



File No. 1470-01

March 1, 2022

Public engagement starts on possible name change for Powell River

Community Conversation: Possible Name Change kicks off March 1, 2022

After much planning, the Possible Name Change Joint Working Group, a collaborative *Community Accord* committee of City of Powell River and Tla'amin Nation elected officials and residents, is kicking off public engagement about the request from Tla'amin Nation for the City of Powell River to consider a name change.

The concerns about the name "Powell" stem from Israel Powell's time as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for British Columbia from 1872 to 1899, where he pursued policies meant to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into Canadian society. This included the implementation of residential schools, banning of the potlatch, and removing ceremonial objects from communities. Powell also helped ensure that the sale of Lot 450, which included the tisk^wat village site, went through. The impacts of these policies, such as loss of land, language, culture, and family ties for Tla'amin people, are still felt today.

The first engagement activities are the launch of a website and a survey (powellriver.ca/pnc). Paper copies of the survey are available at the library, recreation complex, and City Hall. The survey is open from March 1 to March 25. This spring there will be a variety of public activities to continue sharing information about the history and identity of this place, and to be in conversation.

Residents are also encouraged to write to the Mayor and Council with their viewpoint, including name and address, to info@powellriver.ca or by letter to City Hall.

Key facts and clarifications:

- City Council is the decision-making body. Council will consider recommendations from the Joint Working Group, relations with Tla'amin Nation, and public input to decide how the City will proceed or not with a name change.
- No decision has been made on a possible name change yet. No name has been chosen (it doesn't have to be tiskwat). The language of the name has not been decided. Right now we are not focused on choosing a new name - choosing a different name would be a separate process of public engagement with city residents and Tla'amin Nation.
- Israel Powell was not involved with the founding of the mill or the town. There is no record of him visiting Powell River.

Quotes:

Harmony Johnson səlakəs, Possible Name Change Joint Working Group Co-Chair, Vice-President, Indigenous Wellness & Reconciliation with Providence Health Care, Tla'amin citizen
"This truth-telling work is difficult for all of us. It is hard to talk and learn about these aspects of our shared history. I believe, however, that we can find positivity and meaning in this process by approaching this conversation with humility, kindness, and curiosity. We can all make a contribution to reconciliation in action by showing up as neighbours, willing to listen to and learn from one another."

Stewart Alsgard, Possible Name Change Joint Working Group Co-Chair, former Mayor of Powell River, city resident:

"I know from all my years here that people care deeply about this community and its history. I also know that people are committed to truth and reconciliation and finding a way forward with our Tla'amin neighbours. I invite people to take part in this process in order for us to build a positive future and move forward in a good way together."

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