

# Pender Harbour and Area Residents Association



BOX 15  
MADEIRA PARK, BC  
V0N 2H0  
board@phara.ca

**To:** Trent Thomas  
BC Geographical Names Office  
[Trent.Thomas@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Trent.Thomas@gov.bc.ca)

Re: File: 10280-60 (92F/09, 92F/16  
92G/12, 92i/04)

December 14, 2022

Dear Mr. Trent Thomas:

The following is our response to the proposed name changes by the shíshálh Nation for 10 geographical features on the shíshálh swiya/Sunshine Coast/Jervis Inlet area.

The Pender Harbour and Area Residents Association (PHARA) recently poled the Pender Harbour/Egmont community, asking them to comment on the 10 proposed geographical place name changes. We communicated through emails to members, an article in the local monthly magazine, the PHARA website and Facebook page. It was overwhelming clear that the community opposes all of the proposed name changes, especially that of Pender Harbour, but many would be okay if both names were used—*as long as the current names were not replaced*. Only a single respondent supported all of the name changes.

Note that a number of respondents quoted from your policy and procedure guidelines for place name changes: *“First priority shall be given to names with long-standing local usage by the general public. Unless there are good reasons to the contrary, this policy should prevail.”* In keeping with this policy, it is very clear that the current names have been in long-standing local usage for generations by the general public.

We have attached some of the comments we have received. However, three key points were raised over and over: That the current names have been for many generations and should be given priority; That the proposed names are unpronounceable to the vast majority of the general public; that there was some support for using both names, giving priority to the existing names or equal billing, but there was absolutely no support for eliminating the names currently in use.

Here are selection of representative comment (exclusive on the many that simply said absolutely not to the 10 place name changes):

*We have owned property own Pender Harbour for fifty years and had friends who lived here thirty years before us—a total of 80 years. The current names have always been in use. There is no significant Aboriginal population in Pender Harbour at the present time. The historical record of habitation is just that—historical. We are strongly opposed to name changes taking into account that the proposed names are unpronounceable.*

*History is attached to the current names and they are in common use by a large percentage of the population. I do not see what purpose it serves to change them at this time except to cause total confusion, e.g. charts, maps, addresses, pronunciation, etc.*

*We have owned a home in Pender Harbour for over 20 years and we are completely opposed to the proposed name changes. The existing names have long standing use by the general public. There is no compelling reason to change the names. In addition, the existing names should be given priority as provided in the BC Geographical Names Policy and Procedure. [In addition] alternate aboriginal names are difficult to pronounce and residents will likely not adopt usage.*

*We have no issue with signs providing the aboriginal names in brackets below the common names, however the commonly used names should remain on all signage and maps and should be given priority and prominence on the signs.*

*I am...curious to know if the Official Languages of Canada are going to be expanded to include words like "sew?amin" that are spelled phonetically. In English and French "?" is not a letter, it's a punctuation mark. What legislation would have to change for "sew?amin" to become a legal name? English and French don't use phonetic spelling, so why should the First Nations languages use phonetic symbols to spell words. I expect there would more acceptance of many of the proposed name changes by the general public if the proposed names followed a conventional English or French spelling rather than the phonetic spelling that has been imposed on the First Nations by the clergy that were responsible for many of the atrocities to their people. How invested are the First Nations in these phonetic spellings? Perhaps "sew?amin" could become "Sewamin" and we would just have to learn how to pronounce that name.*

*Enough already. This is ridiculous.*

*Having two names is, in my view, sufficient to identify places and allow the First Nations to claim back their original names for places. However, the consideration of completely changing these names including the charts for all the waters along the coast seems both reckless and costly. Marine safety should be considered first along with all that entails. If someone is in trouble, could they say where they are if the name changed and if they did know, would the Search and Rescue know? It is unlikely that the hundreds of thousands of charts currently being used would be replaced by boaters. Having two completely different sets of names for locations*

*without redundancy would not be a well thought through plan. I am against a complete switch in names.*

*Please note and register my objection to any and all name changes as noted below, this would require long term confusion, costs and possible navigational safety. While supportive of recognizing Indigenous heritage, a proper name change of all maps, navigational charts, signs and would require excessive coordination, costs, confusion, navigational safety and take resources away from other far more important public issues.*

*First Nations may have noted these places via language, however, these names, it is well known, were oral and not recorded or written. We would prefer that the names stay as they are currently. There are many things more appropriate on which the Govt should be spending taxpayers \$.*

*We both support the name changes as requested by the Shishalh nation. However, we think that a single name might cause confusion in location and navigation and therefore suggest that both—settler, and indigenous—be used as the official place names.*

*If the First Nations want to see recognition of the ancestral lands, the name should appear secondary to the names that have been used for the past two hundred years. Unnecessary millions of dollars will be spent to update charts. Maps etc.*

*The Pender Harbour name has been in use for generations, is well and widely known, and is represented on charts, documents, boating books and tourist references in addition to all of the familiar local use. As a boating and tourism community, Pender Harbour benefits greatly from having a well-known name.*

*I am against the name change of Pender Harbour. I was born here in the Garden Bay Hospital. I have lived here most of my life as six generations of my family have. The people of Pender Harbour have made it what it is today and it should be up to them if they want the name of Pender Harbour changed.*

*I feel very strongly that any area associated with navigation charts or with high tourist profile, like Pender Harbour and Jervis Inlet (en route to Chatterbox Falls) should not be changed. In principle, I object to changing any place names to names which are not commonly used or easily pronounced by the vast majority of British Columbians. This action creates resentment and racism as it seems more like appeasement than meaningful reconciliation.*

*Although these areas may at one time have been the winter home of the shishálh nation, Pender Harbour is now the home of people of many other nationalities and races. Renaming the area will not restore the shishálh winter encampment and will erase the history of those who know it as Pender Harbour. The new names are not only meaningless to many of the current population but they are also unpronounceable to most of us.*

*We cannot rewrite history but we can inform ourselves and respect the history and cultures that now make up Pender Harbour. Changing the names of our harbour and our towns will not promote harmony or empathy for the previous populations.*

*I am opposed to renaming for the sake of change. I see it as vindictive—not to orient people to places and directions, it is about seeking revenge and not the well being of society. I am particularly surprised by the desire of The Shishalh nation to change the name of Deserted Bay and River. I see those names as important to inform people of the desolation from Smallpox and to change that is to deny the great suffering and toll of life the disease took, on the first nations people.*

*I think this would be outrageous. Pender Harbour is internationally known yachting and tourism destination with a long and distinguished history. It would be a terrible shame to change the name of such a historic port. A true travesty.*

*As a resident of Madeira Park I find it hard to believe that local and provincial governments are spending money on area name changes when we have housing, highway and water issues that need to be addressed.*

*I have no opposition to Indigenous names being introduced as long as the English names have joint billing. Retaining the English names is vital for locals, tourists, emergency responders.*

*I strongly object to this name change... it makes no sense to anyone. However, I have no problem if both names were used, and people can then select the one they prefer.*

Respectfully yours,



Peter A. Robson  
President  
Pender Harbour and Area Residents Association  
604 788 6977/board@phara.ca