
For immediate release

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Queneesh school community disheartened by graffiti

Comox Valley, B.C. – When their school was inappropriately attacked with spray paint over the weekend, Queneesh Elementary students retaliated with ink.

The grade 6 and 7 Montessori class, led by Anne Buchanan, educator, took an unpleasant experience into a teachable moment.

Buchanan seized the opportunity to deliver a valuable lesson in social responsibility and citizenry encouraging the students to express their feelings in letters.

Sometime during the late hours of Saturday, March 7 into Sunday the school was targeted with slanderous messages and a note of apology spray-painted in red, silver and green from one end of the building to the other. Upon discovering the graffiti, parents, neighbours and members of Living Hope Church who meet in the school gym for Sunday service, came forward volunteering to help clean and cover up the mess.

To their dismay, students arrived at school Monday morning to see the vandalism and were met with feelings of distress, as well as an abundance of questions. Why? Why would someone want to ruin a school with expressions of anger?

Buchanan chose to skip the math lesson and get right into a discussion with her senior elementary students about empathy. Empathy for those most effected by the incident including their little buddy class whose window was hit hard with graffiti, and for the District painter, who gave up his day to repaint the exterior of the school rather than pursuing his planned task to work on a mural at Valley View Elementary.

“We have such a beautiful school that we do a good job at keeping it clean and tidy,” shared Buchanan. “We really take pride here at Queneesh.”

The Montessori class toured the outside of the school, stopping to read all the written slurs etched on the walls while trying to make sense of the damage.

The class penned their thoughts in letters, reflecting on the experience and its impact on their school community.

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“Art. Our world wouldn’t be the same without it. It gives us the opportunity to express ourselves but, when people do it illegally, it’s different,” wrote Sonja.

“It made me feel angry because instead of maybe getting new computers we have to pay for paint,” expressed Lucie.

Another student stated she is disappointed with the incident but has turned her focus into an exercise in sleuthing to see if there is evidence in the penmanship and markings that could give clues to the one(s) responsible for the graffiti.

As part of their reflection, students, as well as staff expressed concern about the individual responsible, remaining hopeful that if the act of vandalism came from a place of hurt, they will seek help.

Buchanan was quick to demonstrate to her class that there could be another optimistic outcome in the form of an art project. After the school received a fresh coat of paint to cover up the markings, one hydro box at the rear of the school remained with traces of the crime. Buchanan and her class believe the school might consider turning it into an art piece with the help of artist Jason Craft, who recently led students through the redesign of the front foyer into a mural masterpiece.

Unfortunately, however, graffiti and other acts of vandalism does come at a cost.

“An act of vandalism on one school impacts all schools. The cost of this repair will come from funds that could be directed toward other programs,” stated Tom Demeo, Superintendent of Schools. “Sadly, when the District is required to reallocated money, the consequences are felt on students.”

RCMP are asking the community for any information that may help in the investigation of the graffiti at Queneesh Elementary and throughout the community. Comox Valley Schools also wants to remind the community that if anyone is ever in need of assistance or support, the [Kid’s Help Phone](#) at 1-800-668-6868 is always an available option.

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Images Captions

Students gather around the back of Queneesh Elementary displaying disappointment with the recent graffiti hit on their school, many of whom penned their emotions and concerns in personal letters to reflect on the incident and the reasons why it may have occurred.

The school district maintenance department responded as swiftly as possible to paint over the graffiti that extended from one end to school exterior the other. Soon after the damage was discovered, the surrounding community responded with an outpouring of support to help with the fix.

(Image source: Comox Valley Schools)