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Pender Harbour and Area Residents Association



... our communities association

March 11, 2020

RE: Proposed name change: Madeira Park to salalus

Reference: Provincial Government letter, Provincial Toponymist 23 Jan 2020, file# 10280-60 (92G/05,92F/09).

To: Lori Pratt, Chair, SCRD

Dear Lori Pratt:

We are writing on behalf of the Pender Harbour and Area Residents Association (PHARA) and the Pender Harbour and Area Chamber of Commerce regarding the proposed name change of our community from Madeira Park to salalus. We understand this proposal has been initiated as part of the Foundation Agreement (2018) between the Provincial Government and the shíshálh Nation. One of the major tenets of this agreement is the requirement to consult with stakeholders. For this reason, we are excited to see the Province and the SCRD requesting our input. Reconciliation can only proceed in a favourable light if all stakeholders are included in deliberations on matters of mutual concern. This proposed name change is being opposed in its present format for a number of reasons.

One cannot deny that shíshálh Nation people lived here before non-Indigenous people. However, there is also a newer history of the land, one that began with indigenous and non-Indigenous settlement and that too deserves recognition. For both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who live in the area, the name Madeira Park holds a much more significant heritage value than salalus.

Madeira Park was named after a well-known family led by Joe Gonsalves who was originally from Madeira, Portugal. Gonsalves, who married Susan Harris, an Indigenous woman, was one of the first Europeans to settle in the area in 1904 and became a very well-respected business owner. He purchased most of what is now called Madeira Park. When the federal government

requested a name for the community for its postal service, Gonsalves' youngest daughter, Theresa, told them to call it Madeira Park. The name honours the many accomplishments of Gonsalves and his mixed-race family. Changing the name would be disrespectful to those descendants of Gonsalves who live here and who consider it part of their identity. A number of these descendants and a strong majority of those who live here have made it clear that they are strongly opposed to a name change. We believe it should be up to the people who built the community of Madeira Park and who live here to decide to keep or change its name.

The shíshálh Nation has a strong case for restoring some of its traditional names, but this can be done while still respecting the modern history of established communities. We understand Madeira Park was not as historically important to the shíshálh as the winter gatherings were across the harbour in Garden Bay. Consequently, there appears to be no historic shíshálh name for Madeira Park and we are told that salalus refers to a narrow canoe pass in the area.

We anticipate strong community support if the Skardon Islands or other agreed-upon geographical features were given traditional shíshálh names. As noted, if we'd had a conversation before this, then we could have come up with something acceptable to all of us.

Changing the name of a long-established community is not a simple matter. If adopted in its current form it would subject its residents and government to enormous hardship, loss of identity (branding) and cost. The name Madeira Park will no longer appear on maps. Businesses and residents would be forced to change their address and personal identification, banking information, credit cards and all government documentation including passports. The Federal post office names would have to be changed. All of this would be costly to the Federal, Provincial and local governments as well as each individual resident.

As stated previously, we are opposed to the name change as proposed. We are looking forward to undertaking this process of consultation with all parties: the Province, the shíshálh Nation, the SCRD and local community representatives while developing a mutually acceptable solution to a proposal that could become a setback in the reconciliation movement we are trying so desperately to achieve.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Robson
President, PHARA

Dave Milligan
President, Pender Harbour and Area Chamber of Commerce

Cc; Warren Paull, Chief, SIB; Leonard Lee, SCRD Area A Director; Chair, Area A Advisory Planning Commission; Carla Jack, Geographical Names Office