



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JAPANESE CANADIANS

VANDALISM AND RACIST GRAFFITI

Winnipeg, Manitoba – February 9, 2022

A pandemic of vandalism and racist graffiti is spreading across our nation. Symbols of hate appear at so-called peaceful demonstrations. Oh, Canada, be vigilant.

We empathize, identify, and stand with the Vancouver Chinese Canadian Cultural Centre and organizations and businesses in Vancouver's historic Chinatown as they struggle to keep their premises free from the violence of hate. A few blocks away, the Powell Street neighbourhood that was once a thriving community of Japanese Canadians, was decimated by racism in 1942.

Recall that in 1907 the Powell Street riots were instigated by the newly formed Vancouver Asiatic Exclusion League (AEL), modelled after its namesake that began in California and rapidly advanced north to Bellingham, Washington, 25 kilometers south of the Canadian border.

Less than a month after the Vancouver group was founded, its inaugural event attracted crowds estimated to be as high as 10,000 at Vancouver City Hall. Signs, speakers, and racial slurs promoted a white Canada and removal of all Asians. The crowds broke into mobs, rampaging through Chinatown and the Powell Street neighbourhood in two days of looting and violence. Thousands of dollars in damages were incurred.

Given this historical context, the Mayor of Vancouver wisely stated in advance of the convoy protest this past weekend:

“As the Mayor of a city with an over 95 per cent vaccination rate, my message to the convoy is this: Vancouver doesn’t want you here. Make your point and then go home.”

The mayor’s statement elicited a counter response from an American Senator on Twitter.

Oh, Canada, stand on guard.

The National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) was formed in 1947 to fight for the rights of 22,000 Japanese Canadians who were stripped of their rights and interned during and after the Second World War. The NAJC led talks for Redress, and in 1988, the Canadian government acknowledged and apologized for the injustices. The NAJC strives for equal rights and liberties for all, in particular racialized and Indigenous peoples.