

Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee 2025 Annual Report

Introduction

The purpose of the Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee (RIAC) is to act as a resource and provide advice to Council in support of enhancing intercultural relations and cross-cultural understanding in Richmond. Through its role, the RIAC supports the implementation of the Council-adopted Cultural Harmony Plan (2019–2029). The 2025 RIAC Annual Report is prepared for Council in accordance with the Terms of Reference. This report serves as a summary of the RIAC's highlights and accomplishments during the 2025 calendar year and is based on input from the RIAC members with support from the Staff Liaison.

2025 Membership

From January to June 2025, the RIAC was comprised of up to 17 Council-appointed members, consisting of citizen appointees and organizational representatives. On May 26, 2025, Council endorsed a new Terms of Reference for the RIAC, which resulted in membership composition changes to the Committee to better align organizational representative mandates with appropriate City advisory bodies. These changes include the removal of organizational representative seats from the Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee, Richmond Centre for Disability (RCD) and the Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee, and the addition of an organizational representative seat for Chimo Community Services.

Since June 2025, the RIAC has been comprised of up to 14 Council-appointed members – eight citizen appointees, including one youth, and six organizational representatives. These organizations include: Chimo Community Services, Richmond Multicultural Community Services, Richmond RCMP, Richmond School District No. 38, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and Vancouver Coastal Health. By year end, the RIAC had a full contingent of 14 voting members.

Citizen Appointees

- Yun-Jou Chang, Chair
- Mikaela Nuval, Vice-Chair
- Tahzi Ali, Citizen Member
- Vladimir Choi, Citizen Member
- Amanda Farias, Citizen Member
- Hala Helmy, Citizen Member
- Emmett Mark, Citizen Member
- Randy Sandhu, Citizen Member

Organizational Representatives

- Athena Estremadura, Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee (*January–June*)
- Parm Grewal, Richmond Multicultural Community Services (*September–December*)
- Bimla Kannangara, Vancouver Coastal Health
- Dina McInnes, Richmond Centre for Disability (*January–June*)
- Ashok Rattan, Richmond Multicultural Community Services (*January–May*)
- Daniel Remedios, Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee (*January–June*)
- Taylor Ruan, Chimo Community Services (*September–December*)
- Sissi Su, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- Baren Tsui, Richmond School District No. 38
- Roy Wong, RCMP

The RIAC also included three non-voting City of Richmond representatives:

- Councillor Bill McNulty, Council Liaison
- Peggy Chen, Planner 2 (Inclusion), Staff Liaison
- Shelley Iwata, Recording Secretary

2025 Meeting Highlights

The RIAC held nine meetings in 2025, with no meetings scheduled in July, August and December. RIAC members and guests shared information, provided input on City projects and strategies and took part in discussions related to cultural harmony. Highlights of the RIAC's 2025 meetings include:

Guest Speakers and Presenters

Throughout 2025, guest speakers consulted the RIAC on projects and strategic plans and discussed opportunities to strengthen cultural harmony in the Richmond. Invited guests included:

- Sherry Baumgardner, Tourism Development Liaison with the City's Economic Development Office, provided an overview of the draft Wayfinding Strategy and sought the RIAC's input on inclusive and accessible community navigation.
- Naaz Sidhu, Inclusive Communities Coordinator at Richmond Multicultural Community Services (RMCS), presented findings from RMCS' BIPOC Inclusion and Capacity Building Anti-Racism Series, a one-year project which aimed to address social exclusion, racism and hate.
- Paul Clark and Susan Rybar, consultants for the City's Tourism Masterplan, sought the RIAC's input on tourism assets in Richmond and ways to highlight local culture and heritage that accurately represents the community.

- RIAC member Emmett Mark presented on his work at Dignity Network Canada and facilitated a discussion on how groups like the RIAC can better elevate 2SLGBTQIA+ issues in multicultural communities like Richmond.
- Claire Adamson and Niloofar Hedayati from the City's Community Social Development department presented the 2023–2024 highlights from the Youth Strategy and Seniors Strategy. A discussion ensued on the importance of intercultural and intergenerational collaboration in fostering cultural harmony.
- Rojan Nasiri, Accessibility Planner with the City's Community Social Development department presented on the BC Accessibility Act, highlighting the City's response to the Act's requirements and the implementation of the Richmond Accessibility Plan.
- Jyotika Dangwal, Research Planner with the City's Community Social Development department presented highlights of the draft Social Development Strategy, sharing opportunities for RIAC members to offer feedback to ensure the draft reflects the community's priorities.

Cultural Harmony Plan

The RIAC plays a key role in advancing the City's Cultural Harmony Plan by providing community input and applying an intercultural lens in response to requests from City staff. In 2025, through ongoing discussions and environmental scans, the RIAC helped shape the City's approach to serving Richmond's diverse population. For example, when federally-funded services for newcomers and settlement agencies shifted, RIAC members identified gaps in local programs and service delivery. Their insights supported the City's advocacy for sustained investment in settlement services in Richmond. The RIAC also supports the Cultural Harmony Plan by sharing information and identifying opportunities to improve City programs. Throughout 2025, RIAC members discussed best practices to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, promoted programs and events that reduce barriers to participation for newcomers, and reflected on community festivals such as Culture Days, which showcased arts, culture and heritage through a series of interactive events in Richmond and across Canada.

2025 Consultations and Projects

RIAC members also actively offer intercultural perspectives and expertise outside of meeting times by participating in focus groups and working with City staff to advance projects and initiatives.

Applying an Intercultural Lens on City Initiatives

RIAC members participated in several focus group discussions to offer intercultural perspectives on City initiatives. This included participating in a focus group on the Minoru Precinct Directional Wayfinding Project and providing feedback on the Memorial Garden Public Engagement process. By providing an intercultural lens to City initiatives, the RIAC helps ensure that diverse community voices are heard in decision-making processes.

2025 Diversity Symposium

Several RIAC members contributed to the planning of the 2025 Diversity Symposium at City Hall by volunteering as Steering Committee members alongside City staff. This year's Symposium, *Finding Common Ground: Building Shared Understanding for Inclusion*, brought together community members and professionals to exchange ideas and explore inclusive practices that advance social equity and belonging. This year's steering committee included RIAC members Tahzi Ali, Amanda Farias, Bimla Kannangara and Emmett Mark. RIAC members also facilitated and participated in sessions at the Diversity Symposium, sharing learnings from the event with the Committee.

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

In 2025, the RIAC continued its commitment to fostering intercultural understanding and advancing the goals of the Cultural Harmony Plan. We look forward to building on this work in 2026 to strengthen inclusion and belonging in Richmond as the community continues to diversify and grow.

We acknowledge the contributions of outgoing members in 2025: Athena Estremadura, Dina McInnes, Daniel Remedios, Ashok Rattan, Randy Sidhu and Sissi Su, and the involvement of the Richmond Centre for Disability, Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee and Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee on the RIAC over the years. We thank our Council Liaison Bill McNulty for keeping the RIAC informed on Council issues, and Peggy Chen, Staff Liaison and Shelley Iwata, Recording Secretary, for supporting the committee.

In closing, I would like to add a personal note. After serving on the RIAC for six years, three of which as Chair, I will be completing my final term in December 2025. First, I wish to offer my heartfelt thanks to Peggy Chen and Dorothy Jo for their steadfast care and support as Staff Liaisons for the RIAC. My tenure on the committee has been enriched by the members' passion and dedication to helping the city to foster deeper engagement with and amongst the diverse cultural, linguistic and religious communities that call Richmond home. I am continually inspired by my colleagues' insights, from calling for greater diversity amongst the RIAC membership, to identifying a need for measurable indicators of cultural harmony over time, to naming the necessity of bringing an anti-racist and anti-oppressive lens to this work. As a long time Richmond resident, I feel exceptionally fortunate that this group of engaged citizens and service providers have chosen to volunteer their time to share their knowledge, expertise and lived experience with our Mayor and Councillors so that we can move toward the vision of a city where "residents recognize and respect diversity in the community and enable each individual's contributions in all aspects of community life." Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Respectfully submitted by:

Yun-Jou Chang
Chair, Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee