

Board of School Trustees  
School District No. 57 (Prince George)

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

**MCLEOD LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**June 17, 2003**

**MINUTES**

Present:

Bill Christie, Chairperson  
Carlene Keddie, Trustee  
Michelle Marrelli, Trustee  
Fred McLeod, Trustee  
John Rustad, Trustee  
Patricia Wick Thibault, Trustee  
Dick Chambers, Superintendent of Schools  
Bryan Mix, Secretary-Treasurer  
Wendy De Marsh, Executive Assistant (Recorder)

Absent:

Lyn Hall, Vice-Chairperson

In attendance:

Norma Hart, Principal, McLeod Lake Elementary School  
Josie Tylee  
Sabrina Tylee  
Jodie Ware  
Verne Solonas  
Pat Cowan  
Georgina Chingee  
Sharon Dugan  
Betty Abbs  
Elizabeth Solonas  
Fred Inyallie Sr.  
Allan Inyallie

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1. Opening Remarks

Mr. Christie called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. and had everyone introduce themselves. He explained that the meeting would be informal and that no speakers' list would be used.

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2. Board Presentation

Mr. Chambers explained that there was no desire on behalf of the Board or the district to close rural schools, as long as the supplemental funding for them was provided by the Ministry of Education. He noted, however, that the projected enrolment for September at the school had been a concern since earlier in the spring, when it appeared that there might be as few as 13 students at the school in the fall. At that time, Mr. Chambers explained, he had initiated discussions with the McLeod Lake Indian Band's education supervisor, Valerie Inglis, and written a letter to the band, about the options that were available should the enrolment of the school continue to decline. The options were to leave things as they were, to close the school and bus the students to Morfee Elementary School or to have the students from the community go to school in the band's education centre.

Mr. Chambers explained that it now appeared there would be only six students in attendance at the school in September, and that it was his belief that this would not be a good educational situation for the students. For this reason, he had recommended to the Board that it consider closing the school. He explained that he and the Board were very disappointed to have to be considering that decision.

Mr. Chambers noted that the Board had received one letter of input regarding the proposed closure of the school, which was from a band member in support of the closure.

3. Discussion

Mr. Christie opened the floor to anyone who wished to speak. An informal discussion ensued, during which the following issues and concerns were raised:

- The importance of the school to the community
- The cultural significance of the school to the McLeod Lake Indian Band
- Request that families have a choice between Morfee and Mackenzie Elementary Schools
- Concern about the potential loss of the school's Sekani language program
- Suggestion that the school building be kept open for community use, such as adult programs and a CAP site
- The possibility of the school re-opening should the area population increase
- Concern that families might choose to home school their children rather than send them in to Mackenzie
- Concern that if the building were closed up, its condition would deteriorate and make it unusable in the future should it be needed again for a school
- Concern about the opportunities for social development with only six children in the school
- Concern that the bus ride into Mackenzie is too long for small children

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- Suggestion that the band hire a teacher to work with young children who are kept home by their parents instead of being enrolled in school in Mackenzie
  - Concern that students will not receive the same level of support at a larger school as they receive at McLeod Lake

It was agreed that Mr. Chambers would meet with representatives of the band on June 27 to discuss the continued use of the building should the Board decide to close the school.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.