

Dr. Robin Gray, an academic scholar who has written on this particular topic and is a member of the West Coast Indigenous community provided the comments below to the LKDSB. Dr. Gray is a Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams, BC, and a University of California Santa Cruz President's Postdoctoral Fellow from 2015-2017 and will begin her tenure at the University of Toronto this summer.

This is a very interesting--although, sadly, not an uncommon--case of cultural appropriation 'gone wild' with the use of heritage preservation discourses. I don't have time to prepare a statement or to have a lengthy discussion about this before your meeting on Monday, but due to my identity, expertise, and in the service of a greater good, I'm outlining the primary points that I would make about this issue:

- 1. Confer with local Indigenous communities about improving relationships and representation.*
- 2. Totem poles have nothing to do with Tecumseh—claiming to 'honor' the school's namesake with a totem pole was ignorant to begin with. It's a complete mis-representation of Tecumseh.*
- 3. Totem poles are not the traditional cultural practice of any Indigenous community in Ontario. It is unique to northwest coast Indigenous peoples. Again, an ignorant misrepresentation.*
- 4. The non-Indigenous people who approved and participated in the making of this 'totem pole', perpetuated blatant acts of cultural appropriation that were insensitive and unethical.*
- 5. The non-Indigenous alumni are ultimately making a fabricated claim to the 'totem pole' as the school's cultural heritage thereby nullifying any argument for heritage preservation.*
- 6. The 'totem pole' should be removed and the ones who care about it should take it away.*
- 7. Taking a stand against cultural appropriation, stereotyping, misrepresentation and miseducation is a way for educational systems to honor the TRC Calls to Action and the articles outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).*