

**Municipality of Chatham-Kent**  
**Infrastructure and Engineering Services**  
**Parks and Open Spaces**  
**Information Report**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**From:** Jeff Bray  
Manager, Parks and Open Spaces

**Date:** August 13, 2018

**Subject:** National Association of Japanese-Canadian Chatham-Kent Heritage Marker Project

---

This report is for the information of Council.

**Background**

In 1942, Prime Minister Mackenzie King, through the War Measures Act, forced 22,000 Japanese-Canadians from the coast of British Columbia into incarceration camps, settlements, and prisoner-of-war camps across Canada.

That year, through the Ontario Farm Labour Force Project, 154 men were placed in southwestern Ontario as farm labourers. Although Chatham residents and Chatham Council initially opposed the plan, the voices of opposition were quelled by the realities of the farm labour shortage caused by the war. The communities' eventual acceptance of the Japanese-Canadian workers was aided by the support of church groups and farmers.

**Comments**

In 2017, the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) initiated conversations with the Municipality to review the possibility of saving the Eatonville property (located at the Southeast corner of Highway 3 and Kent Bridge Road) that had housed Japanese-Canadian labourers. After a review of the structure's condition and costs associated with purchasing the property, renovations, and annual maintenance, there was a mutual agreement that this was not feasible for either party. From this discussion came an alternate proposal to develop and install heritage markers and perhaps a future, modest permanent exhibit at the Chatham-Kent Museum.

On December 14, 2016, Ken Noma, the former Executive Director of National Association of Japanese Canadians approached Parks and Open Spaces staff with a proposal to assist with the development and installation of the NAJC Chatham-Kent Heritage Marker Project. A work team of municipal staff and NAJC members was

## National Association of Japanese-Canadian Chatham-Kent Heritage Marker Project

struck. The NAJC provided heritage data, funding, and design services, whereas municipal staff determined site locations and coordinated the marker fabrication and installations.

Through this initiative, sites involved with the Ontario Farm Labour Force Project were identified in the following communities, i.e., Chatham, Dover Township, Dresden, Eatonville, and Valetta. Heritage markers depicting a timeline of events significant to Japanese-Canadians and their experiences relative to Chatham-Kent during the Ontario Farm Labour Force Project will be installed at each site along with Japanese cherry trees. (Appendix A)

The NAJC Chatham-Kent Heritage Marker Project is of national and provincial significance as it is the first system of markers in Ontario to tell the story of the Japanese-Canadian diaspora. The project's completion is also timely as it marks the:

- 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of two hundred Japanese Canadian volunteers to World War I
- 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War Measures Act
- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Redress Settlement


The project will be complete by the end of August. An official opening ceremony is scheduled for September 7, 2018 in Mitchell's Bay Park.

### **Financial Implications**

The design, fabrication, and installation of the interpretive panels will be borne by the Toronto NAJC, the national NAJC Community Renewal Fund, the Hastings Park Foundation, Rotary Club of Bay Bloor, the Japanese Consul General, Hamilton Chapter NAJC, and individual donations. To date, in excess of \$18,000 has been raised in private monies for this initiative, in addition to \$5,000 for in-kind services.

Annual lifecycle costs of \$1,000 will be required to maintain the panels in good standing. These panels will be categorized under the Parks Lifecycle budget. This lifecycle budget is currently underfunded.

Prepared by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Bray, Manager  
Parks and Open Spaces

Reviewed by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas Kelly, General Manager  
Infrastructure and Engineering

Attachment: Appendix A – Marker locations

P:\RTC\Infrastructure and Engineering\I & ES\2018\4030 - National Association of Japanese-Canadian Chatham-Kent Heritage Marker Project.docx

Dresden Site: Lambton-Kent Memorial Agricultural Centre

One Yoshino Cherry tree planted



Chatham Site: The English Farm: 8907 Doyle Line

This site has a commemoration sign that will be replaced with a new heritage marker. Due to the site's proximity to the road, no trees will be planted.



Eatonville Site: Talbot Trail, Eatonville, Ontario – Two Yoshino Cherry trees planted



Valetta Site: 4405 Middle Line, Valetta, Tilbury East - Municipal Shop Location  
Seven Yoshino Cherry trees planted



Dover Site: Mitchell's Bay Park - Ten Yoshino Cherry trees planted

