

CITY OF BURNABY  
COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS

**SUBJECT: ROBERT BURNABY LETTERS - BOOK PROPOSAL**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT this report be received for information purposes.

**REPORT**

The Community Heritage Commission, at its meeting on 1999 November 04 adopted the attached report and approved the recommendations contained therein. This report responds to a proposal to publish a series of letters and accompanying background information on the life of Robert Burnaby. Arising from consideration of this report the Commission felt that until such time as the letters have been received and entered into manuscript format it would premature to choose an option or even decide whether publishing a book is a viable project. The Commission does feel however a basic manuscript, maintained for City archival and research purposes, would prove to be an important historical record and valuable research tool.

Therefore, unless otherwise directed by Council, the Community Heritage Commission will pursue the creation of a manuscript by entering into a Letter of Understanding with the holder of the letters to allow transcribing of the letters into a computerized format. An expenditure of \$2,500 is required for the transcription and funds are available in the Heritage Commission's 1999 budget.

A further report will be submitted Council once the manuscript has been prepared and the Commission decides what further action to take with regard to the book proposal.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Doreen Lawson  
Chair

Councillor Celest Redman  
Vice Chair

:COPY - CITY MANAGER - DIRECTOR FINANCE - DIRECTOR PLNG. & BLDG.
--

TO: COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION 1999 October 29

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

SUBJECT: **ROBERT BURNABY LETTERS - BOOK PROPOSAL**

PURPOSE: To provide the Commission with the options available to pursue the publication of the letters of Robert Burnaby in book form.

---

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** the Community Heritage Commission support in principle the project to assist with the publication of the Robert Burnaby Letters .
2. **THAT** the Community Heritage Commission request Council authorize the expenditure of \$2,500.00 from the 1999 Community Heritage Commission Budget to finance the compilation of a manuscript for the Robert Burnaby Book project.

**REPORT**

**1.0 Background:**

At the 1999 September 09 meeting of the Community Heritage Commission a presentation was made by local historian and author Pixie McGeachie who outlined a proposal to publish the letters of Robert Burnaby. The collection of letters are the property of Anne Burnaby McLeod (Robert Burnaby's Great Great Niece) who has requested Mrs. McGeachie's assistance in publishing the letters. The Commission requested that staff report back on all options available to publish a book on the life and letters of Robert Burnaby including financial aspects. This report outlines the available letter collections, the proposed book concept, three options of publication and printing, and additional information regarding funding options for the Commission's consideration.

**2.0 Robert Burnaby Book Proposal**

**2.1 *Biographical Outline***

The City of Burnaby's namesake is Robert Burnaby, an important player in the early development of British Columbia. He was born in Woodthorpe, Leicester, England on

November 30, 1828, the son of a an English Church Vicar . Robert Burnaby's family was influential and was able to send him to London to study and launch a career with Her Majesty's Custom Service.

He left that career at age 30 to come to British Columbia to make his fortune in the colony, then in the throes of the 1858 Fraser River Gold Rush. He had a letter of introduction to the colonial governor, James Douglas. He in turn introduced him to Colonel R.C. Moody of the Royal Engineers whose prime task was to open up the Colony of British Columbia for settlement. Burnaby was appointed as Moody's private secretary and eventually took over as head of Moody's civilian staff in New Westminster. It was during this time that Burnaby led an exploration party to the lake that would take his name.

In August, 1859, Moody was required to dismiss his civilian employees. Burnaby immediately began a new career as an entrepreneur and with Walter Moberly explored by canoe Burrard Inlet to examine coal deposits. They were taken hostage briefly by local native people while exploring the inlet and added to their adventures by examining the Cheakamus River for gold. He finally moved to Victoria where he established a successful commission merchant business and also was a partner in some failed mining schemes on the Queen Charlotte Islands and in the interior. In 1860 he was elected to a seat in the Legislative Assembly of Vancouver Island. Burnaby also was very active in Freemasonry, organizing the first lodge in British Columbia and being elected the Grand Master in 1863.

Burnaby returned to his home in England in 1864 to care for business interests for a brief time. On return to Victoria he became a commissioner of the Savings Bank of Victoria and settled back into life as one of the capital city's most beloved bachelors. His health failed in 1869 and he lapsed into a debilitating paralysis. With no hope of being cured he was returned to England where he died in his mother's home in Woodthorpe at age 49 in 1878. He name lives on across the Province British Columbia in the name of Burnaby Island (Haida Gwaii), Burnaby Shoal in Vancouver Harbour, Burnaby Range in Mackenzie Sound and, of course - Burnaby Lake and the City of Burnaby.

## 2.2 *Robert Burnaby's Letter Collections*

Until recently the published newspaper articles and book references of Robert Burnaby have relied on a few limited primary and many secondary source materials. These historical references were often second hand accounts of Robert Burnaby's activities such as those found in contemporary newspapers, other letters and government documents. Biographical accounts of Robert Burnaby's life have built on this documentation to outline his activities and achievements.

It is important to note that the letters now located in England span only a small part of Robert Burnaby's life between 1858 and 1863. However, these years are a critical time of Burnaby's most historically important activities in B.C. and record life in the colony during its

formative years. However, the letters do not provide a complete record of important biographical facts for readers.

In 1998 historian and author Pixie McGeachie published in the B.C. Historical News the first known personal letters written by Robert Burnaby between 1859 and 1863 that are in the possession of his Great, Great, Great Niece - Meg Kennedy Shaw. These detailed four letters (approximately 3,000 words) sent to his sister Harriet revealed for the first time Burnaby's gift as an keen observer and letter writer. His writing provides vivid accounts of life in early British Columbia and is a valuable contribution to our historical knowledge.

The letter collection in the possession of Anne B. McLeod comprise letters written by Robert Burnaby between 1858 and 1863 to various members of his family. The letters number 46 in total and amount to 78 transcribed pages or approximately 34, 000 words. These letters span the period from his departure from England in 1858 to his planned visit home in 1863. Anne McLeod who has had the letters in her possession for 30 years, and has transcribed the bulk of the writing, summarized the contents:

*"His early letters give descriptions of New York (the first landfall) and of his fellow passengers (some of whom went on to play a very important part in the history of British Columbia). His descriptions of Victoria and of the mainland where the Royal Engineers were carving out the site of a future city [New Westminster] from the primeval forest, his local explorations and his many contacts with the indigenous Indians all make fascinating reading, as do his assessments of some of the colony's leading figures. There is an amusing account of his campaign to be elected to the Legislative Assembly, and a sadder note with the story of his unsuccessful wooing of a settler's daughter."*

From the example letters received it is apparent that these letters form a substantial primary historical resource. Not only do they provide a portrait of Robert Burnaby, suitable to telling the biography of the City of Burnaby's namesake, they are first and foremost an important historic record that would be of interest to the historian and general public.

### 2.3 Proposed Book Format

In reviewing the potential format for the proposed book a number of options were reviewed. Other British Columbian books based on colonial correspondence and diaries of leading and lesser figures were consulted for format and style. It is proposed that this book be styled after other soft cover 6"x 9" books which look similar to a novel. Photographs would be limited to a 12 page glossy insert, The cover would be a laminated card stock using full colour. It is estimated that 250-300 pages would be required to produce all the letters and Mrs. McGeachie's manuscript based on preliminary word counts.

## 2.4 Proposed Book Content

The book as proposed by author Pixie McGeachie would incorporate the surviving letters of Robert Burnaby, provide annotation, and include a complete family history and biography of Burnaby's namesake to provide context for the reader. This format and content outline should ensure a more comprehensive book that honours Robert Burnaby through his writings and biography, in addition to being a product of interest for a larger market.

### Content Outline of Proposed Robert Burnaby Book

- Preface
- Introduction
- Robert Burnaby: Family History and Biography  
authored by Pixie McGeachie.
- Robert Burnaby Letters:  
Organization to be decided - one possible arrangement is:
  - Part One: Voyage to the West Coast
  - Part Two: Life in New Westminster, Colony of British Columbia
  - Part Three: Life in Victoria, Colony of Vancouver Island
  - Part Four: Epilogue
- Photographs
- Bibliography
- Index

## 3.0 Pre-press and Printing Options

There are a number of options for the City of Burnaby Heritage Commission to process the printing of a book publication. Three options are presented here for consideration.

### 3.1 Option 1: City of Burnaby Pre-press and Printing

The Commission has the option to request from Council the use of civic staff to organize the publication, provide typing services, pre-press graphic service and use the municipal print shop facilities. The City of Burnaby is a registered publisher and has its own ISBN code for its publications. Legal agreements respecting copyright and financial compensation for both the author and owners of the letters could be written by the Legal Department.

The City print shop has the capability of providing the printing service required to produce a quality publication similar to other books reviewed of this type. The "Perfect Bind" cover, used as a standard method of binding, would be the only outside service required for the book's completion.

A large portion of the printing cost would be required to prepare and strip the plates. The print shop has advised that the option of processing the graphics from computer for printing

by "direct to plate" will be available in the July, 2000 which would significantly reduce this cost.

In choosing this option the City and Commission has the most control of the book project and potentially the lowest production cost. However, there remains the issue of availability of staff time for other Heritage Commission projects and potential delays in order to accommodate other print shop priorities.

A rough estimate has been prepared based on the proposed book format outlined in section 2.3 of this report. Using the potential print run of 1000 books, which is considered a modest run for this type of book, an estimate of up to \$14,000.00 has been calculated. It should be noted that this price is for discussion purposes only and is not considered a final quote. Each book would be valued at about \$14.00 and a reasonable sale value may be \$20.00. With a \$5.00 potential profit for each book, it would take the sale of 700 books to recoup the printing costs alone. It should be noted that reducing the press run to 500 books would only reduce the cost marginally to \$11,000.00.

### 3.2 *Option 2: Tendered Process for Pre-press & Printing*

An option that has provided the City with a number of publications has been tendering the pre-press and printing services to a private printing company.

Two separate tenders may be required for this option. As no manuscript yet exists for the book its pre-press needs are high. A person would need to be hired to coordinate the retyping of the letters and Mrs. McGeachie's manuscript into a computer program suitable for the printing and graphics process. This work would also include completing edits and graphic design in consultation with the author and staff. Tenders for printing a book like this has been done in the past and many qualified press publishing firms exist locally to provide these services.

This option also provides the Commission with control of the process and costs through the review of tenders. The Commission's staff will still be required to manage the project through this process, although the time commitment will be less than option one.

Estimates for this option have not been obtained due to the lack of a complete manuscript to base the costs for pre-press graphics. However, printing costs would be similar to those outlined for Option One.

### 3.3 *Option 3: Grant and Private Publishing*

Another option that is available to the Commission is recommending a grant by Council to cover the expenses needed for Mrs. McGeachie to complete the manuscript through hiring a typing service to transcribe the letters and her manuscript to a computer file. A grant would

be processed with the agreement that the City of Burnaby and the Community Heritage Commissions assistance would be acknowledged in the final printing.

Mrs. McGeachie would be able to distribute the manuscript to local publishers and seek out a interested private firm that would take on the risk of printing, distribution, advertising and sales. Although books of this type have been printed privately in the past there is the risk of not finding an interested company.

This option although viable, removes the project from the City and there is less control for the Heritage Commission to ensure a high quality project that honours and is commemorative of Robert Burnaby. It does however, reduce the financial commitment of the Community Heritage Commission and the City of Burnaby. It also removes the City from any legal and financial obligations for copyright, sales and potential profit/loss which are implications of Options One and Two.

#### **4.0 Potential Funding Opportunities**

##### **4.1 *Funding the Preparation of a Manuscript***

As there is no complete manuscript for the proposed book it is difficult to arrive at a detailed cost estimate for the Commission's consideration. It would also be difficult to source potential funding agencies for publishing grants without a manuscript to offer.

The Community Heritage Commission does have some funds available in its 1999 budget. These funds may be available with Council's approval to cover some of the initial costs associated with the typing of the letters and preparing the manuscript for publication. As the project requires the transcription of the letters and Mrs. McGeachie's manuscripts before printing can be considered, it will be necessary to have a clerk/typist to undertake this work. Based on the volume of letters and manuscript it has been estimated that a budget of up to \$2,500.00 would be required to hire a clerk/typist to complete the transcription within 3 - 4 weeks. This would also allow for the completion of proof-reading and editing.

It should be noted that the work of transcribing the letters and placing them in an electronic format will form an important historical record that can be used to form a resource for researchers even with the most rudimentary desk-top publishing format. An interim agreement will be required with the owners of the letters and the author of the manuscript before this work may proceed.

##### **4.2 *Potential Grant Sources***

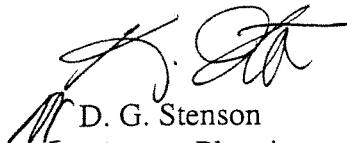
There are outside funding sources which would be available to the Community Heritage Commission in the form of grants to cover printing costs. These include local community associations, educational foundations, and Provincial and Federal Cultural grants. When the

Commission selects an Option for publishing, and the project proceeds, the appropriate granting sources may be outlined for the Commission's consideration.

## 5.0 Summary

The book project as proposed by Pixie McGeachie is an excellent opportunity for the City of Burnaby and the Community Heritage Commission to honour Robert Burnaby and add to the understanding of the history of our community. It will for the first time offer researchers and members of the public with an opportunity to learn about Robert Burnaby's contribution to the history of British Columbia. In doing so it will bring an important aspect of our civic history to the attention of historians, students and the general public. The use of his letters follows a recently popularized trend to make history come alive through the use of dramatic first hand accounts.

The Commission in preliminary discussions had expressed some enthusiasm for this project. In considering the options presented in this report, the Commission is requested to provide direction regarding a preferred option in pursuing this project. As it is necessary to have a manuscript completed, before any of the three options may proceed, a small expenditure of \$2,500.00 is required from the Commission's 1999 budget. A manuscript in computer file format will in itself be a valuable document and historical research resource.



D. G. Stenson  
Director Planning and Building

JW:hr