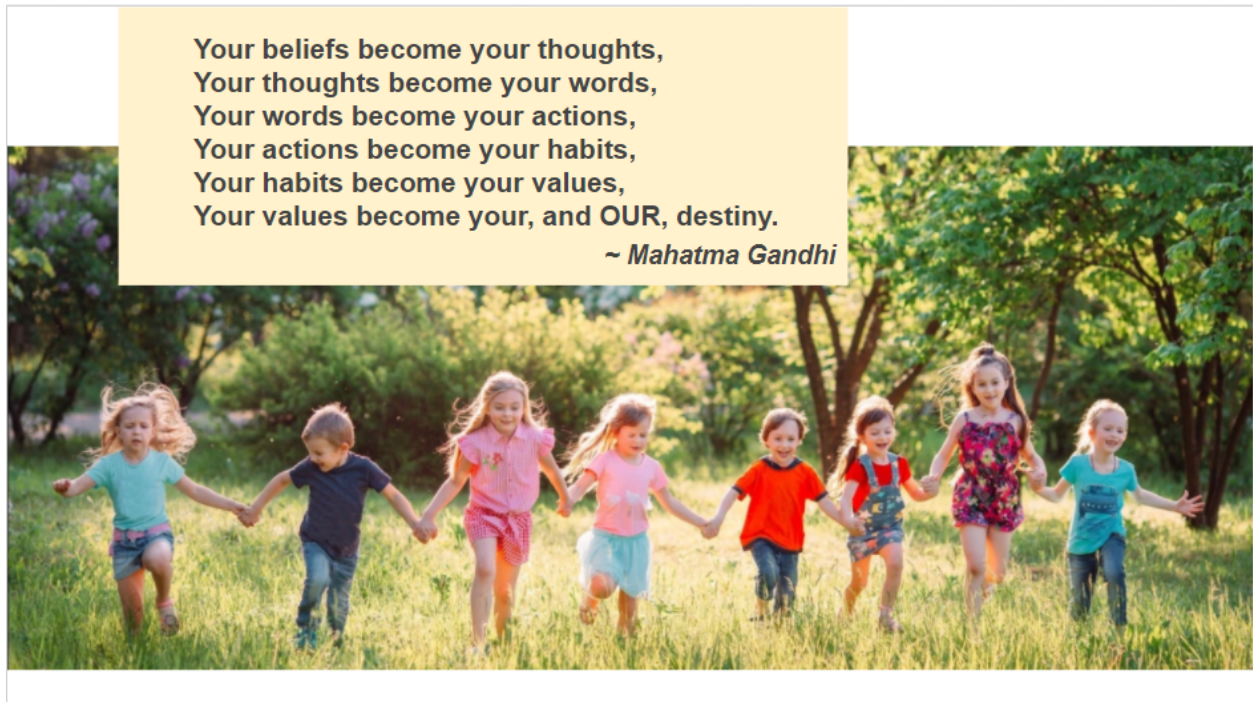


**Feb. 28, 2022 SD61 Board of Education meeting**

**Presentation by Isabel Cordua-von Specht**

**Slide:**



Your beliefs become your thoughts,  
Your thoughts become your words,  
Your words become your actions,  
Your actions become your habits,  
Your habits become your values,  
Your values become your, and OUR, destiny.

*~ Mahatma Gandhi*

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Isabel Cordua-von Specht.

To start, I invite you to read this quote from Gandhi:

Your beliefs become your thoughts,  
Your thoughts become your words,  
Your words become your actions,  
Your actions become your habits,  
Your habits become your values,  
Your values become your destiny.

Trustees, your values have the power to shape the destiny of this community in a profound way.

What do we know to date of your values?

If your values are shaped by your habits, here is what we know:

- That you engage in agreements unbeknownst to the public, without prior consultation. (Lansdowne South is not the only one to suffer this process.)
- That once these agreements are made public you “consult” in a manner that is best defined as a one-way communication exercise.
- That you do not answer questions and concerns that the public raises with you. Where are your responses to the hundreds of submissions you’ve received?

In fact you stated to me at the Feb. 14<sup>th</sup> Board Ops meeting that my questions were "not questions we're going to answer in the public."

- That you dismiss the need to be accountable to the public for your decisions. At the same Board meeting, the Trustee decision-making process was described as follows:

"They gather the information, when they feel they have the information one way or another, they make a decision. That's the process."

We don't get to understand how you arrive at that decision, what factors you've considered, with whom you've engaged to deliberate the issues.

And, beyond these habits, there are individual actions you've taken that are drawing the attention, and ire, of the public. You are facing:

- 1) community reaction to the non-transparent processes surrounding the proposed lease of Vic High land,
- 2) an outcry against this proposed land sale on Lansdowne South - as demonstrated by the over 800 signatures on a petition started just one weeks ago,
- 3) And censure for your disregard for consultation requirements set out in SD61 Regulation 7110 and Ministry Policy 1163.

Most recently you took the unprecedented action of suspending 2 Trustees, an action questioned by many, including Trustees Whiteaker and Duncan. You are a deeply divided Board, a situation most evident at the Board meetings I've witnessed.

There is a crisis of confidence in the Board: Songhees Nation has called for your resignations, the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association has voted "no confidence" in the Board, the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils has stated that it has "lost confidence in this board's ability to conduct itself in a democratic manner," and there are many more in the community who are watching in dismay.

I believe you have lost the legitimacy and authority to make this enormously impactful - and as hundreds have communicated, harmful - decision to sell this land. PLEASE show us tonight that you are up to the task of the leadership role vested in you by the public. It is not too late to do so.

We call on you to step away from this sale.

That action would be significant. It would demonstrate your responsiveness to what the community is telling you. It would demonstrate your ability to change your minds, to change your beliefs and thoughts regarding an issue.

Is it possible that you simply did not know about the true value of this land to the community? That you were unaware of all the issues that converge at this site? Consider taking a page from Lisa Helps' leadership approach of admitting to having gotten something wrong. That is okay. That we can respect.

And then what? What is the best way forward to recover from this crisis? How can you bring back into repute your standing as "Trustees"?

It is time to rebuild your and our confidence and Trust in the unity, integrity, and competence of the Board. Trust is engendered by demonstrating a pattern of trustworthy actions. Such action

would include supporting open, honest dialogue within the Board and with the community to achieve the best, informed outcomes.

I believe in the heartfelt desire each of you have, in becoming a School Trustee, to serve our students and the public for the greater good. But that desire to serve needs to be founded on an alignment, using Gandhi's framework, of your beliefs, thoughts, words, actions, habits, and values.

Trustees, your values have the power to shape the destiny of this community in a profound way tonight:

1. You have the power to affect this and future generations of students – the amount of school space they have to learn in, the amount of green space they have to thrive in, the learning opportunities they gain from living and learning next to a creek, and the wildlife they get to experience.
2. You have the power to affect the quality of life in this community as it densifies, as more single family homes are replaced by large complexes with little outdoor space.
3. You have the power to affect the financial security of downstream homeowners hit by serious flooding.
4. You have the power to affect ecosystem health, including the health of Bowker Creek and the wildlife that depends on it.

What values will you represent today? What legacy will you leave? We ask you to leave a legacy that you and our grandchildren can be proud of: say NO to selling this land on Lansdowne Middle School south campus.

Thank you.