



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TUMBLER RIDGE PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION REPORT



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Tumbler Ridge Preliminary Consultation Report

Safer Schools Together | School District No. 59 (Peace River South)

PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

This executive summary prepared by Safer Schools Together (SST) for School District No. 59 (Peace River South) documents the findings of a confidential community consultation conducted between March 23 and May 4th 2026, following the mass shooting at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School on February 10, 2026, an event that resulted in profound loss and ongoing trauma for students, staff, families, and the wider community.

The consultation took place during an active period of collective grieving, disruption, and recovery, while students, staff, and families were navigating altered learning environments and processing the impacts of violence within their community. The purpose of the consultation was to inform decisions regarding next steps for local school facilities, including a trauma-informed and culturally relevant secondary learning environment in Tumbler Ridge. This included consideration of continued use of the existing building, the potential construction of a new secondary school, site location factors, school configuration, and access to learning spaces and educational programs. This executive summary captures the dominant findings, where the community agreed and where perspectives differed, considerations for decision-makers, and recommended next steps for consideration by the Board of Education and provincial partners.

SCOPE AND SCALE OF ENGAGEMENT

The consultation engaged a broad cross-section of the Tumbler Ridge community over a five-week period, combining surveys with facilitated discussions to capture both breadth and depth of experience. Engagement included:

- A student survey completed by 116 students in Grades 7 to 12.
- A confidential online community survey completed by participants across multiple cohorts, including families, school staff, First Nations Rights Holders, emergency responders, municipal representatives, and community members.
- Private and small-group meetings facilitated by senior SST staff, including dedicated sessions with victims' families and individuals directly exposed to the violence.

Many respondents had multiple roles within the community, reflecting the interconnected roles common in small communities. Throughout the process, SST prioritized confidentiality, trauma-informed engagement design and facilitation, and the central inclusion of student voice and victims' family perspectives. The consistency of responses provided a strong evidentiary base for identifying decision-relevant themes and considerations despite the challenging timing of the consultation.

WHAT WE HEARD

Across the consultation, the voices of victims' families, students, and individuals directly exposed to the violence carried particular weight in shaping the findings below. Their perspectives, grounded in lived experience, were consistently acknowledged by other cohorts as deserving central consideration. The themes that follow reflect this prioritization, while also capturing the broader range of community input.

Psychological Safety and Trauma

There is strong consensus across students, families, and staff that the existing Tumbler Ridge Secondary School building is psychologically unsafe. Trauma exposure is described as severe and specific, repeatedly tied to particular sensory memories. Participants consistently echoed that learning cannot occur without psychological safety, and forcing return to the school was described not just as harmful but as wrong. Those not directly impacted expressed sympathy for students and staff who were most affected, and there was concern that the impact of traumatic stimuli cannot be reliably predicted.

Student Voice and Choice

Across cohorts, participants emphasized that students' voices and lived experiences must remain central to decisions about the future learning environment. This was framed not as a courtesy but as an ethical and trauma-informed necessity: decisions made without students' meaningful input risk compounding the impact of the tragedy. Participants also recognized that students are affected differently depending on their experiences, and that no single decision can reasonably be expected to meet every student's needs.

Use of the Existing Building

There were varying views on whether the existing building should be removed, renovated, or preserved, though the debate centred on how transformation should occur rather than whether trauma exists. Some participants described simply seeing the building as traumatic. Others indicated they might be able to return to a renovated building but worried about what would happen if they were psychologically unable to do so once renovations were complete. Some emphasized that the building must be made completely unrecognizable. Concern was also expressed for students who may complete the rest of their high school experience in portables and the potential impact this may have on their educational program.

Educational Continuity and Learning Loss

Participants expressed a heightened sense of urgency about educational disruption during the interim period, with fear of prolonged reliance on portables and concerns particularly acute for students in Grades 10 to 12. Educational loss was tied to student disengagement and to a loss of independence and potential developmental regression. This was framed as a current concern rather than only a future risk, with concrete examples including single-class schedules, no labs, no gym, and no electives. Participants also raised the risk of families leaving Tumbler Ridge pre-emptively in response to continued disruption.

Trades, Life Skills, and Specialty Programming

This emerged as the strongest area of consensus across the consultation, with near-universal agreement that existing trades, life skills, and specialty spaces and programs are non-negotiable. Participants drew direct links between these programs and student engagement, mental health regulation, employment pathways, and community identity. There was clear emphasis not only on preservation but on expansion, including dual credit, modern equipment, First Nations-led spaces, and integration with social-emotional learning and trauma recovery. The loss of these spaces and programs would be experienced as punitive. Any future school must match or exceed the capacity of the existing spaces and programs.

Staffing, Retention, and the Future of Tumbler Ridge

Participants drew a direct connection between school infrastructure decisions and the long-term viability of Tumbler Ridge. Concerns were raised about teacher loss, recruitment challenges, and reliance on teachers on call, with educators themselves described as carrying collective trauma. Some educators expressed concerns that a return to the building could exacerbate existing trauma and negatively impact their mental health and well-being, while others raised fears of systemic collapse if a return is mandated, citing daily lived experience and

trauma activators. Participants also drew stronger connections between school decisions and healthcare recruitment, expressed concern about the insufficiency of current and long-term mental health supports, and linked education stability to the town's overall sustainability.

Safety

Participants consistently expressed a desire for improved security while rejecting excessive, fear-inducing measures. Participants framed safety as something to be achieved through environmental design and implementation of school safety training, products, and other initiatives.

Location, Accessibility, and Northern Realities

Walkability, winter climate, and the lack of public transit were identified as decisive factors in determining a future site, with central location framed as essential. Participants emphasized that visibility matters as much as distance, with some respondents describing how they plan their daily routes to avoid seeing the existing building. For some, the desire for a site near the town centre influenced their broader response to whether they wanted a new site at all, as they did not feel another location within walking distance of town was available.

Identity, Grief, and the Future of the Site

Participants expressed strong agreement that, if the school is removed, the site should be transformed into something life-affirming. Suggestions included gardens, splash parks, sports grounds, and youth-focused spaces, with a clear preference for joyful remembrance over tragedy-focused approaches. Participants opposed somber, static memorials, drawing a clear distinction between meaningful remembrance and retraumatization.

School Configuration and K-12 Models

There was predominant opposition to a combined K-12 configuration, with concerns centred on safety, age separation, and developmental appropriateness. Participants opposed a combined model because of fears it would compound trauma and concerns about cultural and developmental impacts. Some conditional support for a combined model was expressed, but it was limited and heavily restricted.

LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The findings of this consultation must be understood within the context in which it occurred. The consultation was conducted approximately six weeks after a mass shooting that profoundly affected a small and tightly connected community, while many individuals were still grieving and assessing their capacity to re-engage. Participation reflected readiness and emotional safety as much as interest or perspective, and some community members most severely impacted may not have yet felt able to participate. The compressed timeline, while necessary to inform urgent decision-making, limited opportunities for follow-up, and perspectives may evolve over time. These limitations do not undermine the findings. The consistency of core themes across cohorts despite these constraints strengthens confidence in the conclusions drawn, and reinforces the importance of interpreting results through a trauma-informed lens.

DECISION CONSIDERATIONS

Several decision-relevant considerations emerged clearly from the consultation:

- ◆ Trauma associated with the existing building is ongoing and compounded by delay
- ◆ Prolonged uncertainty increases risk of heightened levels of anxiety, student disengagement, staff attrition, and family relocation
- ◆ Loss of programming would be experienced as an inequitable outcome of the tragedy
- ◆ Visible commitment to a clear path forward is important to restoring stability and trust

Together, these factors underscore the importance of timely, trauma-informed decisions grounded in the lived experience of those most affected.

RECOMMENDED PATH FORWARD

Based on the consultation findings, SST recommends the following course of action:

Build a new secondary learning environment with a high priority on a location close to town centre resources.

A new secondary learning environment should be developed at a centrally located site, with accessibility treated as a primary consideration. Given transportation limitations and winter conditions, students must be able to walk to school within a reasonable distance, and the Middle Bench area is identified as the preferred location to support equitable access. While some participants indicated that re-entry into the existing building might be possible if it were substantially altered, many expressed uncertainty about their psychological readiness and concern about the consequences should re-entry prove unsuccessful. SST recognizes the legitimacy of these concerns and recommends proceeding with the development of a new facility, supported by a representative committee, assembled by School District No. 59, that engages the voices of students, staff, and families.

Ensure the existing building is not used for future student learning.

Given the extent of trauma associated with the site, continued use of the existing building for student learning is not recommended. The scale of renovation required to mitigate traumatic stimuli raises serious concerns and many participants indicated that the building's visual presence itself continues to carry significant traumatic impact. SST therefore recommends removal of the school, accompanied by a trauma-informed process led by victims' families wishes and those most impacted by the tragedy. SST recommends consideration for cultural and spiritual protocols identified through input from First Nations Rights Holders, including Elders. SST also recommends establishing clear timelines for the removal of the existing facility, both to demonstrate visible progress on the path forward and to address the ongoing impact of the building's visual presence on students, families, staff, and others affected by the incident.

Ensure the school configuration is for a separate secondary school.

Future planning should retain a distinct secondary learning environment rather than a combined K-12 model. While some participants acknowledged potential benefits of a shared space, predominant feedback emphasized age-appropriate separation, developmental needs, and student safety.

Ensure that the future learning environment provides programming and learning spaces comparable in scope and quality to those of the former building.

The future learning environment must provide programming and learning spaces comparable in scope and quality to those of the former building. A failure to do so would be experienced as punitive and would compound the educational losses already arising from the tragedy. Beyond restoration, the new build offers

an opportunity to develop innovative, community-connected learning spaces (i.e., outdoor education and skills-focused programming aligned with regional strengths) that could attract educators and families to Tumbler Ridge. Connections with local businesses and mentorship pathways should be explored to support student engagement, employment opportunities, and post-secondary transitions. A representative committee should be established to inform decisions about design features, learning spaces, trauma-informed considerations, and the possible incorporation of meaningful elements from the former Tumbler Ridge Secondary School building.

CONCLUSION

There is strong, consistent agreement that returning to the existing Tumbler Ridge Secondary School building is psychologically unsafe for many students and staff, and that this position is grounded in lived experience and a shared understanding of the conditions required for learning and healing. At the same time, the community has articulated a clear expectation that educational opportunities, programming, and identity must not be diminished as a result of the tragedy. Decisions about school facilities are therefore understood as central to student recovery, staff retention, and the long-term future of Tumbler Ridge. Sustained attention to interim planning, including academic programming, access to community resources, and ongoing trauma support, will be essential during the transition to a new learning environment. The path forward must prioritize the voices of those most affected, including victims' families, staff, and students most affected by the violence. It must also reflect a sustained commitment to psychological safety, educational continuity, and community healing. The decisions made at this juncture will shape the conditions under which a generation of students learn, recover, and remain in the community.



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