

Hi. I'm Mary Ann Watson, this is my husband Marvin. We would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak. We're, however disappointed to be here, again requesting the SD61 Board of Trustees uphold its obligation to investigate, address, resolve and remove racism.

Racism is systemic in SD61. An ugly truth witnessed by ourselves and others whether it's acknowledged or not by the majority of this board and senior admin. It was exposed, and requests for an investigation publicly made repeatedly in March, June and August.

The superintendent office's September 9 letter to my family acknowledged the harm to our family resulting from racist postings and apologized for the distress. Notably, no accountability was offered, no resolutions, no reconciliation. Saying our complaint was taken "seriously and thoughtfully" and the "board and super" rendered their decisions, the matter is now considered closed. But nowhere in the letter were the words "investigation" or "accountability" or 'appeal' mentioned.

We assure you this systemic racism and white privilege impacts our children's learning environment and achievement leaving victims with life lasting trauma. It seems the Board and Super's office are suggesting to the Greater Victoria School community the decision regarding systemic racism and discrimination in the district can be made without serious investigation into this public complaint and without appeal. *SD61's complaint policy provides the process for how a complaint is to be investigated. Why was it not used?*

The "anti-racism word salad" solution offered was for the Super to create a professional development plan to raise awareness and competency of senior admin and trustees around reconciliation, colonialism and systemic racism. The letter mentioned they all took a one day cultural perspectives training session in August.

So to be clear, the board and senior admin decided to spend student education funds on courses for themselves with even more professional development plans ahead, instead of choosing to order a third party investigation into systemic racism and the hate bias incidents during the budget process. Instead of just being anti-racist and respectful of the people who have lived experience or already have anti-racism training, this board and senior admin chooses to keep insisting that they've done no wrong, and will not conduct an investigation. While claiming that they are educating themselves.

No amount of courses are going to qualify this board and admin to speak on or make decisions for minorities. NONE. YALL must get this idea that you can make decisions "about minorities without minorities" out of your heads, it's full blown bigotry.

It seems the complaints process and appeals process are combined into one for minority complaints.

Stepping back as chair is not a resignation. It's insulting and dismissive of the harm caused to Indigenous and minority students.

Taking courses and hiring special advisors using the kids' education funds when racist conduct by trustees and senior admin happens is a perverse robbery of already marginalized students.

This conduct is reminiscent of March 1st when Patti Bacchus commented on our current chair's conduct. She described it as " In total, _____ cited the boards bylaws seven times in a meeting that lasted 27 minutes as if they were some sort of divine direction and not just the board's made up rules being used as tools of oppression to maintain colonial power and governance structures. So much for situating oneself with an open heart."

We were asked by the interim Super what our kids thought of the sd61's response to systemic racism. Our eldest said "All they do is create mechanisms to prevent change while having a facsimile of action". The same can be said about procedure.

You all have a responsibility to do what's right for the students in your charge, and the community at large.

In her latest report, BC's Rep for Children and Youth Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, points out that indigenous-specific racism and systemic racism exists in the education system. She further states that processes to investigate and examine the root causes and extent of this racism, and how to address it has not yet advanced.

We are now calling on SD61's antiracist trustees, staff, rightsholders, stakeholders and the community at large to lobby Minister Whiteside to request an Addressing Racism in Plain Sight investigation into SD61 and BCED. Obviously this board and senior admin are not going to honour SD61's own code of conduct or policies, regulations and bylaws or the BC Human Rights Code or Canadian Charter of Rights. As such they can't be trusted.

An addressing racism in plain sight investigation into SD61 and BCED is required