

# NOT ENOUGH ACCOUNTABILITY WITH RACISM: STUDENTS

Continued from page 1

involved, their words and experiences spoke volumes.

While two dozen may not appear as a large number of students relative to the entire HDSB student population, a few voices usually represent the sentiment of many with respect to experiences of racism, discrimination and hate, said Rossana Bisceglia, the board's manager of research and accountability, in a public virtual presentation on the board's findings Dec. 2.

One student report of racism is enough to warrant a response and review of practices and processes to ensure the board is meeting its obligation to provide safe and inclusive environments, said Director of Education Curtis Ennis.

"When looking at issues of racism, hate, discrimination, oppression of any kind,

a small cohort is impactful. One student, one voice is impactful, so we don't have to wait for a substantive sample size," said Ennis.

In conversations, students spoke of microaggressions that were overlooked.

"There's a sense of not taking these little things seriously; a concern that they have to be large racist acts in order for any concern or attention to be paid," said Jewel Amoah, the board's human rights and equity advisor.

"Because not all acts of racism and discrimination are blatant and it's the subtle acts of racism and discrimination that are of concern, and they equally undermine the student sense of belonging and safety and overall well-being," said Amoah.

Racism is not held to the same standard of accountability as other forms of student misconduct, and a lack



HDSB photo

**Halton District School Board Director of Education Curtis Ennis says even one report of student racism warrants action.**

of an effective response to racism means students themselves bear the burden of response on their own behalf, were two more student observations. Students indicate that when specific topics around race, racism and social justice are introduced in class, this is sometimes done in a way that produces harm and further exacerbates stereotypes and prejudices; it highlights trauma

**"Students need to know that when they bring their voices forward that we believe them, that we hear them and that we're going to take action."**

**- Curtis Ennis, HDSB Director of Education**

rather than represents racialized students in aspects of empowerment, said Amoah.

A Grade 10 student commented that they had yet to be taught by someone of colour and "not even only for me to look up to a teacher that I could fully connect and relate to, but also so that other students see that it's normal to see people of colour in charge of them."

Student concerns were not so much that there were no policies or processes to address discrimination in

the learning environment, but rather that these processes were not fully implemented, said Amoah.

Among the board's new commitments in its fight against racism is exploring the establishment of a system racism response team. That team would oversee the implementation and accountability of actions and monitor and respond to reports of racism and discrimination, said Rob Eatough, superintendent of education. Another is the recruitment of a graduation coach

for Black students dedicated to supporting them in completing secondary education and accessing options for post-secondary pathways. Other commitments included the recognition of student leadership on anti-racist action and strengthening community engagement.

Ennis said the board had heard "loud and clear" from the students that there are no acts of racism that are too small that cause harm.

Oftentimes it's not the intent, it's the impact, said Ennis.

"Students need to know that when they bring their voices forward that we believe them, that we hear them and that we're going to take action," said Ennis.

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With virtual conversations with students regarding racism recently held by the Halton District School Board, we wanted to explore the findings of those talks and share officials' response to them.*

## COMMUNITY

# CULTURE DAYS EVENTS EARN NATIONAL RECOGNITION

**MELANIE HENNESSEY**  
mhennessey@metroland.com

Halton Hills' diverse slate of Culture Days activities have been named among the best in the country.

The municipality's annual festival climbed the rank-

ings for a third consecutive year to earn a top three finish amid all mid-size cities in Canada.

Halton Hills also landed a spot on the overall top 10 list, placing sixth among all participating towns and cities across the country in terms of the number of Culture Days activities present-

ed locally.

"Our artists and cultural groups have shown incredible resilience during the pandemic," said Mayor Rick Bonnette. "Culture Days is an excellent example of how arts and culture contribute to the healthy and sustainable development of the Town of Halton Hills as a

whole, and the importance of continued support to the creative and economic growth of this sector." Two Halton Hills activities received special recognition from the Ontario Culture Days Spotlight Awards program. Williams Mill artist Pauline Gladstone earned top honours (best in-person

activity) for her community art project 'On the Table.' The undertaking gave residents a chance to contribute their personal positive pandemic stories by drawing directly on Gladstone's canvas — an eight-foot picnic table with dozens of story spots to fill. The table is being donated to Halton Women's Place for their February fundraising auction.

Meditation instructor Chantal Garneau, who was

also a funding recipient of the Town's Artist Next Door program, was named runner-up in the best digital activity category for her innovative use of podcast recordings to create site-specific guided meditations in three local parks.

For further details on Culture Days, including digital and self-guided activities that are still available to the public, visit halton-hills.ca/culturedays.

## GIDDENS OPTOMETRY



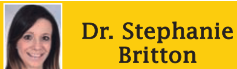
**DOWNTOWN GEORGETOWN**  
83 Mill St | 905 873 1867

We are open but due to the current virus situation we are seeing patients by appointment only. If you are planning a visit (for routine eye examinations, eyewear purchase and repair, contact lens pick up etc), please contact us in advance and we will arrange an appointment time for you. This will help to ensure we keep everyone safe!



**METRO PLAZA**  
371 Mountainview Rd S | 905 873 1861

Day, Evening and Saturday Hours | Same day appointments for urgent eye care. Please phone.



## 3 Months Free

**Book a tour and see what a wonderful life in retirement can be!**

**Reserve before Dec. 31, 2021**  
**Move in dates up to March 31, 2022**

**MILTON 905-636-6300**

**Call to book a tour**

**and learn more about terms and conditions**

