



# ORGANIZATIONAL NAME CHANGE TOOLKIT

## Introduction

This Toolkit is intended to help you navigate conversations (with members, leadership, clients, or the public) and decisions about changing your organization or business's name. We know this process is different for everyone but hope you find this resource helpful. We have included the experiences and recommendations of those who have already undergone a name change, as well as background information and additional resources to assist you through your journey.

## Survey

In November 2023, The Name Matters surveyed businesses and organizations that have already undergone name changes. We were thrilled to received 20 responses.

There was a lot of information shared, and many respondents are willing to speak with you directly about their experiences with the name change process (see last page for details).

Let's keep the conversation going!

Here is what we've learned from the people who completed our survey.

## Why have businesses and organizations changed their names?

- Out of respect for the Tla'amin Nation
- As an act of reconciliation
- To better represent the entire geographic area
- To better align with their own values

"We changed the name of our Accordion Fest to reflect the wishes of the Tla'amin Nation, as a small act of reconciliation, and to better represent the geographic area our festival covers." - *Karina Inkster, co-director of the qathet Accordion Fest*

## What steps are recommended?

- In some cases, the initial recommendation to consider a name change comes from members, or the public. In others, it comes from leadership. Either way, once the recommendation has been made, a first step is to work at a leadership level to develop shared, clear, and informed messaging
- Deeply consider, and establish a proposed new name
- If hoping to use an ʔayaǰuθəm word/phrase in your new name, write a letter of Intent to Tla'amin Nation Executive Council ([Admin@tn-bc.ca](mailto:Admin@tn-bc.ca)) and ask for permission.
- Optional: Seek and respond to input or questions by way of facilitated dialogue sessions and/or surveys (do so in a way that is contained and does not invite polarized debate)
- Change the name and related materials (logo, signage, website, business cards, letterhead, social media handles, banking info, etc)
- Celebrate the new name, share it widely, and tell the story about how and why you changed your name

### Additional steps for non-profit societies:

- Provide adequate information to members about the proposed new name, and reasons for changing it
- Hold a vote among members
- Make an application for name change through BC Societies Act

“Everything went well as we organized in advance and chose a Friday to implement the name change (to have the entire weekend to ensure we did not forget anything).” - *anonymous*

“We canvassed our members to produce a short list, and then voted at our AGM. The vote was unanimous.” - *anonymous*

“We had a board director who did the lion's share of the work. We were lucky. It was a lot. After the name change was certified we had to change logos, stationary, social media, etc. All worth it to make the change.”  
- *Jacquie Donaldson, President of qathet Friends of the Library*



### Don't forget!

- Check your organization by-laws to see name change requirements
- If your business or organization belongs to a provincial body, check for name change requirements at that level
- If you are a non-profit, apply to the registrar of the BC Societies Act to formally change the name
- Register the name for all financial and legal documents

## What is some advice for businesses and organizations contemplating a name change, recognizing it is currently a polarizing issue?

- Develop clear and respectful internal dialogue and ways of working together through the decision to change a name, before reaching out to members or the public. Take the time needed for this to happen well.
- Make your values explicit. Develop a clear understanding of a) what you propose, b) why you propose it, and c) how you propose doing it.
- Once clear on your proposed course of action, share it with those who have a say or are impacted (i.e. members or community members, depending). Be informed, straight-forward, and respectful.
- Be willing to listen respectfully, and develop mechanisms for feedback that are discreet and unlikely to cause harm or publicize misinformation.
- For businesses in particular, consider how you will address a potential loss in advertisers/customers. How might you adjust your target clientele and attract new advertisers/customers to align with this decision?
- Invite participation and ownership in the process. Holding facilitated or informal conversations, inviting logo designs, and sharing in decision-making can build collegiality and pride in the decision.

“Know your organization and keep the dialogue open. The physical name change process was easy, the decision making process was lengthy.” - *anonymous*

“The process was delineated in a very detailed plan that was approved unanimously by the Board in Oct. 2021. Without this written plan showing exactly what would be involved, it is doubtful the Board would have moved forward with the idea. They wanted to ensure the process would be simple, painless and successful as the winds of dissension were already gaining momentum in the community.” - *anonymous*

## What does it cost to change a name?

- Many businesses and organizations said costs were negligible.
- Most businesses and organizations said the costs were minimal and included changes to materials, application to BC Societies Act, and staff time (for paperwork, communications, etc).
- Some businesses and organizations said the costs were notable (\$1500-\$2000).
- Other businesses mentioned lost advertising revenue and/or revenue from individual clientele who objected to their name change. These costs are ongoing and unknown, but substantial in at least one case (many thousands of dollars).

“Costs were only the same as regular marketing and communication costs.” - *qathet Youth Community Action Team*

“The costs were minimal.” - *Patricia Winchell, qathet Regional Cycling Association*

“There are some clients who were mad and volunteered their opinions. There were clients that clearly stated that they would not return to our business because of the name change. Of course, there was overwhelming positive feedback as well.” - *anonymous*

## How can changing a name be part of a broader decolonial or anti-colonial effort? What happens after or alongside a name change?

There is no formula for this, but the items below may inspire - or complement - your business or organization's approach:

- Acknowledge Tla'amin territory and ensure this acknowledgement informs decision-making and actions moving forward.
- Identify reconciliation as a key priority in your strategic plan.
- Hire Tla'amin and other Indigenous people; invite Tla'amin representatives to your Board of Directors.
- Create working relationships/partnerships with the Tla'amin Nation.
- Ensure decision-making and content/services are meaningfully informed by Tla'amin perspectives.
- Center and uplift Tla'amin voices.
- Continue learning and create ongoing learning opportunities for staff and volunteers,
- Provide cultural safety and anti-oppression training for all staff and volunteers,
- Cultivate culturally and emotionally safe services, content, and working environments,
- Develop a truer and more complete understanding of our history and present-day colonial realities.
- Support and/or organize community events that advance reconciliation. View all work through the lens of reconciliation and make changes where this is challenged.
- Create a reconciliation team/ working group to enhance understanding and capacities.
- Have informal one-on-one conversations about the name change, its significance, and other reconciliation efforts as opportunities arise.
- Stay curious!

““We have just completed our strategic plan and reconciliation is one of our priorities.” - *Ann Kurtz, qathet SAFE*

“The more that voices of Tla'amin are raised in the sense of solidarity THE BETTER!!! For everyone and future generations” - *anonymous*

## Continuing the conversation

**Thank you for being part of this ongoing conversation.** This toolkit is likely to generate questions and the desire for additional information. You are welcome to contact the following list of people directly about their organizational name change experiences:

- Adriana Virtue, [qathet Food Hub](#), [adriana@liftcommunityservices.org](mailto:adriana@liftcommunityservices.org)
- Ann Kurtz, [qathet SAFE](#), [akurtzpr@telus.net](mailto:akurtzpr@telus.net)
- Gary Shilling, Executive Director, [qathet Film Society](#): [gary@qathetfilm.ca](mailto:gary@qathetfilm.ca)
- Jacquie Donaldson, President of [qathet Friends of the Library](#): [jacquiedonaldson56@gmail.com](mailto:jacquiedonaldson56@gmail.com)
- Karen Kamon, President, [qathet Art Council](#): [qathetart@gmail.com](mailto:qathetart@gmail.com)
- Karina Inkster, co-Director, [qathet Accordion Fest](#): [karina@karinainkster.com](mailto:karina@karinainkster.com)
- Kevin Turpin, [qathet Physiotherapy](#): [turpinmeister@gmail.com](mailto:turpinmeister@gmail.com)
- Patrick Brabazon, former Chair of the Powell River/[qathet Regional District](#): [brabazon@shaw.ca](mailto:brabazon@shaw.ca)
- [qathet Youth Community Action Team](#): [youth@qcat.ca](mailto:youth@qcat.ca)

## Background and Additional Resources

Many local organizations and businesses have changed their names in support of the request from the Tla'amin Nation that the City of Powell River consider a name change. Here's some background on that request:

- [City of Powell River Possible Name Change](#)
- [The Name Matter's Q and A](#)
- 2021 Tye article: [Powell River Wrestles with Changing Its Colonial Name](#)
- 2023 Tye article: [The Case for Changing Powell River's Name](#)

And here are additional resources, if you would like to learn more:

- Tla'amin place names: [Photo History of Powell River](#)
- First Voices (dictionary and phrase collection): [Sliammon](#)
- [We Are All Treaty People](#) by Keith Carlson
- Joint Working Group final report (including recommendations): [The Report](#)



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