



Japanese Canadian Boatbuilding Research Project

Introduction

The City of Richmond is seeking a consultant to conduct historical research into the Japanese boat builders of Steveston.

Project Background

Starting in the 1880s, many of BC's finest fishing boats were built in Nikkei-run boat yards. Their style of construction was clean and workmanship legendary. Japanese Canadian boat builders supplied the boats that fed more than 150 canneries dotting the West Coast, including Steveston. By 1919, there were at least 20 Japanese Canadian boat works on the Steveston waterfront.

This came to an end with the forced internment of Japanese Canadians in 1942. In a matter of hours, the Royal Canadian Navy impounded 1,137 boats which were turned over to the Japanese Fishing Vessel Disposal Committee. Along with the boats and their gear, boat works businesses were sold at rock bottom prices. However, the connection to and renown for boat building was so strong that some Japanese boat builders continued their craft from internment camps.

In 1949, when Japanese Canadians were able to move freely again in Canada, fishing companies sought out these skilled tradesmen, courting them back to the BC coast. Many, such as the Kishi, Mukai, Asari, and Sakamoto families, returned to Steveston and successfully re-established the trade for which they were famous.

The story of these boat builders is central to Steveston's heritage - illustrating the diversity, ingenuity and resiliency of Steveston's community. However, much has been lost to time. With support from the Japanese Canadian Legacies fund, Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site is developing an exhibit that shares the story of these boat builders, their communities, businesses and craftsmanship. To support the development of this exhibit, the City is undertaking a research project to uncover the little known stories of these many men and the businesses they built.

*An overview of this history can be seen in the short video "A Tradition of Boat Building" found here: <https://www.richmondmuseum.ca/theatre>.

Services

The City is seeking a researcher to gather information and interview descendants of boat building families of Steveston. Particular efforts should be made for boat builders operating prior to Internment. Research will inform the content for the future exhibit at Britannia Shipyards NHS and will be added to the City of Richmond Archives for public use.

The selected consultant will be expected to provide the following deliverables:

1. Participation in virtual monthly check-in meetings for the duration of the project;
2. A defined Research Plan that includes:
 - List of primary research questions;
 - List of research sources (archives, individuals, etc.);

-
- List of proposed oral history interview candidates (English and Japanese speaking);
 - Budget; and
 - Timeline.
 3. Professional quality research report in pdf format (including 2 rounds of edits) that contains:
 - Recommendations on key historical information for inclusion in an exhibition;
 - Research findings with references;
 - Transcriptions in English of all oral history interviews conducted as part of this project;
 - Copies of photographs taken of archival documents;
 - A list of recommended images, ephemera or objects and their source location for use in an exhibition; and
 4. A copy of research notes; and
 5. Copies of recordings of oral history interviews.

A package of known historical research will be provided prior to project start.

City staff in the Museum and Heritage Services area will work with the researcher to approve the research plan and provide feedback on research process and final report.

Budget: \$15,000

This budget is for all research related expenses, including travel. It does not include image procurement for exhibition use.

Timeline

Application Deadline:	September 22, 2024
Contractor Selection:	October 4, 2024
Start-up meeting:	Week of October 21, 2024
Project Completion:	February 28, 2025

Respondent Requirements

- Letter of interest
- CV highlighting relevant past work
- Sample research report
- Two references

Submission Information

Responses should be delivered to the City in one (1) electronic copy by email to Rebecca Clarke, Manager, Museum and Heritage Services at rclarke@richmond.ca.

File attachments should not exceed 10 MB in total.

Contractor Selection

The City will consider the following criteria in its review of a response:

- the Respondent's experience in performing services similar to the Services and the Respondent's references;
- the Respondent's demonstrated technical strength; and
- the Respondent's ability to undertake the Services.

Preference given to respondents with demonstrated relationships to the Japanese Canadian community.