

SALN

Self Advocate Leadership Network British Columbia

December 14, 2020

SALN COVID-19 News-sheet #10: The Importance of Language

This News-sheet is a public document. Information, quotes, and questions are invited to be shared and included outside of SALN.

The majority of SALN members are part of provincial self-advocacy and advisory groups. SALN is aware and interested in the BC self-advocate movement. All SALN members are well-established and recognizable. All SALN members are from leading groups in the movement.

SALN Mission Statement:

To promote a good life through positive and informed: actions, networking and advocacy.

SALN would like to share the following:

SALN is disappointed that Barry Neufeld, a Chilliwack school trustee, publicly called people the "R" word.

Details of statement:

- SALN supports all organizations and news media that has made public statements regarding Barry Neufeld's use of harmful language.
- For years, people with disabilities have not had very much control over the way society "refers" to them. There has been a never-ending struggle for people to be heard and listened to. Over and over, we are asked to "come to the table", "be a part of a consultation", "asked what we think and our opinion" about language...but nothing seems to change. **From the SALN "Thinking About Language Report."** **See link below.**
- **"Having positive control of your life requires language that empowers people. Being recognized and valued begins with mutual respect and how we are introduced, how others refer to us." ...Michael Smull (The Learning Community for Person Centred Practices)**
- What does Barry Neufeld (and others) need for support and education to understand the importance of language?

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SALN Comments:

- I feel very sad that he used that word.
- I feel pissed off that someone in an authority position would use that type of language as a school trustee where it is a privilege – because you got voted in. This is discriminating against children and adults who have disabilities – it makes us feel like we are secondary citizens, less than other people...it is hurtful.
- He is supposed to be a role model – a leader for his people. And he is doing this?
- He lives in a sad world or something...we should be coming together instead of dividing everyone up.
- I feel sad and disgusted. Someone who should be advocating for children has used such demeaning words and it shows inappropriate behaviour for someone who has been voted in by the constituents who live in Chilliwack.
- If a leader is saying stuff like that what does it show for the rest of the school board, the teachers – is makes everyone look bad.
- I drop my kid off at school to be in a safe place – and this kind of language does not create a safe space.
- I find the word is an insult – it's offensive – it excludes people. It really makes me ill that a school trustee would use this word. One would hope that in the year 2020, that trustees would be focused when they speak on the strengths of people in the system and in all society.

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- We are supposed to be valuing and recognizing people's gifts and strengths.
- He needs to change the R word to RESPECT.
- What was really sad is that one of his trustee colleagues backed him up. This shows that there are clearly systemic issues happening.
- We are shocked by his words – but also that he had support by other trustees...
- The Minister of Education should be able to get involved and address this.
- The R word campaign has been happening for years – why is this still happening?
- What support does he need to get it? What support does society need?

Thinking About Language Report: <https://salnbc.com/saln-projects/>

Don't Be That Person: https://www.peacearchnews.com/news/video-language-matters-say-semiahmoo-advocates-following-chilliwack-trustees-use-of-r-word/?fbclid=IwAR2qNrQY13SEPfUWrP04uJNcg-ZnLsEkvfOxaw1r_d5eXPes4ETqVltdoA4

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