

June 2, 2021

Honourable Jennifer Whiteside, MOE
Honorable Murray Rankin, MIRR
Honourable Mitzi Dean, MCFD
Premier John Horgan
MLA Sonia Furstenau, Leader of BC Green Party

Re: School District 61 Budget 2021/22

The 1382 Indigenous children and youth who attend school in the Greater Victoria School District are represented by four connected, but distinct Indigenous communities:

- Songhees Nation
- Esquimalt Nation
- Metis Nation of Greater Victoria
- The Urban/Off-Reserve community.

Leaders from these four communities have gathered together, along with the former parent representative of the School District 61 Board of Trustees Indigenous Ad Hoc Committee, to address current issues arising from budget discussions.

Prior to, and throughout, recent budget discussions, the needs of our children and youth have not been adequately addressed by this school district. Indeed, our children's needs have been pitted against the needs of other children in the school district. Moreover, throughout this time, the Board of Trustees has repeatedly acted in an offensive manner to the Nations upon whose traditional territory the school district is located. The school district has continued to ignore the presence of and the assistance offered by the urban and Metis communities. The failures of the school district, including its Board of Trustees, has put our children, and therefore our communities, at risk.

As we have had to so many times in the past, we are now speaking directly to those who ultimately make the financial decisions that affect our children and communities.

Together, we request that the Ministry of Education consider:

1. accepting the deficit carry over for this fiscal year (in light of the pandemic and recent concerns) and/or
2. increasing the allotted funding to help alleviate the deficit.
3. granting an extension and mandating a renewed consultation process to ensure that an unjust budget built upon systemic racism isn't forced through on procedural grounds.

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This is the right thing to do, at this time of reckoning. We are sure that you will comprehend the harm that chronic underfunding and systemic racism has done to Indigenous students, families and communities. It is crucial that action be taken now. Our Indigenous peoples have the fastest growing population of children in Canada. Forward planning is critical.

We look forward to your government meaningfully implementing and acting on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in this Province.

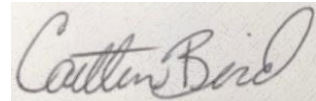
For the children,



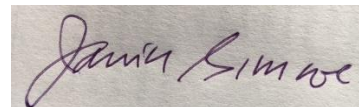
Esquimalt Nation
Chief Robert Thomas



Songhees Nation
Chief Ron Sam



Metis Nation Greater Victoria
President, Caitlin Bird



Urban Peoples' House
Chair, Janice Simcoe

Indigenous Parent, and former Ad Hoc Committee member
Carey Newman - Hayalthkin'geme