

ON TABLE
Regular Council
December 16, 2024
Item 3.1

Schedule 1 to the Minutes
of the December 16, 2024
Regular Council meeting.

New Westminster Community Advisory Assembly

Recommendations for
Council on Cultural
Observances

December 2024



Decision before Council

The following recommendations are presented for Council's consideration

1. That Council receive the recommendations from the Community Advisory Assembly for information
2. That Council direct staff to respond to the recommendations – including identifying resources required to further develop the Assembly's framework as outlined in the recommendations – identify next steps, and report back to the Assembly Members and Council in the first half of 2025.
3. That Council direct staff to prioritize making progress on the Assembly's recommendations in their 2025 workplans.

About the Community Advisory Assembly

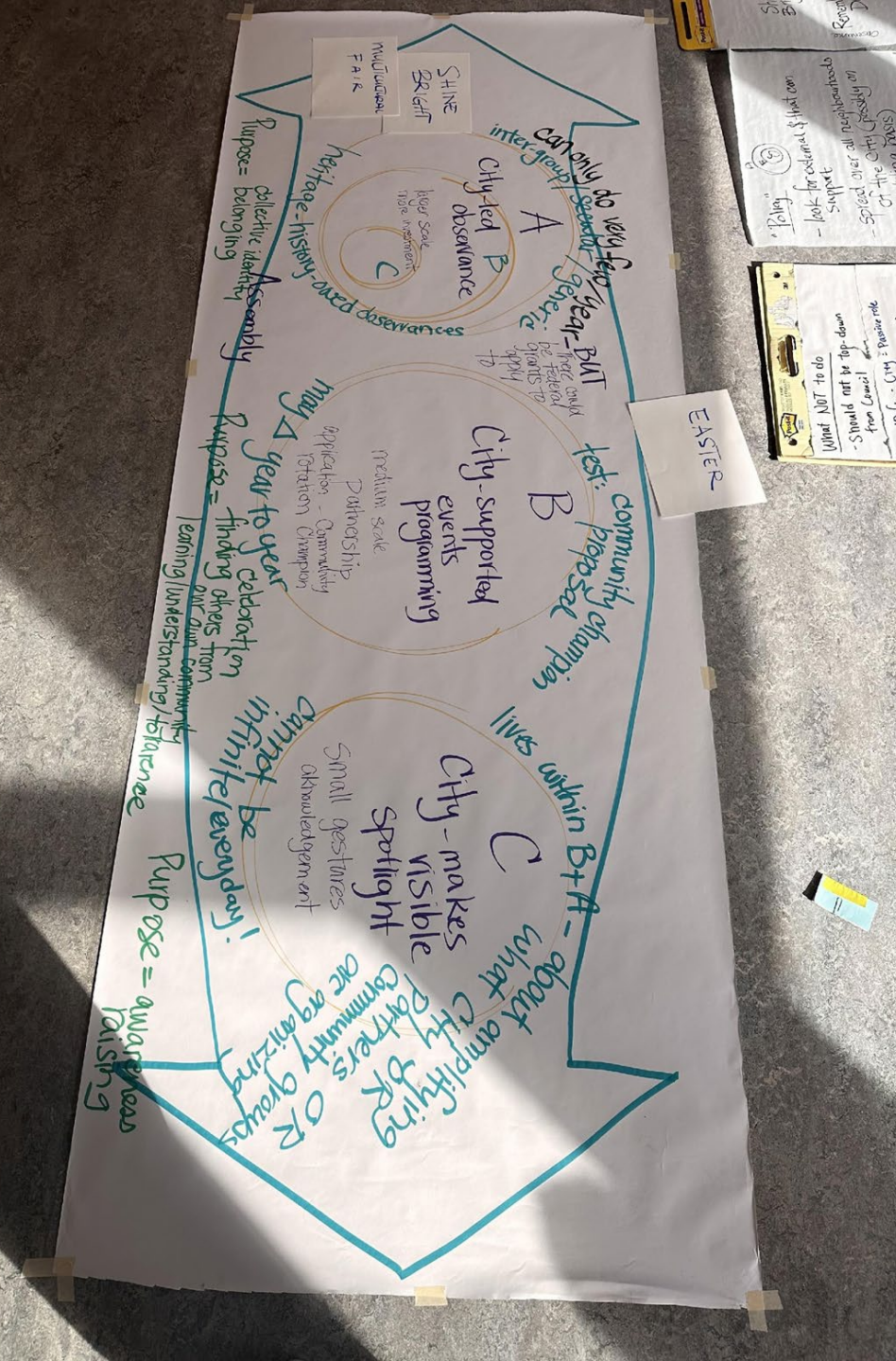
- 36 members, selected by lottery
- Membership mirrors the broad demographics of New Westminster
- Monthly meetings, externally facilitated
- Engage in dialogue and deliberation to develop recommendations for City staff and Council
- Quorum is 2/3, decisions made by consensus

Deliberation Process

September: Explored how cultural observances have been approached in New West, focusing on past and common practices of City Staff.

October: Small-group deliberations to develop draft recommendations

November: Refinement of recommendations and consensus process



Reaching Consensus

- Group deliberation to refine language of recommendation
- Vote on each recommendation
- Support of 75% of members in attendance constitutes consensus
- Percentage of support recorded



Defining Cultural Observances

A cultural observance is a practice or event that is based on the traditions, beliefs, and customs of a particular cultural community. Observances mark major occasions like festivals or celebrations, religious events, or days of remembrance. Their purpose is to respect legacies and cultural identities, build awareness and create opportunities for cultural exchange, bring people together in celebration, and create connection and belonging.

Current Practices

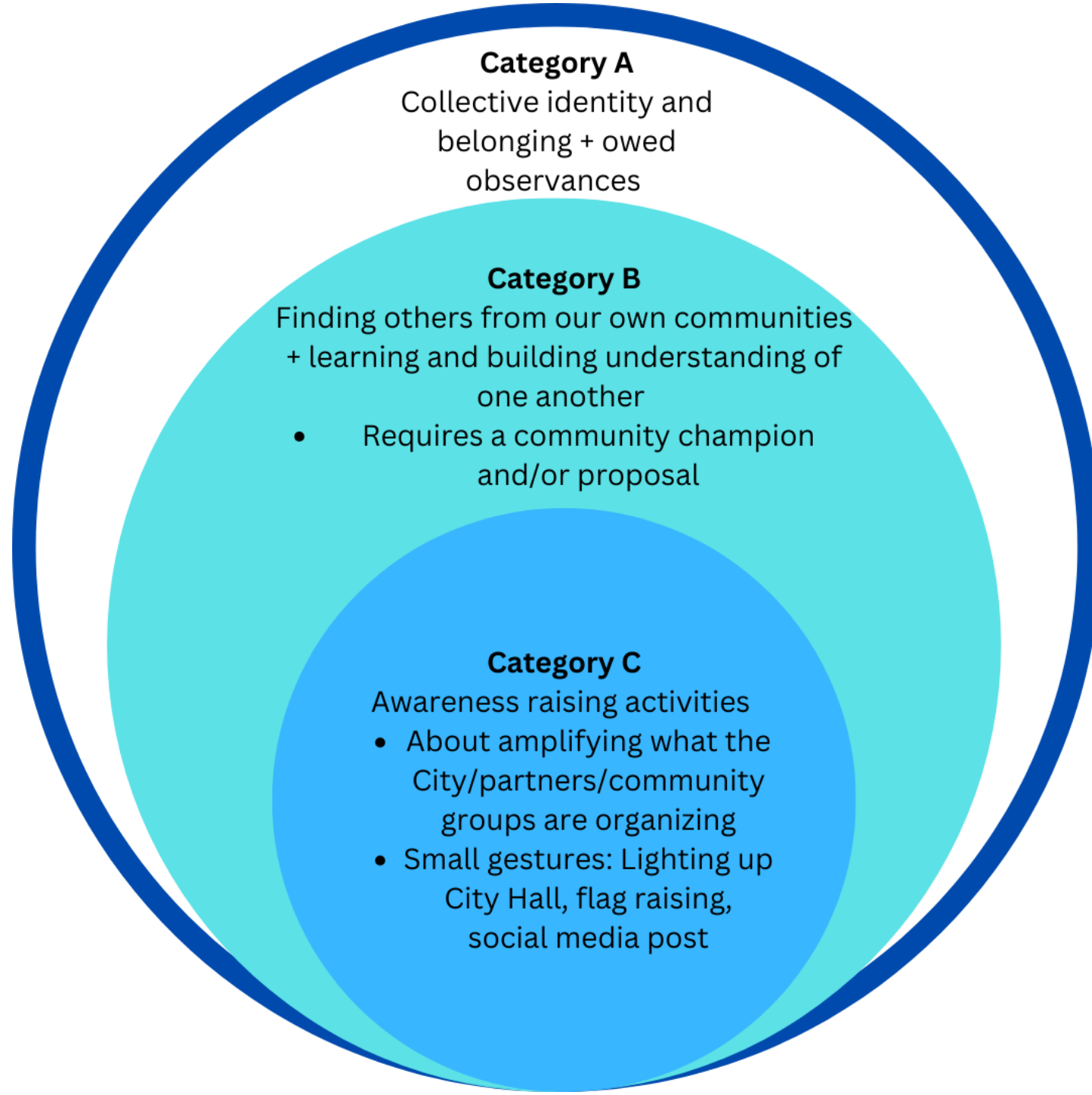
The City of New Westminster does not have an official list of observances that it recognizes, and there are no official policies in place to guide decision-making around which observances to mark and how. Currently, the City's practice of observances is largely driven by "what we have always done", as well as requests from community.

Cultural Observances Categories

The Assembly's dialogue surfaced a recommended framework for how the City can select and recognize cultural observances, organized in three categories:

1. Category A: City-led events that strengthen a collective identity
2. Category B: Community-led observances supported by the City
3. Category C: Awareness raising activities

These recommendations were supported by 96% (25 out of 26) of members who attended the November 21, Assembly meeting.





Category A: City-led events that strengthen a collective identity

Assembly Recommendations:

City-led events that strengthen a collective identity

The Assembly recommends that the City take the lead on a small set of observances that promote a shared community identity and bring people together across differences. At least half of the resources (funds and staff time) invested in observances should be allocated to Category A, which includes two recommended types of events:

- **Seasonal, intercultural celebrations** involving large-scale, public, festival-like events (e.g. Shine Bright in December, celebration of multiculturalism in July, nature reawakening festivities in April)
- **Owed observances**, marking legacies that need to remain visible (e.g. Truth and Reconciliation Day and/or National Indigenous Peoples Day, Remembrance Day)

Assembly Recommendations:

City-led events that strengthen a collective identity

Events in this category should follow these guidelines:

- **City-wide Inclusivity:** Ensure events are distributed across the neighborhoods, for example with a rotation schedule or multiple locations
- **Symbolic Neutrality:** For seasonal celebrations, transition away from using religious or culture-specific symbols, visuals or language in City-led activities, while welcoming communities participating in the events to bring their own flair. Owed observances may retain the use of culture-specific symbols.
- **Collaborative Engagement:** Actively invite multiple communities to co-create and participate in observances and celebrations through the support of community connectors who would act as liaisons between the City and community.

Assembly Recommendations:

City-led events that strengthen a collective identity

- **Resource Parity:** For owed observances, distribute resources across long-standing and new events, and whenever possible seek external funding resources to supplement City resources. In some cases, awareness-raising activities may replace a large event (e.g. Orange Shirt Day may be observed through lighting of City Hall, comments by the Mayor, and wearing of pins or orange shirts)
- **Staff Alignment:** Ensure consistent applications of these recommendations in the planning and implementation of all City-led activities



Category B: Community-led observances supported by the City

Assembly Recommendations:

Community-led observances supported by the City

The Assembly recommends the City establish a structure for communities to request support for significant cultural observances. About half of the City's resources (funds and staff time) for observances should go to Category B, with support including:

- Providing grants to communities to run their own events
- Supporting community-led special events with supplies, staff and volunteer support, permitting, street closures, awareness raising activities, etc.
- Developing responsive programming at City facilities

Assembly Recommendations:

Community-led observances supported by the City

Events in this category should follow these guidelines:

- **Transparency of Opportunities:** Ensure the application process (or processes) is clearly outlined on the City's website, with deadlines and eligibility criteria
- **Proactive Community Engagement:** Actively reach out to community groups and organizations, especially from historically underrepresented communities, to invite participation
- **Low Barrier Application:** Simplify the application process and accept proposals from formally incorporated or informally constituted organizations as well as individual members of the community (this may include City staff)
- **Community-based Adjudication:** Appoint a diverse group of community members to help adjudicate applications

Assembly Recommendations:

Community-led observances supported by the City

- **Clear Selection Criteria:** Use a system for evaluating proposed events on a points-based system based on criteria such as (but not limited to):
 - Historical or cultural significance of the observance
 - Scale of impact of the activities (includes broad community interest, and amplification of underheard voices)
 - Capacity to deliver and past performance of applicants (including adherence with guidelines)
 - Innovation in the form of the event or the partners brought together by the event
 - Filling gaps in programming calendar (for events in low-demand periods)

Assembly Recommendations:

Community-led observances supported by the City

- **Permanent infrastructure:** Explore investing in permanent infrastructure that is adaptable for multi-purpose use to reduce long-term costs and support recurring events
- **Continuous Improvement:** Track application histories to refine future criteria and improve funding



Category C: Awareness raising activities

Assembly Recommendations: *Awareness raising activities*

The City offers tools like social media, decorations, proclamations, City Hall lighting, flag raising, media projects, banners, and educational campaigns to highlight observances. The Assembly considers these “small gestures” that, while valuable, should complement rather than replace substantive actions that honor and connect communities.

Assembly Recommendations:

Awareness raising activities

Events in this category should follow these guidelines:

- **Supportive of City-led or Community-led activities:** Amplify Category A and B activities. The application process described under Category B may also allow for communities to request Category C activities as their sole activity (e.g. an application to light up City Hall only)
- **Online Calendar:** Ensure resources are allocated to improving the breadth and functionality of the City's calendar in the next website redevelopment process (for example, but not limited to, having the calendar available in multiple languages, allowing people to integrate the City calendar into their personal calendars, being able to sign up for email notifications, etc.)

Assembly Recommendations:

Awareness raising activities

- **Accessible Information:** Develop and promote accessible pathways for community members to know tools the City makes available, submit ideas for awareness-raising initiatives to the right body (e.g. to the Mayor's Office for proclamations) and ensure that when policies exist, they are clearly posted (e.g. the City's Flag policy)
- **Standardized Criteria:** Provide clear guideline and criteria for awareness-raising initiatives (possibly similar to those for Category B activities), ensuring consistency and transparency
- **Diverse Representation:** Given the relatively low cost of most awareness raising activities, make good use of them for raising awareness about the dates of significance important to communities that have small representation in New West



Questions