

March 8, 2023

## George Jay Elementary to be renamed a Lekwungen name

**VICTORIA, BC** – The Greater Victoria School District is working alongside representatives of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations to co-develop a process around naming protocols in schools and at school sites. A process is currently being established, paving the way for a new Lekwungen name for George Jay Elementary.

In 2020, the School District convened a committee to review the name of George Jay Elementary following public consultation where the community expressed great interest in renaming the school. The committee reviewed research and listened to the voices of community members, including George Jay staff and an Elders Advisory Council. The outcome of the committee’s review recommended connecting with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations to see if they would like to be involved in the process, and if they would like to proceed with a Lekwungen name. Both Nations expressed their interest and support in moving forward with a Lekwungen name for George Jay Elementary.

“We are grateful to work in partnership with Songhees and Esquimalt Nations to develop a process that will support a new name for George Jay Elementary School that is reflective of the traditional territories we reside on,” said Board Chair Nicole Duncan. “We are committed to honouring local Indigenous language, culture and history as we continue the important work of building culturally responsive and welcoming spaces for all students. A new Lekwungen name will open the door to enriching conversations and learning about Indigenous language, culture and history.”

“The Songhees and Esquimalt Nations look forward to participating in the renaming of George Jay Elementary. By joining this project and sharing a piece of ləkʷəŋən culture, the children, students, and residents of Victoria can experience a part of our traditional ways. The vulnerability of this work requires trust and time on behalf of both Nations. By taking the time to rename an institution, we can begin a healing process for our children and families, who must deal with many barriers in a colonial education system on a day-to-day basis,” said Karen Dick-Tunkara, Councillor of the Songhees Nation.

“Language is the foundation of our culture. Our children and the children of others who learn and hear our language develop a strong identity and connection to our way of life. The renaming of George Jay Elementary is an important step to realizing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action to preserve and revitalize our language. During the era of residential schools, children were forbidden to speak their home language and if they did, they were subjected to punishment. The renaming of George Jay Elementary in ləkʷəŋən is our way to honor those children whose voices were silenced and is the first step toward revitalizing our culture, our history, and our Sacred Trust,” said Chief Robert Thomas, Esquimalt Nation.

The Nations have identified representatives to work with the School District to co-create the processes around renaming protocols. The work is anticipated to begin in the Spring of 2023.

A new name for the school is expected to take shape in the 2023/24 school year.

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