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Wednesday, December 13, 2017

ATTN: The Special Advisory Committee on the Commemoration of Sir Edward Cornwallis
and the Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History

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To the Members of The Special Advisory Committee on the Commemoration of Sir Edward Cornwallis and the Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History:

We are the grade 6-8 class at The Booker School in Port Williams, Nova Scotia. We would like to propose our recommendations on what to do with the statue of Sir Edward Cornwallis. In our unit of inquiry we have been discussing different perspectives on history and historical contexts. The topic of the Edward Cornwallis statue came up because we were looking at the history of Nova Scotia from multiple perspectives, including Mi'kmaq, Acadian, French, English and Black Loyalist.

Through our research we learned about Cornwallis's complicated legacy, including the Bounty Proclamation of 1749. We recognize Cornwallis's contributions to history as one of the founding members of Halifax and Governor of Nova Scotia, however we also recognize that the Mi'kmaq were here 13,000 years prior to European colonization, and suffered as a direct result of this Proclamation. We also found out about some other negative chapters of Cornwallis's past, including his role in the brutal "pacification" of the Scottish Highlands and the recruitment of Protestants to settle in Nova Scotia, setting the scene for the expulsion of the Acadians.

To decide on recommendations on what to do with the Cornwallis statue, we each wrote a position paper which we presented at our class version of a Committee meeting. We discussed the merits of each proposal and found many similarities between what people wanted. After several rounds of discussion and voting, we reached consensus on the following proposal:

Our recommendation to the Special Advisory Committee is the creation of a grouping of sculptures, all of the same stature, in conversation with each other. All the statues would be facing each other as though they were talking to each other, and a visitor would have the ability to step inside the circle and read plaques with information about each of the four historical figures, thus becoming part of the conversation. The plaques would include information such as, a general biography, what they represent, their significance in Nova Scotia's history, the contributions they made, and the struggles they faced. We believe the following four historical figures should be represented:

1. **Sir Edward Cornwallis (1713-1776):** the founder of Halifax. We felt that this history must not be ignored. He brought over colonizers to start a nation, which led to much conflict with the Mi'kmaq. Cornwallis controversially issued a Bounty Proclamation for the killing and collection of scalps of the Mi'kmaq. While this is not a history to be glorified, it is one to learn from.
2. **Grand Chief John Denny Jr. (1841-1918):** Mi'kmaq Grand Chief from the Eskasoni Reserve. He took his role as Chief very seriously, and it has been said that he “conducted his meetings with great solemnity and dignity.” Denny “was careful to follow the traditions of the people, with great attention to detail.” He served his people faithfully for 37 years, and passed at age 77. We chose to include him because he was the very last of the Mi'kmaq hereditary grand chiefs.
3. **Viola Desmond (1914-1965):** a Black Nova Scotian woman, who was a leader, whether she wished to be or not, in Canada's fight for racial equality. On November 8th, 1946, Viola Desmond made a stand against segregation when she was told to sit in the balcony in a movie theatre, instead of the main floor (even after paying the amount for the main floor seats). When she refused, she was arrested. She appealed and lost her case in court. In her lifetime, Viola Desmond was not recognized for this. She predated Rosa Parks' stand in Alabama in 1955, which sparked the Civil Rights Movement in the US.
4. **Noël Doiron (1684-1758):** “Father” of the Acadians. Doiron and his family lived in the village of Noël, Nova Scotia (near Grande Pré) for 40 years. In that time he, his wife Marie, and his family built the dykes that continue to hold back the highest tides in the world. In 1750 they fled to Île St Jean, now PEI, where they eked out an existence for 8 difficult years without enough food, clothing, tools, and shelter. He was considered a leader of the Acadians, and was known for his decisions during the expulsion of the Acadians from Île St Jean. Noël became known for his self-sacrifice aboard the Duke William, a deportation ship. William Nicholas, the captain of the ship, described Noël as, “head prisoner” and “father” to the Acadians. However, the Duke William sank, and was one of the worst marine disasters in Canadian history. 350 people perished, including Noël and his wife, Marie.

Each of these individuals, Edward Cornwallis, Noël Doiron, Grand Chief John Denny Jr., and Viola Desmond are important voices from early Nova Scotian communities. Each of these leaders has something to teach us about Nova Scotian values and important ideas. This is a conversation that needs to be had. The interactive and immersive nature of the placement of the statues and informational plaques would enable people to learn from the past and join the conversation.

Thank you for considering our proposal. We hope that we have contributed to the decision-making process and that you will discuss our recommendations at the next Committee meeting. We would be honoured if you would like to come and discuss this further with us at The Booker School.

Sincerely,



The Grade 6-8 Class of The Booker School

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