



January 31, 2020

STATEMENT TO DENOUNCE DISCRIMINATION AND XENOPHOBIA IN RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

The Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre supports the recent statement from the York Region District School Board that the public should avoid discrimination and xenophobia during this recent outbreak of the coronavirus.

Specifically in Niagara, we call on all school boards, organizations, health care centers, places of work, and public areas to come together and denounce any form of xenophobia and rely on our shared values of equity and inclusivity.

<http://www.yrdsb.ca/schools/Repository/NewsEvents/Pages/Message-from-the-Board-Chair.aspx>

The Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre denounces a petition in the York Region that calls on the school board to publicly expose families that have recently travelled to China and that their children be prevented from attending school.

<https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/stop-2019nCoV-spread-in-york-region-school>

While the health and safety of children and students in schools are paramount, it has never been suggested to quarantine students for 17 days each time they have the flu.

“Influenza and pneumonia are ranked among the top 10 leading causes of death in Canada. Each year in Canada, it is estimated that influenza causes approximately 12,200 hospitalizations and 3,500 deaths annually.”

As an organization, we understand that the coronavirus is listed by the World Health Organization as a global health emergency; however it is not confined to people of one nationality or race. This virus has affected people of all different races and nationalities.

During the SARS crisis, discrimination against East Asians did not make the public safer; instead it isolated people, entrenched stereotypes, led to increased bullying in schools and spread fear of people of East Asian heritage. It is vital that we learn from the lessons of 2003 and apply them in how we treat each other today.

Racism has no place in our society or in our classrooms.

We will continue to follow the directions of the Medical Officer of Health through Niagara Public Health and we call on all staff, clients, and volunteers to use personal protective measures to prevent communicable diseases from spreading and creating a public health concern.

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