



September 8, 2021

Rod Wiebe
Chair, Board of Trustees
Powell River Library
100-6975 Alberni Street
Powell River BC V8A 2B8

Sent by email: trustees@prpl.ca

Dear Rod Wiebe,

Libraries serve as a critical hub for dialogue, education, and social connection and cohesion. They can play an important role in bringing shared understanding and exchange of perspectives on key issues of public importance.

Given this significant function, we write to seek your leadership and support on an issue of tremendous importance to us as the Tla'amin Nation, and to many of our neighbours.

As you may be aware, a grassroots movement has emerged to engage the residents of the Powell River area in a conversation about a new name for the City. Tla'amin Nation fully supports this effort and is embarking upon a joint process with the Mayor and Council to advance this initiative.

Israel Powell was the first superintendent of Indian affairs in British Columbia, a position he held for 17 years. In this role, he was responsible for advancing oppression and colonialism against First Nations people, including being the first to propose creation of a residential school in Kamloops, championing a ban of the potlatch, and personally collecting and shipping to museums First Nations cultural artifacts and skeletal remains. These harms continue to reverberate today. These harms continue to be perpetuated through memorializing this individual in our City's name.

There is growing momentum and support for the city name change initiative, as evidenced by many organizations and businesses voluntarily dropping "Powell River" from their names, as well as the renaming of other sites in the surrounding region. At the same time, there are many in our region that are seeking more information about this name change and the broader context of truth, justice, and reconciliation. We believe the Library can play a leadership role in this regard.

We write to make some suggestions for your consideration:

- That the Library Board of Trustees collectively drafts open letter to the City and the qathet Regional District explaining why “the name matters” and expressing support for a name change;
- That the Library supports an engagement process on the name change amongst residents by offering public education and dialogue opportunities, amongst other initiatives; and,
- That the Library curates a list of recommended readings and resources regarding truth, justice, reconciliation, and place naming to contribute to a special edition of the Peak which will commemorate the upcoming first national Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

We believe that the Library is uniquely positioned to be a key leader in this process by publicly declaring support to drop “Powell River” from its name, to actively participate in a community engagement process to identify a new name we can all be proud of, and offering its expertise in recommending public education resources.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hegus John S. Hackett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hegus John S. Hackett

cc

Rebecca Burbank, Chief Librarian, Powell River Public Library, rburbank@prpl.ca

Stefan Virtue, Intergovernmental and Fiscal Manager, Tla'amin Nation, stefan.virtue@tn-bc.ca