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Joint Working Group Releases Name Change Report and Calls for Period of Reflection

Joint working group report released for qweyqwaystəm (Let's talk) community conversation reveals need for further education and dialogue

Mayor David Formosa and Hegus John Hackett today released the Joint Working Group's report on a possible name change for the City of Powell River. The report summarizes a six-month community qweyqwaystəm (Let's talk) information and dialogue process and includes 11 recommendations. The process was sparked by Tla'amin Nation's request to remove the name "Powell" from the City as part of a commitment to reconciliation and in light of the increasing social awareness of the truths of colonialism and the harmful legacy the actions of Israel Powell has had and continues to have on Tla'amin and non-Tla'amin people alike.

The work to develop the report was guided throughout by the spirit of the Community Accord, including in the framing of recommendations. The report was developed through a consensus-building approach amongst the JWG members to identify facts, observations, and recommendations across the major themes of dialogue that arose through the qweyqwaystəm (Let's talk) process. Truths, observations, and recommendations are presented in four areas: Community Engagement, Relationships and Reconciliation, Racism, and City Name Change.

"We sincerely thank all those who joined us in this shared conversation about our history, place names, what reconciliation looks like, and where it may lead us," said Mayor Dave Formosa. "We know the conversation was challenging at times and we encourage us all to remain curious, to listen, to share, and continue engaging respectfully to help build understanding."

"We understand the importance of meaningful collaboration and community dialogue in this important reconciliation initiative, said Hegus John Hackett. "Harnessing the power of our Community Accord to take this step toward reconciliation helps showcase the government-to-government relationship that the City and Tla'amin Nation have achieved over the years. It is

very clear from the community engagement phase that we all have passion for this initiative. The best step forward is to take some time to review the report and reflect on the hard work of the Joint Working Group. During this review period I am hopeful that we can reflect on the love we all have for the beautiful territory we all live in.”

The City and Tla’amin Nation invite everyone to take the time to read the report and join us in a period of reflection.

The report is available here <https://powellriver.ca/pages/pnc>

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Backgrounder

At a May 12, 2021, community-to-community-to-community meeting between the Tla'amin Nation, the City of Powell River, and the qathet Regional District, Tla'amin Executive Council requested the City of Powell River consider a name change.

In November 2021, the City and the Tla'amin Nation agreed to establish a Joint Working Group (JWG) to oversee a community conversation about the proposed name change.

The JWG engaged the services of a consultant in January 2022 to conduct a community engagement strategy from March through June 2022.

The JWG was mandated to conclude its work by June 30, 2022, and provide a report and recommendations.

Recommendations:

1. That additional public education and community engagement activities be planned on issues of shared values, history, and reconciliation.
2. That engagement activities be targeted to under-reached demographics.
3. That future engagement on the name change be designed to maximize the safety of all participants.
4. That the City make reconciliation and relations with Tla'amin Nation a strategic priority.
5. That Tla'amin Nation develop a set of educational materials describing what they want their neighbours throughout the qathet region to know about them, and that the City include this information in training for City staff and leadership.
6. That the City, Tla'amin Nation, and qathet Regional District, through the community-to-community-to-community (C3) process, establish a Reconciliation Committee mandated and resourced to advance reconciliation throughout the City and Regional District.
7. That the City establish staff position(s) to support the implementation of recommendations in this report and maintain positive reciprocal relationships with the Tla'amin Nation and other Indigenous residents throughout qathet region.
8. That public information and engagement events for various ages, groups, and in a range of formats be undertaken to better understand racism and colonialism and promote action to achieve racial equity.
9. That ceremonial efforts be undertaken to reject all forms of racism and support healing and unification amongst all residents of qathet region.
10. That additional community engagement activities be planned on issues of shared values, history, and reconciliation as the basis for identifying options for a new name for the City.
11. That a referendum or assent voting process is one of many available tools to engage the public and gauge public opinion. It is not the appropriate tool to utilize right now. A possible assent voting process and topic should only be carefully considered after implementation of the recommendations of this report.