



Living well with diversity: Learning from other cities with signage issues

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The next 15 minutes...

- **Who is Richmond?**
- **Three case studies**
 - Ashfield, Sydney, Australia
 - Box Hill, Melbourne, Australia
 - Richmond Hill, Markham, Ontario
- **Reflections**

Who is Richmond?

- **Personal statement**

- We don't live in Richmond so we are not here to suggest what Richmond should / shouldn't do!

- **The big myth**

- Richmond is mainly two groups

- **The reality**

- Richmond is many groups

- **Language is a complex issue**

The cultures of Richmond

- **Immigration status (out of 190,000)**

- Born in Canada (72,500)
- Immigrants (117,500 or 62 percent)
 - Immigrants since 1980 (94,000)
 - ...with full data (79,000)
 - Family class (16,000)
 - Economic class (58,000)
 - » Skilled workers (33,000)
 - » Business class (21,000) **MOST NEED TO START A BUSINESS**
 - Refugees (2,000)

The cultures of Richmond

- **2011 National Household Survey: Ethnic origin**

- Chinese (91,900)
- English (15,100)
- Scottish (15,000)
- Filipino (14,300)
- East Indian (12,900)
- Irish (11,400)
- PLUS: 25 other groups >1000; 59 groups >100; and 71 groups >10 = 161 ethnicities!

The cultures of Richmond

- **Language**

- About 90 percent of the population can speak English (19,800 cannot)
- 108,000 speak English ‘most often’ at home
 - 82,000 speak a different language most of the time
- Richmond residents are able to speak 77 non-official languages in total
- 12,000 work in places where a non-unofficial language is used most of the time

Summarizing

- **Why are there some Chinese-only signs in Richmond?**
 - Legacy of the immigration process (Entrepreneurial program)
 - Language of some entrepreneurs
 - Language of some consumers
 - Global trend (large Chinese diaspora)
 - Not all signs are regulated
- **Also note: social complexity**
 - This isn't just a two-sided issue

Case study 1: Ashfield context

- **Municipality near the centre of Sydney, Australia**
- **Multi-ethnic; 50 percent foreign-born**
- **Known as ‘Chinese-Australian’ place**
- **Significant elderly population**
 - Complaints from this group about feeling detached from the neighbourhood
 - Signage was a key component of this concern

Case 1: Ashfield initiatives

- Appointed a Chinese-origin **social worker** to mediate concerns and encourage merchants to be more 'welcoming', 'inclusive'
- Free **translation** services for merchants
- Instituted '**Welcome Shop Day**' to introduce general public into 'Chinese' commercial areas
- **Walking tours** with visits to restaurants, herbalists, etc.
- **Welcome Shop Awards** (for 'de-cluttering' and signage), with clear suggestions on aesthetics
- **Booklet** (in Chinese and English) explaining socio-cultural policies/strategic plans of the City

Case 2: Box Hill

- Suburb of Melbourne, Australia
- Designated for higher density and commercial activities; rapid condominium growth
- Significant foreign-born population with an acknowledged 'Asian character'
- Desire to be a shopping destination
- Complaints about changing character, signs
- Has looked to Richmond, BC, for planning inspiration!
 - And now there is interest in THIS process...

Case 2: Box Hill initiatives

- **Community events to showcase diversity in the area (i.e., acknowledge many groups)**
 - Annual '**Harmony Day**' with performances, foods, music, etc.
 - **Festivals** for several of the larger groups
- **Shopfront Improvement Program**
 - Concern with clutter
 - Multi-lingual **consultant** hired
 - Free **consultation** offered to merchants on graphic design, with discounted translation

Case 3: Richmond Hill & Markham context

- **Distant suburbs of Greater Toronto Area**
- **RH has similar characteristics to THIS Richmond**
 - 184,000 population; 55 percent immigrants
 - More than 50 percent Visible Minority
 - Of these nearly half are Chinese-Canadians, plus lots of diversity
 - 65 percent speak a non-official language in their home
- **Complaints about ‘Asian-themed’ shopping malls**
 - Sense of ‘overwhelming Chinese character’
 - Visual clutter

Case 3: Richmond Hill & Markham initiatives

- **Used municipal powers**
 - Sign **bylaw**, 1990 (50%+ English/French required)
 - Encouraged more ‘Main Street’ commerce
 - **Re-zoned** land near residential areas from commercial to residential use
 - Pushed malls away from residential areas
- **Race Relations Committee established, supported by a Diversity Action Plan**
 - Includes 3 Council Members
 - Developed **procedures to consider complaints**
 - Has **power** to make ‘actionable’ recommendations

Case study 3: Richmond Hill & Markham

- **The issue is no longer an issue**
 - Pressing issue in mid-1990s
 - 5-6 years to de-escalate
 - 15-20 years later has seen considerable condo and commercial development in Markham & RH, mix of both Asian & North-American style malls
 - E.g. Pacific Mall & Remington Centre
 - Expansion of largest Asian mall in North America, as mixed Asian & North-American style

Learning the lessons

- **Different solutions for different places**
 - Ashfield: **Comprehensive social planning**
 - Box Hill: **Marketing and economic planning**
 - Richmond Hill & Markham: **Zoning and Race Relations Committee**
- **Municipal investment in the issue of social harmony**
- **Attempt to make ‘top-down’ meet ‘bottom-up’ initiatives**
- **Commissioned research to understand issues and help design solutions**
- **Use of challenges to make opportunities**
 - Improve the quality of life of residents
 - Promote understanding