

January 5, 2021

Dear Leelanau County Board of Commissioners:

I am writing to urge the Board to prioritize the commitments it made in the anti-racism resolution (No. 2020-014) (and I quote):

- to promote diversity, inclusion, equality, and equity in all aspects of county government
- to commit your full attention to advocating for equality, equity, and improving the quality of life and health of all of our residents
- to assess internal policies and procedures to ensure equality and racial equity is a core element in all organizational practices
- to promote, support, and participate in the necessary professional development programming to support the purposes of this resolution for all employees, Commissioners and elected officials

Undertaking these actions not only fulfills this Board's promise to the community, but sets Leelanau County apart as a leader in the area of racial equity and inclusion. I disagree with Commissioner Bunek that these efforts "make the county look bad." I believe the exact opposite is true. These initiatives make Leelanau County look good, make it more welcoming, more inclusive, and safer for all people, residents and visitors alike.

One concrete action this Board could take immediately is to add a land acknowledgement to the beginning of every meeting of this Board. That idea was raised by members of the Band at this Board's anti-bias training, and I fully support this Board taking that action.

Commissioner Rushton also asked at the last meeting whether any of the County's policies had racial bias. I too think this is an important question to answer. I ask this Board to form a Committee of Board members, the County administrator, and community members to conduct a full audit to assess our laws, regulations, and policies for racial bias.

Although it's sometimes difficult to identify examples of institutional racism, at least one very recent event clearly demonstrates what institutional racism looks like and what actually makes our county "look bad":

It is the Sheriff using our taxpayer dollars to indoctrinate his officers with far-right racially biased reading material that *Newsweek* has described as "flawed logic" and "fantasy". Actions like that make our county look bad; make our residents feel less safe; and make our potential visitors and tourists reconsider visiting. The Sheriff and his officers, as an elected County officer and County employees, respectively, need to undergo serious and legitimate anti-bias training to undo the harm this action has caused.

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In closing, I applaud this Board's commitment to working for equity and justice in our community by passing Resolution 2020-014, and I urge you to prioritize its continued implementation in 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Fred". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Ellen A. Fred
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