

Sgę:no,¹ swagwe:goh, Karen Sandy ne gya:soh. We appreciate the opportunity to address the ARC as parents from Six Nations. We have admired the resourceful and innovative suggestions to “right sizing” the schools in spite of the challenges. The Grand Erie website was very helpful and informative in terms of bringing us up to date on the guidelines, policy and meetings. We know it must be an onerous process to create schools with programs that have everything for everybody. It’s important for the Six Nations and Mississaugas of New Credit to be involved in these discussions which affect our children. First Nations Youth are the fastest growing demographic in Canada which grew 3.5 times faster than the non-Aboriginal population in 2006.¹ While we may not have been able to reach out to everyone we have generated excellent discussions among the parents that have been able to attend our meetings. To clarify for those of us that did come to the community meetings; we **do not** claim to speak for all parents of either Six Nations or New Credit. We’ve created a facebook page to also keep parents informed of these discussions.

It’s important to communicate the disparity that exists with education as our children leave the reserve and for the first time in the majority of cases, attend school off reserve. The cultural and linguistic education our kids were accustomed to in public school is no longer as prevalent. Some of our students face culture shock and as parents we appreciate the First Nation Counselors and faculty that are available to assist them in this transition. We have a very different history in terms of education than most Canadians have experienced. We carry the burden of injustice created by the residential school system which tried to “kill the Indian in the child”.² Some of our students are learning to cope with multi-generational grief and trauma while juggling the pressures of academic performance. Sometimes there are cross cultural challenges and gaining trust and confidence in a foreign system does not come easy for many of us. Our students learn to persevere, adapt and overcome differences as they make lifelong friends and memories in high school. It’s a complicated reality but it demonstrates our students’ resilience and determination.

We know our students want the same things as their peers; to be valued, respected and to find the right academic, apprenticeship or trade that meets **their** need and vision for **their** future. As parents we hope to effectively advocate for our First Nation students to ensure their education is not compromised in this review process. We seek fairness, equality and reciprocity in any school our students attend because we

¹ Cited in *Diagnostic Report on First Nation and Inuit Post-Secondary Education*, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010, page 2

² Duncan Campbell Scott, 1921 (*original source not available*)

have the same goal as Haldimand parents which is to send our kids to a safe learning environment, to support them in finding the right academic opportunities and programming to prepare them for the labour force. We have heard that enhancing programs is based on numbers but we believe enhancing the programs will make the schools more attractive to draw our students there. Participating in athletics, clubs, hockey, lacrosse and other activities not only engages students but contributes to their success rate. We also want schools that support our culture.

Mandatory bus routes based on residency was suggested as it was before the early 90's. The Mississauga's of New Credit agree their students can go to any school they decide on but transportation is only made available to HSS which is supported by their Chief and Council. At Six Nations, students have many choices also but bussing is made available. If their choice results in a higher graduation rate that's what should be supported. We have heard some discussion on making McKinnon a "walk-in" school only. It would be an injustice to shift and move our existing students who are already at McKinnon despite the over population.

With respect to funding, the board receives tuition agreements from our federal funds for on reserve students who attend high school which we understand matches the provincial per capita. Our community is dealing with the First Nations Education Act which is an issue for our local governments to seek reconciliation. Our leadership may have to endure layers of bureaucracy but our First Nation students should not have to. They should be able to focus on learning, graduating, and creating positive experiences in high school where they are valued as contributing members of their institution. We want to help in any way possible to find solutions.

We respectfully recommend consideration of the following:

1. Current students be grandfathered in and stay at their existing school regardless of final ARC or Ministry decision.
2. Create culturally relevant programming and language preservation opportunities for First Nation students (i.e. alternate versions of Ganohonyhok and rotate in Cayuga, Mohawk, Onondaga).
3. Survey existing/future students to determine what would draw them to a school.
4. Guidance counsellors and/or administration across Haldimand Schools work more collaboratively in redirecting students to reconcile the disparity where enrollment is over or under capacity.
5. Foster meaningful partnerships with all concerned communities and host an ARC meeting at Six Nations.