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Dear Minister Rachna Singh,

Surrey Together Against Racism [[STAR](#)], the Surrey/White Rock Spoke for [Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network](#), expresses our deepest gratitude on the [launch](#) of Anti-Racism Action Plan for K-12 students. To foster the impact of this Action Plan, we are writing this letter to request the BC Government's support in **mandating anti-racism education in the BC K-12 curriculum**. Upon discussing the current state of education in schools with educators and community organizations, we strongly believe in the need for governmental action in mandating anti-racism education.

Through our consultations with the Assistant Superintendent, the Department Head from Surrey Schools, and various community leaders between August 2022 – January 2023, we have learned about the insightful projects already established to bring anti-racist perspectives into schools, such as the Anti-Racism Action Plan Roundtable in [2021](#) and [2022](#), [Anti-racism Learning Resources Project](#), the [BC Community Alliance](#)'s initiatives (to include Canadian Black History in the K-12 curriculum), and the [Erase Racism Project](#). Some school districts have partnered with organizations like Racing to Equity in order to understand the experiences of IBPOC staff members and students and launched plans to bring in more anti-racist initiatives. Mandating anti-racism education will bolster the positive effects of those initiatives. We are grateful for the recent launch of the [K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan](#) and strongly believe that this mandate will strengthen and help extend its impact.

In addition to the tremendous awareness around long-existing systemic racism in Canada post pandemic, there are several reasons anti-racism education must be mandated in the BC K-12 curriculum, such as:

- **To combat racism proactively:** Federal government [plans to invite close to 500,000 immigrants](#) each year between 2023-2025, many of whom will settle in BC. This is likely to lead to increased racism, stereotyping, and backlash, creating unsafe schools and communities. By mandating anti-racism education in all grades, schools will help students understand the importance of including and respecting IBPOC members of their communities. Incidents of racism within the community will be reduced as these students graduate from the school system and become contributing adults.
- **To consolidate resources:** Since the resources on the subject are scattered, not all teachers know where to find anti-racist education resources and how to incorporate them into their lessons. The absence of governmental direction causes uncertainty about ways to integrate anti-racism education into teaching practices. Creating the inventory of curriculum resources as referenced in the [K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan](#) is an essential first step, but without the mandate of anti-racism education and weaving the anti-racism perspectives into the curriculum, some teachers may view this inventory as optional. There is a need to specifically plan how to bring IBPOC voices into different school subjects. For example:
 - English: sharing literature from various cultures
 - Socials: emphasizing the history of IBPOC communities in Canada
 - Math & Science: discussing important scientific/math discoveries and inventions from other cultures

- **To avoid tokenism:** Raising Awareness through presentations and workshops with the help of B.C. Lions for grades 6-10 as one of the key steps identified in the [K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan](#) is helpful, but what about grades K-5 and 11-12? How frequent are these presentations and workshops going to be? If anti-racism education is presented in the format of additional assembly meetings on special days, it might result in tokenism and again, anti-racism education being seen as optional. Engaging in anti-racism education only during specific school events to acknowledge certain days and months of the year leads to a superficial inclusion of IBPOC viewpoints. Anti-racism education should be embedded into the fabric of the school system ranging from lesson planning, purchasing books, inviting guest speakers, and planning extracurricular activities to educating teachers and refining policies and procedures for fostering systemic changes.
- **To ensure safe schools:** There has been an [increase in racism and hate crimes since the pandemic](#), including racism against Indigenous, Black, and Asian people, as well as an increase in antisemitism. A mandate will help strengthen the importance of IBPOC viewpoints in school communities, which can reduce racist incidents and bullying in schools. There is a need to bring forward students' voices about their experience of racism. Storytelling is a powerful tool in helping people understand the wrongs of racism and bringing forward hidden experiences of racism that are not often discussed in school settings. Students need a safe space to share their lived experiences of racism and discrimination. They also need a safe means to express and celebrate their cultural roots. As long as they are comfortable with doing so, their voices need to be heard; having the platform to tell their stories will empower them. It could direct districts to produce more effective and nuanced anti-racism policies that are operationalized in ways that deal with ongoing incidents of racism at the school level. Teachers and students have made it clear that incidents of racism are not always dealt with in ways that ensure changes in pedagogy, behaviour, and understanding of racism at more nuanced levels.

Important as it is, anti-racism education will only be taken seriously if it is mandated, similar to the mandated Indigenous education in schools. BC school system has successfully integrated Indigenous education over the years leading up to the recent requirement of successfully completing [4 credits in Indigenous-focused coursework](#) to receive a BC Certificate of Graduation. Anti-racism education complements the Indigenous curriculum already implemented in BC schools. The Indigenous curriculum is a successful template that can be used to design an anti-racism curriculum. Drawing from the experiences in mandating anti-racism education, the government needs to form a committee of experts and folks with lived experience, which will gather the available anti-racism education resources and create new ones, specifically for each grade level. The BC curriculum can be modified to incorporate anti-racism education components and resources. It is also essential to provide professional development opportunities to teachers as well as student teachers for integrating anti-racism education into their teaching practice.

We believe that this mandate will foster more equitable, diverse, and inclusive communities and support one of [your key priorities](#) to address issues of racism in our education sector. With our conviction in this positive change in the education system, we include our signatures below.

With gratitude and appreciation for all that you do.

Sincerely,
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Coordinator, Surrey White Rock Spoke

Supporters of mandating Anti-Racism Education in BC K-12 Curriculum:

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