimination from the schools and community, and offer more opportunities for intercultural learning and experiences.

Build recreation facilities in City areas currently lacking places for youth to congregate and participate in recreational activities.

Provide meeting, activity and office spaces for developing ethnic groups.