

MINUTES

**OPEN MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
NICOLA-SIMILKAMEEN SCHOOL DISTRICT (NO.58)**

**PSS LEARNING COMMONS
WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2025, 6:00PM**

Success for ALL Learners Today and Tomorrow

Present:	Chairperson	G. Swan
	Vice-Chair	L. Ward
	Trustees	J. Jepsen J. Kent-Laidlaw E. Hoisington (Virtual) J. Chenoweth D. Rainer
	Student Trustees	M. Williams (Absent) S. Pioquid (Absent)
	Superintendent	C. Lawrance
	Assistant Superintendent	J. Kempston
	Interim Secretary Treasurer	H. Cull
	Assistant Secretary Treasurer	L. Rusnjak
	Executive Assistant	K. Buckland
	Manager of IT	E. Park

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES AND METIS COMMUNITY

AGENDA

25/089 It was moved by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

 THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

MINUTES

25/090 It was moved by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw and seconded by Trustee Rainer

 THAT the minutes of the Open Meeting held April 9, 2025, be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

It was moved by Trustee Chenoweth and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

THAT the minutes of the Open Meeting held May 7, 2025, be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

Report of the Closed Meeting held April 9, 2025.

EDUCATION

Indigenous Education Report:

Superintendent Lawrance presented the written report submitted by District Principal of Indigenous Education, Angela McIvor. She highlighted that at the next Board Meeting in June, Angela McIvor and a couple of students will attend to share their experiences from the Institute Inspire Conference.

Early Learning and Child Care Report:

Superintendent Lawrance presented the written report submitted by District Vice Principal of Early Learning and Childcare, Daniella Bennie, who highlighted the success of the event "Once Upon a Book Tasting" that she organized, which was attended by 37 kids and their families.

Inclusive Education Report:

Superintendent Lawrance presented the written report submitted by Director of Instruction Inclusive Education, Misty Sheldon, which emphasized the various partners that the District collaborates with.

Superintendent's Report:

The Superintendent circulated and spoke to her report, reflecting on the District events that have taken place over the past month.

Trustee Chenoweth requested if the Superintendent's Report be sent to the Minister of Education.

OPERATIONS

Riverside Learning Centre Update

Superintendent Lawrance informed the Board that the Child Care Centre has received its licensing and is set to open to families on Monday, June 2, 2025. The paving is finished, and the landscaping is almost complete. Superintendent Lawrance is working on scheduling a grand opening date, and the Minister's attendance is yet to be confirmed.

Board Meeting Dates – 2025-2026

Superintendent Lawrance presented the proposed Board Meeting Dates to the Trustees, and the Board approved them.

School Closure – Central Elementary School

25/092

It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

THAT a motion to pass a School Closure, naming Merritt Central Elementary as the School.

MOTION CARRIED

AUDIT AND FINANCE

2024 - 2025 Budget Development Memo

Superintendent Lawrance provided the Trustees with questions from the public that followed the Board's 1st reading of the Preliminary Budget Bylaw on May 7th.

2025 – 2026 Preliminary Annual Budget Bylaw – 2nd and 3rd Readings

25/093

It was moved by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

THAT 2025-2026 Preliminary Annual Budget Bylaw be moved for second reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/094

It was moved by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw and seconded by Trustee Rainer

THAT 2025-2026 Preliminary Annual Budget Bylaw be moved third reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/095

It was moved by Trustee Hoisington and seconded by Trustee Rainer

THAT 2025-2026 Preliminary Annual Budget Bylaw be moved for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

POLICY

First Reading

- a) 3.50 Nsyilxcən and Nl̓eʔkepmxcín and Culture
- b) 6.20 Signing Authorities
- c) 6.30 Expense Reimbursement
- d) 6.40 Public Use of Facilities
- e) 6.50 School Closure
- f) 6.60 Video Surveillance
- g) 6.70 Student Transportation

Second Reading

None

Third Reading

a) 4.10 Respectful Working Environments

25/096 It was moved by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Chenoweth

THAT the Board move Policy, 4.10, Respectful Working Environment, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

b) 4.20 Employee Recognition

25/097 It was moved by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Chenoweth

THAT the Board move Policy, 4.20, Employee Recognition, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

c) 4.30 Protection of Employees from Violence

25/098 It was moved by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Chenoweth

THAT the Board move Policy, 4.30, Protection of Employees from Violence, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

d) 4.40 Employment of Relatives

25/099 It was moved by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Chenoweth

THAT the Board move Policy, 4.40, Employment of Relatives, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

e) 4.50 Teacher Professional Development

25/100 It was moved by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Chenoweth

THAT the Board move Policy, 4.50, Teacher Professional Development, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

Policies Recommended for Repeal

None.

Trustee Reports:

Student Trustee Reports

Both Student Trustees couldn't attend due to this Board meeting.

P.A.C. Reports

Trustee Hoisington reported on Nicola Canford Elementary.

Trustee Rainer reported on John Allison Elementary.

Trustee Chenoweth reported on SCIDES and Collettville Elementary.

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw reported on Princeton Secondary School.

Trustee Jepsen has no PAC report for Merritt Central Elementary and Diamond Vale Elementary.

Trustee Ward was not able to attend Vermilion Forks Elementary PAC meeting.

Chair Swan reported on Bench Elementary and MSS.

Other Reports:

NONE

CORRESPONDENCE:

NONE

PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD

In-person Question

- How will laying off Princeton's one fulltime worker who does emergency electrical, plumbing, HVAC issues save the School District money?

YouTube Questions

- **Rani Bothe** - What is your next step for closing Central since you're all approved to move on? Would you consider turning Colletville into a dual language school?
- **Amy Mierau** - Colletville would have to go back to dual if they close central, we would need the space.
- **Rani Bothe** - If you close central then busing would be available for all 3 schools for everyone outside of the walking limit ?
- **Amy Mierau** - will there be buses going from Colletville, Diamondvale or bench, to a central location for our central kids? Have you looked at switching to more virtual trainings for Professional development days? - not sure what these currently look like.
- **Rani Bothe** - What are the buses routes and times? Any of these buses could get cut or buses combined? Central had only a drop of 13% vs. Diamond Vale drop of 27% and Colletville drop of 35% consider the staff of Central, they are special, they are a great team together they are strong!!
- **Sarah S** - Has the District explored the precedent-setting Supreme Court of Canada case that compelled the provincial government to fund bus transportation to French schools?
- **Amy Mierau** - I am biased, I love central! I also worry about the loss of programs that a lot of our central community relies on. there would be the way the staff works together, but also the food programming. We have a lot of children in central who rely on the breakfast and lunch program. Will these be available at the other schools? If another public agency takes over space of central, they too would need to complete the renovations, what's the difference if it's for them or for the school.
- **Sarah S** - Why didn't the Budget Working Group include representatives from each PAC/FAC? PAC is the officially recognized collective voice of parents. Meaningful engagement with families has not occurred. Why haven't results of the French Immersion Program review report been shared with parents who contributed perspectives? Implying that a lack of parent support is causing attrition of French Immersion teachers negates the responsibility of the Division to support their employees and develop teacher retention strategies. What does an 18-month cycle and hybrid courses mean academically at MSS? Students & families need to understand this better. What supports will help students/families navigate this confusing process? Which rights holders were consulted in the budget planning? Is there any plan to expand Bench Elementary with the closure of Central Elementary rather than continuing to rely on

portables? As Ms. Bennie is seconded to DV as principal, will her district role be reallocated to existing District staff to refund some of the cuts considering that seems to be an approach with other roles?

- **JStirling** - There are a number of teachers that are in District positions rather than in classrooms despite the fact that we have many classrooms without full-time teachers. Will this continue? Will travelling between Merritt and Princeton by SBO staff be reduced or omitted and moving online to save money?
- **Sarah S** - How much was spent to have 5 District reps present on the same topic at the BCSTA conference? Do you consider this a prudent use of resources? What will happen to positions at Central Elementary? Will they transfer to other schools? Will it be based on the seniority of staff members?
- **Tina Etchart** - Did you really suggest that the PAC's make a decision about Collettville becoming a dual track school? Perhaps let the PAC's take a crack at the budget.
- **Rani Bothe** - How many kids using bus from out in Quilchena? Route 1 and route 3 are doing some of the same stops or very close can they not be combined?
- **Sarah S** - When will the District shut down the smoke pit at MSS as per provincial law? Please answer the question: why weren't PACs/FAC included in the budget planning with other rights holders.
- **JStirling** - We have more admin, but less students. Admin used to teach off-timetable courses so teachers can stay in classrooms. This is not so much the case any longer. Why is that and will it change?
- **Sarah S** - Are you expecting students to do a grade 13 year if they can't get university prep courses or pre-requisites under the 2-year staggered cycle? How would they do science labs in a hybrid system?
- **Tina Etchart** - Why is the district refusing to recover bussing costs from students to get to school yet they charge pay per use for bussing while at school for curricular or extracurricular outings.
- **Amy Mierau** - if space is so limited (the size of the schools) is an issue with growth, why not keep the largest school functioning.
- **Stephanie Yakimchuk** - Catchment map was posted for the 2025 school year. Will kids be able to still attend the schools they are at if these kids are not in the catchment area? or are they grandfathered?
- **Tina Etchart** - There are a lot of barriers already and the district doesn't mind adding more. There's no problem charging the families once inside the school or they simply don't participate
- **Sarah S** - Parents came to the public meetings and sent emails but the budget was a done deal. Trustees are not elected to represent parents. That is why we have PACs that should be included in district planning
- **Rani Bothe** - Will grade 7 band still be offered next year in the district? Why haven't central parents not been informed before the meeting tonight?
- **Sarah S** - Will the District explore the precedent-setting Supreme Court of Canada case that compelled the provincial government to fund bus transportation to French schools based on Charter rights?
- **JStirling** - Just to confirm, teachers in district roles will stay in these roles despite classrooms not having full-time teachers, rather a revolving door of TOC's, TTOC's, and Librarians, etc.
- **Sarah S** - Will the District mandate the use of buses with seat belts at least for long distance trips?

ADJOURNMENT

25/101

Motion to adjourn was made by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Rainer

THAT the Open Board meeting be adjourned at 8:09pm


Chairperson


Interim Secretary Treasurer