

Historical Discrimination of South Asian Canadians

Early Engagement Findings: Shape Your City Survey
and Cultural Mapping Overview

Cultural Redress Team
October 2025



Land acknowledgement

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷə́y̓ əm (Musqueam), Skwx̱ wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



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Courtesy of City of Vancouver Archives, CVA 677-585
View of the 400 block Granville Street from West Hastings Street
Photographer: Philip T. Timms, c.a. 1908

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Acknowledgement

City staff would like to thank everyone who took the time to contribute to this important and sensitive engagement. We are deeply grateful to those who shared personal stories and experiences. Every focus group, survey, conversation, and map pin enriched the process and will help shape the future of this work.

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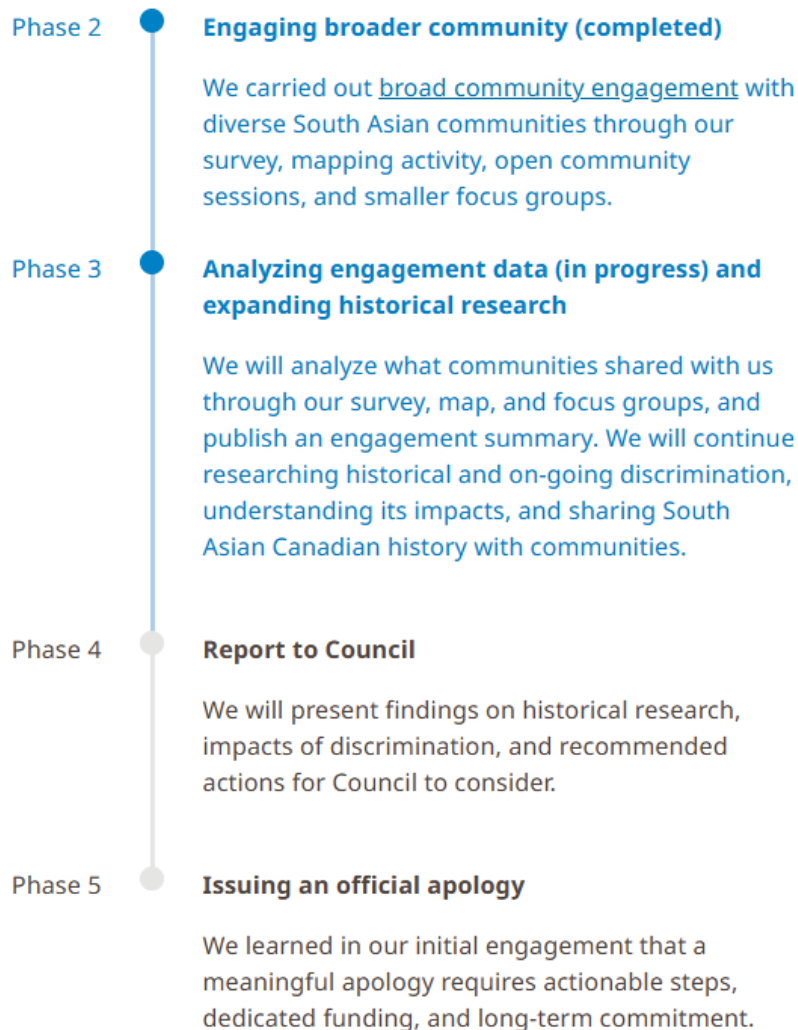
About

Staff engaged with South Asian Canadian communities between October 2024 and March 2025 to learn more about the impacts of current and historical discrimination in Vancouver, important cultural asset, and potential opportunities for cultural redress*. Input gathered will help inform future recommendations to Council.

This work was driven by [an Interim Report](#) endorsed by [Vancouver City Council \(Council\) on July 5, 2022](#) (Phase 1 of the project) to acknowledge and address the historical discrimination and ongoing racism against people of South Asian Canadian descent.

This summary report is an early insights report of the [Shape Your City](#) online engagement. It does not include any written responses and is not extensive. An in-depth summary of the Shape Your City survey results, analysis of additional in-person engagement sessions (focus groups, open houses, and public pop-ups) conducted as part of this project will be released after data analysis is complete.

Upcoming Project Phases



**Note: Cultural redress refers to recognizing and addressing the harms of systemic exclusion and discrimination or historic wrong experienced by cultural communities from the actions, policies or programs of the City of Vancouver.*

About (continued)

Between October 2024 and March 2025, the City of Vancouver engaged with South Asian Canadians on:



Historic discrimination
in Vancouver



Experiences of
ongoing racism

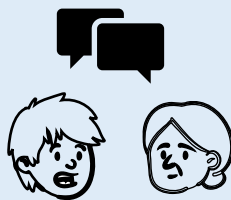


Identifying cultural
redress actions

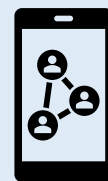
We reached people through:



2 Open Houses
3 Pop-up Booths
6 Focus Groups



South Vancouver
Neighbourhood House:
Youth connecting
with seniors



Media Interviews
(Radio/TV), Social
Media Ads & Email
Newsletters

We received:



706 Survey responses:
656 Online
50 Paper



776 Map pins:
187 Online
589 In-person

All our project information
was available on
ShapeYourCity.ca/SAC
in English, Punjabi, Hindi,
and Urdu.

Engagement Approach

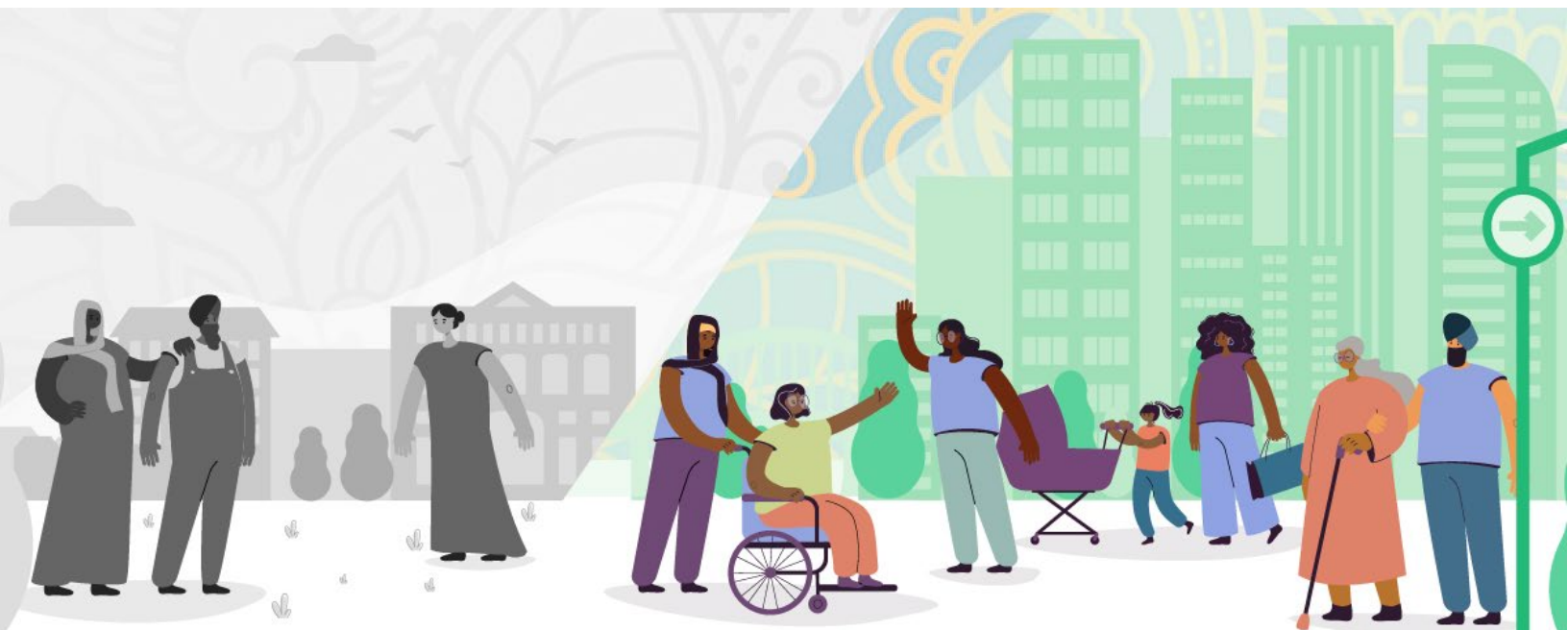
Shape Your City Website

Community engagement was launched through a [Shape Your City website](#) in October 2024 with two main components:

- **Survey Questionnaire:** A detailed survey focused on historical discrimination and ongoing impacts, community input and priorities on potential cultural redress actions, strategies to address incidents of discrimination and racism, and perspectives on South Asian Canadian commemoration.
- **Cultural Asset Mapping Tool:** Communities provided input towards a cultural asset map of past and present South Asian Canadian areas and spaces of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The Shape Your City website was promoted on social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and X, and staff participated in over 15 local media interviews.

The survey and map were translated and made available online in English, Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu languages.



In-Person Events

Staff engaged South Asian Canadian communities in-person through several focus groups, open houses, and pop-up events.

Participants were provided in-person or on-line opportunities to fill out the survey, complete the mapping activity, and offer direct feedback to the project team. Information shared during informal personal discussions and group activities were documented by staff. Staff will release a summary of the in-person sessions in a detailed engagement report after data analysis is complete.

The following events were held in-person:

- **Six Focus Groups:** Each focus group aimed to meaningfully engage with various diverse groups within South Asian Canadian communities. Each focus group included facilitated large and small group discussions as well as survey and mapping activities.
- **Two Open Houses:** Well-advertised open house events provided attendees opportunities to learn about the purpose of the engagement, structured opportunities to submit post-it comments, survey responses and mapping activities.
- **Three Pop-Up Booths:** Pop-ups were conducted at locations where high South Asian Canadian attendance was anticipated, including community events and social club activities for South Asian Canadian seniors. City staff provided information about the engagement process and attendees could participate in survey and mapping activities.



Photographer: Marco Sotres
HDSA Engagement - Diwali
2024

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House Partnership

In partnership with South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH), City staff provided South Asian Canadian seniors with survey and mapping support through a youth-to-senior pairing program. Youth participants recruited by SVNH were responsible for meeting one-to-one with seniors from South Asian Canadian communities who may have difficulty accessing online, computer-based tools or have language and writing barriers.

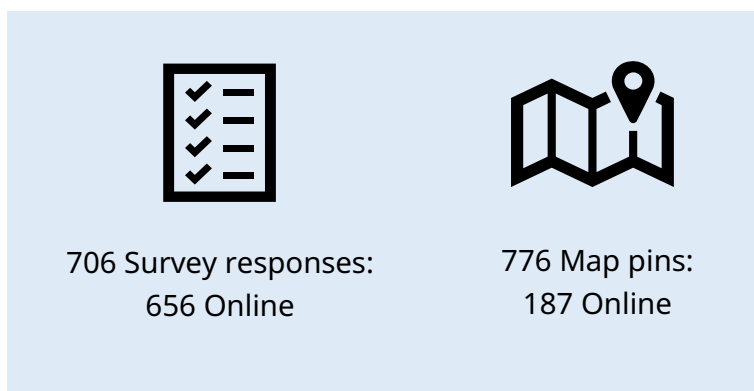
As part of this partnership, we gathered 58 survey entries from South Asian Canadian seniors.



Early Survey and Mapping Results: What We Heard

Note: Open ended questions will be analyzed and included in the detailed engagement summary and are not included in this summary.

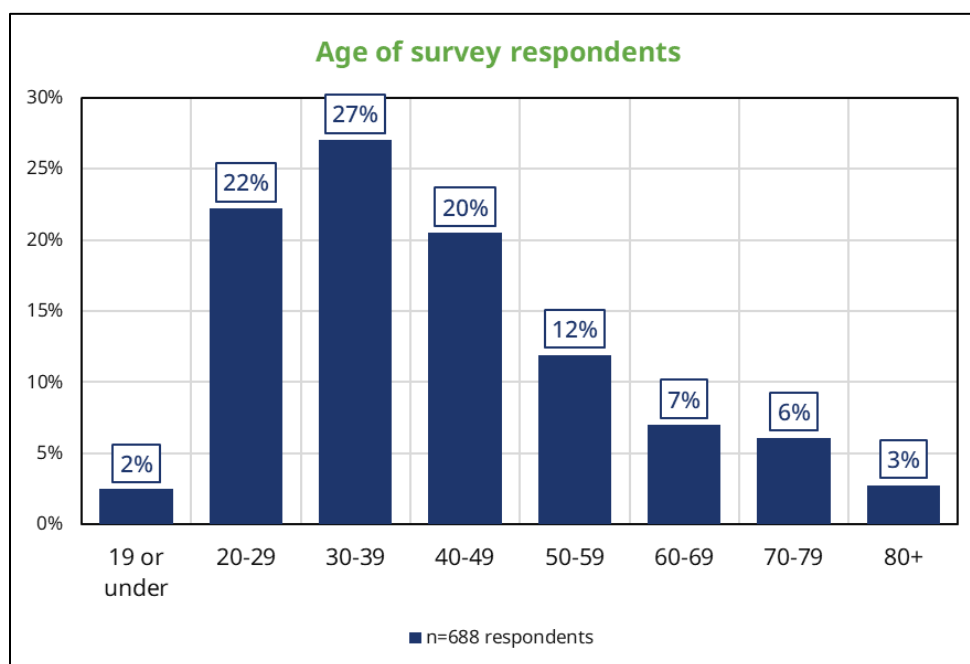
Who We Heard From

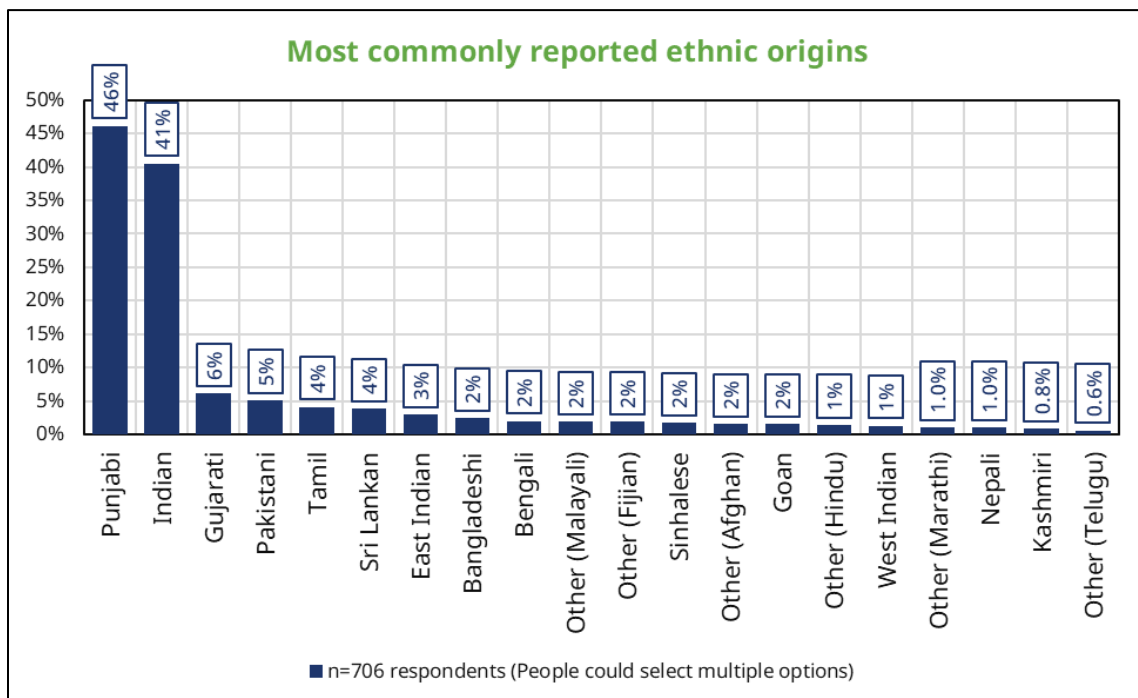
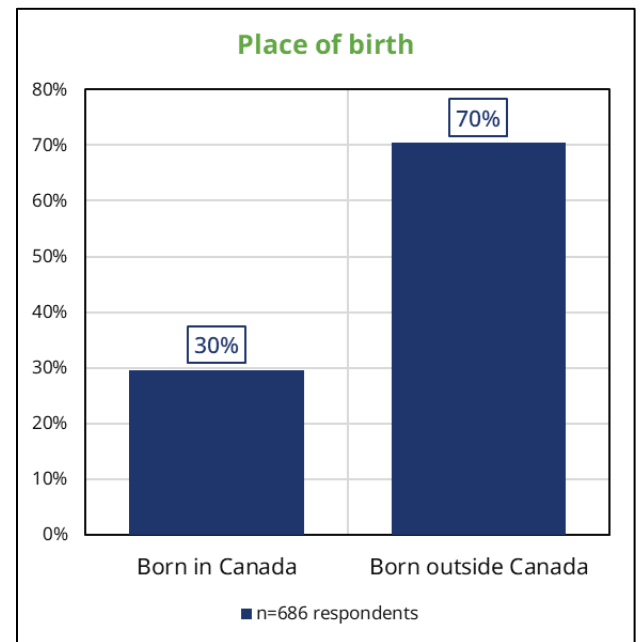
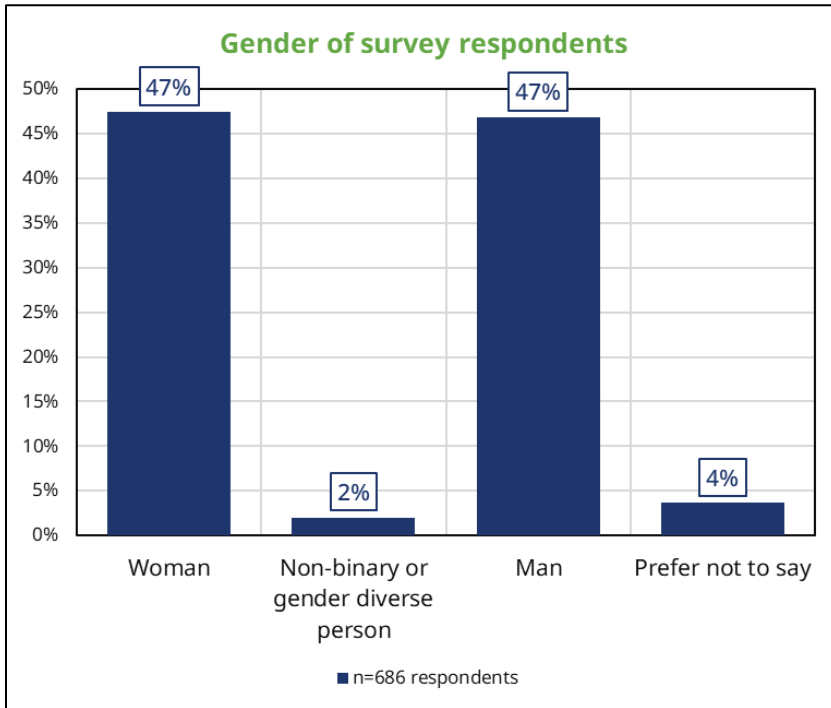


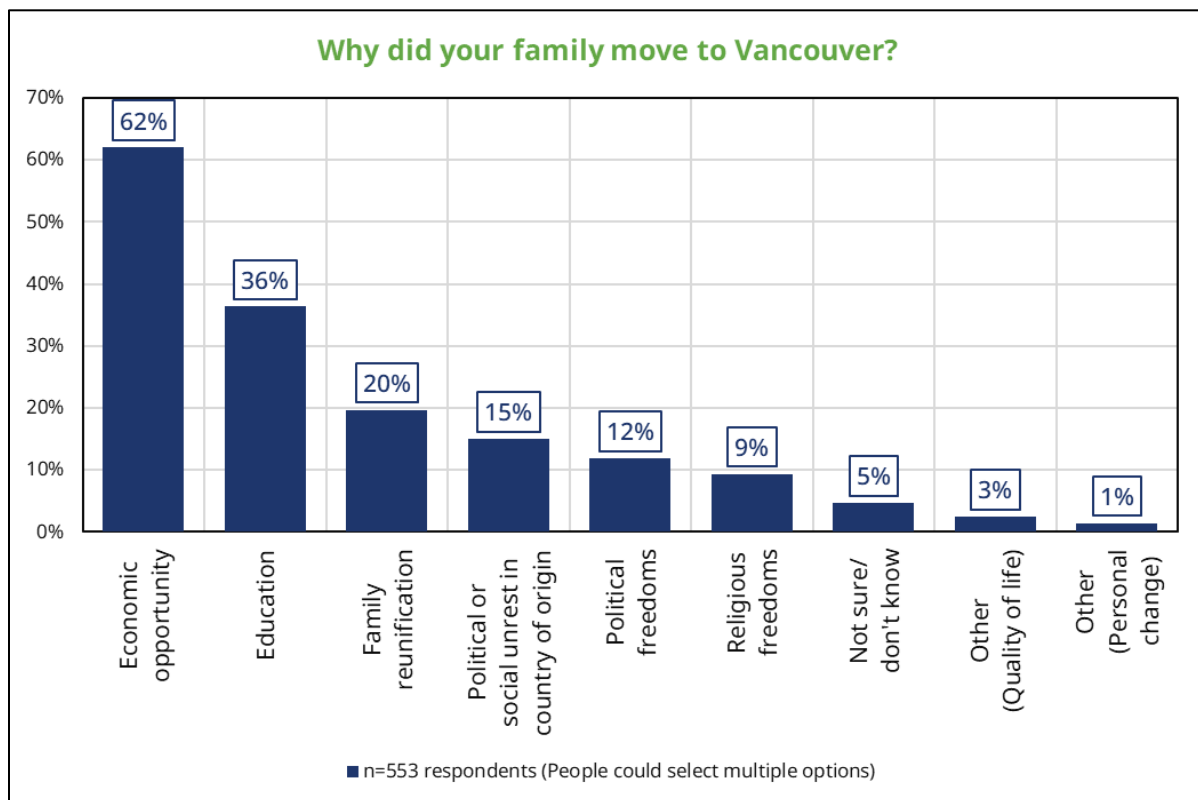
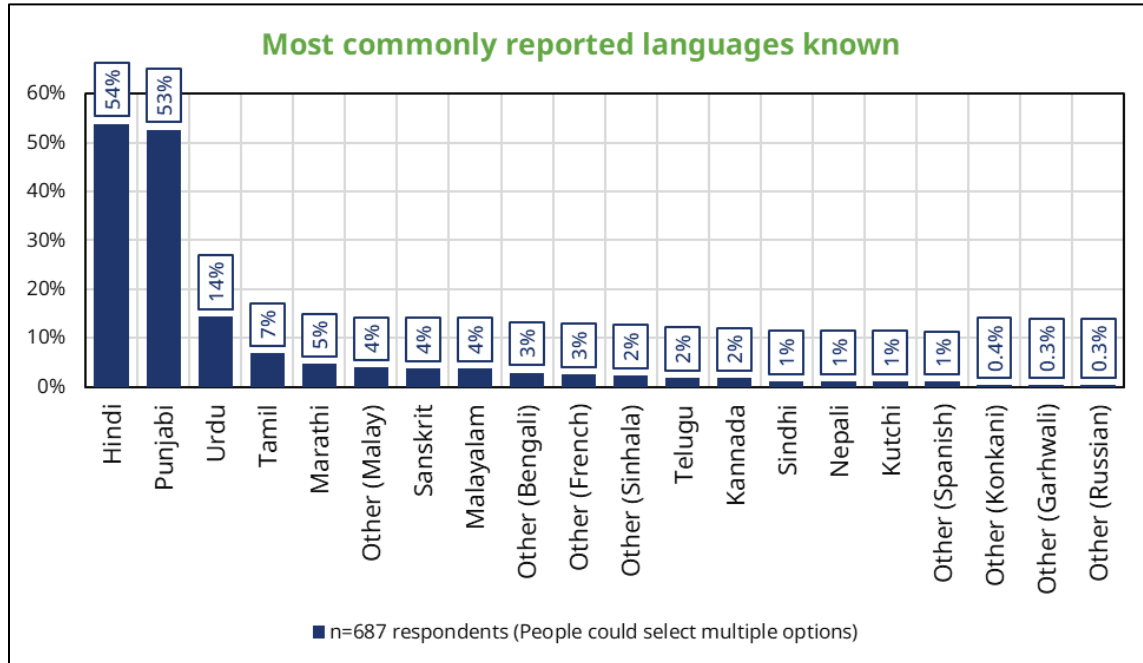
Staff received 706 survey responses and 776 mapping pins through the Shape Your City website, including in-person paper surveys and maps that were transcribed.

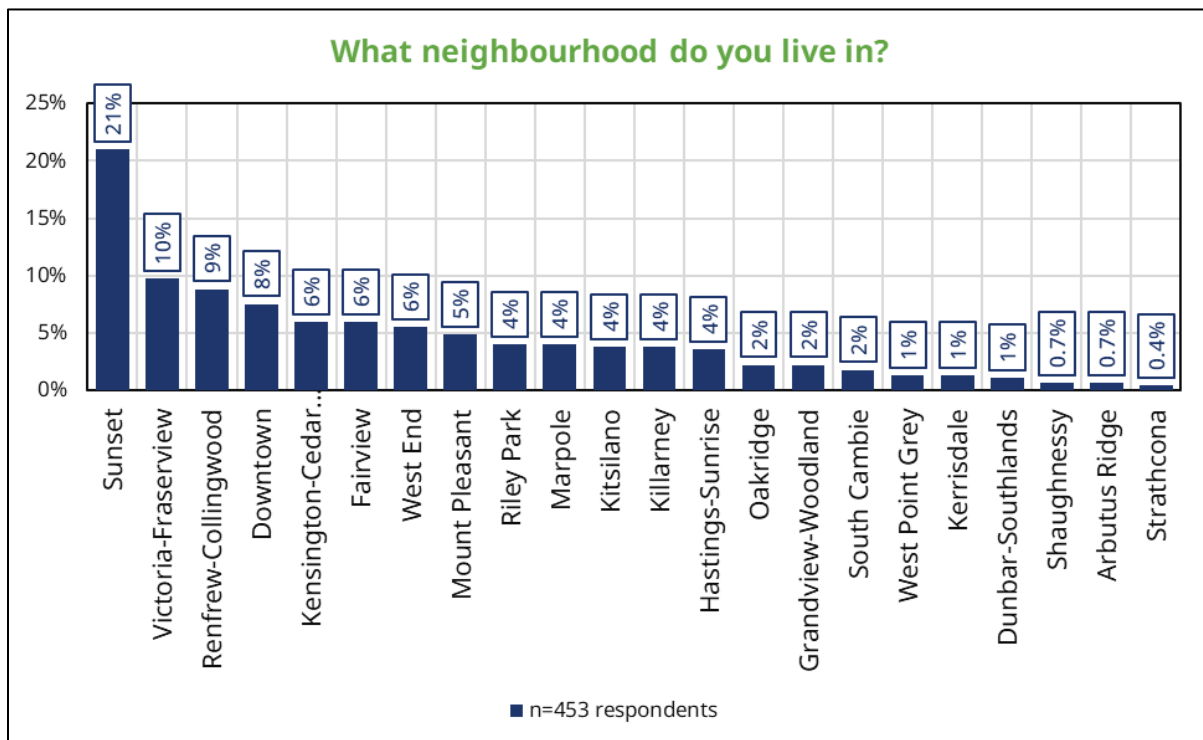
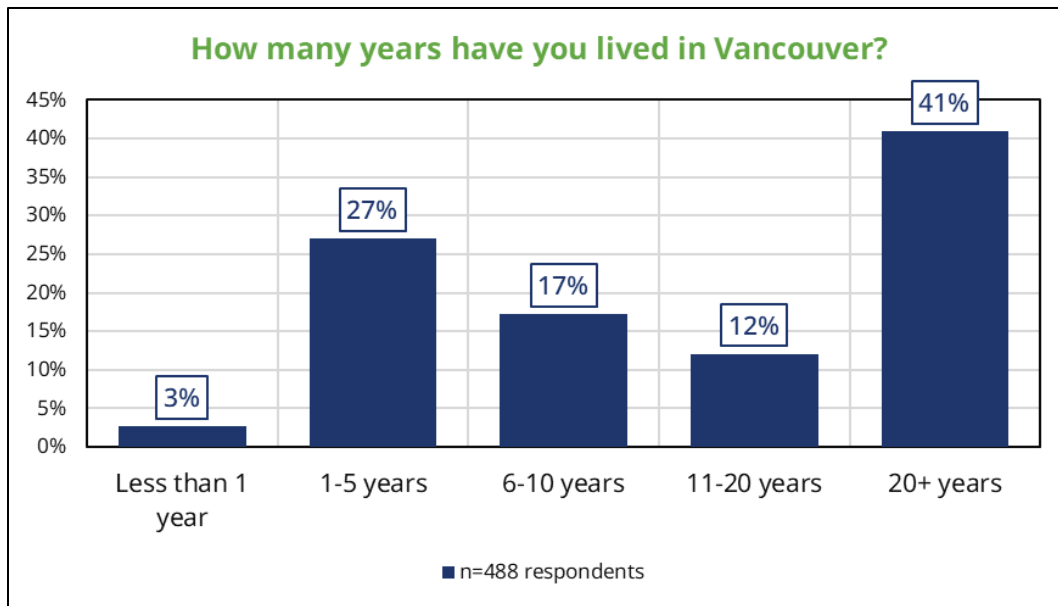
Below are graphs of our respondent demographics including their: age, gender, place of birth, ethnic origins, languages known, reason for migration, length of time as a resident of Vancouver, and neighbourhood they reside in.

All questions were optional, and each question has a different respondent total. More information and analysis of this data will be released in a future report.











What We Heard: Early Insights

Historical Discrimination

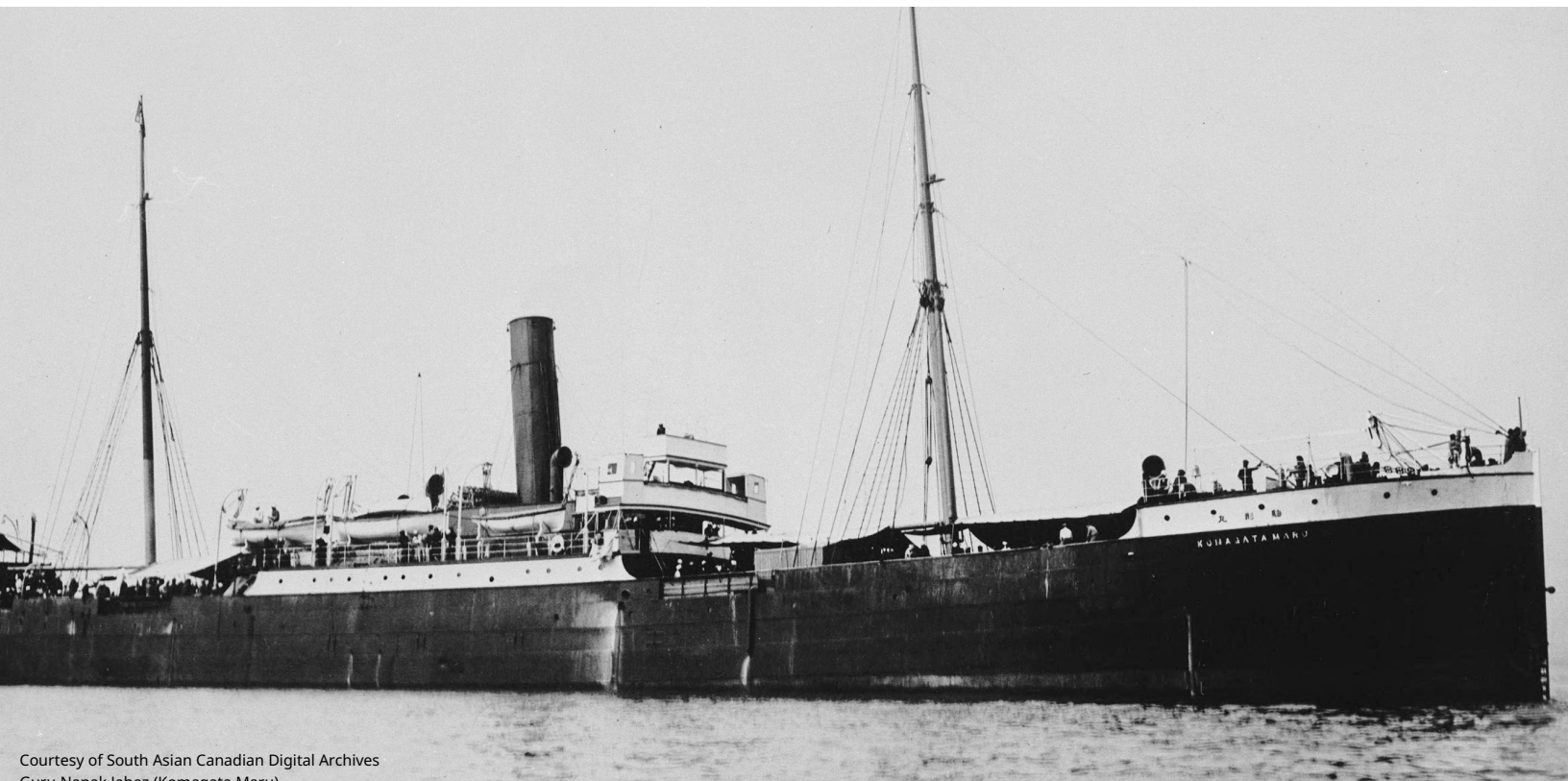
The survey asked respondents,

Is there a current or historical incident of South Asian or South Asian Canadian discrimination that directly involves or involved the City of Vancouver? This could include City actions, policies, or decisions.

The response was an open text format, allowing respondents to write in details and descriptions. A total of 265 respondents completed this question and staff are in the process of analyzing the responses. Reported incidents will inform future historical research that will highlight past harms and discrimination by the City of Vancouver against people of South Asian Canadian descent. Current incidents will be shared anonymously with relevant City departments and will help guide recommendations and actions for cultural redress.

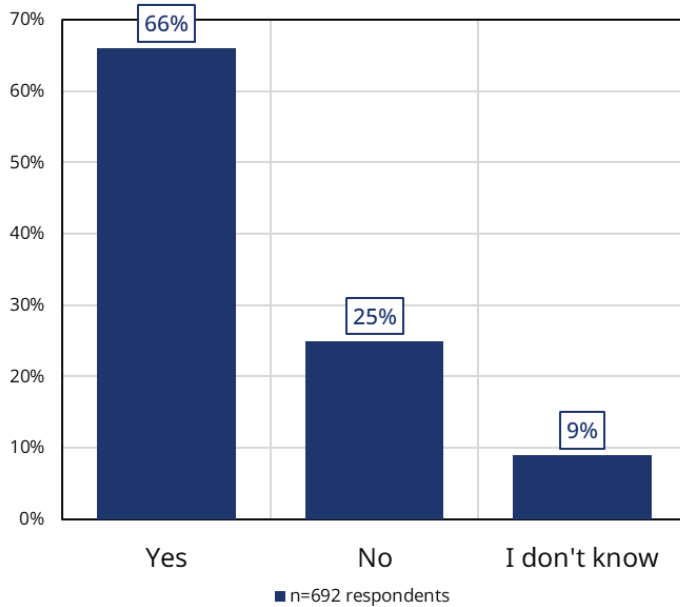
Current Discrimination

The survey asked respondents three questions to gather input on whether South Asian Canadians are experiencing racist incidents today, if they are reporting those incidents, and how culturally safe they feel in Vancouver. See results on page 15 below.

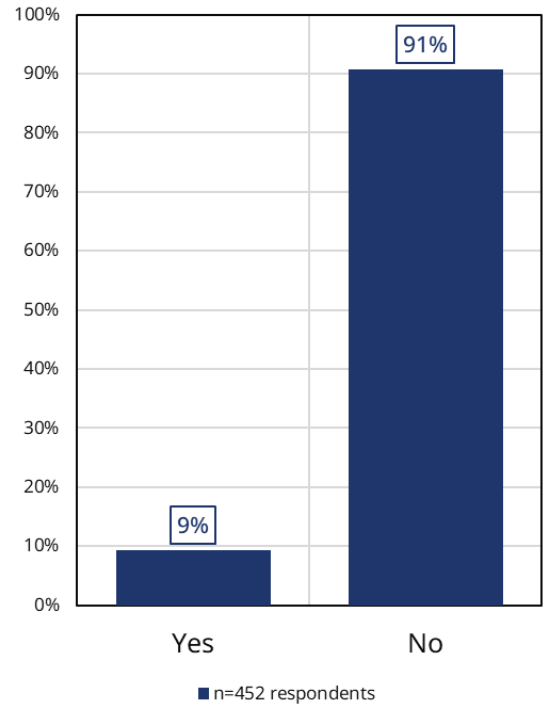


Courtesy of South Asian Canadian Digital Archives
Guru Nanak Jahaz (Komagata Maru)
1914

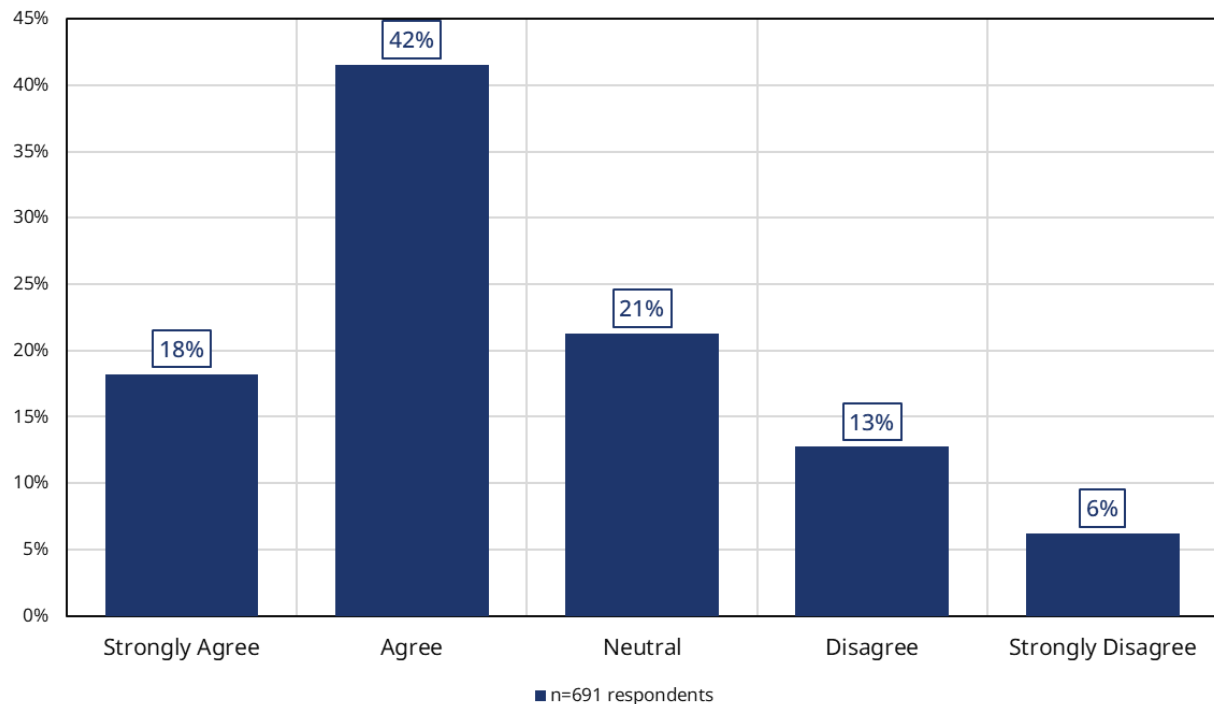
Have you witnessed or experienced racist incidents in Vancouver that were directed at South Asians/South Asian Canadians ?



Did you report it?

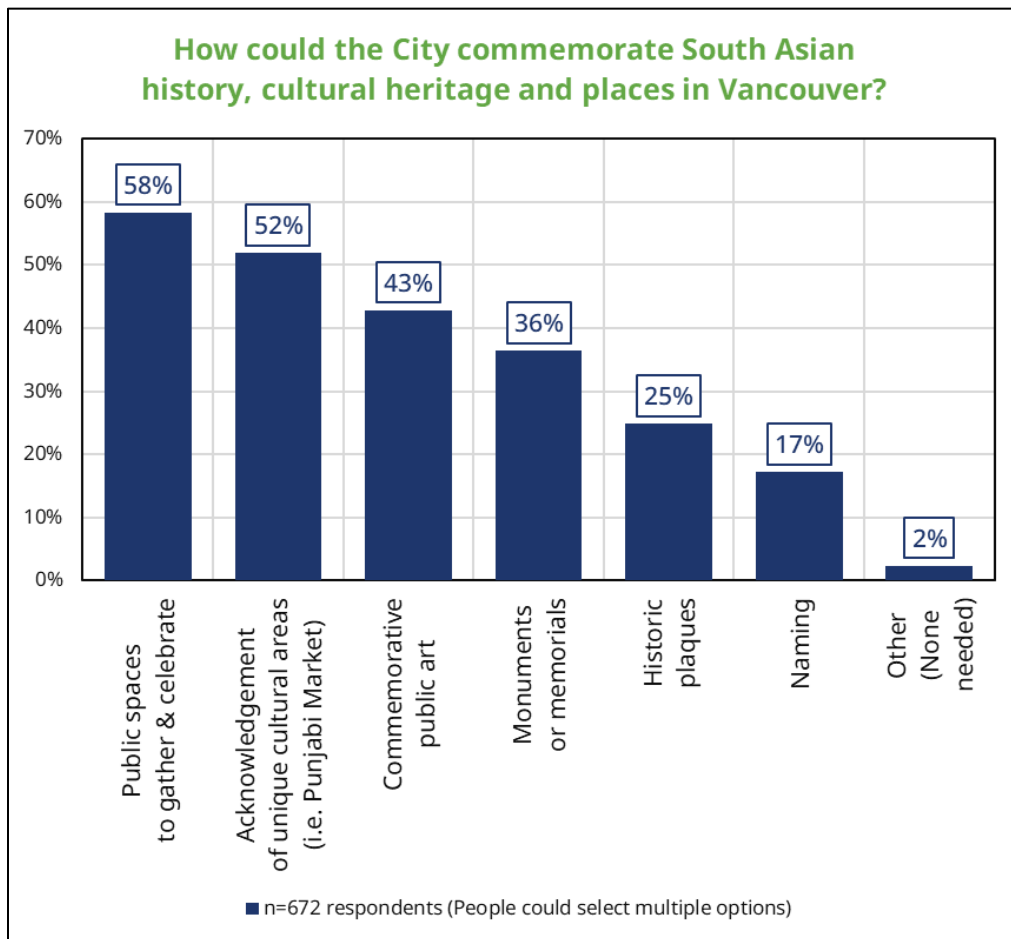


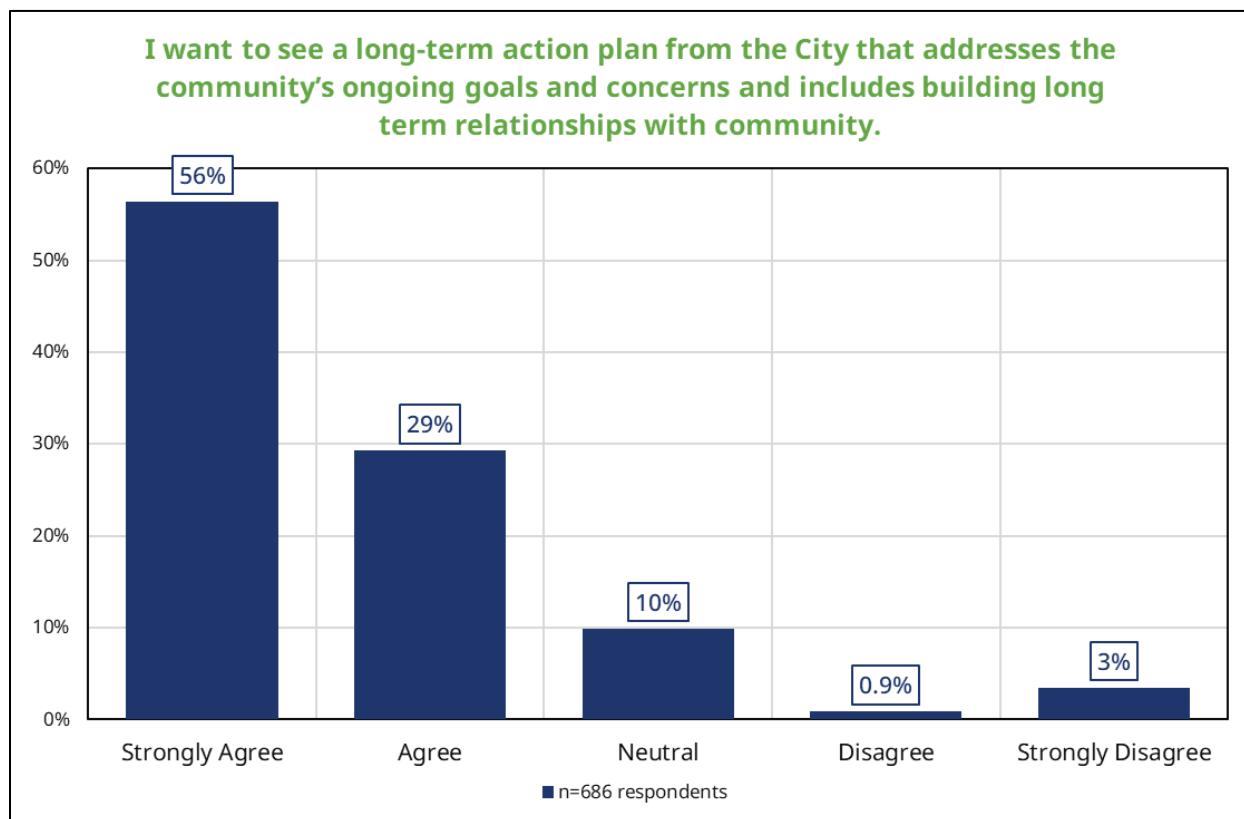
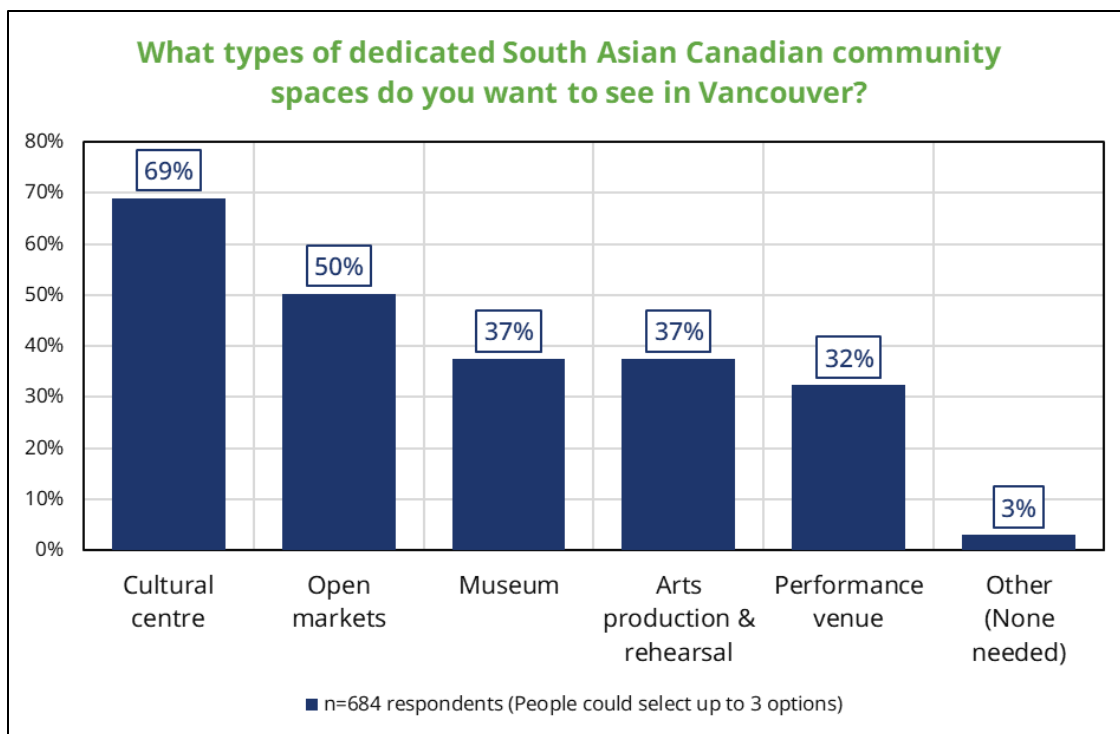
I feel safe expressing my cultural identity in Vancouver.



Cultural Redress

A section of the survey explored opportunities for cultural redress, and asked respondents to prioritize, rank or share their own suggestions. The questions were based on feedback we heard in the first phase of this project, and recommendations from the 2022 [Interim Council Report](#) that required additional community input. Below are the results involving commemoration, community spaces, and the creation of a long-term action plan questions.





Mapping

Through Shape Your City and in-person engagement sessions, 776 mapping pins were collected. Mapping data will help guide future area planning, rezonings, development, and the protection, promotion, and commemoration of South Asian Canadian intangible and tangible cultural heritage. Respondents were asked to indicate if a location existed only in the past or still exists in the present, and to fit their pin into one of ten categories. Below is a description of the pin categories followed by maps of the pins, each image with a different layer of pin concentrations (present and past, past only, and present only).

Pin Category	
	Restaurants, cafes, and other food services
	Grocery stores and stalls
	Social practices and events
	Cultural learning & practicing space, arts and crafts
	Retail shops and professional services
	Commemorative monuments, plaques, public art, murals, & named places
	Religious practice
	Parks, plazas, walking paths, open spaces
	Community services including non-profits
	Special/other

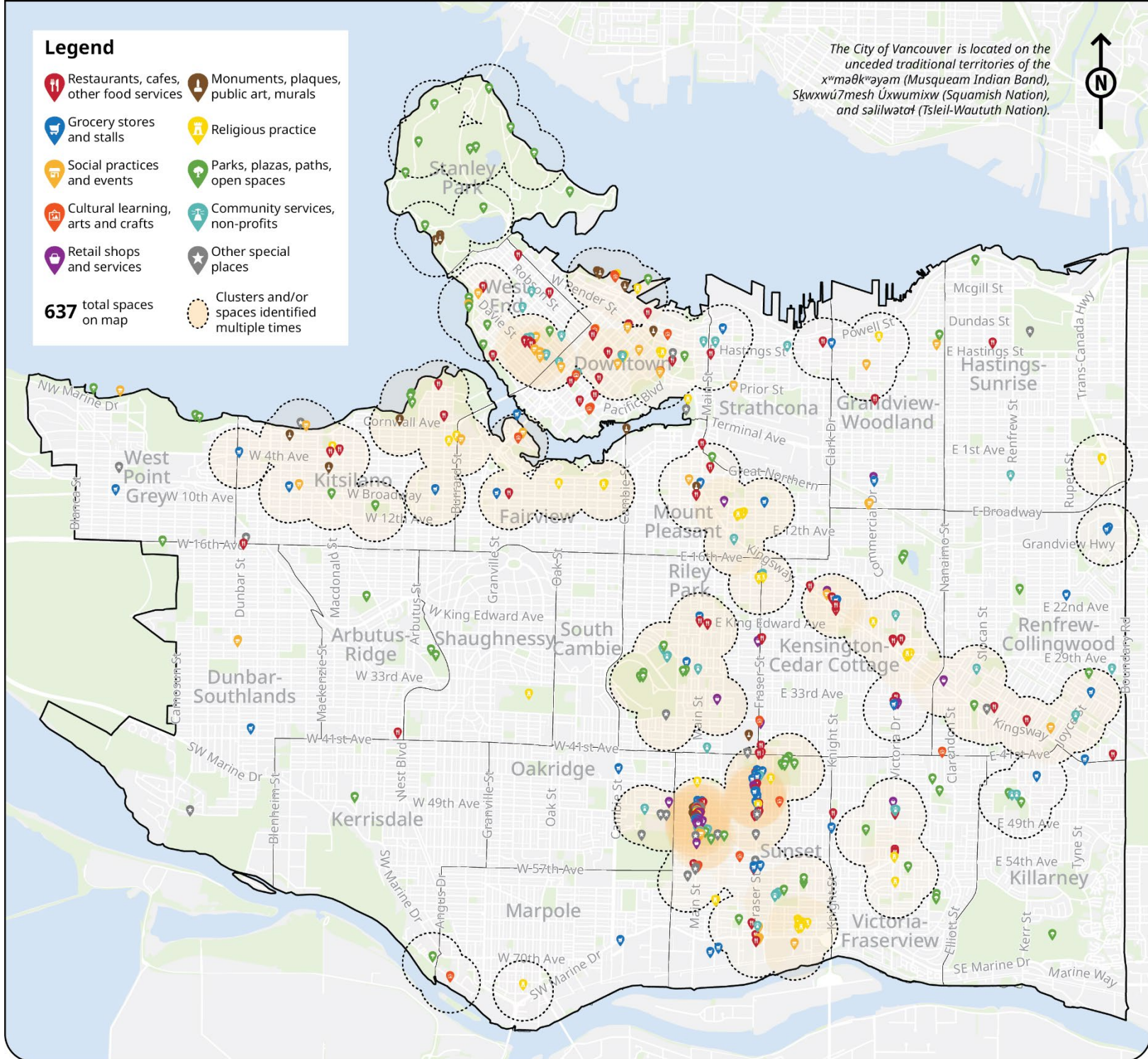
South Asian Canadian Cultural Spaces Mapping

All locations, present and past, identified from in-person and online engagement

Legend

-  Restaurants, cafes, other food services
 -  Monuments, plaques, public art, murals
 -  Grocery stores and stalls
 -  Religious practice
 -  Social practices and events
 -  Parks, plazas, paths, open spaces
 -  Cultural learning, arts and crafts
 -  Community services, non-profits
 -  Retail shops and services
 -  Other special places
 -  Clusters and/or spaces identified multiple times
- 637** total spaces on map

The City of Vancouver is located on the unceded traditional territories of the x'məθk'wəyəm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and salilwəṭ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).



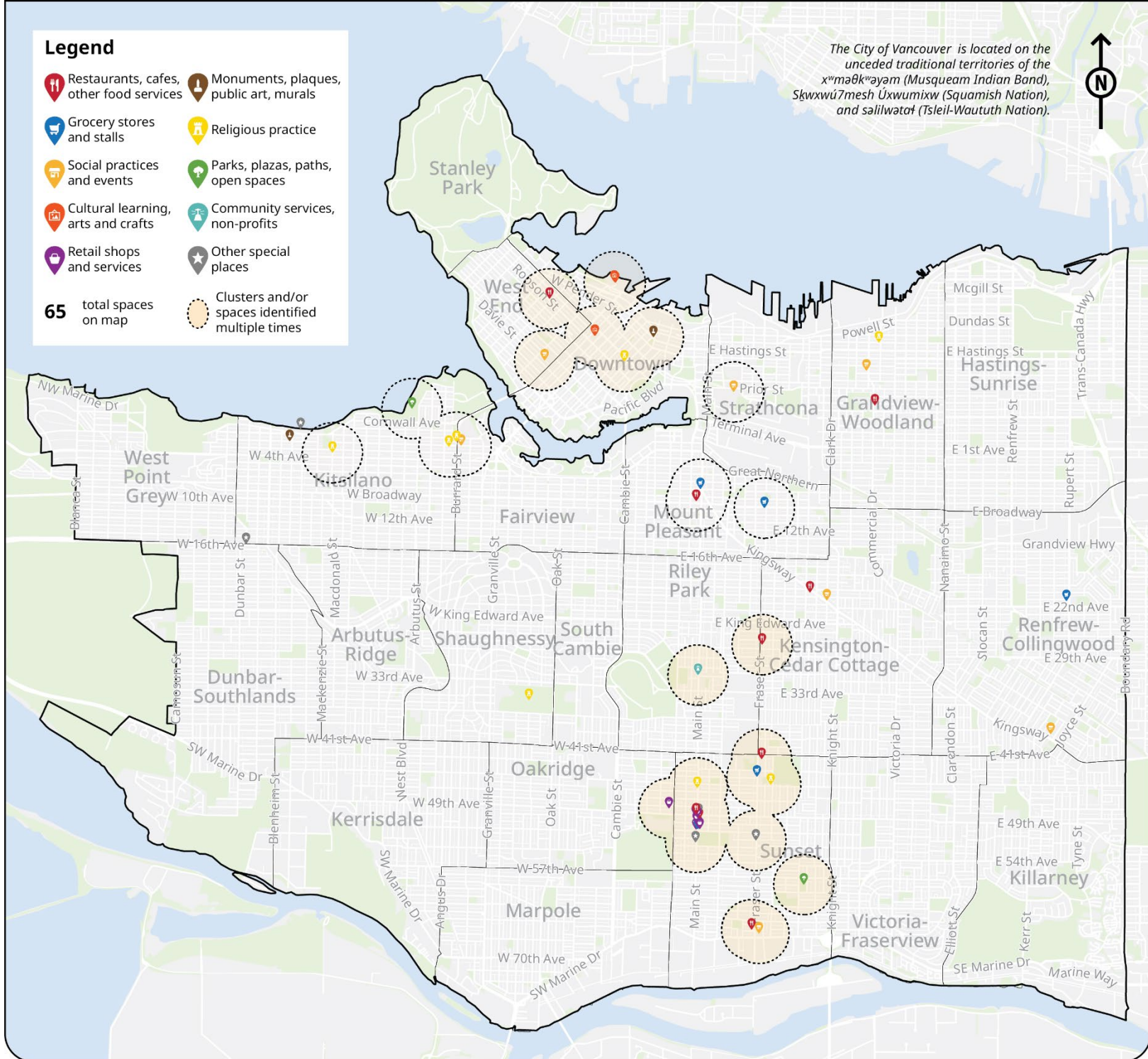
South Asian Canadian Cultural Spaces Mapping

All past (no longer existing) locations identified from in-person and online engagement

Legend

-  Restaurants, cafes, other food services
 -  Grocery stores and stalls
 -  Social practices and events
 -  Cultural learning, arts and crafts
 -  Retail shops and services
 -  Monuments, plaques, public art, murals
 -  Religious practice
 -  Parks, plazas, paths, open spaces
 -  Community services, non-profits
 -  Other special places
 -  Clusters and/or spaces identified multiple times
- 65** total spaces on map

The City of Vancouver is located on the unceded traditional territories of the x'məθk'wəyəm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and salilwətaŋ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).



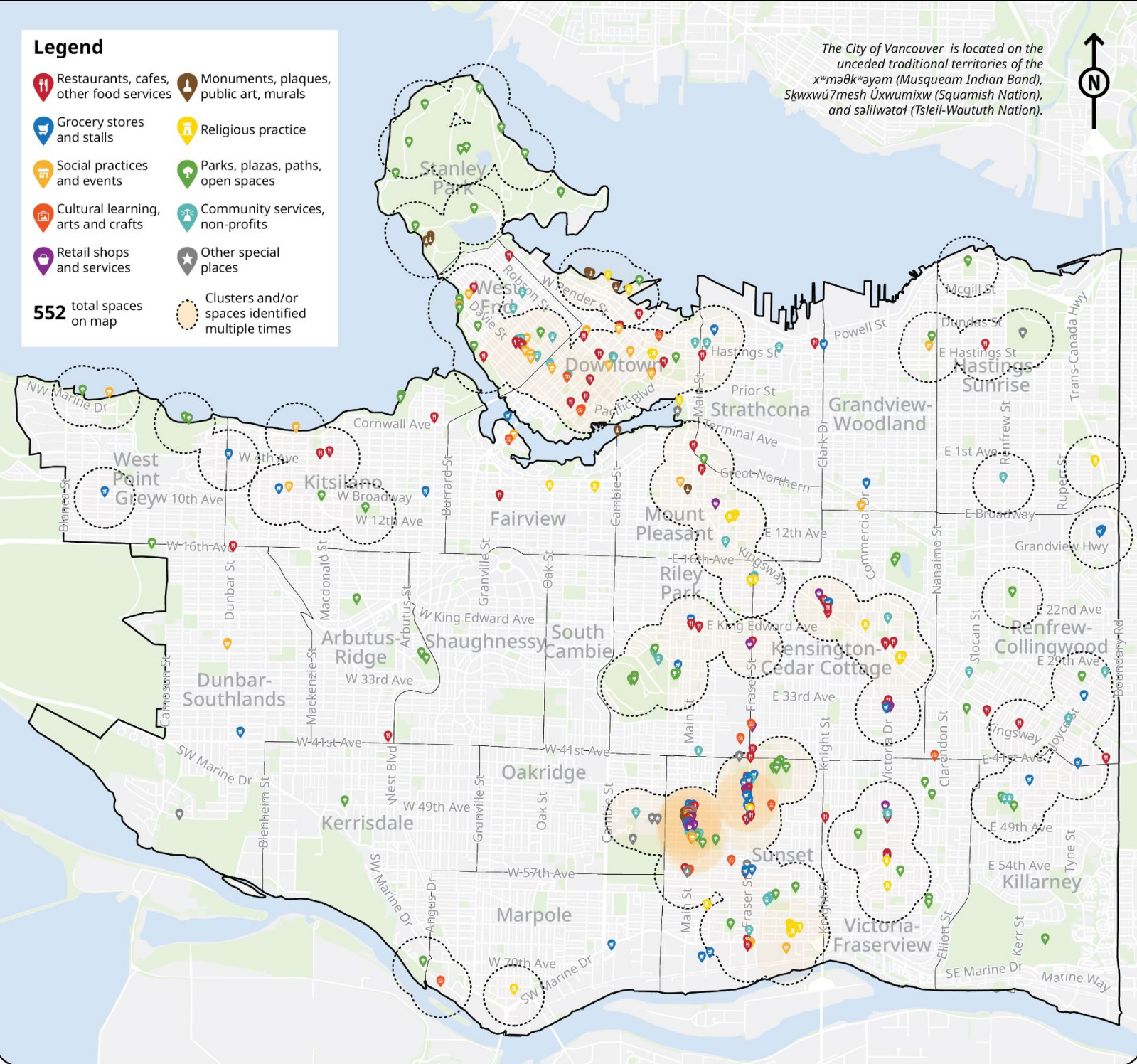
South Asian Canadian Cultural Spaces Mapping

All present (still existing) locations identified from in-person and online engagement

Legend

-  Restaurants, cafes, other food services
 -  Monuments, plaques, public art, murals
 -  Grocery stores and stalls
 -  Religious practice
 -  Social practices and events
 -  Parks, plazas, paths, open spaces
 -  Cultural learning, arts and crafts
 -  Community services, non-profits
 -  Retail shops and services
 -  Other special places
 -  Clusters and/or spaces identified multiple times
- 552** total spaces on map

The City of Vancouver is located on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḵwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and salilwəṭ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).



Next Steps

Staff will continue to analyze data from the Historical Discrimination of South Asian Canadians survey and mapping engagement including written responses and data from in-person sessions. Once complete, a more detailed engagement summary will be released.

The detailed summary will be included in a future report to Vancouver City Council. To visit the project website and receive updates on this work, click [here](#).



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