



**Cariboo  
Chilcotin  
Teachers'  
Association**

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October 26, 2016

Mr. Mark Wintjes, Superintendent  
School District #27  
Williams Lake, B. C.

Dear Mr. Wintjes,

**Re: Gideon Bibles**

I have been approached by a number of teachers with concerns about the School District's decision to make Gideon bibles available to grade five students. I have read your October 11<sup>th</sup> letter addressed to the Staff of School District #27, and believe by allowing the distribution of bibles, the district is in violation of the B.C. School Act.

Section 76 of the BC School Act states that all BC public schools "must be conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles". By giving the Gideons access to the school to distribute their bibles, the district is not upholding the expectations of the Act. Such a policy also discriminates against smaller religions and shields students from those worldviews that do not advertise their beliefs in this public manner. It is a widely held belief that public schools should be free from religious indoctrination and should welcome students of all faiths, as well as those with no faith. This is consistent with court rulings across Canada that have found actions practiced by the Gideons violate Section 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which doesn't just guarantee freedom of religion, it guarantees freedom from religion.

The Gideons aim their product at Grade 5 students for the same reason so many merchants focus on what is known as the tween market. From the ages of 10 to 14, children are at their most vulnerable to marketing techniques. All other districts in the province comply with the School Act and no longer give Gideons access to their public schools for their distribution of religious materials. I am asking that the district reconsider its policy of allowing Gideons access to our schools to distribute their bibles.

Sincerely,

Murray Helmer, President  
Cariboo-Chilcotin Teachers' Association