

November 5, 2020

LBPSB Task Force on Equity and Inclusivity

c/o Chairperson Myrna Lashley

Hello:

Please consider this a response to your invitation posted on the Pearson Board website, and your request on *CTV News* on October 31, 2020, for "good and bad stories" regarding issues on 'Equity and Inclusivity.' Here's my story.

Apologies for the length of this email but, given circumstances, such as the challenge to Bill 40 winding through the courts, in which I am an intervener, 'friend of the court,' and the fact that I am running for chair of the board, I believe it is important you get a clear picture of matters.

LBPSB: "An invitation from the Task Force on Equality and Inclusivity" - October 27, 2020

<https://boardsite.lbpsb.qc.ca/news/post/an-invitation-from-the-task-force-on-equality-and-inclusivity>

CTV Montreal: "How this school board is addressing racism" - October 31, 2020

<https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2067745>



[How this school board is addressing racism](#)

Myrna Lashley gives an update on the LBPSB's anti-racism task force, which can be reached at taskforce.equity@lbpsb.qc.ca.

Saturday, October 31, 2020

My Story Regarding Racism

Sometime in early January 2004, one of my students came to my classroom and showed me a white patch on her scalp. Someone had pulled her hair out by the roots... Apparently there was a feud going on between some Grade 10 black and white girls which revolved around the use of the N-word.

As it turned out, all the students involved were my students: bright, pleasant young ladies, active in sports and I'm convinced one of them would have been Valedictorian the following year.

At any rate, one thing led to another and it was decided by the administration to transfer the white girls to other schools - in spite of the fact they asked for forgiveness.

The reaction to the transfers was swift, ranging from an editorial in the *Montreal Gazette* (next page) to an organization in the States, fond of the 11th letter of the alphabet and well known for their racist views.



So, in January 2004: the girls were banished; February 2004: the adults formed an unnamed committee; March 2004: The committee was subdivided into three sub-committees: 'Policy', 'Communication' and 'Education'; late March: Suggested names for the committee: "**JUSTICE, PEACE, RESPECT, Be Nice, CARE, and Standing Strong**"...

On April 7, 2004, the West Island Suburban published an article: "**Apologies flow after PCHS clash.**" A photo featured a group of black and white girls standing in front of PCHS. They had just kissed and made-up - witnessed by a journalist, mothers - black and white - and me... It was very touching; some of the girls knew each other since Grade 1.



Editorial: Montreal Gazette - January 28, 2004: "Teach, don't ban"

"The Lester B. Pearson School Board has wasted an opportunity by exiling two students from Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School after racially-charged language figured in a dispute between two groups of girls. This kind of forced transfer is a grave penalty at high-school age, and it is also not the most suitable response in this case.

The story, reported yesterday, involves the involuntary transfer of two of the four students who used an acronym involving "the n word" to insult a second group, lesser punishment. Reported violent behavior from one of the taunted students received an even slighter disciplining.

These are muddled methods. Schools today are expected to teach more than classroom subjects. A multi-cultural society demands a high level of acceptance of differences. It's easy enough to give offense even unintentionally. That's why punctilious avoidance of language which is known to be hurtful is - or should be - a sine qua non of civil public behavior almost everywhere. Teenagers who haven't grasped that need to be taught it.

In this case a positive intervention, one or more supervised meetings involving everyone in both groups of students, aimed at explaining why some language is not acceptable, might well have been more constructive, fairer, and a better example to everyone involved."

Letter to the Editor: January 31, 2004 "Students defend their school: it's not racist"

"Concerning the article, 'Students learn price of racial slur' (*The Gazette*, January 27), we, black students at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School, would like to clarify PCHS is not a racist school but an outstanding, multi-cultural community school. Within PC's 33-year history, never has there been a case of racism or racial slander as there was before the holidays, and that case was an isolated one. Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School is a community with an adequate amount of resources such as a guidance counselor, spiritual animator, social worker and a psychologist.

By far the majority of the PCHS student body, both black and white, also agree with the recent editorial of January 28, "Teach, don't ban." We feel the decision made to transfer the two students was harsh and the situation could have been dealt with in a more proactive manner, by using the vast internal resources available to us on a daily basis - namely our teachers.

We are not proud of nor do we support the actions of our classmates, however, we believe their punishment is severe for such a first-time offence."

The letter was signed by three students, and supported by the entire staff - with exception of one or two people. The transferred girls were my students. The community was very upset, and many tears were shed because of the way this was handled CE

(The black girls in my retirement picture (next page) were the writers, **not the protagonists.**

After 33 years at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School, Chris Eustache is retiring

Teacher made a world of difference

KAREN SEIDMAN
THE GAZETTE

After he completed his Bachelor of Arts degree at Sir George Williams University 34 years ago, Chris Eustache saw an ad offering a Bachelor of Education for \$110 at St. Joseph's Teachers' College.

Now that he is retiring after 33 years as an English teacher at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School, it seems less like a whim and more like fate that Eustache answered the ad and decided to become a teacher.

The career he chose has marked his life in many ways. It's kept him young through his interaction with students, he's had the satisfaction of seeing students who struggled in school make a success of themselves and it has propelled him to attend school board meetings religiously and become an activist.

He finally decided to start weaning himself from the Lester B. Pearson School Board meetings last January in anticipation of his retirement.

"Students fight to get in his class," said Tom Colbec, an English, history and French teacher at PCHS who has worked with Eustache for 31 years.

"He's gone to every school dance because he doesn't coach sports and feels he has to participate in extracurricular activities. He'll really be missed."

Eustache will miss school life, as well. In fact, he's hoping to teach a Quebec Civil Law course to Grade 11 students next year just so he doesn't get out of the classroom "cold turkey."

He's seen a lot of changes in 33 years —



RICHARD ARLESS JR. THE GAZETTE

English teacher Chris Eustache retires this month. He shows Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School Grade 10 students Chandeia Walker (centre) and Vanessa Bryan where he was born in Africa.

girls showing midriffs in school, filthy lyrics at school dances, kids whose lives are ruled by screens of various sizes.

"Screens have replaced books and that's not good," said Eustache.

"As a teacher, I do two-thirds of the amount of work I taught 10 to 15 years ago. There just aren't that many students who like to read."

But, overall, he finds it just as much fun to teach now as he did 33 years ago. He likes hearing students' opinions and seeing the multi-ethnic, multi-faith

classrooms function as well as they do.

He does, however, worry about the curriculum being easier than it used to be and kids being exposed to so much entertainment that sabotages parental values.

"Kids are very influenced by the media and there are a lot of bad role models out there," he said.

Eustache, a fixture at school board meetings for more than five years, has waged his battles over the years and believes he's taught his students that it pays to

speak out when there are problems.

It was about four years ago when the school's air-conditioning system had broken down.

There are no windows in PCHS, and, as a result, Eustache finally helped organize a protest that had all the teachers take their classes outside.

Eustache said it cost the board a few hundred thousand dollars, but they finally fixed the problem.

Then, two years ago, staff and students were noticing that the air in the school was very muggy and stale. While some school officials maintained the ventilation system had been cleaned, Eustache knew it hadn't and he rallied teachers and students to clamour for the cleaning, which was done last year for about \$100,000.

"My loyalties always lie with the students and the school," said Eustache. "I showed the students that if you speak up you can make a difference."

Recently, when he attended a class reunion from 1979, he was instrumental in getting the alumni to donate \$1,200 to redo the school's main foyer.

"I'm proud of what I've done and I'm leaving with no regrets," Eustache said.

But he is leaving with a plaque from a student, Chandeia Walker: "Mr. C. Eustache: For your outstanding personality, generosity and kindness. You are a wonderful and well-respected person and I truly appreciate all that you have done. Not only are you my teacher, you are my friend."

Not a bad way to go out.

kseidman@thegazette.canwest.com

Employment / Courses

Clinical Research Nurse/Coordinator
Wanted
Experience required
Pointe Claire location
Fax CVs
attn Eleanor:
(514) 694-5594
Or email:
attn Eleanor:
medstudies
@kellsmrg.com

**WAITERS/WAITRESSES,
DRIVERS & COOKS**
needed for
COTE ST. LUC BBQ
4360 Sources Blvd., D.D.O.
Please call Tony
685-5000

Sound off online with
montrealgazette.com
discussion forums

TeamMartin



Marlene JENNINGS

NOTRE DAME DE GRACE-LACHINE

Authorized by the official agent for Marlene Jennings.

I am pleased to invite all of my riding constituents to attend an OPEN HOUSE
Sunday, June 27th, from 1:30 PM to 3:00 PM
at the Campaign Office
2921 Notre-Dame Street
Lachine, H8S 2H4
T. 514.639.8001 - F. 514.639.9438
E-mail : Jennings2004@bellnet.ca



PART 2 - June 2020 - The N-word – John Rennie High School

On June 16, 2020, the Montreal Gazette reported on a racist video riddled with the N-word posted on Twitter by two girls "purported to be students at JRHS."

It begins with "girls putting on blackface makeup, and then shows racist images and words denigrating Black people. It ends with both girls shouting the N-word together."

At its June 22, 2020, Council meeting the Pearson board passed a resolution regarding racism. It put out a "LBPSB Statement On Racism." On July 15, 2020, the board established a Task Force and named "Dr. Myrna Lashley as the Chair of the "LBPSB Task Force on Equity and Inclusivity." The initiative was widely reported.

Coincidentally, on July 17, 2020, the *Montreal Gazette* published the following letter to the editor. I wrote to the person whose LBPSB email address was made known as the one, who, I thought, was collecting materials for the Task Force. The one sentence letter and the actual letter to the editor was copied to the LBPSB community.

"On July 17, 2020, at 7:21 A.M., Chris Eustace <cgeustace@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello "Mary": (not real name)

Would you be kind enough to insert this letter from today's *Montreal Gazette* in the recent files pertaining to racism.

Thank you.

Chris Eustace"

MONTREAL GAZETTE

"Let us not forget other lives, too" - 17 July 2020 *Montreal Gazette*

Re: "Matters of colour" (*Montreal Gazette*, July 15)

As a 95-year-old Anglican female priest whose fight against discrimination of any kind has long been a major mission, I was impressed by the Black Lives Matter cover photo.

What was and is a damnable human tragedy has kindled a worldwide awareness of racism. Discussions are taking place at many levels and now this slogan is being painted on roads and buildings. Impressive! Nonetheless, I began to wonder how I would feel if I were Asian or Inuit or Cree or any other kind of minority. Black lives do matter, but so do others whose lives have been lost or broken because of discrimination. There has been an increase of discrimination against Asian people since the pandemic, for example.

Our shameful history in dealing with Indigenous people is well documented. In our appropriate zeal for Black lives, let us not forget others.

Racism is the current buzzword and it is appropriate and timely that we set goals to deal with it. But there are other kinds of discrimination, equally as painful. Sexism, ageism, ableism are still alive and well, all of which I have experienced.

Change will come when one person at a time changes, not as a token act but a genuine recognition that we all matter and our differences can be acknowledged and celebrated. One at a time, one day at a time.

Rev. Dr. Lettie James, Lachine

Hours later, in contrast to your invitation, Ms. Lashley, I received this **directive** from the chair of the LBPSB:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Noel Burke <nburke@lbpsb.qc.ca>

Date: Fri, July 17, 2020 at 4:06 P.M.

Subject: Re: Let us not forget other lives, too - letter - July 17, 2020

To: Chris Eustace <cgeustace@gmail.com>

Cc: All student, parent and regular commissioners, & teacher and support staff associations...

Mr. Eustace,

I and my fellow commissioners are quite disturbed at your latest attempt to subvert normal process and protocol with regard to communicating with the school board.

We fail to understand in what context you could consider it appropriate, as a member of the general public, to communicate directly with a board employee, on a first-name basis, and to assign tasks to that person?

Were you writing to "Ms. Sxxx" in another context? - in her capacity to receive correspondence from those interested in becoming a co-opted commissioner from a racialized community? or those interested in being a member of the Task Force on Equity and Inclusion?

Ms. "Sxxx" was kind enough to offer an acknowledgement of reception, but there will be no further direct communication with you from our employees, unless directed by an administrator or myself, and certainly no carrying out of any 'assigned tasks'. **(Ms. Sxxx never sent an acknowledgement.)**

You are hereby directed to restrict any future communications to myself, if communicating with Council, or the Secretary General, if communicating with the administration. No other correspondence from you will be recognized.

Please govern yourself in compliance with this directive - this is yet another time you have had to be officially warned about inappropriate behaviour. **It will be the last before further legal action is warranted.**

Regards,

Noel Burke - Chair, LBPSB



Recommendation: Education is the key

Further to your request for recommendations, here is some background info. and suggestions.

The Suburban: "**Black Like Me**" - letter - June 23, 2020

https://www.thesuburban.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/black-like-me/article_d77d0f9e-3a3d-5298-af05-9d431f121acf.html

Le Devoir : **Des occasions de réfléchir** - letter - Nov. 4, 2020

<https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/lettres/589026/des-occasions-de-reflechir>

Comments following Le Devoir article and this letter are instructive. ..An excellent example why Bill 40 calls for DG to be spokesperson, not a school board politician with a 'my way or no way' attitude.

Kids Help Phone: **Anti-Black racism: Support for Black people and allies**

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/anti-black-racism-support-for-black-people-and-allies>

I am available to help out with the sub-group dealing with '**ethnicity and race.**'

Sincerely,

Chris Eustace
aceteacher.ca - (being updated)

514 620-0726



November 9, 2020

9:29 A.M.



Thank you for trusting the Task Force by sharing your story and recommendations with us. Please know that your story is an essential part of the work that we are doing in order to prepare recommendations on Equity and Inclusivity for the Lester B. Pearson School Board.

Rest assured that your story will be considered with respect by all.

Allow me to once more assure you that under no circumstances will your name appear in any document produced by the Task Force or any of its members.

Once again, thank you.

With kindest regards and gratitude.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Lashley -'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Myrna Lashley
Chair, Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion
Lester B. Pearson School Board