



CITY OF KIRKLAND
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MEMORANDUM

To: City Council

From: David Wolbrecht, Senior Neighborhood Services Coordinator
Joy Johnston, Interim Communications Program Manager

Date: May 4, 2021

Subject: 2021 Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Proclamation

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Mayor and City Council proclaim May 2021 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in Kirkland, Washington.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:

The origin of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month dates back to the 95th Congress (1977-1978) when five joint resolutions were introduced proposing that a week in May be designated to commemorate the accomplishments of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (APIs). One of the resolutions, H.J.Res.1007, was passed by Congress, designating seven days in May beginning on May 4 as Asian/Pacific American Week.

On March 28, 1979, President Carter issued Proclamation 4650, the first presidential proclamation, for Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week. In this proclamation, President Carter spoke of the significant role Asian/Pacific Americans have played in the creation of a dynamic and pluralistic American society with their contributions to the sciences, arts, industry, government and commerce. Over the next ten years, Presidents Carter, Reagan and George H.W. Bush continued to annually issue proclamations designating a week in May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week.

On May 7, 1990, President George H.W. Bush issued Presidential Proclamation 6130 designating May 1990 as the first "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month", and Congress permanently designated May of each year as "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month on October 23, 1992.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is observed annually in May to celebrate the contributions that generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have made to American history, society, and culture. A rather broad term, Asian/Pacific encompasses all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island). The month of May was chosen to commemorate the

immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks were Chinese immigrants.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have a rich heritage thousands of years old and have both shaped the history of the United States and had their lives dramatically influenced by moments in its history. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have endured hardships throughout history, including exclusionary laws surrounding housing, marriage, immigration, and naturalization, as well as the persisting gaps in achievement, opportunity, and accessibility to in-language services. Specific to the Pacific Northwest, United States residents of Japanese descent from Western Washington and Alaska were forcibly relocated and incarcerated in concentration camps during World War II, an action that was admitted by the U.S. government in 1988 to have been based on "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership". Kirkland housed a railway station that was used in that incarceration and relocation.

More recently, there has been increased violence toward Asian Americans. A study based on police department statistics across major U.S. cities found a nearly 150 percent surge in anti-Asian hate crimes in 2020. A statement issued by City Council on March 16, 2021, condemned the acts of hate and violence displayed in the rising incidence of anti-Asian hate crimes. The statement read, in part, "We must halt the spread of bigotry to keep our community safe. It's our collective responsibility to not only speak up and stop hate crimes, but to continue to examine and dismantle institutional and structural racism, to eradicate hate, and to connect with our shared humanity." The full statement and further resources for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders can be found at www.kirklandwa.gov/AAPISupport.

In proclaiming Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the community is encouraged to learn more about those of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander heritage and to celebrate this month with appropriate programs and activities. The King County Library system [lists several books](#) illustrating diverse Asian American experiences. More Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month information and resources can be found at asianpacificheritage.gov.

Attachment A: Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Proclamation



A Proclamation of the City of Kirkland

Proclaiming May 2021 as

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in Kirkland

WHEREAS, on February 21, 2017, the City of Kirkland adopted Resolution R-5240, declaring Kirkland as a Safe, Inclusive and Welcoming City for All People; and

WHEREAS, all residents deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, compassion and justice regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, income or economic status, political affiliation, military status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental or sensory ability; and

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2021, the City Council issued a statement condemning recent and continuing acts of violence against Asian Americans across the country and reaffirming that racism, in any form, and against any group, has no place in Kirkland, and this statement is available on the City's website along with other resources curated to support the safety of our Asian American and Pacific Islander community; and

WHEREAS, the origin of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in the United States dates back to 1978 when a joint congressional resolution established Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week in early May to coincide with two important milestones in Asian/Pacific American history: the arrival in the United States of the first Japanese immigrants on May 7, 1843 and contributions of Chinese workers to the building of the transcontinental railroad, completed May 10, 1869; and

WHEREAS, in 1990, the first Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month was designated by presidential proclamation and in 1992, Congress permanently designated May of each year as a monthlong celebration that is now known as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month; and

WHEREAS, additional Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month information and resources can be found at asianpacificheritage.gov and Asian and Pacific Islander Americans continue to enrich our region's economy, culture, education, politics, arts, literature, science and technological developments despite institutional and systemic injustices designed to prevent and limit these achievements and contributions.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Penny Sweet, Mayor of Kirkland, Washington, proclaim May 2021 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and call upon the all people of Kirkland, Washington, to learn more about those of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander heritage and to celebrate this month with appropriate programs and activities.

Signed this 4th day of May, 2021

Penny Sweet, Mayor