



The Board of Education of School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board of Education **DATE:** May 21, 2024

FROM: Chelsea Prince, Director of Instruction – Indigenous Education with
Quelmúcw Education Council

RE: **Change of District Name to a Secwépemctsín Word/Phrase**

Background

In 1997, when the Armstrong-Spallumcheen (School District 21) and Shuswap (School District 89) School Districts amalgamated, the Quelmúcw Education Council, then known as the First Nations Education Council, was very disappointed with the change of name to the North Okanagan Shuswap School District.

While the land that district schools sit upon in the Armstrong area is territory that is jointly claimed by the Syilx Okanagan and the Secwépemc peoples, the whole school district sits on traditional Secwépemc territory. Positioning “North Okanagan” before “Shuswap” may not have been intended as prioritizing one area over the other, but that is how it can be perceived. In addition, the word “Shuswap” is an outdated and historically incorrect term invented by settlers, which is really the word “Secwépemc”.

However, we have come a very long way since that time. Secwépemc flags hang in front of the DESC along with all our district schools, and the Quelmúcw Education Council is an essential partner with the school district. The Council recognizes that as an organization, we are committed to having a meaningful and authentic relationship with First Nations communities, and that the selection of “Reconciliation” as a value in the new Strategic Plan was not done so lightly.

A significant step toward Reconciliation is land acknowledgment, which includes recognition that this is Secwépemc territory, that Secwépemc people have occupied this land since time immemorial, and that most district staff and students are guests on this land. The school system is a colonial structure that has been imposed upon First Nations, a structure that has done significant harm to people, culture, and ways of life. It is, however, a structure that can be an important part of building a new relationship as partners with First Nations.

Proposal

We propose that the Board takes another important step toward Reconciliation by changing the name of the school district to a Secwépemctsín word or phrase. The choice of word/phrase will be carefully considered, and Quelmúcw Education Council members are in the process of consulting with Elders and community members. By doing this, we eradicate the word “Shuswap”, a term that was imposed by settlers on Secwépemc peoples, and we rid ourselves of the perception that the North Okanagan is more highly valued than the Shuswap. A name change to a Secwépemctsín word is also a very visible representation that our district is committed to Reconciliation and partnership with Secwépemc communities.



**The Board of Education of
School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)**

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Respectfully submitted,

Chelsea Prince
Director of Instruction – Indigenous Education

I acknowledge that I work and live on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Secwepemc people. While this land is far from my own traditional lands in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory on the Bay of Quinte in Lake Ontario, I am daily grateful for, in awe of the beauty of, and feel a particular connection with this place.