

New School Naming Committee Summary Report

Background

Under YK1 Administrative Procedure 541, the Board's responsibility is to name all District facilities and buildings. According to that same procedure, a Naming Committee is to establish and determine its own process for arriving at its recommendations. In late 2020, the Superintendent of Schools charged the principal of JH Sissons to form a committee to examine the question of naming the new school currently under construction on the site of the former school on 51A Avenue. The intent was to solicit community input regarding the name of the new facility, and to formulate recommendations for possible names to the Board of Trustees.

The first formal meetings of the Committee took place in February 2021. Initial discussions focused on developing a Terms of Reference (Appendix A), and then determine the process for engagement with community and partner groups. The Committee met twelve times throughout the Spring and Fall of 2021. Ongoing public health orders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic meant that all Committee meetings took place online. Discussions were nevertheless robust and focused on providing a short list of recommended school names to the Board of Trustees. They reflect the Committee's best effort at engagement, both formal and informal, with members of the wider community, including Indigenous partners.

In addition to the principal, the Committee members included 6 parents, 1 staff member, and a community member. The school principal chaired the meetings.

Communication and Engagement

The Committee undertook to engage with the community such as:

- Advising the school's PAC of the Committee's formation and mandate.
- A call to the school community and staff for volunteers to sit as Committee members.
- An update on the school's website.
- An online survey to the community soliciting input for names, but also criteria the Committee ought to use in selecting a name.
- Media releases and interviews of the Committee's chair.
- Discussions with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and the North Slave Métis Alliance.

Criteria

The following criteria for naming a school comes from YK1 Administrative Procedure 541:

- Have significance for the students, parents and the community of the particular facility;
- Be easily identifiable with the facility;
- Not be in conflict with the names of other facilities in the system, or surrounding Districts;
- Be appropriate in terms of copyright and trademark provisions.

In addition, the Committee established these criteria arising from their own deliberations, and communications (both formal and informal) with the wider community:

- Respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and the concept of the capable person, as represented through:

- The Dene Laws
- Respect for the Land
- Indigenous Language and Culture
- Recognition of the school as a place:
 - Of learning
 - Where personal growth and excellence are encouraged
- Representation of community values, including:
 - Kindness;
 - Inclusion and respect for diversity of:
 - Learners
 - The wider community, including those members who are LGBTQ2+

Throughout deliberations, members paid attention to the importance of reconciliation with the Indigenous community, and respect for the principles arising from the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. The Committee believed reconciliation was at the heart of their work.

Indigenous Partners

The Committee worked both formally and informally to engage with Indigenous partners in regarding a school name. We began by having a committee member start informal discussions through his contacts at the North Slave Métis Alliance (NSMA) and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN). Subsequently, formal correspondence invited those organizations to share their perspectives with the Committee.

Considerations

The school's programming is currently 100% French Immersion, and that programming is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. However, given the expected lifespan of the facility, it is possible that the school will have different programming at some point in the future. As such, there was some discussion about whether the school's name should include the words École and School. Consequently, the committee suggests that the Weledeh word enih t'èkq̄ be included either before or after one of the above-mentioned names. Enih t'èkq̄ means 'school' or 'learning place', as confirmed with discussions with the chiefs of N'Dilo and Dettah.

The Committee received 29 different names. A short list of six names, in no particular order of preference, was presented to the Board for consideration in December 2021.

- Naka / Nàaka (Weledeh word for the Northern Lights)
- Tinde'e (Weledeh word for Great Slave Lake)
- ʔori (Weledeh word for spruce bough)
- it'ò (Weledeh word for cranberry)
- [REDACTED] (Well-regarded local YKDFN educator)
- [REDACTED] (Well-regarded local indigenous community member)

Selection

On January 11, 2022, the YK1 Board of Trustees approved a motion to name the school It'ò, the Weledeh word for cranberry, based on the thorough and detailed report from the New School Naming Committee. In August 2022, École It'ò will replace École J.H. Sissons and continue the legacy of exceptional teaching and learning that the school is known for from 1975 until 2020.

Appendix A:

Yellowknife District No. 1 Education Authority (YK1)

New School Naming Committee

Terms of Reference

Purpose:

The Committee will recommend a name for a new YK1 School currently under construction at 5700 51A Avenue, Yellowknife, NWT.

Background:

The Government of the NWT provides for infrastructure throughout the NWT through the capital planning process. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is responsible for the construction of new schools. YK1 is responsible for ongoing maintenance and operation of schools within its District.

A new school is under construction on the site of the former Ecole J.H. Sissons (EJHS). Construction of the new school commenced in the summer 2020 and is planned for completion in the summer of 2022.

The Board of Trustees of YK1 is responsible for approval of the naming of schools and other Board owned facilities. (Policy 2 – Role of the Board) The Superintendent has the responsibility for the process for proposing a name. The responsibility was delegated to the Principal of EJHS (Committee chairperson) to form a committee to determine a process and propose a name for the new school. (Administrative Procedure 541 – Naming of Schools and District Buildings)

Membership:

The opportunity to participate as volunteers in the Committee will be advertised. If the chairperson cannot attend any meeting, they will arrange for an acting chair to take their place for that meeting. Quorum consists of the chair (or acting chair in the event the chair cannot attend) and four additional members of the Committee.

Scope of Work:

The New School Naming Committee has a mandate as described in the Administrative Procedure 541 – Naming of Schools. The Committee will determine a process, list of stakeholders, engagement activities, communications and timelines to determine a proposed name for the new school.

The Committee will design and implement a transparent and participatory process for the selection of a name. This will include the development of a communication and engagement plan.

Decisions:

The Committee will strive to arrive at decisions by consensus. This includes any recommendations that may be made to the Board of Trustees. If a decision cannot be achieved by consensus, the chair will call for a vote on the question, to be decided by the majority of those present. The chair will only vote in the event of a tie.

Reporting:

The Committee Chair shall provide timely reporting to the Superintendent on the Committee's activities. At the conclusion of the Committee's work, the Committee chair will present the suggested names to the Superintendent who will forward them to the Board of Trustees for their final deliberation.

Timeline:

The Committee will meet at least monthly beginning in February 2021. Recommendations on a name or names for the new school will be provided to the Superintendent by November 30, 2021.