

MINUTES

**LOWER NICOLA, NOOAITCH & SHACKAN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING
NICOLA-SIMILKAMEEN SCHOOL DISTRICT (NO.58)**

**ROCKY PINES COMMUNITY SESSION, ROCKY PINES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026, 4:30PM**

Success for ALL Learners Today and Tomorrow

Present:	Chairperson	G. Swan
	Vice-Chair	L. Ward
	Trustees	E. Hoisington J. Chenoweth D. Rainer
	Superintendent	C. Lawrance
	Assistant Superintendent	M. Sheldon
	Secretary Treasurer	M. Friesen
	District Principal of Indigenous Education	A. McIvor
	Director of Instruction – Inclusive Education & Early Learning	A. Moulard
	Executive Assistant	S. Chenoweth

Questions from the Public

Sharon Parsons, Lower Nicola Band Ed. Coordinator – Where is the city getting their numbers?

Chair Swan responded: We're hearing that there is supposed to be families moving into town, but nothing confirmed. There is a lot of talk from the city that 150 families are moving here, that is not supported by the district or the Ministry. We're not seeing that in any of our data, and neither is the Ministry. It would be great if was happening but were seeing a declining enrollment. Families are leaving, mill closures, lack of jobs, and housing instability.

Sharon Parsons, Lower Nicola Band Ed. Coordinator, Lower Nicola Band Ed. Coordinator Parsons – Has there been any talk about the Province giving more money?

Chair Swan responded: We are paid for the "bums in seats." On September 30, we do a count that is sent to the Ministry which then in December they tell us whether that count was correct. We base our preliminary budget that gets passed in April on the projections and that gives our funding amount. Selling buildings does not help operating budgets, the sale of the proceeds goes to capital only.

Mark Friesen, Secretary Treasurer responded: When the district drops below a certain percent there is what the Ministry calls funding protection. They give a small stipend to see you through the transition. But with our enrollment for our DL school, we have missed out on that. Our brick and motor schools are dropping, but our DL school offsets that for now.

Chief Tighe, Shackan Band – When are we going to come together to figure out how to use the power of our Valley? You have a tough decision to make. When are we going to come to the table and to try and fight the problems or hospital closures, education funding, we need jobs to come to the valley. Not once has the Mayor come to me to have a conversation. Racism is worse now than it was when he was a kid.

Superintendent Lawrance: It never goes away it just goes underground but we're seeing it pop up again. In hard times, it's hurtful, unkind, nasty comments coming from sitting in some of these meetings and have those things said. We stand up for our indigenous students and our communities, but it's pretty disheartening that there are people that feel comfortable sharing that in an open meeting.

Chair Swan responded: We welcome a working group from the FN communities, the City, TNRD, Interior Health, Big Business, ex: the mine, etc. Working as one unified voice to the Province will have more pull. Sharon, Lower Nicola Band Ed. Coordinator Parsons – I have been on the LEA and IEC with the district for 7 years, using our FN communities to try use the power and talk to the Province, but it all seems political.

Superintendent Lawrance responded: The Chiefs and the bands have more pull, when the Chiefs were going to meet the minister, Chief Stu and Chief Lee were lobbying and advocating for education with the Minister

Dale Shackelly, Councilor Nooaitch Band – Educational dollars for students, numbers haven't changed for years.

Trustee Ward responded: Per student funding has not kept up with inflation.

Chair Swan responded: He explained that the cost of salaries, benefits, aging infrastructure has not increased with the rising cost of everything.

Chief Tighe, Shackan Band – Needs of kids have changed over 20 years; kids have more needs. When you show up with the real data they will start to listen, things start to get real, fast

Dylan Richardson, Shackan Band Administrator – Year 2 facts, 6.8 EA's is there an incline or surplus if a school doesn't close?

Superintendent Lawrance responded: If we don't close a school, this will happen. We had to cut positions last year. Janitors took the biggest hit last year, moving from 12 months to 10 month contracts.

Brandy Porada, parent Nicola-Canford – There is a petition going around to hold off for one year. What is your thoughts on that? If we wait, will have to go through this process again?

Superintendent Lawrance responded: Holding off a year means that in the first year we cut \$477,000. So, holding off for a year means there will be 2 FT literacy and numeracy teachers cut and there will be 2 less counselling positions. We would be reducing services to kids. Which, when we talk to the community, our parents said with no question, services and teachers, EA's, people who have contact with kids, they don't want cut. They want teachers and EA's next to our kids and the last thing they want is to reduce staff. I am aware of the petition and there's misinformation in there, which is interesting because the person who put the petition together has been to several meetings and has been provided with the same information that we provided today. We did have reserves in previous years that were used to balance the budget.

Brandy Porada, parent Nicola-Canford – The city has increased their rental rates for fields. We can't afford it as a volunteer soccer group. increasing their rental rates, for fields.

Brandy Porada, parent Nicola-Canford – It will affect everyone, not just the schools that are on the list. I know teachers who have come out of Nicola-Canford and go to the board office. She also talked about positions at the board office – Why is more money being spent there?

Sharon Parsons, Lower Nicola Band Ed. Coordinator responded: There has been title changes that may be confusing people.

Superintendent Lawrance responded: We have teachers that come out of schools and become an itinerant teacher. For example, the ELL teachers, Healthy School Teacher and Student Support Teachers. This then has opening in the schools that need to be filled. These are not District office positions.

Trustee Chenoweth responded: At our last public meeting, it was expressed that people want the process to go down to two options.

Chair Swan responded: We will make the decision at the March board meeting.

Chief Lindsay, Shackan Band – When do you have to make the decision?

Chair Swan responded: March 2026

Brandy Porada, parent Nicola-Canford – Moving schools from Central to Collettsville. How will that affect busing students to Collettsville?

Chair Swan responded: We only bus the rural FIM students to Collettsville.

Brandy Porada, parent Nicola-Canford – Questioned the Mamit Lake catchment area? Central or Nicola-Canford? Would we make the change to send more kids to Nicola-Canford?

Chair Swan responded: Mamit Lake bus goes to Central. We actually did cost out, the bus would have to go all way down to Nicola-Canford and drop kids and then head back out into town. Another thing is we looked at what if you added 20 more minutes on the bus that last kids on the bus was getting on at 7:30 but is now getting on at 7:10 am.

Brandy Porada, parent Nicola-Canford – I'm pure sure that most of those kids get driven by their parents.

Trustee Hoisington responded: When you're talking about an extra 10 minutes on the bus to kids that is big.