

**MULTICULTURALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, March 5, 2026**

A Regular Meeting of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee convened on Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 7:01 p.m. in the Council Committee Room, City Hall, 3000 Guildford Way, Coquitlam, BC, with the following persons present:

*\*Indicates virtual attendance*

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Councillor Brent Asmundson, Chair  
Councillor Matt Djonlic, Vice Chair  
Tina Balachandran, Citizen Representative  
Ann Johannes, Citizen Representative\*  
Nikki Kasravi, Citizen Representative\*  
Bita Rezaei, Citizen Representative  
Bibi Singh, Citizen Representative  
Lucie Wee, Citizen Representative

ABSENT: Parmis Bagher Zadeh, Citizen Representative (regrets)  
Leo Chen, Citizen Representative  
Carolina Echeverri, Citizen Representative (regrets)  
Honore Gbedze, Citizen Representative (regrets)  
Edgar Sanchez, Citizen Representative

STAFF: Heidi Hughes, Manager Tourism and Visitor Economy  
Rebecca Laurie, Manager Civic Engagement  
Chris Siddaway, Manager Community Partnerships and Policy  
Victoria Elahi, Social Planner  
Alex McLellan, Committee Clerk

**CALL TO ORDER AND TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and provided an Indigenous territorial acknowledgement.

The Committee Clerk announced changes to improve access to City Hall for Committee meetings.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES****1. Minutes of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee Meeting held on Thursday, January 22, 2026**

The Minutes of the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee Meeting held on Thursday, January 22, 2026 were approved.

**OLD BUSINESS****NEW BUSINESS****2. Festivals and Events Strategy Update**

The Manager Tourism and Visitor Economy gave a presentation entitled “Festivals and Events Strategy” and referred to slides contained in the Agenda package.

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- Suggestions to reflect cultural diversity and creativity in events by ensuring representation relative to demographic information, ensuring cultural groups are integrated in event planning, and promoting local artists.
- Suggestions to support a sense of belonging in events by encouraging “co-creation” and participation between cultural groups and generations to both celebrate unique cultures and provide integrative experiences based on a common theme such as music, food, art, or film.
- Suggestions to support a sense of belonging in events by identifying volunteers amongst newcomers through settlement and language-learning groups, and by providing information to newcomers at predictable points of contact such as the school district.
- Suggestion to increase the multicultural success of events through interactive activities that allow participants to engage directly with other cultures, and activities that promote communication and engagement between diverse persons, following the examples of Coquitlam’s Canada Day and Richmond’s Diversity Symposium.
- Suggestion to increase the multicultural success of events by promoting and presenting events in multiple languages.
- Suggestion to increase the multicultural success of events by creating a multicultural advisory table to help plan for coordination, cohesion, and integration of cultural festivals and events.
- Suggestions for services and supports for event planners including a clear checklist with key deadlines, training through a multicultural advisory table,

promotion through City social media and attendance of City officials, and funding.

In response to Committee discussion, staff noted the following:

- Staff hold pre-meetings with festival and event planners using outdoor spaces and event planners have access to a special events coordinator for support in permitting.
- The Festival Planners Network meets a few times a year and includes staff from the City, event planners, suppliers, and vendors to share information about event sites, permitting, and funding.
- The City hosts a central calendar online where events can be submitted, and, while this is populated by the City where events are permitted, the onus is on event organizers to submit in most cases; the City also hosts a Tourism Coquitlam website with a specific events calendar and other promotional information.
- The Community Services department has a volunteer services team that hosts an application and screening process and posts volunteer opportunities.

### **3. Departmental Staff Updates**

The Chair introduced the Manager Community Partnerships and Policy as a staff liaison to the Committee for this year.

The Manager Community Partnerships and Policy gave a verbal update regarding organizational changes in the City. The former *Parks, Recreation, Culture, and Facilities* department has been reorganized into two departments, *Community Services* and *Parks and Capital Projects*, respectively. Regular department updates from *Community Services* will be provided to the Committee meetings going forward.

The Manager Community Partnerships and Policy and the Social Planner gave a verbal update regarding the Welcome to Coquitlam event, which will be held again this year after being interrupted for a number of years. Previously, this was an open house style event in City Hall with tables representing City departments and community organizations. The direction for the event this year is to be focused, easy to navigate, inclusive, and interactive. The primary audience will be newcomers to Coquitlam with a focus on newcomers to Canada.

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- Suggestion to have staff or volunteers with proficiency in common newcomer languages available to support and encourage participants to engage widely in the event.

- Suggestion to provide brief biographies of Councillors to increase relatability and approachability.
- Suggestion to explain the roles of Council and Councillors because they may be different from that of newcomers' countries of origin, with a focus on promoting the openness and accessibility of local government.
- Suggestion to focus information on City services related to daily life such as waste management, finance, wildlife, and community events.
- Suggestion to focus information on City and other services related to safety such as RCMP, Fire and Safety, Emergency Management, and health and mental health services.
- Suggestion that the event would be best held on a weekend to avoid school and work conflicts, particularly Saturday morning; otherwise, a weekday late afternoon would be reasonably accessible.

The Social Planner gave a verbal update on the Work Plan. The Festivals and Events Strategy was addressed at this meeting, as was the Welcome to Coquitlam event, which will be discussed further at the next meeting. The draft Accessibility and Inclusion Plan and the Canada Day event will be discussed at the next meeting. The Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership will present at the July or September meeting. The Emergency and Disaster Management Act Implementation Strategy is awaiting the selection of a consultant before determining Committee input. Coordination is underway with staff to determine whether the Talent and Retention Strategy may be brought to the Committee this year.

#### **4. Canada Day 2026**

This item was postponed to the next meeting.

#### **5. Committee Members' Roundtable / Multicultural Communities and Emerging Issues (Standing Agenda Item)**

The Chair invited Committee members to share emerging issues and information regarding events occurring in their communities.

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- Report of a successful Indian art and dance performance at the Evergreen Cultural Centre with a large and multicultural audience, which demonstrated growth in cultural participation and belonging as supported by the Centre and by the Indus arts and culture community through respect and patience.
- Offer by a cultural events organizer to collaborate with City events to make cultural dance programming accessible to the public.
- Report of a Nowruz event at the Library City Centre branch on March 14.

- Suggestion that Nowruz event organizers and participants should be mindful of conflicting feelings within the Iranian community due to conflict in that region.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**NEXT MEETING DATE – Thursday, May 14, 2026**

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

**MINUTES CERTIFIED CORRECT:**

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Councillor Brent Asmundson, Chair

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Alex McLellan, Committee Clerk