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Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 11:50 AM

To: Town <town@fortfrances.ca>; Doug Judson <dwjudson@gmail.com>

Subject: [External] Correspondence to Council Regarding TOFF's Renaming of Colonization Road

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Please include this correspondence to Mayor and Council for the next Council meeting.

Mayor and Members of Council,

I believe that there is a consideration with regard to the town's renaming policy that has not yet been fully explored. A major impact of renaming Colonization Road, greater than address changes or financial obstacles, is to the *culture* of Fort Frances. We must realize we are not discussing a simple street name but what kind of people live here, what this community stands for, and what kind of town we want to become. It would be a prudent move for the town's image that Council act quickly and decisively to correct these matters as they arise.

Our town is currently facing many challenges and I realize a name change will not fix our issues, but it is a necessary step. Correcting names from our past demonstrates a commitment to strive for a much more tolerant and compassionate future. We must be willing to adapt.

The image we project is crucial in ensuring a better future for Fort Frances.

For consideration:

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- How do young people feel
- growing up here? Over the years I have consistently heard the same thing from our youth: once I'm done school I'm leaving this town. And the reasons that come up time and again are intolerant (older) people, racism, and lack of opportunity for youth. Our youth
- are leaving for larger and more diverse cities, taking their talents and dreams with them.
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- Is the way we present ourselves
- affecting recruitment of health care professionals or more importantly, retention of these professionals?
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- Are people willing to move
- here, start businesses here, become a part of this community? Do entrepreneurs want to invest in a town that still has a Colonization Road? Demonstrating progressive ideals fosters economic growth.
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- New Gold is a leading employer
- in the Rainy River District and a wonderful community partner. New Gold is also committed to Indigenous partnerships and embraces diversity and inclusiveness (directly from their Mission and Values statements). Does it benefit companies to continue to closely
- work with communities whose values do not appear to align with their own?
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- Part of the town's Strategic
- Plan includes improving relationships and establishing partnerships with nearby First Nations communities. It specifically states in Section 6 of "Objectives" that one of the opportunities to do this is "development of signage in Public town facilities that
- includes Anishinaabemowin to better accommodate our local Indigenous community members." The initiative to change local signs to improve relationships with First Nations communities is literally already in our town's Strategic Plan. And a lack of action on
- this name change risks these relationships.
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- If we look at the demographics
- to see what kind of people have spoken out against the name change they are primarily Caucasian senior citizens, as has been pointed out on social media. The larger picture is that the direction of this town is also dependent on those who are not voters or
- not yet voters. What kind of people don't (or won't) live here? Consulting residents of a road excludes those who may not even consider living on a road with such a name. What about the residents of all of our surrounding First Nations communities that shop
- and work here and have to see that? What's the right thing to do for future generations?
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(Side note: the policing of social media and fake outrage at "ageism" are attempts to deflect from the issue, discredit those who push for progress, and not have to consider their own prejudices. When endeavouring to maximize representation we must acknowledge when a certain demographic has had sufficient say in matters and when we're missing younger and more diverse voices. Pointing out that we've heard from old, white people is not ageist. We must not conflate "ageist" with "not catering solely to the opinions of older residents." The fact is that no one is dismissing the views of these residents because of their age- none of them have presented a compelling reason to keep the name.)

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- How many of our citizens
- feel ashamed of our town for not doing this sooner? Does the town not have a responsibility to respect the wishes of those citizens who do not want our town to have a reputation of racism? And I don't care how many people say that they don't think it's racist-
- the fact is that *some*
- people do and we don't get to decide that it's not.
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Now is not the time for consulting every single citizen for their opinion just to appease the voters. We require strong leadership to send a swift, clear message: is Fort Frances a town that looks the other way with painful reminders of the colonial subjugation of First Nations, or not?

Thank you for your consideration,

Nathalie Donaldson
Resident of Fort Frances
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