



CITY OF RICHMOND STEVESTON HERITAGE INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

September 15, 2023



Thematic Framework

Overview

Interpretive themes		
Cultural Diversity		
Connection to the Fraser River		
The Past in our Present		
Stories	Sub-Stories	Interpretive Locations
Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Catch b) Fishing Techniques and Traditions c) Processing the Catch d) The Fishing Fleet 	<p>Primary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site • Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site <p>Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steveston Harbour • Scotch Pond • Imperial Landing • Fisherman's Park • Garry Point Park • Steveston Fishermen's Memorial • Nikkei Fishermen's Memorial
Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Natural Bounty of the Land b) Land Management and Stewardship c) A Farming Community d) The Business of Farming 	<p>Primary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London Farm • Dyke Trail <p>Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branscombe House • London Wharf Park
Community Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Building Community b) Home Life c) Staying Connected d) Nikkei Contributions 	<p>Primary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steveston Museum and Post Office • Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site • London Farm <p>Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steveston Tram • Steveston Village • Branscombe House • Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre • Steveston Nikkei Memorial • Steveston Community Centre • Steveston Martial Arts Centre • Kuno Garden & Cherry Trees at Garry Point • Suikinkutsu Japanese Garden in Town Square
Transportation Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Evolution of Transportation b) The "Sockeye Special" c) The Backbone of Commerce 	<p>Primary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steveston Tram <p>Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site • Steveston Museum and Post Office • London Farm • Railway Greenway • Steveston Harbour • Imperial Landing • Steveston Community Park • London Wharf Park

Interpretive Themes

The following interpretive themes, or central concepts, can be seen in all of Steveston's heritage places and activities. These concepts are important lenses through which Steveston's history and heritage can be viewed and its stories told.

These themes, and the stories that follow, highlight Steveston's unique heritage and offer opportunities to illustrate how these histories are part of the larger story of British Columbia and Canada.

A. Cultural Diversity – Steveston was and is a culturally diverse area, attracting people from around the globe for economic opportunities and natural bounty.

Since before contact, Indigenous peoples have been drawn to the areas' rich resources. Later Chinese, Japanese, South Asian and European populations came and developed commercial fishing and farming industries. Changes in community populations through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries were representative of larger socio-economic trends and government policies such as:

- Establishment of the reserve and residential school systems for First Nations people outlined in the Indian Act;
- Criminalization of Indigenous peoples' cultural heritage practices such as fishing, potlatches, and speaking Indigenous languages;
- Race-based immigration policies that discriminated against people of non-European descent such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Continuous Journey Regulation;
- Race-based awarding of fishing licenses that discriminated against people of non-European descent;
- Racial segregation of public schools that discriminated against people of non-European descent;
- Land ownership and enfranchisement laws that privileged men and people of European descent; and
- Forced internment of Japanese Canadians and dispossession of their property and businesses during the Second World War and four years after.

These policies shaped both the fishing and farming industries that were the backbone of Steveston's community.

In response, members of the Steveston community were at the forefront of social change, showing leadership by:

- Starting the movement to unionize the fishing industry;
- Establishing Richmond's first hospital and the first socialized health care system in Canada;
- Establishing Richmond's first racially integrated school, home to BC's first certified Japanese Canadian teacher; and
- Winning the right to vote for Japanese Canadians in BC elections.

Despite numerous challenges, people continued to come from around the world, creating a unique mix of cultures and working together to build a community that supported each other's well-being. While racism has been a persistent factor in Steveston's history, so has the cultural harmony that was fostered through shared working and living experiences.

B. Connection to the Fraser River – The Fraser River is a designated Canadian Heritage River with a rich natural and cultural heritage. Steveston exists in its current form in large part because of the physical and natural environment found in its location at the mouth of the Fraser River. The estuary surrounding Steveston is considered an environmentally sensitive area due to its unique ecology of tidal marshes, tidal sloughs, mud flats, traces of surviving indigenous vegetation, riverine and terrestrial habitat.

This River and its rich estuary have supported the people who settled in the area since time immemorial by providing food, fertile soil, a means of transportation and a place of beauty and recreation. The importance of the River as a connector and provider is at the heart of every story from its beginnings to today.

C. The Past in our Present – The village of Steveston and the surrounding area have maintained a strong identity despite, or perhaps because of numerous ups and downs throughout history. Communities of peoples have come and gone and come back again. The industries of fishing and farming have changed significantly over the years, but are still well-represented in the area with many residents connected to those earlier ways of life.

Preservation of heritage places and practices that long distinguished Steveston have played an important role in this continuity. So has a turn toward a new economic basis in tourism. While today's community looks very different than that of the past, the legacies of what was created then, still lives on in its people, places and activities.



Image: Steveston Waterfront circa 1943, COR 1985 4 14

Stories / Sub-stories

Although Steveston has many stories to tell, this plan focuses on four central stories which provide a rich basis for interpretation and offer opportunities to bring each story to life through existing places, objects and activities.

A. Fishing

Fishing has been a central driver of settlement in the area for millennia. Settlements initially served as a base from which fishers could collect and process their harvest. This was seen in the rich traditions of Indigenous Peoples fishing the Fraser River and Salish Sea and remains true for the more than 500 commercial vessels in the modern day Steveston Harbour.

Contained within the Fishing storyline are a number of sub-stories that speak to not only the technical aspects of the work but also the people doing the work and their experiences of hardship and success.

- **The Catch** describes the many species of fish and other sea life that have provided sustenance for people over the years. In addition to fish traditionally found in the Fraser River, the Catch tells about the species commercially fished up and down BC's coast by the vessels and fishers of Steveston.
- **Fishing Techniques and Traditions** focuses on the methods of fishing and their technological and cultural evolution. From the highly productive, and carefully regulated, traditional Indigenous fishing techniques, to gillnets, Seine nets and Easthope engines, each fishing method is unique to a people and time and sets the stage for the day-to-day experiences of Steveston's fishers and their families.
- **Processing the Catch** highlights the prolific fish processing industry that shaped Steveston's development during the twentieth century. This story is dominated by the salmon canneries that lined Steveston's Cannery Row, but also includes Indigenous practices of salmon preserving and modern practices of reduction and freezing.
- **The Fishing Fleet** tells the story of the vessels that supported fishers and the unique craftsmanship that went into their design and maintenance. In particular, this includes the history of the many boat works that were owned by Japanese Canadians who brought their unique boatbuilding skills with them from Japan.

The prominence of fishing in Steveston's development allows for numerous interpretive opportunities, highlighted by two National Historic Sites – the Gulf of Georgia Cannery and the Britannia Shipyards – and brought to life today at the Steveston Harbour.

B. Farming

While today's farmland is found largely on the outskirts of Steveston, historically farming was central to the area's development. Throughout the twentieth century, farming in Steveston has taken many shapes, evolving to suit the people, economic markets and technology of the time. From Chinese market gardens, to family dairy farms, to large-scale grain farms, to the berry and vegetable farms in today's Agricultural Land Reserve, each of these illustrates unique features of the land and the people who work it.

- **The Natural Bounty of the Land** tells the story of the richness of the area. Fueled by the fertile soils of the Fraser River estuary, the land that Steveston was built upon is home to many native species of plants and animals that have provided agricultural economies for the peoples of the area for millennia.
- **Land Management and Stewardship** shares how farming in Steveston shaped and was shaped by the River and its ecology. From the creation of the dyke system to maximize use of the rich delta soil to management of "pests", and the use of chemicals to increase production, farming has had a significant impact of the ecology of the River estuary.

- **A Farming Community** tells the story of Steveston's many farming families and how together, they worked the land. These stories of resilience and resourcefulness share how farmers, their families, labourers and community worked together to make a living off the land. These stories also illustrate the class, gender and racial divides that were part of twentieth century farming culture.
- **The Business of Farming** speaks to the evolution of farming methods and how farmers worked not only to feed their families, but to produce crops that supported a sustainable business. From the types of crops planted, to the farming implements used, to the means of transportation to get to market, each decision set the course for how successful a farm business would be.

The story of farming is primarily told at London Farm with supporting interpretation in parks spaces and along the dyke trail.

C. Community Life

Located in the Southwest corner of Richmond surrounded by river and open fields, Steveston has always been set apart from other populated areas. Because of this, community members took it upon themselves to build what they needed, developing a strong sense of independence. The story of Community Life reflects this enterprising spirit and illustrates how people from diverse backgrounds can come together to form a community.

- **Building Community** focuses on the amenities and activities that developed in Steveston as the community grew. From hospitals and schools to celebrations and commerce, these places and activities characterize the life of the peoples that settled in the area known as Steveston.
- **Home Life** illustrates how the people working in the fishing, canning and farming industries lived. The opportunities offered by this work attracted people and families from around the world who lived in different circumstances, practicing a variety of cultural traditions.
- **Staying Connected** speaks to the evolution of communication methods that the diversity of people in Steveston used to maintain connections with their families in distant lands.
- **Nikkei Contributions** tells the story of the Japanese Canadians who played a significant role in the shaping of the Steveston community. From the first settler from Mio, Japan, to the forced removal of Japanese Canadians, to the modern contributions to Steveston's community, the ups and downs faced by the Nikkei people have put an indelible mark on the community known today.

The story of Community Life is told at many places throughout Steveston. The Steveston Museum and Post Office serves as a focal point, while Britannia Shipyards and London Farm offer immersive experiences.

D. Transportation Hub

The story of Steveston as a Transportation Hub is the only story that is largely situated in the past. In today's world of highways and cars, it is difficult to imagine the large steamships of the early twentieth century that visited Steveston's port regularly to transport salmon across the sea. Also lost are the ferries and interurban tram that took people from the busy Steveston town to the neighbouring areas of New Westminster or Vancouver. With each change in transportation came changes to the development of Steveston and the lifestyle of people travelling and moving goods.

- **Evolution of Transportation** tells the story of the changes to how people and goods moved from Steveston to other places in the region or world. It includes the early international ships, local travel by canoe, ferry or horse, as well as the interurban tram system and modern day transit and roads.
- **The "Sockeye Special"** was the affectionate name locals gave to the interurban rail, reflecting the importance of the Tram to the people of Steveston. This story shares the experiences of the people who travelled on the Tram for work and going to and from social events in Richmond and Vancouver.
- **The Backbone of Commerce** describes how various transportation systems supported the commercial development of Steveston. This includes systems that brought workers into Steveston during the fishing and canning seasons and provided producers with a reliable method of marketing and transporting their products.

This story is primarily told at the Steveston Tram with supporting interpretation at the Steveston Museum and Post Office and London Farm.



Images, top to bottom, left to right: Wood working displays at Britannia Shipyards, Tram passenger display, Doing laundry at London Farm

Interpretive Goals for Heritage Sites

Interpretive goals help direct the presentation of the themes and stories described above. These interpretive goals focus on the primary points of interpretation at City-owned facilities and places. The Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site is guided by its own interpretive plan which is in development with input from community, including the City of Richmond.

Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Goals

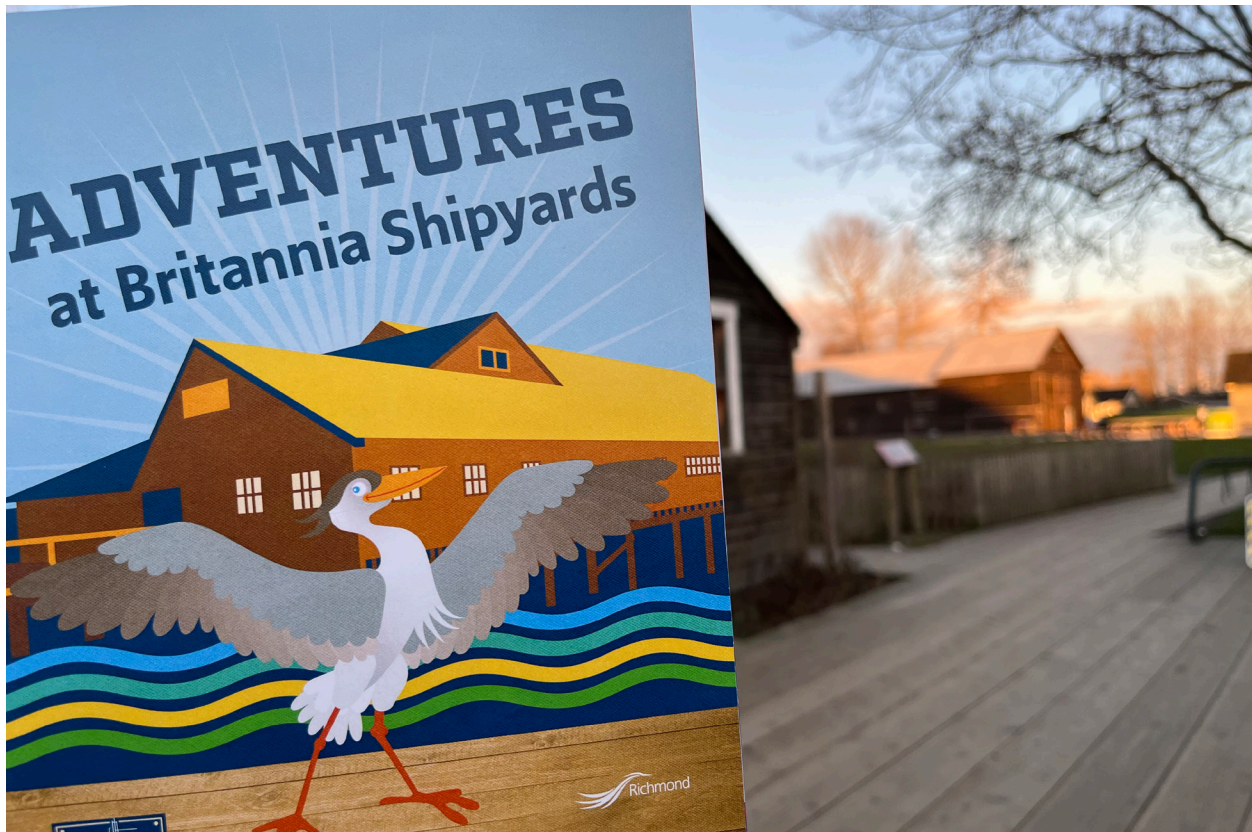
Interpretation at this site is designed to...

- Create authentic and immersive experiences of the daily life of the people who worked in West Coast fishing and boatbuilding;
- Foster greater understanding of the cultural diversity of people that supported West Coast fishing and boatbuilding;
- Encourage discovery of the complex workings of West Coast fishing and boatbuilding industry; and
- Inspire connections to and stewardship of West Coast maritime heritage and the Fraser River.

London Farm Goals

Interpretation at this site is designed to...

- Inspire connections to and stewardship of the land and the site;
- Create an environment of curiosity and remembering of early twentieth century farm life;
- Foster greater understanding of agricultural and farm practices of early twentieth century farming; and
- Encourage discovery of the people and complexity of Richmond's farm society.



Kids activity book at Britannia Shipyards

Steveston Museum and Post Office Goals

Interpretation at this site is designed to...

- Evoke memories of and curiosity for the Steveston community;
- Foster greater understanding of the experiences and contributions of Steveston's Nikkei community;
- Highlight the past and present communication methods of Steveston people; and
- Encourage exploration of Steveston's unique history and heritage beyond the Museum's walls.



Image: School program at Steveston Museum and Post Office

Steveston Tram Goals

Interpretation at this site is designed to...

- Immerse visitors in the authentic experience of an interurban tram from the first half of the twentieth century;
- Foster a greater understanding of the significance of interurban transportation to Richmond;
- Encourage discovery of the streetcar technology and operation; and
- Inspire connections to Richmond's transportation history.

List of supporting resources (by area of interest)

Branscombe House

Branscombe House Conservation Plan,
Don Luxton and Associates, 2013

Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site

The Britannia/Phoenix Heritage Study,
Duncan Stacey, 1983

A Heritage Overview of "Area E" at the Britannia Waterfront, Leonard Ham, 1988

City Bylaw 5585 for Heritage Designation,
City of Richmond, 1990

Britannia Information Report,
City of Richmond, June 1990

Britannia Complex Phase II,
Robert Lemon Architecture, Sept. 1990

1991 Agenda Paper HSMB of Canada,
Parks Canada, 1991

Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Statement of Significance, Historic Sites and Monuments Board, 1991

Some Tree Ring Dates for buildings at the Britannia Heritage Shipyard – Dendrochronology Report,
M L Parker Co., Mar. 1992

The Britannia Heritage Shipyard Marketing Research Study, MDM Marketing Consultants, May 1998

Steveston Community Industrial Adjustment Study: Final Report Feasibility Analysis, Cornerstone Planning Group, May 1998

Britannia Heritage Shipyard Business Plan, Britannia Business Plan Steering Committee, Sept. 2000

Britannia Heritage Shipyard Historic Zone Interpretive Plan, Denise Cook Design, Sept. 2006

Britannia Heritage Shipyard Marketing Project – Steveston Resident Discussion Group Plan,
Mitchell James Marketing, 2006

Britannia Heritage Shipyard Marketing Project – Multi-year Marketing and Communications Roadmap,
Mitchell James Marketing, 2007

Britannia Shipyards NHS Strategic Plan 2014-2018,
City of Richmond, 2014

How We Lived: Stories of Work and Play at Britannia,
City of Richmond, Feb. 2009

Britannia Shipyards NHS Site Entryways and Wayfinding Concept, Denise Cook Design, Mar. 2010

Voices of Britannia: The People, the Stories and the Future" Community Engagement Project – Final Report, City of Richmond, Nov. 2013

Seine Net Loft Design Brief, City of Richmond, Jan. 2015

Britannia Heritage Shipyard Conservation Plan,
Don Luxton and Associates, 2015

Waterlot Management Plan, City of Richmond, 2016

Japanese Duplex and First Nations Bunkhouse Historical Literature Review, Denise Cook Design,
May 2016

Restoring the Japanese Duplex and First Nations Bunkhouse Buildings, City of Richmond, Sept. 2016

Maritime Vessel Management and Operational Plan,
City of Richmond, Nov. 2016

Britannia Shipyards Heritage Site Business Plan – Market Analysis, RC Strategies + PERC, Nov. 2017

Britannia Visitor Survey (in conjunction with Strategic Development Plan), City of Richmond, 2017

Britannia Shipyards NHS Strategic Development Plan,
Nordicity, 2018

Britannia Staff & Board Boat Survey Summary,
City of Richmond, 2018

Britannia Shipyards Building History,
City of Richmond, Sept. 2018

Management of the Existing Fleet of Boats at Britannia,
Bud Sakamoto, Nov. 2018

Marketing Plan for Britannia Shipyards,
City of Richmond, April 2020

Phoenix Cannery Building: Research Report and Conservation Options, Don Luxton and Associates Inc.,
Dec. 2022

Phoenix Cannery Building #32: Research Report and Conservation Options, Don Luxton and Associates Inc.,
May 2023

Garry Point Park

Garry Point Park Master Plan, Pacific Landplan Collaborative Ltd., 1983

Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site

Gulf of Georgia Cannery Management Plan,
Parks Canada, 2011

Visitor Information Program LITE Final Report,
Parks Canada, 2018

Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society Strategic Plan,
Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society, 2020

Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society Building

Japanese Nurses Residence Relocation Drawings,
McGinn Engineering and Preservation Ltd., Dec. 2009

Exhibit text panels, D. Jensen and Associates, 2010

Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society Building Interior Renovation, Birmingham & Wood Architects and Planners, April 2013

Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society Building Conservation Review, Don Luxton and Associates,
Nov. 2013

London Farm

City Bylaw 3528 Designation of Lands,
City of Richmond, 1977

City Bylaw 3515 Designation of House,
City of Richmond, 1978

*Minutes from the Provincial Agricultural Land
Commission regarding London Farm application,*
Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, Dec. 1978

London Farm Site Development Plan, Advance Planning
and Research Architecture, 1982

London Farm Plan, Justice and Vincent Landscape
Architects, 1986

London Heritage Farm House Plans, unknown, 1987

*London Heritage Farm Long Range Planning
Workshop Notes,* PreDesign Consulting, Dec. 1996

*Growing up on London Farm: the Memories of May
London,* City of Richmond Archives, 1998

London Heritage Farm Collections Policy,
City of Richmond, 2012

London Farm Conservation Plan,
Don Luxton and Associates, 2014

London Heritage Farm – Farming Historical Research,
City of Richmond, 2020

London Heritage Farm Master Plan,
City of Richmond, 2021

Scotch Pond

City Bylaw 5960 for Heritage Designation,
City of Richmond, 1992

Scotch Pond Conservation Plan,
Don Luxton and Associates, 2014

Steveston area

*An Archaeological Heritage Resource Overview
of Richmond B.C.,* Leonard C. Ham, 1987

City of Richmond Heritage Inventory,
City of Richmond, 2005

Steveston Area Plan of the Official Community Plan,
City of Richmond, 2009

*Steveston Village Conservation Strategy &
Implementation Program,* Birmingham & Wood
Architects and Planners, Jan. 2009

*Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre Conservation
Plan,* Don Luxton and Associates, 2014

Steveston area research, John Atkin, 2017

Brand Discovery Session, Tourism Richmond, Mar. 2018

Steveston Tourism Plan, Tourism Richmond, July 2019

Steveston Story – Story Presentation,
Tourism Richmond, Oct. 2019

Visitor Volume Study, Tourism Richmond, 2020

*Steveston Heritage Sites Destination Development
Plan,* City of Richmond, 2021

Steveston Museum and Post Office (Norther Bank Building)

City Bylaw 3956 for Heritage Designation,
City of Richmond, 1981

*Steveston Museum Findings and Recommendations
Report,* D. Jensen and Associates, June 2009

*Planning and Programming the Steveston Museum
and Town Square,* Birmingham & Wood Architects
and Planners, Mar. 2012

Northern Bank Building Conservation Review,
Don Luxton and Associates, Aug. 2014

Pc-685 Steveston Town Square IFC,
Damon Oriente Ltd, Sept. 2015

Visitation stats from Tourism Richmond,
Tourism Richmond, 2015-2019

*Statement from the Steveston Historical Society Board
on the future of the Steveston Museum / Post Office /
Visitor Centre,* Steveston Historical Society, Fall 2018

Steveston Historical Society 2019 survey of members,
Steveston Historical Society, 2019

*Steveston Museum: A Vision for Improving the Visitor
Experience,* Doug Munday Design, Sept. 2020

Richmond's Postal History, Bill McNulty, 2008

Steveston Tram

*BCER Power Poles and Railway Tracks Conservation
Review,* Don Luxton and Associates, 2013

*BCER Steveston Interurban Tram Passenger Car #1220
Conservation Plan,* David Youngson, 2014

Tram Structure Conservation Review, Don Luxton
and Associates, 2016

*Conservation Maintenance Report BC Electric Tram
1220,* Andrew Todd Conservators Ltd., Oct. 2018

Steveston Interurban Tram Feasibility Study,
Davies Transportation Consulting Inc., Mar. 2019