

Dear Mayor and Council,

It was brought to my attention today, after participating in an anti-racist training, that our council approves tax exemptions for the churches in our community. Both the new Whistler Community Church and Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church receive these tax exemptions.

As a full-time Whistler resident, involved community member and property tax payer this doesn't sit well with me. In all honesty it makes my heart feel heavy and my stomach feel sick.

I grew up in Ottawa, and was raised as a practicing Catholic and went to Catholic school which in Ontario is funded by the provincial government. Never knowing to question why the government funds a religious based school, I just went along with it, as my education was based on what my parents thought was best for me.

As an engaged Canadian citizen and a settler to this land, I am taking the time needed to educate myself on our colonial past and to work on questioning our history. Having graduated from a Catholic high school in 2002, and now knowing that the last residential school in Canada closed in 1996, it brings me great sadness and shame to know that my parents money and the money of my friends parents, went into the Catholic education system though their property taxes and that blood money was part of the money used historically speaking, to keep Catholic based residential schools funded. It sickens me to know that I had a passive part to play. While I was receiving a Catholic education and could go home to my parents each night, Indigenous youth, the same age as I, were forced to go to residential schools only to be malnourished, beaten & molested.

As a community we talk about Truth and Reconciliation but there will NEVER be Reconciliation without Truth. As a community, it is vital that we stand with our nations and do the decolonization work that is needed together. The RMOW and Council should no longer give tax exemptions to organizations that have historically played a HUGE role in our troubled past. It is said that when we know better, we do better. And as someone who has a voice, I wanted to voice my concerns to you all today about this tax exemption, and to say NO MORE.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my concerns and to hopefully realize that it is our duty, especially as settlers to this land, to speak up, and do something. And you all have the power to change the tax exemption status for the churches in our community.

Sincerely,

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