

**DATE:** September 7, 2021

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Trustee Shelagh Dunn

**SUBJECT:** Motion re Renaming Prince Charles School

**REFERENCE:** [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)  
[HAA.BP First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education](#)

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## ISSUE

Trustee Dunn served notice of motion at the June 22, 2021, Board meeting.

## BACKGROUND

### *Renaming the school*

Many staff, family and community members have been writing the Board to request a change to the name of Prince Charles School to better reflect the students and teaching happening in the school. They have highlighted that:

- the large majority of students attending Prince Charles School are First Nations, Métis or Inuit and all attend the Awasis program, a Cree language program with First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural teachings.
- The name of the school does not reflect the culture and history of the students who attend the school.
- The name of the school carries with it the history of colonization, and the history of colonization on this land has harmed First Nations, Métis and Inuit people through policies such as residential schools.

Many settlers are reckoning with the impact of colonization with recent confirmations of unmarked graves at the buildings across Canada which were called residential schools. As this number continues to grow, so does the awareness of the history of genocide in Canada, and so does the collective grief and trauma for survivors and their families.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action<sup>1</sup> include multiple calls for action in education and commitment to Indigenous languages. Through Board policy [HAA.BP First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education](#), Edmonton Public Schools has also committed:

- To affirm the Board of Trustees' (the Board) responsibility in supporting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students to thrive within a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment that is respectful of and responsive to students' life experiences.
- To support a Division culture that promotes truth and reconciliation through the acknowledgement of the impact of colonization and intergenerational loss of language, culture, identity and relationships on children, families and communities.
- To strengthen the learning and academic achievement of students through collaborative relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit parents/guardians, grandparents and other family members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members.

The staff, family and community members writing to us have called upon the Board of Trustees to honour these commitments and to honour the important work happening in the Awasis program.

### ***The renaming process***

Community conversations on school names in Edmonton Public Schools have highlighted the importance and power held by a name and the need for thoughtful, inclusive, and representative school names. If done in a good way, renaming conversations have the potential for connection, humility, and learning. While the Board of Trustees has the authority to name and rename schools, I believe that we need to consider how this authority should be used and who should lead and participate in conversations on school renaming.

If this motion should pass, it is important to center the voices of the students, families and staff of Prince Charles School and rely on the leadership and guidance of relevant Elders and Knowledge Keepers in the community.

### **RELATED FACTS**

- Sherbrooke School opened in 1948 and was renamed Prince Charles School in 1953.<sup>2</sup> This name was also adopted by the community league who later petitioned to rename the community of North Inglewood to Prince Charles as well.<sup>3</sup>
- The Awasis Program was established in 1974.<sup>2</sup> The program “provides students with Cree Language instruction and cultural teachings and activities. Cree Language and cultural activities include: Cree Language curriculum of study, daily Cree prayer, seasonal Feasts, Pipe Ceremonies, Smudge, Awasis Day celebration, music study which integrates song and drumming, Traditional and Pow Wow dance, Métis jigging at guitar and fiddle, field trips to cultural sites, and the annual Aboriginal History Quiz.”<sup>4</sup>
- This spring, the Board of Trustees for Kootenay Lake School District in British Columbia voted unanimously to change the name of a school named Prince Charles School in the spirit of reconciliation.<sup>5</sup>

### **CONSIDERATION**

Renaming Prince Charles School does not undo the enormity of harm caused by colonialism and the harm done in the name of schools on this land. Renaming Prince Charles School is not an action that will absolve the Board of the need to continue to commit to the work of reconciliation. It is, however, a small action that can be taken in relationship with this school, the students, families and staff who spend time there, and the Elders and Knowledge Keepers in our community. It is a small action in response to community and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, one which can reflect and honour the Awasis language and culture program.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**Given the significance of the Awasis (Cree) language and culture program at Prince Charles School, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action regarding the commitment to Indigenous languages and action in education, the Edmonton Public School Board commits to renaming Prince Charles School and requests that Administration facilitate a consultation process with students, families and staff of Prince Charles School and relevant Elders and Knowledge Keepers in the community to gather feedback to inform the renaming process.**

**OPTIONS**

1. Approve the recommendation.
2. Provide feedback and request changes to the recommendation for approval.

**NEXT STEPS**

Upon approval of this recommendation, Administration will inform the community of the decision to rename Prince Charles School and begin consultation with students, families and staff of the school, and relevant Elders and Knowledge Keepers in the community to inform the renaming process.

SD:km

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<sup>1</sup>Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, United Nations, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). *Truth & reconciliation: Calls to action*.

<sup>2</sup>Black, J. (1999) Prince Charles school celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> Year, *Alberta Sweetgrass*, 6(11).

<https://ammsa.com/publications/alberta-sweetgrass/prince-charles-school-celebrates-50th-year-0>

<sup>3</sup> Prince Charles Community League (2019). *About us*. <https://www.princecharlescommunityleague.com/about>

<sup>4</sup>*Awasis program*. Prince Charles School. Retrieved August 26, 2021 from:

<https://princecharles.epsb.ca/programs/alternativeprograms/awasisprogram.html>

<sup>5</sup>Szeto, W. (2021, June 21). Kootenay school erases royal's name from its title as an act of reconciliation. *CBC News*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/prince-charles-secondary-school-renaming-reconciliation-creston-valley-1.6074701>