

Contact:

Deanna Pfeifer, Media Coordinator

P: (250)-514-2860

E: pfeiferdeanna@gmail.com

For Immediate Release - Mar. 7, 2022



Community Members Organize in Opposition to Proposed Public Land Sale by School District 61

SAANICH – On Feb 27th, over 100 local residents gathered near the Lansdowne Middle School South Campus to oppose the proposed sale of a publicly held land along Bowker Creek a 1.9-acre natural area essential for wildlife habitat, water quality, and flood protection in the Bowker Creek watershed.

According to The Friends of Bowker Creek, an estimated 50 percent of the watershed is covered by impervious surfaces such as parking lots, roofs, roads, and sidewalks. As such, natural areas and pathways along Bowker Creek are highly utilized and treasured by local communities for their high ecological value - an increasingly rare commodity in the CRD. Nature space, including the land proposed for sale, has become a symbol of health, well-being and urban wildlife protection in Greater Victoria.

Over the past 2 months members of the public have expressed adamant disapproval of the sale at a series of [School District 61 Board meetings](#). Organizers say pressures to further develop and sell off this land are at odds with the essential need to preserve what ecological value is left within the area. Additionally, the underpublicized land disposal process has skirted ministry policies and ignored decades of environmental planning and restoration efforts in the watershed.

At the event, Tiffany Joseph, a Tsartlip community educator, shared Indigenous perspectives about the creek, as well as the lands upstream, and the estuary that connects Bowker to the Salish Sea. She acknowledged her Lekwungen relatives and WSÁNEĆ ancestors, who cared for the creek since time immemorial, and how colonization has and continues to affect these waterways.

Camosun Community Association President Lisa Timmons delivered an impassioned presentation decrying a proposed sale of public land to private interests, removing much-needed school land and green space from the public trust while communities face densification.

A puppet show, based on a creek story by community artist Carolyn Knight, heartened those gathered before colorful “Save Bowker Creek” banners held by a smiling group of children and adults were paraded along the Richmond Road sidewalk and around the school.

What’s next? A final vote to decide the future of the land will take place on March 14 (deferred on February 28th). Members of the community [can view the recorded proceedings](#) on the SD61 website.

The community’s [Change.org petition](#) has exceeded 100 signatures as of March 7

Quotes:

“As we plan for climate change-driven realities in the 21st century, the idea of building on a floodplain is reckless. This land is not surplus, but instead crucial environmental infrastructure for mitigating peak water flows and atmospheric river episodes, which cannot be ignored, underestimated or overwritten any longer. Surely discussions can determine an appropriate place for the sacred services that hospice provides without compromising our neighbourhood’s ability to combat the climate crisis.” — Carolyn Knight, Community Eco-arts Educator

“The Rally brought us all together, with all our various gifts and talents, to fight for something so important to us. Some of us have spent decades working on the restoration and protection plans of Bowker Creek. I want to be a part of the healing of the land and protect it from development for the good of all, for generations to come.” — Deanna Pfeifer, Director of local grassroots campaign Rodenticide Free B.C.