

FINAL REPORT

School District 50 – Haida Gwaii

Piet Langstraat

September 24, 2019



Final report

DATE: September 24, 2019

PREPARED FOR: Honourable Rob Fleming, Minister of Education

SUBJECT: School District 50 – Haida

PURPOSE: Final report on matters related to School District 50 = Haida Gwaii

Background

On December 18, 2018 the Honourable Rob Fleming, Minister of Education, appointed me as a Special Advisor to:

1. evaluate the Board's governance practices, including:
 - a. capacity
 - b. roles and responsibilities
 - c. culture and practices, including approach to conflicts of interest
 - d. relationships with district managers
 - e. relationships with stakeholders
 - f. compliance with legal requirements
 - g. accountability and evaluation mechanisms, including for senior staff; and
2. assist the Board in:
 - a. developing a strategic plan and ensuring alignment with other planning documents
 - b. recruiting, hiring and evaluating senior staff positions
 - c. understanding and carrying out effective board governance practices, and
 - d. any other matter arising from the evaluation described in subsection 3 (a) as required by the Minister.

Process

From December to May, 2019 I worked with the Board and senior staff of School District 50 on a number of matters.

1. Developing a Strategic Plan for the District.
2. Developing a Learning Framework to guide principals, teachers and other staff.

- a. Coordinating a data room exercise with senior staff, principals and Ministry staff.
- 3. The amalgamation of Tahayghen Elementary School and Gudangaay Tlaatsg'aa Naay Secondary School.
- 4. Superintendent Recruitment
 - a. Consultation
 - i. Public meetings in Masset and Skidegate
 - ii. Meetings with principals
 - iii. Meetings with union representatives
 - iv. Online consultation
 - b. Advertising and proactive recruitment
 - c. Shortlisting
 - d. Interview process
 - e. Contract negotiations
- 5. Preparing an application for the Human Rights Special Program for Employment Equity in order to proactively hire individuals of Haida descent.
- 6. The development of a Haida Immersion Program

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- 8. Supporting the Board with the process for a harassment complaint between the Secretary Treasurer and a trustee
- 9. Supporting the Board and staff with a by-election resulting from the resignation of a trustee

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Commentary

In my initial work with the District it became evident that the District was lacking clear direction and that there was little focus on student wellness, student learning and student outcomes. The development of a Strategic Plan with clear goals and the outlining of work required to develop accompanying

operational plans was fundamental in refocusing the Board and staff on the primary purpose of the work in the District.

The accompanying development of a Learning Framework to guide the day to day work of principals, teachers and other staff based on data provided to the Ministry was enthusiastically embraced by senior staff and principals. This work is ongoing under the direction of the new superintendent.

The release of the former superintendent and the appointment of an Acting Superintendent had created a situation where there was lack of continuity in leadership. The extensive public and staff consultation to ascertain the desired attributes of a new superintendent provided valuable input that guided the Board in its hiring process. I led the Board through the hiring process including engaging in the proactive recruitment of a number of individuals who I felt were suitable candidates for the role. The process resulted in the successful hiring of Carey Stewart.

Discussions regarding the amalgamation of Tahayghen Elementary School and Gudangaay Tlaatsg'aa Naay Secondary School had been ongoing for a number of years. Late in its mandate the former Board of Education had passed a motion to move ahead with the amalgamation. Little had been done since that time to move the process forward and it remained highly controversial in the community of Masset. Working the Acting Superintendent I undertook an extensive consultation process with the community of Masset, member of the Haida Nation from Old Massett and staff from the schools. In addition a steering committee was established with wide representation. This resulted in concrete plans and a timeline for the renovation of Gudangaay Tlaatsg'aa Naay to accommodate kindergarten to grade twelve students.

Fifty-five percent of the students in School District 50 are of Haida descent. The Board was seeking ways in which to support increasing representation of Haida individuals on its staff. In addition, the Board was seeking ways in which to more meaningfully support Haida language and culture. Working with senior staff and union representatives I spearheaded a renewed application to the Human Rights Special Program for Employment Equity in order to allow the District to proactively hire individuals of Haida descent. I also worked with the Board and senior staff to develop a three year plan to introduce a kindergarten to grade three Haida Immersion Program in Skidegate and Masset

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Throughout the term of my appointment as Special Advisor I researched documents and

correspondence to ascertain the credibility of these allegations. My findings were shared with the Board and, where appropriate, with the public. I was able to work with the Board to alleviate many of the concerns that had been raised.

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Next Steps

The District is now on a positive course. A number of foundational processes and structures have been established. The Strategic Plan and Learning Framework will guide the work of the District for the next three years. The support for Haida language and culture through proactive hiring of Haida staff and the establishment of a Haida Immersion Program will provide all students with First Nations perspectives and learning opportunities. The plans for the amalgamation of the schools in Masset will result in more appropriate utilization of space and ongoing operational savings for the District. The hiring of a new superintendent will provide stability of leadership into the foreseeable future.

It is my opinion that there are ongoing issues and concerns regarding the governance processes of the District. From June through August, 2019 I worked with the new superintendent to provide him with advice on how best to support the Board. While I was able to somewhat improve Board relationships and processes I believe that continued oversight is warranted. I would recommend that Ministry staff continue to monitor the activities of the Board of Education.