



Revitalizing Japantown?: a unifying exploration of Human Rights, branding and place in  
Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

2012-2015

Community Advisory Committee and Partners Update – April 2013

**Project Update - April 2013**

**'Revitalizing Japantown?'** :

***A unifying exploration of Human Rights, branding and place in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside***

2012 – 2015

***Revitalizing Japantown?*** is a research project which engages Downtown Eastside (DTES) residents, organizations and artists who are working with a team of researchers with grassroots experience in the community. The goal of the project is to recover the long Human Rights history of the neighbourhood while doing our part to ensure that the rights of current DTES residents remain a public priority. To accomplish this we're working with the 5 founding communities of the DTES: Coast Salish people, the Low-Income community, Chinese Canadians, Japanese Canadians and African Canadians.

[www.revitalizingjapantown.ca](http://www.revitalizingjapantown.ca)

Funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada

Dear Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members & Community Partners

We last met in person on August 8<sup>th</sup> 2012 when many of you were able to join us at the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre. Attached to this letter are the Minutes of that gathering, along with the list of Community Advisory Committee members and the Committee's Terms of Reference, our Community Partners and a short text which describes why Jeff Masuda was motivated to create **Revitalizing Japantown?**.

For those of you who are less familiar with **Revitalizing Japantown?**, you might remember Jeff's previous DTES research project. It took place from 2007-2011, in partnership with the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House (DTES NH) and focused on Environmental Justice in the DTES. Rebecca Haber was the face of that project, screening Environmental themed films and facilitating Community Conversation Circles at the NH while working with 17 low-income residents who were paid as Community Researchers. They used photographs to demonstrate what they thought was both healthy and unhealthy about the community and then compared the DTES to Vancouver's more affluent neighbourhoods. The photos were shown across the DTES in venues like Oppenheimer Park and at community events such as the Alley Health Fair. When the project came to an end in 2011, the DTES NH hosted a Showcase which was attended by +/- 85 people, including residents, workers from sister organizations and City Planners.

Since last August, the Research Investigators, (Jeff Masuda - Assistant Professor, University of Manitoba; Sonia Bookman - Assistant Professor, University of Manitoba; Joyce Rock - Co-leader, DTES Kitchen Tables Project; Beth Carter - Director-Curator, National Nikkei Museum & Cultural Centre; and Audrey Kobayashi - Professor, Queen's University), have been working behind the scenes with the project's staff (Greg Masuda - Project Filmmaker & Artistic Mentor and Aaron Franks - Research Associate, Centre for Environmental Health Equity) to find funding for the film and arts portions of this project and to plan our upcoming activities in the community.

On the funding front, we're awaiting news on funding for 2 creative parts of this project. This month we'll know if the BC Arts Council will invest in **Parallel Visions: Dispossession Legacies in Vancouver's Downtown**



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**Eastside**, which funds DTES artists to work alongside residents to create 4 works of art that reflect the complexity of the DTES community as it struggles to resist those who would just as soon erase its legacy. In June the Canada Council for the Arts decides if they'll fund **Repossession**, a film that documents the experiences of DTES residents during the City Of Vancouver's ongoing Land Use and Planning Process (LAPP), all against the backdrop of gentrification.

As in August 2012, **Revitalizing Japantown?** will again this year be at the Powell Street Festival on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. Most of the Research team will be there, using the time to do more Community Consultation by inviting feedback from residents as well as their participation in a Mapping exercise which further demonstrates their own DTES history and sense of belonging.

With the Research team spread across the country for most of the year (Jeff, Sonia and myself - Aaron - at the University of Manitoba, Audrey at Queen's University and Joyce in Montreal), it's Greg Masuda who's our day-to-day point person in the community. Aside from participating in community meetings and events, Greg documents as much as he can on film, already collecting footage for **Repossession**.

I'll be writing to you again soon about the next step in the project, which is to set up interviews with +/- 50 DTES residents who represent a cross-section of the community. Greg will then take the lead in contacting you in person and soon after, Jeff and I will be in Vancouver on several occasions to do the actual interviews.

In the meantime, if you've any questions about the project, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you.

Aaron

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