



DATE: February 7, 2022

TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Rhonda Nixon, Superintendent

SUPPORT: Vessy Mochikas, Assistant Superintendent, Inclusive Education; Mike Bowden, District Principal

RE: BC MÉTIS FEDERATION

(PUBLIC – FOR INFORMATION)

RATIONALE

Our Board of Education cherishes its relationship with our diverse multicultural population of approximately 14,500 students, approximately 15 percent of which are of Aboriginal ancestry. The Aboriginal Education Council and the District work collaboratively to ensure that we meet the needs of each Aboriginal student and their families. As Superintendent of Schools, I work closely with our Board of Education and Aboriginal Education Council to further the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action within our school district.

BACKGROUND

Upon learning the tragic news of the discovery of the remains of children who were students at the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School at Williams Lake First Nation, I had published a letter to parents, students, and staff. The purpose of the letter was to express my deepest sympathies to anyone who was personally affected by this tragic news and to provide support to students and staff who required them. In my letter, I had failed to name Métis children and their families who were impacted by this tragedy. Because of this omission, on February 2, 2022, I received an email and letter (attached) from President Keith Henry of the BC Métis Federation expressing his concerns on behalf of parents who had approached him about feeling alienated and hurt. I responded by email (attached) with a sincere apology and gratitude for his feedback on my omission in failing to acknowledge specifically Métis children, families, and staff.

STATUS

My first step in receiving President Henry's letter was to listen to the feedback that stemmed from the hurt of those Métis families who had approached him. I want to publicly acknowledge the hurt that I caused each of you by inadvertently omitting specific acknowledgement of Métis children and their families impacted by residential school histories in my letter. I am sincerely sorry for this omission as it is precisely by omission that those of Aboriginal ancestry are

silenced, not heard, and not acknowledged. This is the opposite of what I had tried to do by publishing the letter of condolences and by offering support to those in need.

I wholeheartedly appreciate the feedback of President Keith Henry and the Métis families who shared their concerns with him. I look forward to further dialogue with you, learning from you, and continually striving to improve, through my leadership, our district response to identify barriers to equity and to ensure that every student, parent, and partner association feels heard, valued, cared for, and respected.

CONCLUSION

The attached report is for the Board's information.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rhonda Nixon". The signature is cursive and fluid.

Rhonda Nixon, PhD
Superintendent

RN:dh
Attach