

November 27, 2020

Dear Abbotsford School District Families, Students and Staff,

As you may be aware, we had a recent incident at one of our schools involving a classroom assignment related to the “positive stories/facts about residential schools.” We understand the tremendous upset this has caused in our community, and I am compelled to let families know how we are responding to this matter. First of all, we continue to investigate the circumstances related to this situation and will address it appropriately. Secondly, I want to assure you of our commitment to appropriately respond to situations of this nature and to reaffirm our commitment to creating equitable and inclusive spaces for our students and staff. The first step is to unreservedly apologize for the harm it has caused to our community, and in particular to members of our Indigenous community, and to our district aspirations to be leaders in our nation’s journey of truth and reconciliation. We take responsibility for the impact of our actions and commit to repairing the harm we have caused.

One of the questions presented to us in the wake of this incident relates to the resources being used in the district. As part of our [Enhancement Agreement](#), we have strengthened our partnerships with our local First Nations and Metis Association to support student learning and to help our teachers infuse Indigenous perspectives into our classrooms. We offer numerous professional development opportunities throughout the year to assist educators in implementing activities related to truth and reconciliation. Of particular note are the following district promoted resources related to the residential school system. We are grateful to the Elders, Leaders and families from the Sumas First Nation, Matsqui First Nation, the Fraser Valley Metis Association, Indigenous students and their families who continuously provide their counsel in relation to our programs and services.

- [Lexéywa Art Activism - A recalling of a residential school experience](#)
- [Ray & Millie Silver Indigenous Library – Truth Telling & Reconciliation](#)
- [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)

During times like this, our children may need the support of caring adults to help them process the discourse related to this event. I encourage all families to have conversations at home about these important topics, including the intergenerational trauma and impacts of residential schools.

As always, counselling and support services are available through the district to further support your child's emotional needs. We have several resources available through our Indigenous Education Department that brings Indigenous peoples' voices to the forefront and can be used as a starting point for these conversations. If you or your child require ongoing support outside of school, the following agencies are recommended mental health resources:

- START – In an immediate mental health crisis, START is available to consult with caregivers over the phone at 1-844-782-7811.
- Abbotsford Child & Youth Mental Health – Visit their website or call 604-870-5880.

- Abbotsford Hospice Society – Visit their website or call 604-852-2456.
- Foundry – Visit their website or call 604-746-3392. Foundry is now offering virtual drop-in counselling sessions.

This has been a humbling experience for all of us. As a school district, we will redouble our efforts to interrupt and disrupt racism and all forms of discrimination, and remain committed to revealing and correcting miseducation related to our Indigenous Peoples. We will work with our Indigenous community elders to move forward together in a manner that honours each of our children and our common humanity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Godden', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Kevin Godden  
Superintendent of Schools