

Title: “Outrage continues after school doubles down on 'Indigenous kids only' pizza party”

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Transcript

Drea Humphrey: Some have coined it a racist pizza party, but that hasn't stopped the BC Elementary school, who threw it from doubling down on their decision to do so, nor from blaming the victims while they're at it. Let's talk about it.

Drea Humphrey here with rebel news and apparently segregation is alive and well in British Columbia. At least it is for a Crescent Valley Elementary school called Brent Kennedy Elementary, which hosted an Indigenous kids only pizza party at the end of last month. And you know how much kids love pizza.

The party shocked parents and confused many students who couldn't quite grasp what was so wrong with them to make them unworthier than their Indigenous peers, especially for at least one non Indigenous child who was allowed to attend the pizza celebration, but only as a lower class to the others, including her own brother.

In response to a Brent Kennedy parent who questioned in a Facebook community group whether her kids were the only ones who came home feeling very left out from the school's Indigenous only pizza party, we see a comment from the little girl's mother here. She says her son, who is Indigenous, participated in the party, but her daughter, who isn't, was permitted to join but forbidden from having any pizza.

Can you imagine? I mean, how good must that pizza have smelt and look to this poor child as she watched the other kids enjoy it, chowing down in front of her all the while when she was served a whopping slice of discrimination instead.

So what was the excuse given to some of these concerned families? Well, according to Brent Kennedy's principal, Jenn Kooznetsoff, nothing to see here at all. You see, the kids were simply segregated into racial groups of haves and have nots because the Indigenous children were participating in a data mining. Oh, sorry, data equity gathering event, which occurs every year.

Now, side note, I've started to dig and research into these data projects. We see is doing on kids and that's a whole other story that's going to have to come up in a future report, but Kooznetsoff also told parents that she shouldn't be the one getting harassed for the party concerns and instead directed concerns to the district Aboriginal principal Gayle Higginbottom. Well, I did do that. I reached out to Higginbottom, the district public relation department got back to me instead and gave me the same excuse about the equity scan while acknowledging there's flexibility in how they can go about doing so and declining to answer my question about whether or not the school will be more inclusive in the future.

Now on the off chance there's some of you watching and they're getting prepared to wave the finger at the Indigenous community members who had to have been behind this preferential treatment, maybe don't. After all, that would just serve as the driving force that are usually behind people in positions of power who implement segregation, right? Dividing people, creating a group of others dehumanizing them. At least you would think anybody that advocates for reconciliation from things like residential school segregation would appreciate that parallel.

And while the district's Aboriginal principal, Gayle Higginbottom, did oversee the event, the truth is, some of the communities Indigenous parents are just as bothered by the modern school segregation as the next parent. A few days ago, a father named Christopher Yates, who says he's a proud Red River Métis, he took to the school's bulletin. He says he was originally reluctant to do so, but felt as an Indigenous leader and a parent he must. So basically what he does is share some of the letter he had already sent out to some of the people behind the pizza party. I'm not going to read the full balance statement, but here's some of what he said.

Reconciliation is a relatively new pathway that both Indigenous people and Canadians have joined together in fostering a true and meaningful collaborative approach to moving forward.

[...]

On this pathway to reconciliation, mistakes will be made by government institutions and Indigenous nations.

He says,

I was concerned when my children told me they were separated for an Aboriginal education offering. I do believe I have made it very clear that my children are not to be

separated from the rest of the class for Indigenous offerings. If an offering is for the whole class or the whole school, then my children may participate.

Further down, he explains, he believes that the intentions were good as always and that this may have not been understood by all parties. And that Indigenous people face barriers in institutions such as education and that “[separating] children, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, makes a very clear divide. To offer pizza to one set of children and not the other, creates a mindset of separation. And division with the children not offered the reward.”

Emily Duggan, a local Cree and Welsh mom who happens to be running in the upcoming school trustee by election for Castlegar's School District 20. Her child goes to Brent Kennedy, too. Here's what Duggan tells Rebel News her and others in the community are still feeling from the situation that they believe has yet to be rectified.

Emily Duggan: And people in the community are outraged, whether they're Indigenous, part white, whatever their cultural background is, they're not happy with it. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that this is an example of segregation, and we know from the past segregation never works. Segregation on racial profiling it is probably the worst kind of segregation. And yeah, it doesn't work. It's not OK. It's 2024. We know better and it's our responsibility to do better and that's the general consensus about this.

Humphrey: And do better is exactly what Emily and a few other parents tried to help the school. So you see, I wish I could stop the report here by saying that the school came to the realization that they had racially discriminated against their own students and apologize for doing so, but that's not what happened.

For weeks, Duggan and her husband offered to do a truly inclusive pizza party that welcomed all students and completely on the parents' dime, which would mean them and a couple of other parents would be splitting a \$900 bill to do so. And as it should have been, the principal actually eventually agreed to the welcoming, unifying idea.

Duggan was ecstatic and got to work planning the pizza party for April 5th. After all, this is about the children, right? Wrong. Instead, while she was in the works of planning this, she got another email from the principal, who apparently seems to have caved and bowed down to the authorities at “B”, who told her this logic and reasoning behind canceling the actually inclusive pizza party.

Her statement to Duggan reads, “the rationale behind this decision stems from concerns raised by both the PAC and school staff regarding the proposal's potential to create division and convey an endorsement of the viewpoint that the Indigenous Equity Scan day coupled with

the pizza celebration, lacked inclusiveness. It is essential to clarify that we do not share this prospective.”

You've got to be kidding me. So now a pizza party for *all* is the one that's divisive. And to make matters worse, Kooznetsoff sent out a quite an alarming e-mail just before the school closed their doors for spring break. It says,

Unfortunately there has been a great deal of negative social media attention directed at Brent Kennedy Elementary that has been destructive for our school community, the school has received several negative phone calls and emails. To ensure that staff and students feel safe in our building, we have taken the precautionary measure of locking the front door during instructional time.

Now personally, I think school doors should be locked anyways. I mean, if you lock your house door because your children are inside, why are the schools not locking the door when they're responsible for other people's children? But since this isn't normal practice for Brent Kennedy, and an email like that came out from the principal, I imagine it was quite alarming. Were the anti-segregation and pro-inclusivity parents now a threat to the school?

Naturally, I reached out to the school to see if they'd care to elaborate on what could have possibly been in those phone calls and emails to make them take such a safety precaution. I didn't get an answer to that question, so I reached out to the RCMP. I mean, surely if the school officials felt so threatened to the point that they had to bring in new safety precautions. They would tell the police, right? Wouldn't it be negligent not to do so? But according to the RCMP, they received no reports of any incident or verbal physical threat made to Brent Kennedy School staff, students during the whole period of time that parents and families and tax paying public members have been opposing the situation.

So what was that email about? Was this simply the principal's way of trying to halt these emails with her tail between her legs? Because, like so many times and with so many people in history before, when they were in a position of power to stand against discrimination, they'd rather take the path of least resistance instead.

You tell me what you think in the comments, Drea Humphrey for Rebel News.

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Accompanying Rebel News Article

Outrage continues after school doubles down on 'Indigenous kids only' pizza party

Drea Humphrey investigates Brent Kennedy Elementary School's handling of parental concerns regarding a 'racist pizza party' held last month in Kootenay, British Columbia.

Drea Humphrey, March 22, 2024

Many Crescent Valley British Columbia parents are still hurt and outraged after Brent Kennedy Elementary chose to double down on its decision to host an Indigenous children-only pizza party last month.

In a statement to Rebel News, a publication correspondent for School District 8 confirmed that Indigenous students were rewarded with the delicious meal as part of the school's implementation of the province's data equity survey program.

Despite concerns being raised by parents who oppose their children being racially segregated into groups of haves and have-nots at school, and pushback from the general public who have learned about what's now being called the "racist pizza party," Brent Kennedy Elementary has reinforced the decision to host the party.

The school went so far as to accept and then reject a parent-led initiative, headed by school trustee candidate Emily Duggan, to have parents pay for a pizza party for all. The school claimed that a party for all would somehow be more divisive.