

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
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### **QELEŅSEN Á, LEN GIFTED AS NAME FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**LANGFORD, BC** – At the beginning of the 2022/23 school year, a new secondary school option was approved by the Board of Education for students in grade 9-12 looking to complete their education while in training for high performance programs for athletics or the arts. The secondary school is located inside the Eagle Ridge Community Centre and welcomed its inaugural class of students in January 2023. The school was temporarily known as Eagle Ridge Secondary School.

A consultation process for a permanent name of the secondary school began in September 2023. The process involved students, parents/caregivers, staff, school community members and the Indigenous Nations the Sooke School District works with (T’Sou-ke Nation, Sc’ianew Nation, Pacheedaht Nation, Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation). The Nations determined the gifting of a name would come through Sc’ianew Nation, which is the nearest nation to the school location.

The Elders of Sc’ianew Nation met in early November 2023 to discuss a name for the new secondary school. With guidance from SENĆOŦEN language teachers and local Elders Lavina Charles and Shirley Alphonse, the SENĆOŦEN name recommendation to bring forward for the school was QELEŅSEN Á, LEN Secondary School (pronounced K-wuh-Lun-Sun, Eh Lun). QELEŅSEN Á, LEN is SENĆOŦEN, and translates to “Eagle House”. The powerful spirit, resilience and grace that the Eagle symbolizes are the attributes that come with the word, QELEŅSEN and the word, Á, LEN means house or in this context, school. The Board of Education unanimously passed a motion to name the new secondary school QELEŅSEN Á, LEN Secondary School on November 21, 2023.

“By accepting a gifted Indigenous name for the school, we have an opportunity to contribute to the preservation, revitalization and the strengthening of local history, language and culture,” said Board Chair Amanda Dowhy. “As part of walking the path of reconciliation, the Board of Education is committed to embodying a sense of belonging in our schools and honouring the Indigenous peoples that have called these lands home since time immemorial.”

The Board of Education has accepted a gifted name for the latest school additions in the District; PEXSISEŅ Elementary School, Centre Mountain Lellum Middle School and SĆIÁNEW STĒLITĶEL Elementary. “Receiving a gifted name from the Nations in our District is a testament of the care that they have for these lands and the children who are growing and learning on them,” said Deputy



Superintendent Paul Block. “To borrow from Elder Shirley Alphonse, it is our responsibility to continue working side by side, supporting each and working together to ensure that the deep history, truths and connections to these lands are not lost and that the past is anchored to the present.”

With the acceptance of QELENSEN Á,LEN for the new school name, District Principal Wayne Kelly along with students and staff will begin working on a logo that they hope to share before the end of the school year.

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