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To: Finance, Facilities & Technology Committee

Prepared By: Jason Reid  
Secretary Treasurer

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Subject: ŚÉŚÍŚÉJ Childcare Centre Historical Display

Date: January 30, 2024

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## Purpose and Background

The purpose of this briefing is to present the plan for the historical displays at the ŚÉŚÍŚÉJ Childcare Centre for approval by the Board.

At the April 19, 2023 Regular Meeting, when the Board approved the name of the ŚÉŚÍŚÉJ Childcare Centre the Board also directed “*that a display be created for the site to honour the history of the land pre and post contact.*”

## Historical Display Plan

### Pre-Contact History

The concept for the pre-contact history was developed by District Vice Principal Maire Walker in consultation with the Indigenous Education Department and reflects the planned focus of the early learning program. Through a nature-based early learning program rooted in WŚÁNEĆ ways of knowing and being, children at the ŚÉŚÍŚÉJ Childcare Centre will establish a sense of community, place and belonging leading to smooth transitions into future education. First Peoples Principles of Learning will be woven through the fabric of the programming to ignite an understanding of Indigenous perspectives.

The planned approach for the pre-contact historical display is to create an outdoor story walk display that will be interactive for early learners in the childcare program and that will be accessible to the community. The story walk will display WŚÁNEĆ culture including pre contact history and Indigenous ways of knowing including native plant species. Saltwater People will be a resource to reflect pre contact history in the interactive display. This display will include elements similar to the “Beyond the Fence” display at Lochside Elementary.

The display will be installed on the property outside of the fenced children’s play area, with components visible to children within the play area. The detailed design work for the display has not yet been completed as the site was not accessible for this project while under construction. If this concept is approved by the Board, district staff including Indigenous Education Department staff will design the story walk display in consultation with the local community, and then engage a contractor to complete the installation. Project budget of \$15,000 has been allocated for the creation of this display.

### Post-Contact History

The post contact history begins with the donation of the land and its use as the site of the South Saanich School from 1873 to 1913 and ends with the opening of the ŠEŠIŠEJ Childcare Centre. The plan is to mount a framed display in the entrance to the childcare centre, which includes a historical narrative and two historical photographs (circa 1879 and 1908) of South Saanich School (see attachment). The framed display will be similar in size to other framed displays mounted in the Board room.

The narrative summarizes historical information documented through the consultation process, with much of the school and site history provided by Mr. Brad Morrison in 2017, who at that time was the Archives Manager at the Sidney Museum. The photographs were provided by and will be used with the permission of the Saanich Pioneer Society. Before incorporating into the display, we will explore options for improving the quality of the images.

In developing the plan for the post-contact history, I consulted with descendants of the donor who had also participated in the earlier community consultation process. Feedback from family members was considered and reflected in the historical narrative. A request by some family members to include pictures of Mr. and Mrs. Turgoose in the display was considered; however, these photos were not incorporated into the proposed display (see attachment), because of the risk of perceived imbalance in conveying each of the pre-contact and post-contact history. Including photos of one or a few historical Indigenous persons in the pre-contact display is not practical and is not consistent with the planned approach for the display.

### Staff Recommendation

That the Board approve the proposed plan for the pre and post contact historical displays at the ŠEŠIŠEJ Childcare Centre.

With respect,



Jason Reid  
Secretary Treasurer

Attachment: Post Contact History (Narrative and Photos)

## **Brief History of South Saanich School and ŠEŠIŠEJ Childcare Centre**

In 1872, the newly formed South Saanich School District identified the need for a new school, as the existing school off of Mt. Newton Cross Road was in poor condition and too distant to serve school age children located in the southern portion of the district.

On April 7, 1873, Mr. William Turgoose donated two acres of land from the corner of his farm to the trustees of the South Saanich School District, with the condition the land be held and used for public school purpose.

*“... unto the Trustees of the South Saanich School District (hereinafter referred to as the said Trustees) and their Successors forever Upon Trust To hold and use the same for Public School purposes in the said District”*

South Saanich School, a school house measuring 25 feet by 50 feet, was constructed and opened on the donated site in 1873 with 53 pupils attending between the ages of 5 and 16. Mr. and Mrs. Turgoose’s children and grandchildren attended the school, and today their descendants, including the Michell family, continue to live and work on the Saanich peninsula.

A teacher’s residence was constructed on the site during the 1875-76 school year, and an addition was built on the school in 1882. South Saanich School operated for about 40 years until 1913 when it was replaced by Saanichton School and Keatings School.

Following its closure in 1913, the school house was used as a manual training school for a number of years. In 1915 the teacher’s residence was destroyed by fire, and the school house was torn down in 1933. Following removal of the school house, the site remained vacant and unused for the next 90 years due to the condition on the property’s donation restricting alternate use of the site. In 1917, the property’s title was transferred from the now defunct South Saanich School District into municipal government and in 1964 the property was transferred to School District No. 63 (Saanich).

In 2016, School District No. 63 (Saanich) commenced a public consultation process focusing on the following question: *“What should the School Board do with the White Road property so that the educational needs of our students and community are best served and the wishes of the donor are respected?”* As the property is not suitable as a modern school site due to its smaller size and location, identifying a suitable alternative “public school purpose” was a key objective of the consultation.

Following an extensive community consultation, in October 2018 the Board of Education approved completing a review considering the benefits and feasibility of creating a Nature Based Early Learning Centre on the property. In October 2020, the Board of Education approved an early learning and childcare program plan and facility plan for a funding application to the Childcare BC New Spaces fund. Project funding was confirmed in the spring of 2022 and construction began in the spring of 2023 following successful rezoning of the property.

In April 2023, the Board of Education approved naming the new facility ŚEŚÍŚEJ, a SENĆOTEN word recommended by local Elders meaning “Little Forest”. The ŚEŚÍŚEJ Childcare Centre opened on [date] serving up to 84 children and families.



