

City of Richmond

Sister City Advisory Committee 2021 Year in Review

2021 Summary:

The Sister City Advisory Committee (SCAC) manages the relationships with three Sister Cities: Pierrefonds, Quebec (since 1967), Wakayama, Japan (since 1973), and Xiamen, China (since 2012); as well as one Friendship City: Qingdao, China (since 2008). Information from various SCAC activities and events are outlined in the following pages and can be found on the City's website at www.richmond.ca/sistercity.

2021 Committee Members:

Chair

Lisa MacNeil

Vice Chair, Pierrefonds

Allen Chan

Vice-Chair, Wakayama

Glenn Kishi

Vice-Chair, Xiamen

Helen Quan

Vice-Chair, Qingdao

Melissa Zhang

Members

Charan Gill

Joan Page

Karen Shigeno

Nicholas Sturtevant

Polly Tang

Sue Tian

Jenny Zhang

Victor Zhuo

Council Liaison

Councillor Linda McPhail (January to June)

Councillor Andy Hobbs (July to December)

School Board Liaison

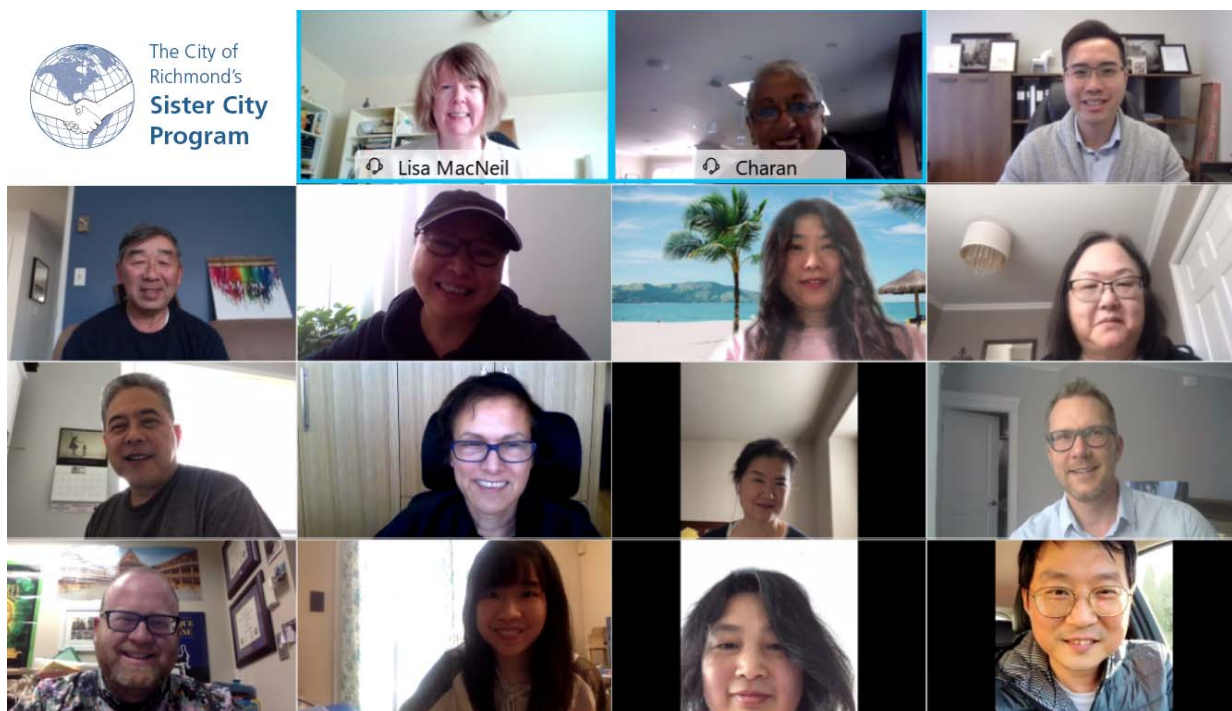
Ken Hamaguchi

Heather Larson (Alternate)

2021 Sister City Relationship Highlights

January

- Newly appointed SCAC members were introduced at the first meeting in January.
- The SCAC elected the Chair and Vice-Chairs for Pierrefonds, Wakayama, Xiamen, and Qingdao sub-committees and selected members to the following sub-committees:
 - Pierrefonds Sub-Committee;
 - Wakayama Sub-Committee;
 - Xiamen Sub-Committee; and
 - Qingdao Sub-Committee.



Left to Right: Lisa MacNeil (Chair), Charan Gill, Allen Chan, Glenn Kishi, Helen Quan, Jenny Zhang, Karen Shigeno, Ken Hamaguchi (School Board Liaison), Linda McPhail (Council Liaison), Melissa Zhang, Mike Romas (City Staff Liaison), Nicholas Sturtevant, Polly Tang, Sue Tian, Victor Zhuo

February

- The City of Richmond sent Chinese New Year greetings to Xiamen and Qingdao.



Chinese New Year Greeting to Xiamen and Qingdao

- In February 2021, the City of Pierrefonds reached out with an invitation for a book club called “Black Girls Gather”. This book club was created by black youth for black youth by the West Island Black Community Association, with support of the Library in Pierrefonds. While the SCAC was not successful connecting this group with a similar group in Richmond, this program exemplifies what the Sister City Program is about, making connections and finding organizations to support meaningful connection between Richmond and its relationships. You can learn more about this program here: <https://blackgirlsgather.wibca.org/>



Black Girls Gather Book Club

- The City of Richmond and City of Pierrefonds school boards partnered up under the Sister City Program to connect students in grade 1 and 2 as pen pals. The Pen Pal Initiative was well received and 21 students participated in the program.



Student Pen Pal Exchange – Mitchell Elementary School

- In early 2021, the Committee began planning and preparing for Richmond’s relationship milestone anniversaries with Xiamen, China (10 years) and Pierrefonds, Quebec (55 years), which will be celebrated in 2022.

March

- As the pandemic continued into 2021, the Richmond-Wakayama Student Exchange adapted to ensure the continuity of this long-standing program. In the spring of 2021, 90 students from Richmond and Wakayama connected on Zoom and shared presentations about school and life in their communities, played games, and held a question and answer session to learn more about themselves and their schools. The schools are looking to expand their Zoom connections in 2022 and hopefully students from Wakayama can travel to Richmond in the autumn.



Virtual Richmond-Wakayama Student Exchange Program *new pictures*

April

- The SCAC partnered with the organizers of the Cherry Blossom Festival and highlighted the historical connection between Richmond and Wakayama as Sister Cities through a blog post and video sent by the City of Wakayama. The full post can be found here: <https://richmondcherryblossomfest.ca/blog/wakayama-richmonds-sister-city-in-japan/>
- Building on the success of the virtual Richmond-Wakayama student exchange, from April to June in 2021, 60 students from Palmer Secondary, Steveston-London Secondary and Burnett Secondary schools participated in email exchanges with Wakayama City High School. The exchange was held in both English and Japanese, allowing over 120 students to develop their language skills and establish new international friendships.

June

- In June 2021, the SCAC released their second bookmark collection titled “Sharing Children’s Artwork Bookmark Collection”. A total of 45 pieces of artwork were submitted by children in Wakayama, Japan and Qingdao, China. These bookmarks were distributed to local high school libraries, the Richmond Public Library and participatory schools in Wakayama and Qingdao. When possible, the bookmarks will also be used as gifts for delegations and will be distributed at local community events to increase the visibility of Richmond’s Sister City Program.



2021 Bookmark Series – Wakayama (left) and Qingdao (right) Student Art

- In June 2021, the SCAC partnered with Richmond and Pierrefonds schools to find participants in a poetry/art Pen Pal exchange, using the black out poetry style, in French for teenage girls. Using pages of an existing text, black out poets isolate then piece together single words or short phrases to create lyrical masterpieces. Overall, there were approximately 40 participants in this art exchange program from Pierrefonds and Richmond.
- In June 2021, following feedback from the public, the SCAC began a full redesign of the www.richmond/sistercity webpage to provide consistency in information on each city and to accurately reflect the impact of Sister City Program and Richmond’s established Sister City relationships to the community. The redesigned webpage will be debuted in 2022.
- In June 2021, the SCAC had conversations with Pierrefonds and Qingdao on how to bring together hockey coaches in a virtual “Coaches Corner”. Children’s hockey clubs have expressed an interest in sharing ice hockey tips through online videos or reading/watching recommendations. Due to local pandemic guidelines, Richmond Hockey Club was unable to action this initiative.

July

- On July 12, 2021, the SCAC and the Richmond Public Library partnered for the third annual “One Book, Four Cities” book club. This event featured residents from Richmond, Wakayama, Xiamen and Qingdao, who read “In the Skin of a Lion” by Michael Ondaatje. Residents participated in a number of events throughout the summer including an online discussion forum, a Q & A with the author, and a social media book search. This was also the first time Wakayama was involved in this annual event. At the conclusion of the book club, the books were donated to local high schools in Richmond.



One Book, Four Cities Book Club Author Chat with Michael Ondaatje Web Banner

- Throughout the duration of the “One Book, Four Cities” book club the Richmond Public Library hosted a Book Club Search. Residents in Richmond were provided clues on social media and the first to find the hidden book received a copy of “In the Skin of a Lion” by Michael Ondaatje. Two of the six clues highlighted Richmond’s sister city relationships with Pierrefonds and Wakayama.



Steveston Post Office Cherry Blossoms and Minoru Chapel Pierrefonds Garden

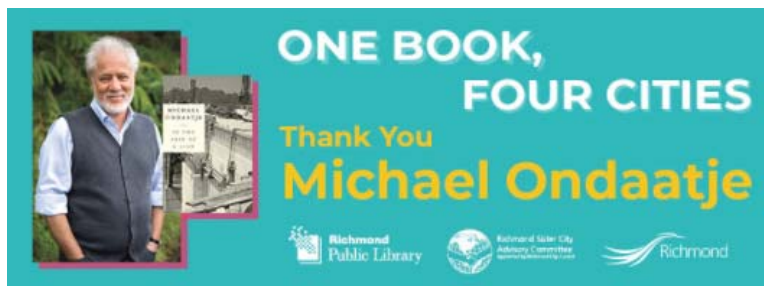
- On July 16, 2021, anniversary milestone for the Richmond-Wakayama relationship was featured on the City’s social media pages. This highlights the sustained efforts made by the SCAC to increase the program’s visibility and reach to the residents of Richmond.



Social Media Post on the City’s Twitter account

August

- On August 19, 2021, Michael Ondaatje, author of “In the Skin of a Lion”, participated in a Zoom event to facilitate a discussion with book club readers from around the world. This event was hosted by the Richmond Public Library, and featured participants in Wakayama, Japan and Qingdao and Xiamen, China.



Michael Ondaatje’s virtual author chat for “In the Skin of a Lion”

- As part of Council’s direction to include sustainability and climate knowledge exchanges into the Sister City Program, staff initiated a pilot information exchange with the City of Pierrefonds and shared Richmond’s Climate Action Plan as part of this program.

September

- In September 2021, the City of Wakayama published a book titled “We are Friends”. The intent of this publication is to introduce Richmond and our sister city relationships to the residents of Wakayama. The publication featured information about Richmond, shared imagery of Richmond to Wakayama residents and highlighted important activities and milestones in the Richmond-Wakayama Relationship.



Publication cover of “We are Friends”

- Running from September 8 to October 30, 2021, the City of Xiamen launched a photo exhibition titled “Travel Photography”. The Exhibition displayed 200 photos from 25 foreign cities to showcase how people unite against COVID-19 and work to restore normality in life. The display was located at the Xiamen Museum; Xiamen Library; and Children’s Palace and featured photos from the Richmond community.



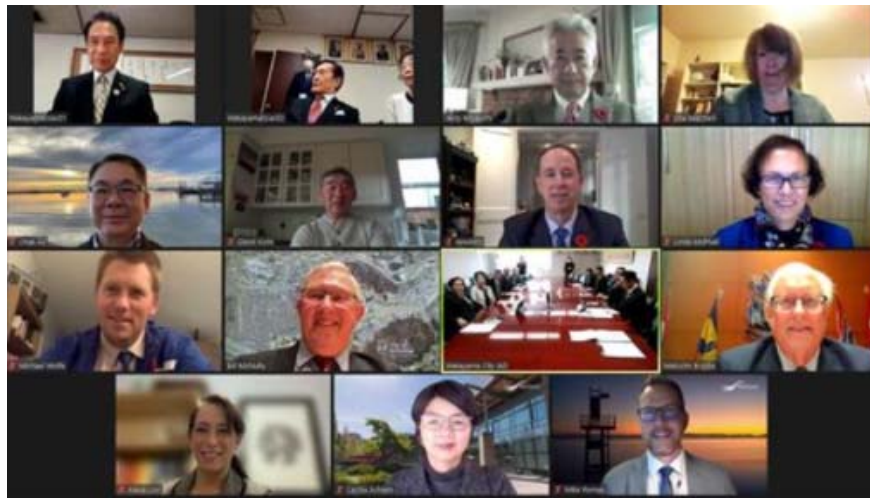
Xiamen Sister City Photo Exhibition 2021

October

- In partnership with the Richmond School Board, the SCAC initiated the 2021-2022 school year pen pal program. Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, virtual activities such as pen pal relationships became a popular way of interacting with youth in Richmond’s Sister City relationships. Schools in Wakayama and Pierrefonds have been connected with schools in Richmond. To help promote the Sister City program in schools, the Committee created a postcard, which shares images of iconic Richmond scenery.
- The SCAC met with French immersion program school administrators to promote Sister City Program and opportunities to collaborate with schools in Pierrefonds.

November

- On November 4, 2021, the City of Richmond and the City of Wakayama met virtually to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU highlights the Sister City commitment to actively promote education, cultural, artistic, tourism and economic exchange between both cities.



Virtual Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony – November 4, 2021

Richmond Participants

Mayor Malcolm Brodie
 Councillor Chak Au
 Councillor Andy Hobbs
 Councilor Alexa Loo
 Councillor Bill McNulty
 Councillor Linda McPhail
 Councillor. Michael Wolfe
 Ms. Cecilia Achaim
 Mr. Mike Romas
 Ms. Lisa MacNeil
 Mr. Glenn Kishi
 Mr. Jerold Takayoshi Miyauchi

Wakayama Participants

Mayor Masahiro Obana
 Councillor Maszumi Yoshimoto
 Dr. Nobutada Iwahashi
 Mr. Kouzou Shima
 Mr. Yoshiko Kitagawa
 Mr. Sakuji Togano
 Mr. Hideaki Sogou
 Mr. Shigo Miyata
 Ms. Mayumi Iwasaki
 Mr. Takaki Inagaki
 Ms. Shirley Zhang

- On November 5, 2021, the members of the SCAC participated on a virtual information exchange with sister city representatives around the globe. As a result of this meeting, sister city representatives have agreed to meet regularly to share best practices and activity ideas that show the value of a sister city relationship in our communities.
- On November 24, 2021, SCAC members met virtually with Wakayama’s Sister City Affiliation Committee to discuss the implementation of the newly signed MOU document and to prepare for the Richmond-Wakayama 50th milestone anniversary celebration in 2023.

December

- In December 2021, the Committee received a request from Xiamen to participate in the Xiamen International Youth Friendship Concert, which celebrates friendship and the dreams shared among children with international cities around the world. The Richmond Youth Honour Choir participated in the televised program and sang their original song “The Heart of Beautiful BC”. The full video can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaBTIJKf2A>



Richmond Youth Honour Choir singing the Heart of Beautiful BC

- The SCAC had its final meeting where members scored each of the Sister/Friendship cities participation over the past year. All cities achieved a highly engaged score on the Sister City Program’s annual relationship scorecard.