

**February 23, 2021**

Good Evening,

February has been a busy month in the Burnaby School District. In addition to the numerous events and initiatives in our schools that have already been highlighted, we will also hear from staff and students later tonight on projects that honour Black History Month and Pink Shirt Day.

It has also been a busy month for the board, with the culmination of a long process to a modernized governance structure that reflects the current board dedication to not only fulfilling our fiduciary responsibilities, but also to becoming a change catalyst to address broader issues that matter to Burnaby citizens.

To be open to change we must honour the work and perspectives of our partners and community.

The importance of engagement with our partners and community is intertwined with the value of authentic listening as we approach our work through an anti-racist and equity lens.

Our engagement on the budget process and the Long-Range Facilities Plan will be different in years past as we move generative dialogue into practice.

And tonight, I am pleased to report that we have continued the dialogue with students on a Sustainability Strategic Plan by engaging our District Student Advisory Committee (DSAC) and the Burnaby Youth Sustainability Network (BYSN). Students provided thoughtful feedback on our draft sustainability values and objectives and gave further insight into what matters to them when it comes to areas such as sustainability practices, sustainability education and Indigenous knowledge and representation on sustainability.

In addition to the work of the Anti-Racism Working Group, last night Beth Applewhite, District Vice-Principal of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, presented "A Candid Conversation on Race" to the District Parent Advisory Committee (DPAC). In the DPAC presentation yesterday, Beth outlined a holistic approach in our journey to addressing systemic racism: Recognizing it exists, Providing the resources, Educating community, Upcoming engagement and community consultation on the Anti-racism Action Plan.

The presentation was well received, and as one parent summarized, how happy and thankful she was to be in a district that is doing this work, in a district that cares enough to be doing this work.

And I echo that sentiment. I am incredibly grateful to work with a board that is open to new ideas and courageous enough to tackle difficult issues that matter to our community, while keeping students at the centre of our work.

Thank you, and that concludes my report.

**Jen Mezei, Chair**

**Burnaby Board of Education**