



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

For the June 12, 2014 Meeting

To: Governance and Priorities Committee
From: Julie MacDougall, Assistant Director
Parks, Recreation and Culture
Subject: Centennial Park Welcome Pole

Date: June 3, 2014

Executive Summary

The Welcome Pole in Centennial Park turns 44 this year. Showing its age, the pole was removed by Parks staff on March 12, 2014 and safely stored in the Parks Yard to allow it to dry out with the intention to restore the pole to its original condition. Upon further inspection by staff and First Nations carver Harold Alfred, it has been determined that the pole has reached the end of its lifespan.

The condition assessment involved visual observation and measurements including specific measurements of the density resistance of the wood carried out using a resistograph instrument. These assessments concluded that the Pole is in poor condition, with a significant amount of decay present. The average life span of a West Coast welcome pole is about 50 years.

Traditionally, poles are left to return to the earth or gifted back to the carver's family. The next step in the process is to contact the carver's family and discuss options for relocating the Welcome Pole.

Recommendation:

1. That Council receive this report for information

Respectfully submitted,

Nichola Reddington
Community Recreation & Culture Coordinator

Julie MacDougall
Assistant Director

Jocelyn Jenkyns
General Manager, VCC

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:

June 5, 2014

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the condition of the James Dick Welcome Pole and the process to work with the carver's family to discuss next steps and future options for Council's consideration.

Background

Kwakwaka'wakw Nation master carver James Dick of Alert Bay was commissioned in 1970 by the Government of British Columbia to carve the Welcome Pole. It was gifted to the City of Victoria one year later to commemorate the 100th anniversary of British Columbia joining Canadian Confederation.

The Welcome Pole at Centennial Park is approximately 4.5 metres tall and one metre in diameter at the base, and is carved out of Western red cedar. It is one of 13 poles commissioned by the Government of Canada in 1970, as a gift to commemorate British Columbia entering Confederation. A pole was given to each of the 10 provinces, to the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, and one was erected on the grounds of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

Showing its age, the pole was removed by Parks staff on March 12, 2014 and safely stored in the Parks Yard to allow it to dry out with the intention of restoring the pole to its original condition. Upon further inspection conducted by staff and First Nations carver Harold Alfred, it has been determined that the pole has reached its lifespan.

The City of Victoria has six totem poles in the civic outdoor art collection including a pole carved by Mungo Martin in 1956 in Beacon Hill Park. The City received a consultant report from Andrew Todd Conservators in January 2011 with an assessment and condition report on the six poles and provided treatment proposals for each artwork. The Two Brothers in Centennial Square by Butch and Clarence Dick and the Mungo Martin pole in Beacon Hill Park were cleaned, capped and re-sealed in 2011. The totem pole conservation report has been incorporated into an overall public art maintenance plan that is currently being developed to ensure the City is proactively caring for and maintaining existing works in the collection.

Issues & Analysis

The condition assessment for the Welcome Pole involved visual observation and measurements including specific measurements of the density resistance of the wood carried out using a resistograph instrument. The resistograph is an instrument that detects decay and cavities in trees and timber. Through resistograph technology, an arborist is able to detect wood decay, stages of rot, hollow areas, cracks and ring structure. As the micro drill enters the tree, the resistance of the wood changes the rotation speed of the drill. These variations are translated into a graph.

These assessments concluded that the Pole is in poor condition, with a significant amount of decay present. The mild, wet environment of the coast and exposure to salt water is destructive to wood and has expedited the decaying process.

The average life span of a West Coast welcome pole is approximately 50 years, and traditionally, poles are left to return to the earth or gifted back to the carver's family when de-accessioned.

Restoration of the pole was desired, however, the pole is beyond the state of repair based on the extensive rot and cracking found at five different testing spots. Due to the urban setting of Centennial Park, the option of leaving the pole at the current site is not advisable due to safety concerns and heavy use of the walking and biking trails running alongside the park space and the Inner Harbour.

The next steps in the process will be to engage in dialogue with the carver's family to discuss future options and to report back to Council on outcomes and any options to be considered.

Recommendation:

1. That Council receive this report for information.



Aerial View from Top of Pole



View of Pole Base

