

**Under Embargo Until Tuesday, August 5, 2025 at 10:00am**

## **Public Engagement Session on September 9 Proposes Variation to Trustee Electoral Areas within the Greater Victoria School District**

**VICTORIA, BC** – Our community is invited to a public information and engagement session to learn about a proposed variation to Trustee Electoral Areas within the Greater Victoria School District. The session will be co-hosted and attended by the Greater Victoria School District, Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, the municipalities of Esquimalt, Highlands, Oak Bay, Saanich, Victoria, and View Royal, as well as the Capital Regional District (CRD).

### **INFORMATION SESSION DETAILS**

**Date:** Tuesday, September 9, 2025

**Time:** 7:00pm to 9:00pm

**Location:** SJ Willis in the gymnasium (923 Topaz Avenue)

**Format:** A brief presentation followed by an opportunity to circulate and ask questions to representatives of the school district, First Nations, municipalities, and the CRD.

**Digital Feedback:** For those unable to make the session, an [online feedback form](#) will be open from August 5 to September 11, 2025.

“Meaningful discussions with Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, local municipalities, and the CRD have resulted in proposed changes,” says **Sherri Bell, Official Trustee, Board of Education, Greater Victoria School District**. “Now, we are asking for our community to familiarize themselves with the proposed changes, ask questions, and help identify other items to consider.”

The collaborative discussions leading up to and including the proposed changes honour the District’s and local government’s commitment to and active participation in truth and reconciliation. The work aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) final report and its 94 Calls to Action, as well as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“It’s encouraging to see real steps being taken to make space for Indigenous voices in decisions that shape our kids’ education and futures,” says **Chief Jerome Thomas, Esquimalt Nation**. “This kind of collaboration shows what’s possible when we all come to the table with respect and open minds.”

The Greater Victoria School District received the letter dated March 19, 2025 from the Township of Esquimalt requesting the Minister of Education and Child Care to “direct School District 61 to create an inclusive and collaborative task force to consider a Trustee Electoral Area election model for the Minister’s ultimate consideration of approval for implementation in time for the 2026 Local Government/Board of Education elections.” This letter sparked additional letters of support for changes

to the trustee electoral areas within the Greater Victoria School District expressed by Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, and most municipalities that lie within the district.

“The Township of Esquimalt was the first to ask for this conversation out of our desire to build stronger relationships and reconciliation within School District 61,” says **Councillor Tim Morrison, Township of Esquimalt**. “Official Trustee Sherri Bell responded accordingly by facilitating inclusive collaboration among all our communities, which has resulted in our joint proposal for much needed reform on how we elect our school board and determine fair and equitable representation for the school district in which we all share.”

Upon receiving letters of support and direction from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, the Official Trustee formed a Task Force consisting of representatives of the Greater Victoria School District, Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, the municipalities of Esquimalt, Highlands, Oak Bay, Saanich, Victoria, and View Royal, as well as the Capital Regional District. Task Force meetings allowed for respectful discussion that resulted in the following proposed variation to trustee electoral areas which will also be detailed during the September 9 engagement session:

1. A shift from an ‘at large’ electoral model to a model with seven trustee electoral areas based on municipal and First Nations boundaries—a model that currently exists within most school districts in the province that serve multiple municipalities. The change has the potential to limit disproportionate representation of communities on the Board of Education and allow for more localized and inclusive representation, as well as create stronger relationships between the School Board and local Nations and municipal leaders.
2. There are no proposed changes to the number of trustees, which will remain at nine.
3. A distribution of the nine trustees amongst the seven electoral areas as follows:
  - Esquimalt Nation (1 Trustee)
  - Songhees Nation (1 Trustee)
  - View Royal / Highlands (1 Trustee)
  - Oak Bay (1 Trustee)
  - Esquimalt (1 Trustee)
  - Saanich (2 Trustees)
  - Victoria (2 Trustees)

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### Useful Resources

- [Capital Regional District Map](#)
- [Trustee Electoral Areas of School Districts in BC](#)
- [School Trustee Election Procedures in British Columbia](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

## About the Greater Victoria School District

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.

The Greater Victoria School District No. 61 (the District) includes the Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation, as well as the municipalities of Esquimalt, Oak Bay, Victoria, and portions of the Highlands, Saanich, and View Royal.

The District is proud to provide quality education for more than 20,000 students in 28 elementary schools (Kindergarten to Grade 5), 10 middle schools (Grades 6-8), and eight secondary schools (Grades 9-12). The District serves more than 1,500 Indigenous students. More than 1,000 International Students from across the globe attend schools in our District, and each year, over 650 adult learners register in the Continuing Education Program. The District also offers a variety of Programs of Choice, including French Immersion.

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