

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING

ACTON SHEET

DATE: January 5, 2022
TO: Board of Education
FROM: Scott Saywell, Superintendent
SUBJECT: Coal Tyee - School Name Change

Recommendation

The Education Committee recommends that the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) engage Policy 2.19 and assign an ad hoc Committee to rename Coal Tyee Elementary School.

Background

This Action Sheet is to outline next steps with respect to the potential renaming of Coal Tyee Elementary School.

The Education Committee heard a presentation by the school at the December Education Committee meeting with respect to work being done by the school on the Board goal of reconciliation. This work has included discussions regarding the name Coal Tyee.

When Coal Tyee Elementary School was opened it was named after the Snuneymuxw resident KI-ET-SA-KUN also known as Coal Tyee. According to a bust of KI-ET-SA-KUN as described on City of Nanaimo website the story is as follows:

...In 1851, while Ki-et-sa-kun in having his gun repaired in Victoria; he mentions the coal in Winthuysen Inlet. In 1852, James Douglas sent Joseph Mackay (the clerk for the Hudson Bay Company) to Winthuysen Inlet to investigate the reports of coal deposits. He confirms the value of the coal deposits, a year later the Company decides to close the mine at Fort Rupert (where the coal deposits were found to be inferior) and transfer its mining operations to Winthuysen Inlet. On September 10th the first shipment of coal leaves for Victoria. In honour of Ki-et-sa-kun's discovery, he was given the name Coal Tyee, meaning Great Coal Chief.

We believe that at the time of the school opening, in good faith it was felt that he represented a positive story of collaboration between the colonial and Indigenous peoples as well as representing Nanaimo's heritage with respect to coal mining.

However, Coal Tyee is seen by our Snuneymuxw relatives as a tragic figure given his interaction with the colonial peoples led directly to purposeful colonization of the area and destructive resource extraction that has impacted the land. That interaction has also impacted the Snuneymuxw peoples in an extremely negative and ongoing way and led directly to the generational trauma that we are working with our Snuneymuxw relatives to heal. We also want to be clear that the colonization is the fault of the colonizers and not Coal Tyee nor any other Indigenous person. However, Coal Tyee's role is not one to be celebrated and is not consistent with our policies.

Further, given the view of our Snuneymuxw people with respect to the name, we have concerns that the school can be appropriately welcoming to students from the Snuneymuxw people. Given these facts, the name is not in line with Syeyutsus and it is time for change. Further, preliminary discussions with SFN indicate support for a change in name.

The Board's naming policy specifically contemplates the renaming of facilities. The purpose statement of Policy 2.19 – Naming of Schools or Parts of Facilities is as follows:

As per the Syeyutsus Reconciliation Framework, the Board recognizes that naming a school is a respected process critical to creating a sense of community, a sense of belonging and creating an opportunity to honour the land in which it is located. A school name also fosters a unique identity for families, students, and staff.

In addition to naming a facility, the Policy also contemplates the renaming of a facility as follows:

1. The Board will consider the renaming of a facility or part of a facility in limited circumstances that may include:
 - a. Where a local municipality or regional district renames a geographic reference associated with the school; or
 - b. Where the name of the facility or part of the facility does not align with Board policies; or
 - c. Where the Board receives a request from the community that aligns with the Board's naming policy.
2. Where the Board considers renaming a school or facility, they will receive a report regarding any potential cost implications for consideration in their decision-making process