



Sagitawa Christian Camps

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Ministering To All Ages

Summer Programs
Off-Season Programs

Trail Rides
Canoe Trips
Backpacking
Resident Camps

Day Camps
Family Camps

Discipleship
Team Development
Leadership Training

Retreats
School Groups
Facility Rentals



September 20, 2010

Dear Administrator;

School District #59 is trying to introduce Policy 4588: Communications from Outside the Schools, in which they state the following,

"All schools and resource programs will be in compliance with section 76(1) of The School Act, and shall be operated on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles. The Superintendent will ensure that students and staff of the district are protected from intrusion by special-interest groups and external communications of any kind, including individuals and organizations not directly supporting provincial curriculum, or school goals.

A limited number of organizations such as Public Health, municipalities, colleges and other educational institutions, may be permitted to distribute information that is free of commercial advertisement. Such permission will be granted by the Superintendent or designate."

The decision that has resulted from this policy is that Sagitawa brochures, and Gideon Bibles not be offered to interested children. I take issue with this decision for three reasons.

1. Section 76(1) of The School Act says,

"All schools and Provincial schools must be conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles."

Section 76(2) is similar,

"The highest morality must be inculcated, but no religious dogma or creed is to be taught in a school or Provincial school."

Neither Camp Sagitawa nor The Gideons are making any effort to change the way that schools are conducted. Our offer simply provides interested students and their parents with information of which they may choose to take advantage. In the years when they were permitted, short presentations of Sagitawa programs were always done on a non-sectarian basis. Never was this transgressed. The nature of outdoor recreational teaching at Camp Sagitawa has always been a valuable asset to students that have attended.

The Superintendent's interpretation of 76(1) seems extreme to include "all individuals and organizations that are not directly supporting provincial curriculum or school goals." It is well known that the curriculum includes work experience, recreation, and other extra-curricular activity outside the school. The following quote was taken from the BC 2010 Learning Outcomes for Physical Education for grades 8-10.

"Community organizations may also support the curriculum by providing facilities, locally developed learning resources, guest speakers, and workshops. Teachers may wish to draw on the expertise of these community organizations and members.

At the same time, bringing outside resource people into the classroom is an effective way of reinforcing content, emphasizing and practicing listening skills, exposing students to different points of view, providing opportunities for discussion and debate, providing a departure point for writing, and making learning more concrete and relevant."

2. It certainly isn't the case with Aboriginal Education Days. Does the Ministry of Education in BC wish to have a double standard?

The Aboriginal Education Days program is held annually in June, and is observed by all schools in School District #59. While we agree that an aboriginal component should be included in educating our youth, we would caution that it be elective.

Parents are not given the option to select a different activity for their children, unless they choose to keep their children home that day, for which it is counted as an absence. A few days prior a letter may have gone home to notify parents that the students were going to attend, but there was no notification or information provided as to what the activities or content would be.

Activities include:

- ✓ Explanation of native lore, and beliefs... as to meanings of dances
- ✓ Participation in native dance is strongly encouraged.
- ✓ Participation in native prayer
- ✓ Witnessing of blessings on the sick for healing
- ✓ Expectation given to bow heads...
- ✓ Lots of native drums, music, played
- ✓ Plus other benign activities such as art, painting, etc plus hot dogs, etc

Is this in keeping with section 76(1) of The School Act? Is it acceptable that parents are **not informed**, or that children are **required** to participate in religious rites?

When Camp Sagitawa attended schools to speak with students, nothing of a religious or sectarian nature was discussed at all. And furthermore, even within our own programs, Camp Sagitawa has always kept parents informed, and allowed that a certain level of involvement to be optional.

3. Complete self sufficiency fosters an attitude of conceit. The community is a necessary partner in education. Any school system that disregards the value of the community is by principle teaching their student body that they are smarter than anyone else in the community. Well rounded individuals are those who are taught to listen to varied

values from within the larger community, and to think for themselves. The school is only one member of the larger community.

The Superintendent's office wants to be protective. While this response is understandable in light of recent news, it is not in keeping with the principles of education. For example, BC education uses Outcomes of Learning for their curriculum goals. It does not dictate specifics of what has to be taught. So when it comes to protecting our schools from self interest groups with hidden agendas, wouldn't it be more appropriate to address the outcomes, so that local school administrators would be more prepared to decipher for themselves what is of value, what is not, and how to tell the difference?

The protective stance being taken is offensive to the community, and it teaches a student body that by being part of a system, they are the only achievers in society.

We are asking School District #59 to reconsider the application of their interpretation of The School Act. We are asking the Ministry of Education to reconsider how schools are responding to their goals. Please do not restrict all communication from outside the school. Let the children learn how to be community oriented in their thinking and in their values.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Pryzner', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Gary Pryzner , Camp Director,
Sagitawa Christian Camping Society