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Vancouver police say anti-Asian hate crimes spiked in April

Hate crimes on the rise

The Canadian Press - May 1, 2020 / 5:19 pm | Story: 298920

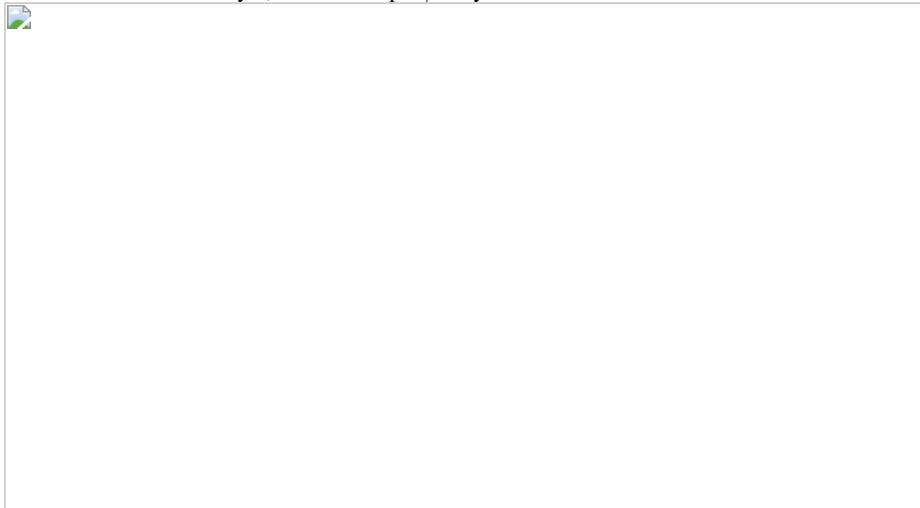


Photo: CTV News

The Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver has been the target of racist graffiti and vandalism linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vancouver police are reporting an increase in anti-Asian, hate-motivated incidents in recent weeks.

The department makes the announcement as it seeks public help to identify a man seen scrawling graffiti on several large windows at the Chinese Cultural Centre on April 2.

Const. Tania Visintin said Friday hate crimes of that nature will not be tolerated, adding it's "disheartening" to see such incidents occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A statement from police says the suspect walked into the courtyard of the cultural centre and wrote disturbing, racist remarks towards the Asian community on four large glass windows.

He is described as white, with a thin build, dressed in a black jacket, pants and baseball cap and wearing grey runners and a black and white bandana over his mouth and nose.

Police say of the 20 anti-Asian hate crimes reported to police this year, 11 occurred in April.

In comparison, police say there were 12 such crimes reported in all of 2019.

Visintin said investigators waited for almost a month to release the details about the graffiti to ensure all investigative steps had been taken.

"We do take it very seriously and we have our steps that we have to follow to complete a thorough investigation and to really grab the suspect," she said during a news conference.

A camera has been set up in the area to monitor for any other hate-related incidents and Visintin said police foot patrols continue in the area.

"We want the public to know that we are taking this seriously, investigating fully and we want this to stop," she said.

The rise in incidents, combined with the timing of Asian Heritage Month, prompted Vancouver city manager Sadhu Johnston to issue a statement.

"No one should feel unsafe, harassed or that they don't belong, and we at the City of Vancouver will not tolerate acts of hate," he said.

Chris Lee, director of the Asian Canadian and Asian Migrant Studies Program at the University of British Columbia, said he believes the attacks will have a long-term effect on the city's Asian community.

"People will remember there was a moment when they felt unsafe, they will remember a moment when they were singled out or scapegoated, and those scars will stay," he said in an interview.

The fact the attack was directed at the cultural centre also hits a nerve, he said, noting Vancouver's Chinatown was the first site Chinese-Canadians were allowed to live in the city.

"This is an intense moment of being excluded and racialized," Lee said.

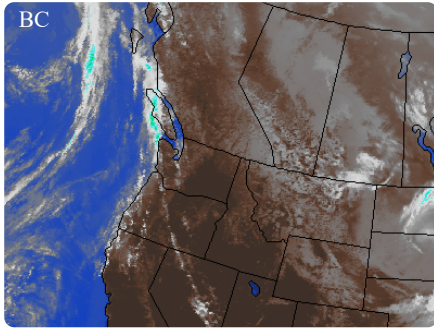
This report by The Canadian Press was first published May 1, 2020.

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