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Reconciliation and Leadership

INTRODUCTION

**NOTE THIS PAPER IS A DRAFT AND CAN AND WILL CHANGE.
ALL CONSTRUCTIVE INPUT WELCOME.**

Reconciliation is one of the most pressing issues facing Canada today. Communities across the country have been working with First Nations as well as other cultural groups such as Japanese and Chinese communities to redress the hateful policies of the past.

Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada states in his opening of the “What we have learned: Principles of truth and reconciliation” document⁽¹⁾:

All Canadians must now demonstrate the same level of courage and determination, as we commit to an ongoing process of reconciliation. By establishing a new and respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, we will restore what must be restored, repair what must be repaired, and return what must be returned.

The Principles identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission give guidance with both First Nations and as common sense principles for reconciliation efforts with other groups⁽¹⁾:

#3: Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.

#4: Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.

#9: Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.

#10: Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.

From the TRC Report “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future”⁽¹⁾ (Page 210):

*A just reconciliation requires more than simply talking about the need to heal the deep wounds of history. **Words of apology alone are insufficient**; concrete actions on both symbolic and material fronts are required. Reparations for historical injustices must include not only apology, financial redress, legal reform, and policy change, **but also the rewriting of national history and public commemoration.***

In every region of the country, Survivors and others have sent a strong message, as received by this Commission: for reconciliation to thrive in the coming years, Canada must move from apology to action.

In the words of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in the apology for Internment and disenfranchisement of Japanese Canadians, Canada made a “ *solemn commitment... that such violations will never again in this country be countenanced or repeated.*”⁽²⁾

And in the words of Premier Christy Clark during the 2014 official apology to Chinese-Canadians:

“While the governments which passed these laws and policies acted in a manner that was lawful at the time, today this racist discrimination is seen by British Columbians - represented by all members of the legislative assembly - as unacceptable and intolerable.”

Honouring A.W. Neill Legacy History

From the book "Place Names of the Alberni Valley" by Helen Forde et al.⁽³⁾:

"Between Third and Seventeenth Avenue. Named for A.W. Neill, who arrived in Alberni in 1891. He was a pioneer farmer of Cherry Creek, business man (Pioneer Feed Store), Member of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly from 1896-1903, Indian Agent for the West Coast of Vancouver Island 1903-1913. He was Mayor of Alberni 1916-17. He was Independent Member of the House of Commons for Comox-Alberni 1921-1945"



Mr. Neill was also an Alderman on the first Council of the City of Port Alberni (in image third from left - 1912³) and he notably delivered the first Old Age Pension cheque to a resident of Port Alberni⁽⁴⁾. Thanks to these high profile positions, Mr. Neill was a well known figure in early 20th

century Port Alberni.

As an Independent Member of Parliament A.W. Neill sat on the Committee that made recommendations to Parliament on Old Age Pensions⁽⁵⁾. According to the Canadian History Museum: "When his government finally won a majority in 1926, Mackenzie King followed up on his promise to Woodsworth and Heaps by introducing legislation that became the Old Age Pensions Act in 1927"⁽⁷⁾. The Act was presented by the Mackenzie King on April 15 1926.⁽⁶⁾ The Canadian History Museum also notes: "Status Indians were excluded."

It was A.W. Neill's private members bill that moved Armistice Day to November 11 and renamed it Remembrance Day.⁽²⁸⁾

These achievements should still be honoured in ways respectful to Neill's full legacy.

Honouring A.W. Neill Legacy West Coast and Alberni Indian Residential Schools

“Their mortality will compare with a similar number of white people after making allowances for their traditions. They have a pernicious habit of abandoning their wives and taking others” - A.W. Neill 1909



Following is some of A.W. Neill’s history as Indian Agent. The letter at left from Neill states⁸: “*These Indians come to maturity so much sooner than whites that it is like keeping white children in a board school until they are 22 or 23. It leads to immorality among the children unless they are watched like convicts.*”

Below is correspondence from Neill in the Department Indian Affairs 1909 Annual Report⁹:

“*Temperance and Morality — Their mortality will compare with a similar number of white people after making allowances for their traditions. They have a pernicious habit of abandoning their wives and taking others, for which, under existing laws.... can not be punished either for deserting their wives or for bigamy wthey they take another wife.*”

Documents at the website: “thechildrenremembered.ca” quote Principal Motion in 1904⁽¹⁰⁾:

“*The hardest battle fought by our ex-pupils is the persistent endeavour of the older people to make them take part in those dances, so that the dances may be continued in the future.*”

In comments in Parliament in 1936 A.W. Neill confirmed his success as Indian Agent⁽¹¹⁾:

“*...what is now more properly called the potlatch consists in an Indian who wishes to get a high standing among his fellow men collecting a large quantity of goods.... But that practice gradually died away. **The influence of the white man induced an individualism amongst the Indians, and I was careful to instil that point of view myself when I was Indian agent. I used to point out to them that it left them in poverty...***”

As a demonstration of some of the trauma experienced at the Alberni IRS, an excerpt from “The Survivors Speak”, a part of the Truth and Reconciliation Report⁽¹⁾.

“Middle of the night. So, I thought that was one of the things going on there..... I just fell down and cried, and cried, and cried. Finally, he left me alone. And then we went into the dining room.... The next thing I know he had all his clothes off too.... ”

A.W. Neill, as Indian Agent from 1903 to 1913 held a position of significant responsibility and purpose in those efforts of the state to assimilate First Nations. For this reason he represents a key symbolic figure in that history deserving of scrutiny under the Truth and Reconciliation Report’s goals recognizing the “cultural genocide” of Residential Schools⁽¹²⁾

Denial of Minority and Religious Voting Rights

“The Scottish-born parliamentarian declared Canada to be a “white man’s country.” To the everlasting shame of his district...”



It is worth noting that during his six terms the “significant Japanese-Canadian population” in Comox-Alberni as well as other minorities and First Nations were not allowed to vote. A.W. Neill is featured prominently on the Elections Canada and Canadian Museum of History websites on the history of minorities right to

vote⁽¹³⁾⁽¹⁴⁾:

“In 1936, a delegation of Japanese Canadians asked the House of Commons to extend the franchise to them. Prime Minister Mackenzie King said that he had been unaware that they wanted the franchise. A. W. Neill, MP for Comox–Alberni, an area with a significant Japanese Canadian population, said the request for the franchise was “sob stuff” and “claptrap.”

Elections Canada quotes A.W. Neill saying Japanese were, *“being spread all over Canada like the smallpox disease. ...This is a white man’s country, and we want it left a white man’s country*

Elections Canada also point out Neill’s leadership in opposition to religious minorities gaining the right to vote.

“A.W. Neill... said that only “sickly sentimental” MPs wanted Doukhobors to have the franchise. Debating further revisions to the elections act in 1938, Esling, Stirling and Neill again opposed giving Doukhobors the vote...The Doukhobors remained disenfranchised.”

In 1936-37 during a call for extending the right to vote to Asian immigrants, he worked with MP from New Westminster Thomas Reid on a brief titled **“Opposing Oriental Franchise in the Province of British Columbia”**.⁽³⁰⁾

Elections Canada says, “After the Second World War, the most virulently anti-Japanese MPs lost their seats to more moderate members, and public opinion began to shift as well.”

Finally, a Globe and Mail column titled “Blocked from polls as an 'Oriental,' he cherishes his vote” from May 2, 2011 states⁽¹⁵⁾:

“A later call for the franchise was dismissed as “sob stuff” and “claptrap” by A.W. Neill, a retired merchant who was the longtime independent MP for Comox-Alberni. The Scottish-born parliamentarian declared Canada to be a “white man’s country.” To the everlasting shame of his district, the supremacist was re-elected in 1940, his sixth consecutive successful campaign..”

Anti-Immigration and White Supremacist Organizations

"we want them to stop standing, pick up their feet, move ahead, make some progress toward bringing about a white British Columbia"

In his Address in response to the Speech to the Throne on March 16, 1922 A.W. Neill said⁽¹⁶⁾,

*"The important planks [of the King Government] are those with reference to the **restriction of Japanese control of the fishing industry, the immigration of Asiatics, the eight hour law, old age pensions...** And when I suggest that the Government take action in these matters, I mean exactly that the putting of legislation on the statute books. We do not want to have somebody standing up here and proposing an academic resolution or flourishing a flag and saying: **We stand for a white British Columbia.** Mr. Speaker, we in British Columbia are sick to death of seeing and hearing people who "stand for a white British Columbia." The time for that has passed; we want them to stop standing, **pick up their feet, move ahead, make some progress toward bringing about a white British Columbia.** Therefore I stress the point that if the Government will put legislation covering these points into concrete form and pass it, **they can count on my hearty support.**"*

Neill represented a constant voice leader in Parliament even though exclusion leagues like the White Canada Association, "had no adequate support on which to build popular support".⁽³¹⁾

Recently, in Vancouver, the Japanese Canadian society protested the Naming of the "Howard Green" Building⁽¹⁷⁾ as he was an MP that supported A.W. Neill, they state: "**When A.W. Neill led BC MPs in demanding a halt to further Japanese immigration** in February of that year [1938], Green was the first of many BC MPs to offer support. " The building name was changed in 2007.

Neill has been described in "The Politics of Racism" reproduced at japanesecanadianhistory.ca as a zealot on the topic⁽¹⁸⁾:

"Indeed some were zealots. Men like Thomas Reid, the Liberal M.P. for New Westminster, and A.W. Neill, an Independent representing Comox-Alberni,

had consistently assumed an anti-asian position, using arguments and literature supplied by the White Canada Association....”

On February 1, 1938 A.W. Neill moved in the House “An Act respecting Japanese Immigration”⁽¹⁹⁾ which in his words, “proposes to place the Japanese nation on the same plane as regards immigration to Canada [prohibited], as that occupied by the Chinese during the last fifteen years... and I think has the support of ninety per cent of the people of British Columbia”.

He modelled it after the restrictions in place for Chinese immigrants which he said in his remarks ⁽²⁰⁾: “*So you can imagine that the Chinese population is rapidly disappearing.*”

When it was defeated by the Government, A.W. Neill brought another proposal with Bill 38. On March 9, 1938, A.W. Neill explained his new Bill in the House⁽²²⁾:

Prime Minister Mackenzie King: *What is the bill about?*

Mr. Neill: *It is to amend a section 3. To put it in two words, it proposes to add the words "of Europe" to section 3 paragraph (t).*

Mackenzie King: *What is the effect of the bill?*

Mr. Neill: *--- in addition to the foregoing "prohibited classes," the following persons shall also be prohibited from entering or landing in Canada: Persons over fifteen years of age, physically capable of reading who cannot read the English or the French language or some other language or dialect commonly spoken by and native to the people of any country, state, province or other political or territorial division of Europe"*

The Bill would have had the effect of denying anyone who did not read a European Language. Mr. Neill quoted the Pattullo government of BC at the time:

"Oriental immigration into Canada should be prohibited, and as many orientals as possible returned to their home countries".

Neill said immediately after in defence of his new Bill:

"While I am anxious to secure the best that can be obtained for the people of British Columbia, in friendliness to the government, too, I should be glad to see them accept this bill because it is a way out of **the un-popularity**

that will accrue to them if they reject Bill No 11 without accepting some reasonable substitute."

This rhetoric was in tune with that of White Supremacist Organizations like the Native Sons of British Columbia⁽²³⁾

"Chinese who have spent forty years within our borders, are today just as Chinese as when they came from their own land. Their traditions, their mental reactions, their habits and their secret contempt [dislike] for ways that are not their own definitely mark them as unfitted [unable] to adopt the responsibilities of a democracy such as Canadians cherish."

A.W. Neill's Bill 38 was thrown out by the Speaker of the House on a technicality. This same xenophobic rhetoric still reverberates today with groups like Immigration Watch Canada or the Council for European Canadians. Council for European Canadians founder Richard Duchesne is described in Wikipedia⁽²⁴⁾:

Duchesne criticized a motion of the Vancouver council to investigate discriminatory policies imposed by Whites on Chinese immigrants in the city before 1947 as an exercise in manipulating "white guilt", claiming they have "the goal of taking Canada away from the Europeans and transforming the nation into a multicultural and multiracial society."

A mass email from Immigration Watch Canada sent to Port Alberni City Councillors on January 5, 2017 states⁽²⁵⁾:

These and other facts about the detrimental effects of mass immigration on the well being of Canadians are well documented by government statistics and academic research. Unfortunately, governments and the beneficiaries of mass immigration have prevented these facts from reaching wide audiences and allowing political parties to continue to use mass immigration policies for their narrow self-interest. However, the election of President Donald Trump shows that there is a limit to these policies.

Those pre-1947 policies are directly linked to the policies A.W. Neill referenced, and defended, in his speech on Bill 38 in the House of Commons in 1938 and the debates on Bill 11.

Japanese Internment

A.W. Neill again represented the extreme. Going so far as to compare Japanese-Canadians to smallpox⁽²⁶⁾. May 5, 1944 while debating what to do with the Internment Camp residents Neill suggested:

"It is very much as though we discovered three hundred cases of smallpox in Canada, and instead of segregating them all in one place and providing doctors and nurses to attend them, we spread them over a number of different towns and said, nobody will notice a case of smallpox here and there, and everything will be lovely.

On the basis of that theory we are going to start clusters, centres, cancers if you like, of this alien pagan race in every province, all reaching out and spreading out like some evil pool of poison in the province, and by and by they would unite."

In a previous debate June 30, 1943 Mr. Neill⁽²⁷⁾ that CCF leader Angus McInnis immediately described as "flesh creeping", when asked by MP John Knox Blair on the Japanese internees, "What would you do with them" Neill replied, "Send them back to Japan...." he continued, "you cannot breed a white man in a brown or yellow hide. And you cannot let the brown man boss you."

If Government did not take his advice he threatened he, "would subscribe to the demand to break away from eastern Canada, and have a federation of provinces west of the great lakes".

In Parliament, July 7, 1944 he said when relating conversations held on the issue of voting for Japanese Canadians:

" I said, "Well, you were aware that those were the conditions to which you were coming when you came here?" And he said, "Yes".. So that all this sob story about the poor Japanese being deprived of their rights is all bunk. They knew the conditions which existed.."

Concluding Thoughts on A.W. Neill

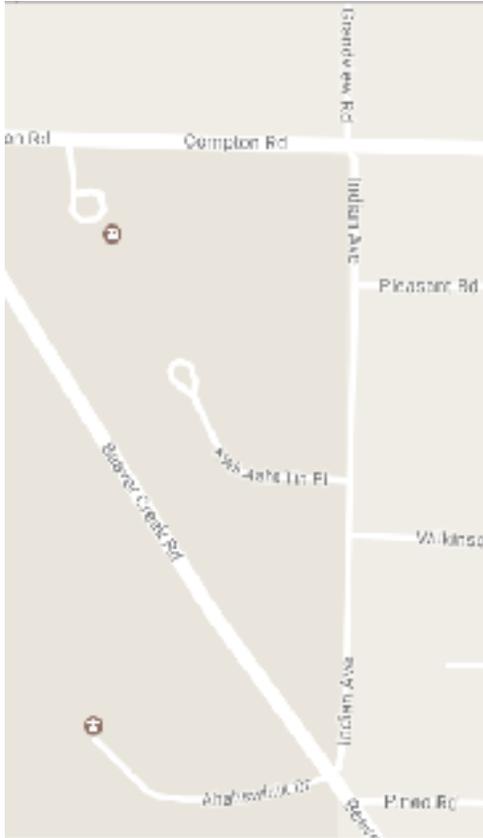
Mr. Neill's leadership, and direct support of both the Indian Residential School system and with discriminatory efforts against Canadians of Japanese, Chinese and others of non-European descent as well as religious minorities makes Mr. Neill a powerful symbol of a very dark chapter in Canadian and British Columbia history.

His connections with unpopular white supremacist organizations of the day are disturbing. These policies are incompatible with the values of modern Port Alberni and the message of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples under the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation report.

It is also at odds with our cooperation with people of all backgrounds in the Alberni Valley including those of Japanese, Chinese and South Asian descent and most notably our formal Sister City relationship with Abashiri, Japan. The School District 70 board is undertaking a parallel effort to rename A.W. Neill school due to the same concerns

Practical Impacts “Indian” Avenue Justification

PROPOSAL WITHDRAWN AFTER HFN INPUT



The Canadian Encyclopedia states: “Indian is a term that is now considered outdated and offensive, but has been used historically to identify Indigenous people in South, Central and North America. In Canada, the term is used most often to refer to legally defined identities.”

In Port Alberni it has been historically associated with other negative and racist terminology for local First Nations.

While the term is still often used in official capacities such as Federal and First Nations Ministries and Organizations, discussions with government organs like the BC Business Registry service indicate that requests to use the word “Indian” in a First Nations context have been near zero for many years as First Nations or Aboriginal is preferred. While the use of the word in Business would not automatically be considered objectionable in a Business name it would depend on the context used. Discussions with students indicate any use of the word Indian to refer to First Nations students or people is severely frowned upon and students would be

reprimanded for doing so.

However, informal consultation with Hupacasath residents on Indian Avenue has indicated they do not see the name as a problem.

There is a disconnect between what is deemed acceptable in official government verbiage, versus what is acceptable to First Nations on the reserve, versus what is acceptable to the wider public (non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal) as a whole including accepted business practice.

Indian Avenue Properties Affected

Indian Avenue borders the City of Port Alberni on the East side of the road and Hupacasath First Nation (HFN) Ahahswinis 1 Reserve on the West side.

According to BC Assessment there are 14 properties in the CPA ranging from 4959 to 5327 Indian Avenue. There are approximately 5 properties (confirmation needed from HFN) that would be affected on the HFN reserve.



Options

Existing street names of adjoining roads at Ahahswinis Drive on the HFN reserve or Grandview Road in the CPA could be used as alternate names for Indian Avenue or a completely new

name could be devised. Some properties may be able to be re-designated to the cross streets of Pleasant Road or Wilkinson Road.



A walking path could be created along one or both sides of the street that would provide a safe route with interpretative signage explaining some the history of the area and of efforts towards reconciliation.

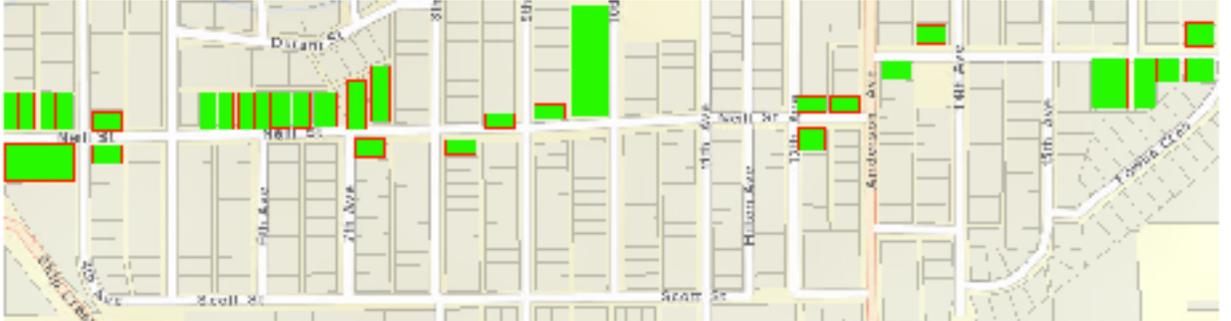
Costs

There are 4 Indian Avenue street signs. At an estimated cost of \$110 each, total cost to City would be \$440. There are only residential properties on the street.

Canada Post reports municipally initiated residential address changes are free to residents unless Mail Forwarding is used.

Neill Street Properties Affected

Neill Street runs from 3rd Avenue in the West to Fowlie Cresc/17th Avenue in the East. Affected addresses span from 3615 to 4950 Neill Street.



There are approximately 31 properties with Neill Street addresses including at least one non-residential address. Those addresses are shaded green in the picture above according to BC Assessment. Many properties bordering Neill Street are assigned to cross streets.

Options

Depending on planning department conventions and regulations, cross streets could be used as alternatives for 16 of the 31 addresses depending on the preferences of the owner. Options for the new name of the street and for property owners suggestions and preferences would be communicated with them in writing after initial consultation.

Costs

There are approximately 27 Neill St. street signs. At an estimated cost of \$110 each, the total cost to the City would be \$3000. There are mostly residential properties on the street (on either the Hupacasath or City of the Avenue). Canada Post reports municipally initiated residential address changes are free to residents unless Mail Forwarding is used.

Hilton Centre, at 4325 Neill Street houses multiple non-profit organizations that would be required to change their address. They may incur large costs and the City should budget \$10000-\$20000 to assist with those costs.

Consultation

Hupacasath and Tseshah First Nations Councils must be equally and fully engaged and supportive of the process. The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council would also be an excellent support for reconciliation work.

Once a decision has been made to investigate the issue, property owners must be consulted in writing of the City's intent and justifications for doing so which could include this document. Property owners must be informed of any potential costs or inconveniences and ways to mitigate them. Suggestions and feedback on the issue should be sought from both property owners and the general public on implications for the community, opportunities for healing, education and reconciliation work, and new names for the streets.

Comment should be sought from Japanese-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian and other cultural groups in Port Alberni and in the region that may have dealt with the history and effect of A.W. Neill from an immigration perspective.

Overall Educational Opportunities, Costs, Funding

Education and Healing Ceremonies and Memorials

As this initiative potentially exposes wounds or re-ignites suffering to do with residential schools, Japanese internment, and other hateful periods of our history it would be important for the City to work with all involved on educational opportunities, healing ceremonies and memorials that explain the significance of the changes to the community and the history of the people and places involved in a way that can begin to heal those past harms and bring the entire community together.

One idea may be to create a walking path along Indian Avenue (which currently does not have a sidewalk) that would include interpretive signage relating to the history of the Hupacasath peoples and the relationship between Hupacasath and the City of Port Alberni.

Another idea could be for Aboriginal symbols to be stamped on the sidewalk corner stones along Neill Street which also bear Neill's name or a plaque could be installed on City property that would explain Neill's significance to the community both from Colonial, First Nations, and Immigration perspective.

Another idea, in order to honour A.W. Neill's work as MP could be to install a cairn/plaque in the Josephine Street Cemetery that recognized his Bill that set November 11 as the date for Remembrance Day. Similar efforts could be taken to honour his work on the Committees that recommended a National Old Age Pensions program to Parliament.

Costs

To Residents:

Costs to residents must be determined as accurately as possible and communicated with the public. A preliminary investigation indicates:

- Canada Post: Free for Municipal Changes
- Drivers License and Medical Services Plan: Free
 - <https://www.addresschange.gov.bc.ca>
 - Call 1 866 775-0011 (8AM-5PM Monday to Friday)
- BCID as a Driver: Free
 - <http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/getting-licensed/Pages/Change-your-address-or-name.aspx>
 - Call 1-800-950-1498
 - In Person at an ICBC Drivers License Office (7th and Wallace)
- BCID as a Non Driver: Free
 - Call 1-800-950-1498
- Passport: Free - <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/help/general.asp>
- Mastercard/Visa/AMEX: Free
 - Free Online or Phone (back of Credit Card)
- Bank: Free
 - Free Online or Phone (back of Debit Card)
- Land Title: No change required (relies on legal, not civic address), no fee.
- Wills: No need for change.
- Business License: Change at time of annual renewal automatic by City.

To Non-Residents:

Hilton Centre / Outreach Therapy is a facility housing a number of non-profit services for children and other community groups at Neill and 10th Avenue. It is the only active non-residential business property affected by the proposal. There may be more significant costs associated with administrative issues that the City should attempt to cover in whole or in part. An estimate of this cost should be able to be obtained from Hilton Centre and every effort should be undertaken to

cover. Cost of **\$16000**(29) is a preliminary estimate and may be greater or less and should be covered by the City.

To City:

The production of street signs is expected to cost approximately \$110 per sign. There are approximately 31 signs affected. **Estimated cost ~\$4000.**

The City should cover the non-residential costs for businesses like Hilton Centre. **Estimated cost: \$16000**

Neill Street includes stamped names in the corner sidewalk stones. These could be replaced, so as to also improve accessibility by creating better ramps to street level but would add to the cost. The corners could be left as is as a reminder of the Street's historic name or even a new stamp added signifying the reconciliation work the City has done. **Estimated cost: \$0**

Further work to honour A.W. Neill's other contributions could include a cairn and plaque in the Josephine Street Cemetery commemorating his Bill that designated November 11th as Remembrance Day. A suitable plaque to explain and commemorate his work on Old Age Pensions could be installed at the Alberni Valley Museum or another location. Costs for these commemorations is unknown at this time. **Estimated cost: Unknown.**

Funding Opportunities:

Residents:

As the City may not be able to grant monies to individuals, this would be a good opportunity for fundraising to cover any costs of residents. A local community organization or individual could start a funding drive including perhaps a GoFundMe type internet initiative with any excess funds being donated to an appropriate Reconciliation or Immigration related charity. The City should investigate any interested groups or individuals that would be willing to take on this fundraising.

Non-Residents:

The City should budget an amount that would cover part or all of the costs associated with the Outreach Therapy facility's administrative costs for the change. A maximum of **\$16000** would seem appropriate.

City Costs:

As this initiative falls under Reconciliation work mandated by the TRC and the Government of Canada, every effort should be made to investigate granting opportunities from all levels of Government. Our Members of Parliament and of the Legislative Assembly should be able to advise the City on funding opportunities.

Some possible Granting sources include:

Inter-Action: Multiculturalism Funding Program

<http://canada.pch.gc.ca/eng/1469471946307>

The Canada 150 Program through Province of BC

<http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/grants?grantid=759>

UBCM: Community to Community Forum

<http://www.ubcm.ca/EN/main/funding/lgps/community-to-community-forum.html>

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