

New Westminister Secondary School Replacement Project
Memorialization Advisory Committee Meeting

FEBRUARY 2, 2022

TIME: 4:00 PM TO 5:30 PM **LOCATION:** Via Zoom

ATTENDING MEMBERS	<p>Karim Hachlaf, Superintendent of Schools/CEO, New Westminister Schools Bill Chu, Canadians for Reconciliation Society Richard Geoffrey Leggett, Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral Jessica Schneider, Massey Theatre Society Mark Gifford, Trustee, Board of Education, NW Schools Robert McCullough, City of New Westminister Jamie McEvoy, Councillor, City of New Westminister Erika Mashig, City of New Westminister Jim Pound, Union-Solomon Lodge No.9 Karah Goshinmon Foster, Nikkei Place Daana Gilpin, Education Asst., Tsilhqot'in Ntnl. Gov. Sherry Stump, Community Ed Liaison, Tsilhqot'in Ntnl. Gov. Rhonda Larrabee, Chief, Qayqayt First Nation Carleen Thomas, Intergovernment Relations, Tseil-Waututh Nation</p>
PROJECT TEAM	Dave Crowe, New Westminister Schools
CHAIR	Maya Russell, Board Chair, Board of Education, NW Schools
GUESTS	<p>Kelty Mckinnon, Principal, PFS Studio Robyn Gibson, Senior Project Designer, PFS Studio Jim Wolf, Local Historian</p>
MEETING RECORDER	Kaeleigh Evans, New Westminister Schools
WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meeting called to order at 4:01 pm</i> • Chair Russell welcomed all and gave a land acknowledgement • Chief Larrabee welcomed all and mentioned there is a lot of concern in the community about the old NWSS site given recent news, and is optimistic things will be done respectfully • Trustee Russell began introductions, and all meeting participants introduced themselves 	

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DECONSTRUCTION UPDATE – DAVE CROWE

- Dave provided an update on the status of the site and the work to decommission the former school; things were delayed a little because of the reconnections to the Massey Theater took longer than anticipated for the new utilities connections to make it a standalone building
- Dave explained currently things are moving to RFP for decommissioning, after a successful RFQ a few months back that received great response of over 15 companies that have been narrowed down to 5; the RFP will take approx. 6 weeks before a contractor is awarded to start the process
- Chair Russell asked if the group had any questions
- Erika asked where the staging area for debris and trucks would be upon decommission and Dave responded that will become a part of the transportation plan once a contractor is selected and they submit their sequencing and plan
- Jessica asked if there is a relationship of the site staging to this group as there will possibly be sensitive areas and materials involved and noted that perhaps this issue should be outlined in the RFP
- Dave agreed with Jessica and informed the group that there is no subsurface work at all allowed and the fact that the site is a former cemetery is included in the RFP. He noted that as far as parking and amenities go they are trying to maintain as much parking as possible and will be working with various stakeholders to minimize those impacts
- Richard asked if the RFP should specifically state that there would be no subsurface work due to the sensitive nature of the site but Dave had answered that question when responding to Jessica
- Dave also added that this is a very unique deconstruction and they are being careful to look for contractors with like experience
- Richard asked if before deconstruction takes place it would be possible to arrange for various groups to ritually recognize the beginning of the work and offer prayers
- Dave thanked Richard for that suggestion and noted he will bring it back to the project team
- Bill asked to confirm if any concrete underground would not be demolished, Dave confirmed
- Bill asked if any basement would be filled, and Dave confirmed yes it would be covered with fill
- Carleen thanked Richard for his point on ritual recognition and defers to Chief Larrabee but notes it is very important to have some sort of ceremony and offers her assistance in organizing that
- Dave reiterates that there is at least 6 weeks before contractor is award so there is some time
- Chair Russell asks for any other thoughts and Chief Larrabee thanks Carleen for her offer of assistance and notes she can reach out to her at any time

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PRESENTATION BY JIM WOLF

- Chair Russell introduces Jim Wolf, a local historian and published author, to share his presentation on what records are available about various local burials
- Jim shares his screen, showing his presentation titled Monument of Neglect
- Notes that the story of the site is defined by racism and classism which is why there is so little to document what this place was like and why even though it was known that the site was a cemetery preservation was neglected; the site was treated as an embarrassment to the city
- Jim begins to discuss how he began rebuilding the list of lives lost; what sources are available and what the limitations are
- One source is the newspaper, but as the examples that Jim showed the group display, only settlers are mentioned by name; first nations and marginalized individuals were not named
- Another source is government records but noted that when BC joined Canada and the Births and Deaths Act was created it noted that this was not to be applied to “Chinese or Indians” so none of those deaths, births or marriages were included in records; for the same reason the BC Archives is not reliable and noted that death certificates often do not have place of burial
- Other ways to find unregistered deaths and burials is by crosschecking various resources such as coroner’s reports, asylum and gaol death records, church records and city council records as the city would pay for indigent burials; while racist in how they reported deaths the newspapers are also a reliable source for cross-checking
- There is a surviving record of an undertaker during the period of operations of the public cemetery which also helps (including an asylum record annotated with names and numbers to track plots), but missing are the records of the two other important undertakers at the time
- Church parish records are valuable as priests made records of funerals they attended
- Chinese Benevolent Society Records were attached to the creation of the Chinese hospital in 1904 which had a register of patients and who died when, partial burial records also
- Jim tried a targeted approach looking at particular groups such as Japanese Canadians or Asylum Patients; going into specific gov or community records that detailed their deaths then confirmed their burials
- For Asylum (public hospital) deaths, asylum reports and BC Death Index records from 1882-1920 were used – death certificates could be reviewed, looked for other burial locations and through process of elimination could figure out who was buried in this site
- Carleen asked about the asylum records, and whether indicators of nationality were provided for the Woodlands asylum as her paternal uncle was a resident; Jim cited he can look at that but has not added that to this data list but she can contact him if she would like him to look into it
- Jim showed a plot map that distinguished the two cemeteries– the public cemetery operated without a plot map so it is uncertain who was buried where but Douglas Cemetery was surveyed

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with burial plots from 1909-1920 created with a registered grid so specific names can be matched to locations; also noting the Chinese Cemetery is grouped with Douglas

- Jim showed a chart breaking down burials by year that have been discovered, at the beginning there was only 1 cemetery so there are more records. When new cemetery opened in Sapperton in 1869 it appears to flatline because vital statistics are not picking up burials of marginalized people; it grows in 1900 when vital statistics start recognizing ethnic minorities so it looks like more burials when in fact there are just more records; as Asylum grows all those deaths are buried in Douglas Cemetery so the numbers grow from that as well
- Jim showed a breakdown of institutional and ethnic groups for the public cemetery and Douglas cemetery; Indigenous numbers are very low due to poor records; may not reflect the truth
- Jim states the importance of embracing incomplete knowledge as we will never know everyone that was buried there but through these processes we can honour and respect the history of the known and the unknown
- Jim shared some of the stories of various individuals who were recorded in the newspaper and in photographs such as “Jim”, Jeannie Queen of the Chehalis, Chief Ahan, and Tai Kee; as well as showing photographs of a Japanese Canadian Buddhist congregation, and the remnants of Japanese gravestones that were used in the construction of a New West home. Jim showed photos of a Sikh cemetery, not at this site but shown the way it may have looked
- Jim notes that it is difficult to uncover records for those in poverty, who may have died from drug use or suicide; gaol deaths from disease or capital punishment or those in workhouses and 1918 flu pandemic deaths
- Jim concludes his presentation and Chair Russell thanks him and thanks Jessica for calling out how painful this is to observe in the Zoom Chat
- Carleen is called on, and she thanks Jim for the amazing research citing that it puts into perspective the history and the people that helped build this province and what is suppressed and erased and why this committee is so important
- Jamie is called on and asks when a publication will come out; Jim confirms a publication does need to happen to share this list, the data and the stories and that he wants to share this work with the help of the City and local Museums
- Richard is called on, he asks Jim if he needs help getting into the Anglican archives and Jim says that he will be in touch offline
- Bill is called on and states that it is amazing after all this time there are still records being unearthed; states it is a point of contention in the community because there is a lot of misunderstanding over what happened– asks how many burials were uncovered via the radar penetrating tests done? Jim says that he regrets having to be somewhat secretive when he was a consultant but now has the freedom to share his information. Adds that the question about what the radar uncovered would be best posed to Golder and that Trustee Russell may be able to get that info from them

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- Bill adds that he was an engineer before retirement and put in a motion to highlight the fact that more study for engineers is required to deal with burials and excavations
- Carleen is called on but she defers to Chief Larrabee
- Chief Larrabee says she understands about researching and uncovering info like this, that she is excited to find the info but sad to hear some of the stories. She has family buried at St. Peters in plots that say “For Indians Only”, understands the racism that was rampant. She notes when looking for burial sites of her ancestors at different gravesites in Chilliwack and Surrey because like Jim mentioned she had the dates of death but no mention of where the burial occurred. During this research she understood that some were sent to medical research facilities, and asks Jim if he knows of this practice – Jim notes he has not heard references to this, not to say it did not happen but had not come across it in his research. So much suppressed information leads to the conclusion that the bodies must have been taken elsewhere because it seems unbelievable, they were buried on the site with no records.
- Chief Larrabee also adds to Bill’s point that whenever there is construction in New West and archeologists are involved, she is notified right away and Golder contacted her regarding a bone found while surveying for the Pattullo Bridge expansion (turned out to be animal) but knows that in today’s society people are sensitive regarding the land they are digging up
- Carleen is called on, who adds that there may be added confusion because when the Indian Act came into being, women were stripped of their status if they married non-Indigenous men so there may be Indigenous women buried who were not categorized as such
- Kelty is called on but she says her question was answered, as she wondered if folks from the Gurdwara would be on site but Jim had made a reference to the Sikh population during his presentation; Jim says it’s a good reminder and that he should reach out to that group again as they likely did record their dead in some way and thanks Kelty for the reminder
- Jim Pound is called on, he congratulates Jim on this work and asks if there is a plan for this data to become public record; Jim confirms that it all came from public record and he has just collated it but will work with the City to release the info in an appropriate way
- Chair Russell says she was struck by the information regarding Essondale and will go back to her job at the Canadian Mental Health Association to speak about the experience of the mentally ill or those coded as mentally ill

SUMMARY INFORMATION

- Chair Russell confirms with Jim that he is comfortable sharing his email with the group, which will be distributed to the attendees at a later time and Jim states he is happy to follow up with anyone individually
- Chair Russell thanks the group and requests those with thoughts about the next meeting contact her

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CLOSING

- Meeting ended at 5:33pm.
- Next meeting will take place on **Wednesday, May 25, 2022 from 4pm-5:30pm via Zoom, accessible by [this link](#)**
- Questions or comments should be directed to Karim Hachlaf (khachlaf@sd40.bc.ca) and copied to Kaeleigh Evans (kevans@sd40.bc.ca).

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