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June 12, 2012

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Should Local Parents Question Official Statistics? By Warren Munroe

Sir,

Please ensure your readers are aware of corrections to the article, “Ambling waves of grey” by Steve Heywood, PQB News, June 1, 2012.

You refer to “Munroe’s figures” and “stats from Munroe”. The numbers referred to are not Munroe’s, but rather, Statistics Canada’s 1996, 2001, 2006 Census Counts.

Regarding enrolment numbers you refer to, these are not Munroe’s, but rather, the Qualicum School District’s (QSD) and the Ministry of Education’s enrolment numbers.

Indeed, you inadvertently compare Statistics Canada with Qualicum School District numbers much like comparing apples to oranges. This would not have happened but for your newspaper’s policy of not allowing subjects to read articles prior to printing to ensure proper sourcing and accuracy. Thank you for changing this policy.

Also, your article insinuates “a local” parent led community members astray, including the Mayor of Qualicum Beach.

Please be aware, locals can contribute information of relevance in an effort to find alternatives to closing a school permanently such as Kwalikum Secondary School, a recommendation made only 7 years after opening a \$9.1 million expansion to KSS.

Indeed, the enrolment numbers I requested of the QSD going back to 1983 show that enrolment had declined in the 1980’s to lower levels than the forecasted low. Enrolment can rise and fall as the boom is followed by a bust, followed by an echo, and so on.

Also, another contribution, arising locally and having an impact provincially, is that after questioning official methods, BC Stats began publishing the changes they have been making to their population estimation methods, for the first time since 1998.

Your statement that “current stats from Munroe show enrolment is recovering faster than figures from the school district” is simply not true. As mentioned, these were not my numbers. I did add international students as these were not included in the chart printed on the front page of the PQB News October 5, 2010. I requested to you, during our last correspondence in January 2011, to print the revised chart but this was not done. See www.wminformatics/popgeog/pgforum/qsdfri.html.

Regarding your statements “Munroe’s figures show more young families are moving to Qualicum Beach.” Please be aware the 1996, 2001, and 2006 Statistic Canada’s Census Counts by Age and Sex show that more people of the ages 5 to 17, plus those 30 to 50 years moved in to, than out of, the Parksville Census Agglomeration (Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Nanaimo G) also referred to as Oceanside.

Locals should never be discouraged from asking questions. We certainly don’t want small groups of people with-holding data that is being used to justify opening and closing of facilities etc., nor do we want newspapers demeaning locals for asking questions.

As you aware, I earned a Master of Arts majoring in Geography, specializing in statistics and population, from Carleton University in Ottawa, where I worked closely with adjunct professors from Statistics Canada, and I have a Population Research and Analysis consulting business in Qualicum Beach, as well as having served as BC’s Population Analyst and the provincial expert on migration from 2002 to 2006.

There is a flood of data already upon us and we need more people who can organize, interpret, and explain it. I recently sponsored a student from Vancouver Island University, Erin Phillip, who did a public presentation of her study of the effects on transportation for alternative school closure scenarios. Perhaps someday, the QSD will allow students to use the same data sent to outside consultants, and will also fund such research.

Communities (including their newspapers) that encourage public consultation, scientific inquiry, the exchange of information, thoughtful discussion, and engage students, young and old in local and global issues are both better informed and better able to participate, and gain high paying jobs, in the growing global knowledge economy.

Sincerely,



William Warren Munroe

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cc Teunis Westbroek, Mayor Qualicum Beach