



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

December 14, 2022

Hon. Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care
Room 124 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Singh,

RE: Request Aboriginal Meeting Places be Included in Area Standards Document

At the School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay In-Camera Board Meeting of November 9th, the Board carried the following motion:

THAT the Board send a strongly-worded letter to the Ministry of Education and Child Care asking them to amend the Area Standards document to include a space designated for an Indigenous Meeting place in new school builds and renovations.

For over a decade, our Board has advocated for dedicated spaces for Aboriginal students to learn and gather—a safe, inclusive space for *all* students to utilize, which embraces the area's local Indigenous histories, values and practices.

In his July 8, 2019 response to the Board's letter of March 13, 2019, then-Minister of Education, Rob Fleming remarked "The Ministry is supportive of opportunities to provide designated space for Aboriginal students to be comfortable, heard and respected and will take your feedback into consideration during our upcoming review of the *Area Standards*."

At present, we have not seen any changes to this Document, which currently acknowledges and reflects the additional space requirements of both special and supplementary special education, yet still does not recognize the need for a "Gathering Place" for Indigenous students. Our Board believes most strongly that such a space is essential to providing a culturally appropriate place where our Indigenous—and all students—will feel safe, comfortable, listened to and respected.

Doug McPhee (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Irene Bischler • Alysha Clarke
• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

While we acknowledge that a designated Aboriginal meeting space would be utilized very differently from, and would be much more inclusive than, the space used for special and supplementary special education, the need for—and value of—providing additional space for Indigenous students is equal to the need—and value of—providing additional space for special and supplementary special education.

Given Government's strengthened focus on Truth and Reconciliation, our Board fails to understand why government has not yet formalized a commitment to providing dedicated Indigenous meeting spaces within the Ministry of Education *Area Standards* document. As well as being the right thing to do, an indigenous Gathering Space would help fulfill #63 of the Truth and Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action:

"...to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:

...

iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect."

We would sincerely appreciate your review of this need for Indigenous students and for furthering reconciliation within our schools.

Please also review the attached several correspondences between the Aboriginal Education Department at Mount Baker Secondary School, School District 5 and the Ministry of Education, going back to May, 2012.

Sincerely,



Doug McPhee, Board Chair

Cc*: Hon. David Eby, Premier, BC New Democratic Party
Kevin Falcon, Leader, BC Liberal Party
Sonia Furstenau, Leader, BC Green Party
Tom Shypitka, MLA Kootenay East BC
Hon. Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Elenor Sturko, Critic for Education, BC Liberal Party
Karin Kirkpatrick, Critic for Child and Family Development & Childcare, BC Liberal Party
Carolyn Broady, President, BCSTA
BCSTA for distribution to member Boards of Education
Clint Johnston, President BC Teachers' Federation
Chris Schultz-Lorentzen, President, BCCPAC
Shelley Balfour & Chris Kielpinski, CFTA Co-Chairs
Patti Pocha, SD5 CUPE President

Doug McPhee (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Irene Bischler • Alysha Clarke
• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

Lies Salvador, DPAC Chair
Aaron Thorn, President, SD5 Administrators' Association
Denise Augustine, Director of Education and Learner Engagement, SD79
107.5 Today FM Radio
Drive 102.9/B104 Radio
Cranbrook Daily Townsman
Elk Valley Herald
e-know Online News
Fernie Free Press

*This correspondence is public and transparent. Please feel free to share and/or respond with comment.

Doug McPhee (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Irene Bischler • Alysha Clarke
• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

November 17th, 2021

Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education
Room 124 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Whiteside,

RE: Request Aboriginal Meeting Places be Included in Area Standards Document

At the School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay In-Camera Board Meeting of November 9th, the Board carried the following motion:

THAT the Board write a letter to the Ministry of Education asking them to amend the Area Standards document to include a space designated for an Aboriginal Meeting place in new schools.

For almost a decade, our Board has advocated for dedicated spaces for Aboriginal students to learn and gather. Given Government's strengthened focus on Truth and Reconciliation, our Board believes that now would be an ideal time to formalize a commitment to providing dedicated Aboriginal meeting spaces within the Ministry of Education Area Standards document.

Currently, this Document acknowledges and reflects the additional space requirements of both special and supplementary special education.

Our Board believes strongly that a "Gathering Place" is essential to providing a culturally appropriate space for Aboriginal students; a space where students will feel comfortable, listened to and respected.

While we acknowledge that a designated Aboriginal meeting space would be utilized very differently from the space used for special and supplementary special education, the need for—and value of—providing additional space for Aboriginal students is equal to the need—and value of—providing additional space for special and supplementary special education.

We would sincerely appreciate your review of this need for all Aboriginal students. Please also see the attached correspondence between the Aboriginal Education at Mount Baker Secondary School and the Ministry of Education, going back to April 2011.

Sincerely,

Frank Lento, Board Chair

Frank Lento (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Krista Damstrom
• Chris Johns • Kathryn Kitt • Doug McPhee • Wendy Turner • Patricia Whalen



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5
SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY

March 13, 2019

Hon. Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
1020 Hillside Ave
Victoria, BC V8T 2A3

Dear Hon. Minister Fleming,

Re: Amend Area Standard Document to Include Aboriginal Space at Mount Baker Secondary School

The Board of Education of School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay) at its regular public meeting on March 12, 2019 passed the following motion:

M/S that the Board write a letter of support to the Ministry of Education asking them to amend the Area Standards to include a space at Mount Baker Secondary School designated for an Aboriginal Meeting place. Letter to be sent in a package with the past letters of correspondence.

Currently, the Area Standards document acknowledges and reflects the additional space requirements of both special and supplementary special education. The use of additional space may be different for Aboriginal education than that of special and supplementary special education, its value to our students is the same.

Mount Baker Secondary School (MBSS) Aboriginal Education has been advocating for an amendment to the Ministry's Area Standard to include the addition of a designated space (allocated square footage) for a "Gathering Place" for the past 8 years. We believe that a "Gathering Place" provides space and a place for Aboriginal students to be comfortable, to be heard and respected.

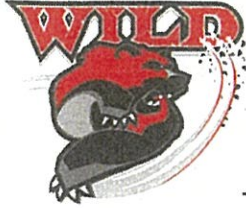
We would sincerely appreciate your review of this need for our students. Please also see the attached correspondence between the Aboriginal Education at Mount Baker Secondary School and the Ministry of Education.

Sincerely,

Frank Lento
Board Chair

cc: Trustees
Lynn Hauptman
Rob Norum
Debbie McPhee

Encl.



ʔakinmi ya·kiʔ ʔituqʔiʔqakʔamnamki Mount Baker Secondary School

1410 Baker Street Cranbrook BC V1C 1B2
Phone: 250-426-5241 Fax: 250-426-6673 mbss.sd5.bc.ca

February 12, 2019

Board of Education
School District 5 Southeast Kootenay
940 Industrial Road #1
Cranbrook, BC
Ktunaxa 'amak'is
V1C 4C6

Dear School District 5 Southeast Kootenay Board of Education Members:

Re: BC Ministry of Education Area Standards

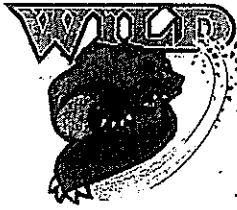
As we move forward in our endeavor to replace Mount Baker School, we are writing to request that School District 5 Southeast Kootenay Board of Education submit a letter of support for our continuing efforts to have the BC Ministry of Education amend the Area Standard. Without an amendment there will be no physical space for Aboriginal Education in a new school. Formally, beginning in 2011, we, MBSS Aboriginal Education, have been advocating for an amendment to the Ministry's Area Standard to include the addition of a designated space (allocated square footage) for a Gathering Place without avail. To date, the Government response has been unsupportive of change and have on one occasion suggested Aboriginal Education can utilize space designated for Special Education.

While we appreciate the recent changes in Aboriginal Education, notably the inclusion of Indigenous content into the new curriculum, a Gathering Place is essential for Indigenous students to escape the hegemony they experience daily within the current school system. We believe that a Gathering Place provides space and place for Aboriginal students to be comfortable, to be heard and respected. Without a designated space for Aboriginal Education, the current Area Standard positions us to utilize, barter and fight for space designated for other purposes within the policy standard.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. The BC Ministry of Education can be viewed at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/capital-planning/areastandards.pdf>. We have enclosed copies of previous correspondence regarding this matter. We look forward to your reply. If you have any questions please contact Debbie McPhee at debbie.mcphee@sd5.bc.ca or if in agreement, please mail your letter of support to Debbie McPhee at the address as it appears in this letter head.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie McPhee
for
MBSS Aboriginal Education Council



ᑭᐱᑎᑎᑦ ᙱᐱᑦ ᑭᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ
Mount Baker Secondary School

1410 Baker Street Cranbrook BC V1C 1B2
Phone: 250-426-5241 Fax: 250-426-6673 mbss.sd5.bc.ca

April 15, 2016

Honourable Mike Bernier
Minister of Education
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Bernier:

Formally, beginning in 2011, we have been advocating for an amendment to the Area Standard to include the addition of a designated space for Aboriginal Education increasing the Gross Area as it is currently designated by the Ministry of Education. We have been well supported locally in our endeavors.

June 6, 2014, we received a letter from then Minister of Education Peter Fassbender in response to his visit to Mt. Baker Secondary School. In his letter he notes that in the current Area Standard for new schools, Aboriginal Education can utilize designated Special Education space, a portion of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre, or in existing schools, convert excess spaces such as classroom space. Nowhere in his letter did he acknowledge that Aboriginal Education was worthy of designated space and worse asked us to consider utilizing existing space in our school after having been in our space which is a converted classroom.

While we are sincerely pleased with the recent changes in education especially the Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom Moving Forward and the First Peoples Principles of Learning. However, these changes cannot come at the expense of Aboriginal students; they must provide space and spaces for Aboriginal students to be comfortable, to be heard and to be respected. What then are the reasons the Government and their representatives continue to create conflict for Aboriginal Education by positioning us to utilize, barter and fight for space designated for other purposes through this policy standard. As indicated by previous responses and actions, what are the reasons the Government continues to believe that Aboriginal Education does not merit additional designated space in the Area Standard.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to your reply.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie McPhee on behalf of
Aboriginal Education
Mount Baker Secondary School
250-426-521 ext. 748
debbie.mcphee@sd5.bc.ca



June 6, 2014

Ref: 174058

Debbie McPhee
c/o Aboriginal Education
Mount Baker Secondary School
1410 Baker St
Cranbrook BC V1C 1B2

Dear Ms. McPhee:

Thank you for your letter of April 17, 2014, regarding the inclusion of designated space for Aboriginal Education in the Ministry of Education's *Area Standards*.

In a recent review of the *Area Standards* document, it was determined that there was sufficient opportunity within the existing standards to include designated space for Aboriginal Education. A number of the exceptions in Section 2.2.5 (such as for Special Education and Supplementary Special Education) could be utilized for Aboriginal Education if programmed as such. During the early stages of building design, educators and architects are encouraged to use the collaborative Integrated Design Process to articulate desired space needs within existing space parameters.

For new schools, you may be aware of the opportunity to incorporate up to 15 percent additional space to include a Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) within the school. The NLC area is programmed via a community consultation process, which has seen some districts include First Nations' space.

For examples of related NLC's, you might be interested in contacting staff in School District No. 70 (Alberni) where they incorporated meeting space for First Nations' elders, parents and students into their Alberni District Secondary School replacement project. Also, School District No. 43 (Coquitlam), which included an Aboriginal Learning Centre in their recently-opened Pitt River Middle School.

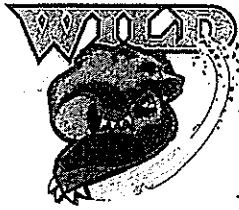
There are also a number of school districts with declining student enrolment that have converted excess space in existing schools into program-specific areas. I encourage you to consider this approach to create space for Mount Baker's Aboriginal Education requirements.

Thank you for your dedication to the students of the Southeast Kootenay School District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Fassbender".

Peter Fassbender
Minister



ʔakinmi yakiʔ ʔituq'itqakəamnamki
Mount Baker Secondary School

1410 Baker Street Cranbrook BC VIC 1B2
Phone: 250-426-5241 Fax: 250-426-6673 mbss.sd5.bc.ca

April 17, 2014

Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Education
P.O. Box 9045, Stn. Prov. Gov't.
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Minister Fassbender:

Formally, beginning in 2011, we have been advocating for an amendment to the Areas Standard to include the addition of a designated space for Aboriginal Education increasing the Gross Area as it is currently designated by the Ministry of Education. We have been well supported in our endeavours.

April 15, 2013, we received a letter from the then Minister of Education, Don McRae in response to his visit to Mt. Baker Secondary School. He confirmed in the letter that our request "has been noted by staff at the Ministry and will be included in discussion at a future time." Would you please provide us with an update of the noted discussion regarding our request?

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to your reply.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie McPhee on behalf of
Aboriginal Education
Mount Baker Secondary School
250-426-5241 ext. 748
debbie.mcphee@sd5.c.ca



April 15, 2013

Ref: 166930

Debbie McPhee
Sharon Trefry
Aboriginal Education
Mount Baker Secondary School
Email: debbie.mcphee@sd5.bc.ca

Dear Ms. McPhee and Ms. Trefry:

Thank you for your letter of April 11, 2013.

With regard to the Ministry of Education's area standards for new school construction, my colleague, George Abbott advised you that your request for increased area to enhance the provision of aboriginal programs would be fully considered as the standards are updated. I am pleased to confirm that your request has been noted by staff at the Ministry, and will be included in discussion at a future time.

I note your comments regarding the enrolment audit program and I am pleased to advise that analysis of Aboriginal Education programs and services are reviewed with the Ministry's Aboriginal Education program group to ensure consistent interpretation and intent of the current Ministry directives throughout the entire audit process.

For many years the Ministry has utilized an Audit Program Advisory Committee, comprised of school district officials and Ministry staff to aid in the development of an audit program that clarifies Ministry directives and enrolment reporting procedures as well as to provide advice and direction on the audit program. There are two individuals who act in an Aboriginal Education advisory role on this committee: Nella Nelson, Coordinator, Aboriginal Nations Education Division at the Greater Victoria School District and Ted Cadwallader, Field Director, Aboriginal Education at the Ministry of Education. I would encourage you to contact either of these individuals if you have recommendations for the evaluation of programs and services delivered to support Aboriginal students.

Thank you for your service to the students in your school district, and in particular to students of Mount Baker Secondary School.

Sincerely,

Don McRae
Minister

Ministry of
Education

Office of the Minister

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Location:
Parliament Buildings
Victoria



April 11, 2013

Honourable Don McRae
Minister of Education
P.O. Box 9045, Stn. Prov. Gov't
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Minister McRae:

A year ago, Minister George Abbott asked, what could the Ministry of Education do to support Aboriginal Education at our school.

At Mt. Baker Secondary School two areas were identified:

Area Standards

1. Area Standards: The Ministry of Education amend the Area Standards to include the addition of a designated space for Aboriginal Education. This would then increase the Gross Area that is supported by the Ministry.
2. Audit Process: The Ministry of Education continue to review the Aboriginal Education Audit to evaluate the quality of programs and services delivered to support Aboriginal students.

Thank you for your consideration to these matters.

Submitted with respect,

Debbie McPhee
Sharon Trefry
Aboriginal Education
Mount Baker Secondary School
250-426-5241 ext 748
debbie.mcphee@sd5.bc.ca

Mount Baker Secondary School

1410 Baker Street Cranbrook BC V1C 1B2
Phone: 250-426-5241 Fax: 250-426-6673 mbss.sd5.bc.ca



May 24, 2012

Honourable George Abbott
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Gov't
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Dear Sir:

Two questions were raised regarding Aboriginal Education at your visit to Mt Baker Secondary School, Cranbrook, BC earlier this year:

1. To amend the B.C. Ministry of Education Area Standards to include a designated space for Aboriginal Education
2. To revise the Audit process to more appropriately examine Aboriginal Education Services and Programs implemented to support Aboriginal students

Today we met with MLA Bill Bennett regarding these matters. We have asked Mr. Bennett's assistance in soliciting a response from you, Minister Abbott, to the questions presented that day.

Attached are a number of documents we believe are relevant to the questions

Submitted with thanks and respect,

Debbie McPhee
Sharon Trefry
Aboriginal Education
Mount Baker Secondary School
250-426-5242 ext 748
debbie.mcphee@sd5.bc.ca



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5
SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY

sent
April 15/11
C.M.

April 11, 2011

Honorable Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister of Education
P.O. Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister MacDiarmid:

The Board of Education of School District 5, at its Regular Public Meeting on March 8, 2011, passed the following motion:

"MOTION R-10-208

M/S that the Board write a letter to the Ministry of Education to strongly consider the addition of designated Aboriginal space under section 2.25 Exceptions of the Ministry of Education's Area Standards document."

Currently, the Area Standards document acknowledges and reflects the additional space requirements of both special and supplementary special education. While the use of additional space may be different for Aboriginal education than that of special and supplementary special education its value to our students is the same.

A sense of place, land and territory is personally, historically and culturally significant to Aboriginal Peoples and is important to promoting involvement rather than isolation or segregation in schools.

In order for Districts to truly meet the needs of Aboriginal students and increase Aboriginal completion rates, additional space for special projects, elders programs and gathering in general is invaluable.

We encourage you to strongly consider the addition of designated Aboriginal space in the Ministry's Area Standards Document.

Yours truly,

Frank Lento
Chairperson of the Board of Education

Cc: MLA
BCTF
BCCPAC