

COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

SUBJECT: CITY OF BURNABY ARCHIVES ANNUAL REPORT 2011

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT this report be received for information.

REPORT

The Community Heritage Commission, at its meeting held on 2012 February 02, received and adopted the attached 2011 Annual Report of the City of Burnaby Archives, noting many programs and projects, including a major renovation, the formal naming and dedication of a reading room, new digitization initiatives, and more.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor C. Jordan
Chair

Councillor N. Volkow
Vice Chair

Councillor R. Chang
Member

Copied to:	City Manager Deputy City Manager (C. Turpin) Director Parks, Recr. & Cult. Services Chief Librarian Director Planning & Building Chief Information Officer
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TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

DATE: 2012 January 05

FROM: CITY ARCHIVIST

FILE: 2410-20
*Reference: Community Heritage
Commission*

SUBJECT: CITY OF BURNABY ARCHIVES ANNUAL REPORT 2011

PURPOSE: To present the 2011 Annual Report of the City of Burnaby Archives

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** this report be received for information.

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

2011 was a milestone year for the City of Burnaby Archives. On November 5th, we celebrated our 10th Anniversary with a joint McGill Library/City Archives birthday party. This event capped off a momentous year that was witness to an ambitious agenda of facility and program projects, including: a major renovation, the formal naming and dedication of our reading room, a successful grant application, new digitization initiatives, continued growth in research requests and an increased availability of resources for the citizens of Burnaby and researchers around the world.

The following report provides a brief summary of our operations throughout 2011.

ARCHIVAL RECORDS PROGRAM

The City of Burnaby Archives opened in the new McGill Library in 2001 and functions as a division of the Office of the City Clerk. The Archives is the official repository for all inactive civic records of permanent administrative, legal, fiscal, historical, evidential and/or informational value to the City of Burnaby. Archival material is preserved as evidence of the functions, legal rights, obligations, policies, decisions, procedures, accountabilities, and operations of the City. It is the responsibility of the City Archives to ensure the preservation and accessibility of these vital records by providing proper facilities, environmental controls and resources to maintain the archival material in perpetuity. In the past decade, the Archives has fulfilled this role with the transfer of over 500 meters of textual records into its custody. Transfers have been made from every City department and have helped staff at City Hall alleviate some of the ongoing records

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storage issues within the City Hall complex. This has also enabled staff to make official City records available and accessible to the public via the Archives' ongoing scanning and digitization initiatives. Currently, an index of all Council minutes and reports dating back to 1934 can be searched online with full-text versions of the documents available from 1980 to the present. All City Bylaws, dating back to 1892, are also available as full-text pdf documents online as are descriptions and finding aids for all files and records in our holdings.

In addition, the Archives has supported the protection and preservation of the City's documentary heritage by way of its expanded collections mandate and the incorporation of the Burnaby Historical Society Community Archives collections into the City's holdings. This transfer saw over 100 meters of textual records and over 10,000 photographs moved to the Archives facility in 2007. As our resources expanded, so too did the demand for service – demand for both research services and for use as a records repository. As a result, the Archives storage facility reached 90% of its capacity by 2010.

In order to address this issue, the Community Heritage Commission recommended, and Burnaby City Council approved, the installation of a new, high density mobile storage system for the Archives. The renovations were undertaken throughout the summer months. Our entire collection (comprising over 2500 boxes of records) was carefully packed, catalogued and moved offsite for the duration of the work. The compact, mobile shelving units were then installed during the month of July, and our records returned the first week of August. As a result of this work, our storage capacity has increased by almost 90%. This new system will allow us to continue building our collection and go a long way in alleviating our immediate storage concerns.

By September, we were able to resume our regular schedule of transfers from the City and accepted approximately 30 metres of additional records from the Clerk's, Legal and Planning Departments. In addition to the official City records, our community collection saw the inclusion of some exciting new material into our holdings. Accessioned this year were the Robert Bailey, William Martin, and Gillis family fonds, as well as a collection of ledger books from the Oakalla Prison farm which were kept by Warden Warren Mulligan. We also received a collection of photographs taken of the Lougheed Drive-in Swap Meets in the 1970s by photographer Bill Jeffries and images from long-time Burnaby businessman, Dan Libonati. All of these records are currently being processed and will be made available for public research on our Heritage Burnaby website in 2012.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING: HERITAGE BURNABY

Work on the Heritage Burnaby website continued this year and in March, the City Archives received a grant valued at \$10,000.00 from the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre as part of the B.C. Digitization Program. These funds helped us to complete the first phase of our oral history initiative. The Archives holds approximately 100 hours of oral history recordings that consist of interviews with Burnaby pioneers done in the 1970s and 1980s. These interviews were completed by Simon Fraser University students as well as by members of the Burnaby Historical

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Society and include former Burnaby Reeve William Pritchard, pioneering residents like Florence Hart Godwin, Drs. Blythe and Violet Eagles and many others who describe their lives and experiences in early Burnaby. Unfortunately, the tapes themselves existed only in analog formats (reel to reel and cassettes), the majority of which could no longer be accessed. The funding provided by the B.C. History Digitization Program in addition to that approved by the Community Heritage Commission and City Council afforded us the opportunity to undertake a conversion project to make these records accessible to the public.

This project resulted in the digitization of approximately 80 hours of analog reel-to-reel audio tapes. Once digitized, these tapes were indexed and described and are now available on our Heritage Burnaby website. Researchers or other members of the public can search by subject or browse entire interviews online to hear first-hand accounts of Burnaby's pioneer days. This project has received a great deal of attention and local media coverage as it is one of the first of its kind and offers listeners the opportunity to get an intimate glimpse into the lives of our early residents.

Other opportunities for public outreach this year included a month-long display of archival records and photographs that was mounted at the Cameron Branch Library and an invitation to speak at the Burnaby Senior's Advisory Committee to offer advice on preservation strategies for their Committee records. The 10th Anniversary party in November was a great success which saw 2500 people visit the McGill Library and Archives during the day-long celebration. Our staff also made contributions to the professional archival community by sitting on the Archives Association of British Columbia Membership Committee and offering training and support to other municipal archives in the fields of database development and content management throughout 2011.

Also this year, despite the month-long closure during the summer while we were under renovations, the Archives saw a steady increase in the number of research requests made by the public. This was of particular note as it highlighted the success of our online Heritage Burnaby program – despite having the entire collection physically removed and unavailable with construction underway, we were still able to successfully manage the ongoing research requests via the electronic access afforded by our online collections. The Heritage Burnaby digitization program continues to allow unprecedented levels of access for researchers, staff and members of the public.

THE PIXIE McGEACHIE READING ROOM

When the Archives re-opened to the public at the end of the summer, we were honoured to pay tribute to Burnaby's long-time community archivist, Pixie McGeachie, by formally naming the reading room in her memory. On 2011 September 24, members of Burnaby City Council, the Community Heritage Commission, the Burnaby Historical Society and family and friends of the late Pixie McGeachie joined with Mayor Corrigan to unveil the "Pixie McGeachie Reading Room" at the City of Burnaby Archives.

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Pixie McGeachie served as Burnaby's community archivist for more than two decades. A resident of Burnaby for over sixty years, she was the editor for the Burnaby Examiner newspaper and authored dozens of books and articles chronicling the history of our city. During her twenty years as the volunteer Community Archivist for the historical society, she succeeded in gathering thousands of rare and valuable historic photographs and documents which now form the core of the photograph collection on the Heritage Burnaby website.

The residents of Burnaby suffered a great loss when Pixie McGeachie passed away in August of 2010. The City Archives Reading Room was named in Pixie's honour in recognition of the contribution she made to the community in the preservation and promotion of its history and heritage.

CONCLUSION

The programs and facilities completed this year will usher us into our second decade with improved services and heritage assets for the community. Our 2012 work plan will include a second phase of the oral history program that will involve a new series of interviews. The last set of interviews in the Burnaby Historical Society collection are approximately 30 years old, and feature many Burnaby residents who have since passed away. It is felt that now would be an appropriate time to initiate a pilot project to undertake new interviews to ensure vital parts of our history are not lost. A selection of interviews will be completed, captured in a digital format and made available online. If this initial phase of the program is successful, future phases in subsequent years will be developed and made part of the archives' long-term work plans.

The resources that have been provided to fund these improvements and to allow a TFT archival assistant position have been integral to the success of our public programming and projects throughout this landmark year. Under the continued guidance and support of the Community Heritage Commission and Burnaby City Council, we look forward to building on these successes as we move into 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

Arilea Sill
CITY ARCHIVIST

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cc: City Manager
Deputy City Manager (C. Turpin)
City Clerk
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Chief Librarian
Director of Planning and Building
Chief Information Officer