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Meeting being held to address escalating conflicts at Shelburne high school

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A date has been set for a public meeting to discuss conflict in Shelburne schools following escalating incidents at the end of the school year.

The meeting has been scheduled for August 21 at the Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex (CDRC).

Shelburne resident and organizer Gary Whitworth, said the session is looking to address the growing violence and conflicts within local schools.

During a council meeting in mid-June, Dufferin OPP Insp. Terry Ward informed Shelburne council of two incidents at the local high school that had been deemed ?racially motivated?.

At the time, Ward told council there was little the police service could do without their being a call to service due to the school board and elected trustees voting to not have police presence in schools in April of 2021.

A notice released by Centre Dufferin District High School (CDDHS) shortly after the reported incidents confirmed that the fights were precipitated by the use of anti-black language and anti-black slurs.

The incident has since been managed internally by Centre Dufferin and the Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB).

Tension escalated just days after the two initial incidents when information of a ?potential general threat' and indication it would be carried out on the final day of instruction (June 17) resulted in students being moved to virtual learning. An investigation by police and the school did not substantiate any potential threat.

In response to the incident, the Town of Shelburne and its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee both issued public statement condemning the incidents.

At a town council meeting on June 27, Whitworth requested the public meeting, which would include council, parents, teachers, principals, school board trustees, and the Dufferin OPP liaison.

?When there are children that fear for their lives and have nightmares about being shot and killed, and yes that's what they are afraid of, we as adults are at fault,? said Whitworth, at the meeting. ?Children do not see skin colour. It is adults who teach children that there is a difference. Words can be harmful.?

Shelburne Council agreed to participate in the public meeting forum.

Whitworth said the high school, UGDSB trustees, the Dufferin OPP liaison, and council members from surrounding areas including Grand Valley, Amaranth, Mono, Mulmur, and Melancthon have been contacted to attend the meeting

The public meeting will take place on August 21 from 1 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. at the CDRC.