



## **World Lebanese Cultural Union British Columbia Council**

To the attention of the President of WLCU-BC Council Mr Henri Zarifeh, and the Council members.

**Subject:** Commemorating the Lebanese who perished in the TITANIC one hundred years ago.

Dear Friends

As we all know, in April 1912 (one-hundred years ago), 154 persons from Lebanon embarked the ship TITANIC, with the hope to settle in the “new world”, and to start a new life, far from persecution, and needs.

They dreamed of success, and planned to send money back home to support their families, and maybe bringing along with them their spouses, kids ,brothers ,sisters, to share with them work and wealth.

Leaving Beirut by boat to Marseille(south of France), taking the train for a long ride to Cherbourg (North of France), and a boat to embark in the life journey that will take them to the countries of the “American or Canadian Dream “.

Only 29 of the 154 survived while 125 persons died in that journey; couple of them were shot and killed when trying to embark on the safety boats. These emigrants of the third class lost their lives; few were never retrieved and few were unknowingly buried in Halifax or elsewhere. No one ever mentioned them as a group of people who came from the historical Land of Lebanon, who shared the past and the dream of a better life. They

were given names such as Turco, Arabs or Syrian; they were only counted individually on the list of dead or missing.

While all government who lost citizens on the ship commemorated the events, the various Lebanese governments before and after the independence of the country never thought to acknowledge the loss, never mentioned them and never designate a day of prayer, or a moment of silence.

As a Lebanese emigrants and descents living the Canadian or American dream, we are able to understand the Titanic tragic event, as a painful chapter in our migration history and we feel the pain-even after 100 years-of the related families in many Lebanese villages in 1912.

That is why I am proposing to you the idea to Recognize and commemorate the Lebanese who lost their lives in the Titanic as well as to remember, by the same token, all Lebanese Nationals who lost their lives in troubled countries of emigration, from Africa to South America without forgetting Belgium and USA.

Accepting this idea and designating a special commemorating day to be celebrated in BC first, and maybe later in worldwide scale, might pave the way, one day to erect –on behalf of the Lebanese Diaspora- a special monument to the memory of our lost brothers and sisters. This monument could be, in Halifax or in Europe, in Lebanon or anywhere.

I consulted with the Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center, Ms Guita Hourani, also I contacted Mr Guy Jones the president of the Irish Lebanese Foundation- who did an extensive research about the Lebanese in Titanic and was a pioneer in the Titanic celebration, both welcomed the idea, and are willing to join us.

A question could arise, why you are asking us -as a west Canadian from Lebanese background, and perhaps the smallest community in Canada- to take this decision?

Because I believe in our BC council, as an innovative group, and its visionary Leaders, working only for the interest of the Lebanese Diaspora, who were always a true leaders of change, and new ideas...

I am not exaggerating when I say visionary Leaders:

Let's recall,

In 1995, we inaugurated the first Lebanese monument in the world that bearing the name of WLCU and located in Queen Elizabeth Park in Vancouver. BC !!

In 2009, a unique memorial was inaugurated at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, celebrating the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Gibran. The main bronze plaque bearing

the logo and the name of WLCU, while another plaque shows clearly that Gibran is Lebanese (Unlike the famous Washington monument).

Also, let's not forget that BC, the first and only Canadian province, to host the statue of the Lebanese emigrant, (standing up in Victoria)..

Finally

I truly believe that you are a quality people, with a pure, straight and a strong spirit. I believe in you as Dreamers who make their dream come true...

Dear President, as I hope you will consider my proposal, please accept my highest regards.

Dr Nick Kahwaji

1 July 2012

Board member,

WLCU Main representative to DPI