

September 26, 2023

A welcome to all no matter your gender or sexual orientation.

Just last week, intolerance was on display by a small number of people. To be clear, it is ok for people to have questions around SOGI resources and their use in schools....

What is not ok is creating fear through ignorance. It is not ok to treat 2SLGBTQIA+ people as “others” and use conflated labels to sow division.

September 30 marks the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation. It is an important reminder of the damage intolerance and racism can do. It is a reminder of how it is racism and intolerance is normalized and accepted in a society.

At our Honouring Our Youth ceremony I heard from elders how 2S people have always been held the highest regard in indigenous culture.

The **concept** of Two-Spirit folks existed well before the arrival of European settlers on Turtle Island. Indigenous individuals who identified as **Two-Spirit** folks were seen as **gifted** and **honoured** in their community because they carried two spirits with them, both male and female. Much of this can be attributed to the “double vision” 2S people are gifted with, being able to see both through the masculine and feminine lens. 2S folks were often the **healers**, and **visionaries** within their given community and they were foundational members of their culture.

As we think back to the displays of hate of last week, we can look forward to September 30 and learn from Indigenous teachings in so many ways including tolerance, love, respect, and honouring each individual.

Over 100 languages spoken in Burnaby and everyday the diversity of our City proudly grows. Burnaby Schools are the places where both learning and teaching takes place.

“We all need to empower and educate ourselves, and education has the power to transcend the boundaries of ignorance and intolerance.”

Dr. Palto Datta, Senior Lecturer, Regent College, London, England

The Burnaby School District will continue to support the use of the power of education to eliminate racism and intolerance in all its forms.

Bill Brassington, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education