

Hi, I'm Mary Ann Watson and this is my husband Marvin.

We're here to bear witness to the issues brought to light by the SD61 budget process. We appreciate the opportunity to express our concerns.

Our family are Holocaust survivors. This quote by Marvin's mom from The Last Days of Auschwitz in Newsweek January 1995, expresses our motivation for our children to participate in music as well as sets the "life after death" feeling the budget process caused.

Quote

"By whim of the commandant, an orchestra of inmates was commissioned to serenade the prisoners as they marched off to the factories, mines and construction sites. "This was the unreal thing: this beautiful music," says Rachel Piuti, who came to Auschwitz in 1944 from a labour camp in central Poland. "We marched out, the music accompanied us. We marched back, the music welcomed us. This is why it seemed already like life after death."

The budget process triggered our family's intergenerational trauma. It was disturbing with blatant white supremacy and anti-Indigenous racism. It was evident throughout the budget process and it permeates SD61's culture.

A multitude of discriminatory incidents were embedded in the process, in survey questions, presentation slides and in the words and actions of staff and trustees in multiple meetings. The lack of basic human decency was evident when the May 28th meeting was not paused for 215 little souls to be grieved. A basic human right was denied. It felt like a hate crime.

The message that OUR children mattered LESS was familiar. Our kids too have faced hate/bias incidents while attending SD61. The discrimination policy is never followed. We were told to get over it or faced retaliation, victim blaming, dismissed, blocked or blacklisted. No justice & no peace.

Justice requires people be held accountable for acts of hate/bias.

SD61 does not abide by its own bylaws, policies and regulations. Trustees ignored Policy 8251 The Trustees' code of ethics. Section A primary obligation 1.

Fail.

(1. I will strive to meet the individual needs of each child regardless of their ability, race, colour, gender, sexual orientation or any other bias or discrimination.)

Many other policies and regulations were breached: First Nations Education, Equity, Consultation, Communications and Discrimination, to name a few. The complete lack of respectful dialogue was also familiar.

The Communications policy requires commitment to the principle of open, two-way communication, a shared responsibility of the Board Chair and Superintendent. Yet, a Trustee admitted on camera...

Quote

"When I listened to our rights holders and our stakeholders, our partners, our parents, even our students talking about wanting to communicate, they are not asking for another news media release. They are not asking for another webpage or another posting. What they are asking for is for a dialogue..."

The Discrimination Policy states, "In order to create a school and district culture which supports diversity, all members of the school community must be expected to model respectful conduct and to refuse to tolerate any form of discrimination." This includes Trustees and senior admin.

According to multiple rights holders and stakeholder's letters as well as the public record, Senior Admin committed discriminatory acts that require investigation and disciplinary action.

We insist that these four actions be taken.

1. An investigation with true consequences for the hate/bias incidents/crimes throughout the budget process that were in violation of the Charter of Rights. (and SD61 bylaws, policies and procedures. (BC Ombudsman or BC Human Rights))
2. A third party audit of hate /bias incidents with recommendations. This data is already supposed to be recorded. Where is it?
3. A new hate /bias incident policy and procedures that addresses when senior admin are implicated. Collect, analyze and respond to race based data.
4. Address issues related to the _____ during this budget process. We recommend _____ while a proper investigation is conducted into the hate/bias incidents in the budget process and until consequences are determined. Until this happens, healing of damaged relationships with rights holders and stakeholders as well as restoration of SD61's reputation and public trust can't begin. We almost didn't attend today's meeting, after Carey Newman withdrew as a presenter, as THE Four Houses had not been invited or informed in a timely or respectful manner. To my limited knowledge the message could be something like "there is no about us without us."
We would like to request that our speaking notes as well Carey Newman's public social media post /letter and the Rushing the Budget Through June 6 Recommendations also be included in the agenda and minutes for this mtg.

Thank you

