

Gillian Burnett Introduction:

Tell us about yourself and why you are running or what you hope to achieve.

I have been a parent advocate in SD57 for more than 12 years and at a provincial level with the BCCPAC from 2017-2021. I whole-heartedly support public education and believe I still have more to offer. I hold a Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting from UNBC and work as the Financial Controller for 3 companies offering contractor services to primarily the wood fiber industry. I see this as just a natural step forward for me and am looking forward to a new challenge that inspires me to learn. I am seeking the opportunity to continue advocating for the students of SD57 because I have found it to be rewarding work that challenges me to dig deep to understand issues from a variety of perspectives so I can put forward concrete ideas about how we can address them. I hope to bring strong leadership to SD57 where every student can thrive and reach their goals.

Question 1 from CUPE Local 3742:

What do you view as your responsibility in relation to senior management?

Interesting question. First, I think I have established a relationship of mutual respect with most of the senior management over my many years as a volunteer and I would continue to nurture these relationships as a trustee, taking into consideration the new roles and responsibilities we have towards each other. As a trustee, I'd need to give clear and concise directions for senior management to operationalize through policy development that supports the vision collaboratively reached and stated in the district's Strategic Plan.

Further, I'd have the responsibility of asking questions that keep all of us focused and accountable to our goals. I'm not an educator, but I can be a champion for our educators. I will leave the day-to-day running of the district to those with the expertise, but I will ensure that the district upholds the values of equity, inclusion, transparency, integrity, community and respect using fair judgement in all decision making.

Question 2 from PGDTA:

School District 57 continues to face a six-year shortage of teachers in all of its communities. This has already resulted in over 20 thousand hours of lost support to students and District assessment data shows that vulnerable students are not reaching education achievement benchmarks in multiple areas.

What are your ideas for teacher recruitment and retention and how would you advocate at both local and provincial levels for a fully funded serious recruitment and retention plan?

Recognizing that if elected, this will be something I need to commit to, I took quite a bit of time to consider the issue. As a trustee I can champion a local environment that would attract teachers through a healthy, safe work environment, where teachers feel supported with opportunities for growth. But more will be needed to address the shortfalls. I've been inspired by our district's work with UNBC in recent history to expand the teaching program so more students can attain a teaching degree. That's a concrete plan I can support. I would use all avenues through BCSTA and submissions to the Select Standing Committee of Finance to advocate for fully funded serious recruitment and retention plans for BC Teachers. I'd listen to ideas and use real experiences to illustrate why the need to act is essential.

Question 3 from DPAC:

What does accountability mean to you and increasing accountability in SD57?

Accountability – taking ownership of, being responsible for... I've been a strong supporter of the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning because I believe that when we seriously look at what the data is telling us, we will know where we need to focus. I've asked the hard questions and taken ownership of what I can influence and change internally and externally. As a trustee I will take ownership of and be responsible for making decisions that have a direct impact on learning outcomes and well-being of our students, but I think parents need more than a commitment to this. They also need a transparent process so they can see that each trustee is using integrity to reach decisions. They need to hear what has been considered, not just the decision, but how we arrived at the decision as well. I will endeavor to do just that if elected. I'm not afraid of the time commitment necessary to fully understand the issues before us. I will work hard to ensure the district is in a constant state of improvement, wherever it is needed, no matter how difficult.

Question 4:

Please provide a value Statement on Indigenous Education in School District 57.

I could answer this question by citing the commitment that the district has made to both Truth and Reconciliation: 94 Calls to Action and UNDRIP, or identifying the district's incorporation of the First Peoples Principles of Learning, but I'm not going to. I'm going to answer more personally. I'm personally committed Truth and Reconciliation. I acknowledge that I am a settler on the unceded ancestral lands of the Lheidli Teneh and I'm truly grateful and blessed to be able to derive peace and well-being while enjoying time at our many lakes. I believe that building strong relationships with indigenous communities can foster healthier, culturally safe environments for all. Acknowledging the inter-generational traumas experienced by residential school survivors allows us to learn from our past and intentionally choose a different path forward. As long as gaps exist between indigenous and non-indigenous learners we must continue to work together and focus intentionally on closing them. We must have respect for one another and appreciate that we all have something to contribute. I admit that I am on a journey of Truth and Reconciliation and I still have far to travel and learn. So not a value statement on Indigenous Education in SD57, but my own values that support the work of the district.