

Revitalizing Japantown?': A unifying exploration of human rights, branding, and place in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

November 2012 – Partners' Update

Hello Everyone,

Our team has been making progress over the last four months since our partner's meeting and launch in August, most recently with Jeff's recent trip to Vancouver where he touched base with many of you.

The purpose of this biannual newsletter is to keep you up to date on key milestones within the project, as well as developments we have observed in the community. At six months into our three-year project, this update is timely.

Community Advisory Committee Meeting – August 8th, 2012

Our first Community Advisory Committee meeting took place in the summer to coincide with the official launch of our project. Nearly 20 interested community leaders and community members attended, although interest was much higher (summer holiday schedules prevented many from attending). We generated some constructive discussions and were able to answer Advisory Committee member's questions concerning the intent of the project. Meeting minutes were sent out in September 2012. Minutes are posted on our internal blog.

Recruitment – Two New Master's Students!

We have recruited two Master's students that will be working with us over the next two years. We have provided each of our students with an opportunity to introduce themselves here:



Trevor Wideman

Trevor is finishing his final year of a B.A. Geography Honours degree at the University of Manitoba under the instruction of Dr. Jeff Masuda and will be commencing his Master's of Arts in Geography in the Department of Environment and Geography. He is excited to be involved with the 'Revitalizing Japantown?' project, because it fits very well with his current research on Winnipeg's urban planning policy of "intensification" and its potential in terms of instability and displacement of low-income residents resulting from gentrification. His role as a master's student in "Revitalizing Japantown?" will be to examine how the City of Vancouver is dealing with similar challenges within its urban planning processes. He is particularly interested in studying the role of "branding" as a public and private sector marketing/development tool that may influence public perceptions of "place", including its potential influences gentrification and resident displacement.



Scott McCulloch

Scott is currently enrolled in the Master's program in the Department of Sociology at the University of Manitoba. His research interests include brands and branding, social inequality, as well as cities and urban space. As part of the research team working on the 'Revitalizing Japantown?' project, Scott will be examining the Powell Street Festival and its role in the (re)branding the DTES.

Both Trevor and Scott will be relocating to Vancouver in the summer of 2013 to begin their research and take part in project activities. We will be relying heavily on your generosity to welcome our students, show them around the community, provide working space, and guide them to resources and other opportunities.

Ethics – Phase One Submitted

We have submitted an ethics application to the University of Manitoba, a necessary first step to begin conducting interviews with community leaders, community members, and interested stakeholders who have knowledge and interests that coincide with our project. These interviews are a step towards organizing a larger, human rights discussions about the neighbourhood, likely to begin in the summer of 2013. We intend to gather about 50 interviews and will soon be asking you to suggest members of your networks - community knowledge and history holders - who would be interested in sharing their stories about human rights in Vancouver.

Contributing to Oral Histories at the Nikkei Museum

The Nikki Museum has hundreds of hours of oral histories on tape of which they have generously shared with us. Of particular mention are seven, possibly many more interviews that will contribute to our own archival data set that speaks to the history of Powell Street prior to the removal of the Japanese Canadian community in WWII. We have offered to selectively transcribe some of these interviews for the benefit of museum users, and hope to contribute some of our own interviews with Japanese Canadians to their archives. The Oral Histories stand to be an invaluable asset to all of the research that is being conducted by our team, including the student projects.

Website

The Project's Website is active! The public site will be a major hub for the research team to post upcoming activities, share publications, and communicate with the larger DTES community. The site includes a discussion board and can be viewed at: <http://www.revitalizingjapantown.ca>.

We will continue to populate the website, including researcher's and partner's biographies. In the near future will ask you to link relevant information about your organizations to the site as well as a short statement as to your interest and involvement in the project.

Community Arts Grant

Two arts grants have been identified as potentially valuable sources of funding to contribute to the knowledge mobilization objectives of our research. Applications for the BC Arts Council's 'Innovations' grant and the Canada Council for the Art's 'Research/Creation' grant are both due early in 2013. Monetary value of these grants is up to \$200,000. Over the next two months we hope to work with several of you to submit proposals for both of these opportunities.

Please feel free to contact us with relevant project updates or to inquire further about any of this month's updates. We hope that everyone enjoys their December!

All the best from the 'Revitalizing Japantown?' Research Team

Jeff Masuda
Sonia Bookman
Greg Masuda
Scott McCulloch
Trevor Wideman
Vanessa Sloan Morgan