

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

May 20, 2021

6:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Members:	Albert Dumont, Inini McHugh, Jo VanHooser, Nina Stanton, Lili Miller
Indigenous Education Staff:	Jody Alexander (Vice-Principal, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education), Kris Meawasige (Indigenous Student Support and Re-engagement Coordinator), Chantel Verner (Instructional Coach)
Other Staff and Guests:	Wendy Hough (Non-Voting Trustee Delegate for IEAC), Trustee Bell (Trustee), Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Jessica Young (Vice Principal, Canterbury High School), Wayne Kilabuk, Sonia-Nadon Campbell (Special Education Advisory Committee Representative on the Indigenous Education Advisory Council), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Opening (Elder Albert Dumont)

Elder Dumont opened the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

He delivered a tribute to Superintendent Baker, noting that he felt she was an extraordinary human being, showing his appreciation towards her, and acknowledging her presence at her last Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) meeting.

Vice Principal Alexander and the members of IEAC expressed their gratitude towards Superintendent Baker.

2. Student Voice

Elder Dumont emphasized the importance of the District's consideration of the wellness of young people as they may return to school in the fall of 2021 with complex mental health or addiction issues stemming from the fears of the pandemic and isolation factors.

A student was welcomed into the space.

3. Community Discussion

The following points were raised in community discussion:

- McHugh shared the success of the Inuuqatigiit Educational Hubs. The program was developed to support Inuit children and youth from grades 1 to 12 within the educational system by providing academic and cultural support in smaller cohorts of 6 to 8 children. The program has impacted the students in a positive way and the provincial government has expressed interest in creating more programs based upon the hub model. Mr. McHugh showed his gratitude towards Superintendent Baker and Trustee Hough for their contributions to assisting with the grant writing process and for forging the connections with the learning support teachers, guidance counsellors, principals and the Indigenous Education Team, who assist with the hub programming;
- VanHooser announced that she is taking a leave of absence from the Children's Aid Society (CAS). She and her son will return to their Annishabee roots in Lac Seul First Nations. The Council wished her well and asked her to continue joining the IEAC circle in a virtual capacity. She indicated that she would be pleased to continue participating on the IEAC remotely;
- Superintendent Baker congratulated Elder Dumont on his April 2021 appointment as Ottawa's poet laureate, a two-term position.
- McHugh shared that he has been promoted to the Inuuqatigiit, Manager of Education, overseeing four different programs. He noted that Inuuqatigiit is recruiting for new jobs specifying Indigenous staff; and

Vice Principal Alexander reported that the District has hired two additional Indigenous graduation coaches. The Indigenous Education Team has grown to ten people, making the team second largest in the province, next to the Toronto District School Board.

4. Presentations

4.1 Safe Schools Policy and Code of Conduct Policy Phase II Consultation (M.J. Farrish)

The draft versions of P.125.SCO Code of Conduct Policy, P.032.SCO Safe Schools Policy (Managing Student Behaviour) and P.145.SCO Safe Schools Policy (Emergency Preparedness and Response) were presented to IEAC for independent review on 21 April 2021.

Superintendent Farrish proposed that IEAC share their views on any policy updates required from the Indigenous perspective. She welcomed input to be shared either during the presentation or afterwards in writing. She noted an extension from the original timeframe to Fall 2021 for final approval on the presented policies.

Vice Principal Young reported that during Phase I of the consultation process, several types of focus groups were formed: students, student senate, parents and guardians, multicultural liaison officers, school administrators and federation partners. Shared themes, which appeared often, were mental health and well-being of students and staff, greater need to monitor bullying in schools, addressing racial slurs, homophobia and sexism, dress code, defining the role of police in schools.

Vice Principal Young shared that Policy P.125.SCO School District Code of Conduct was revised and now includes new language on a dress code. Primarily the only clothing choice restrictions are on any article of clothing with messages that promote or symbolize hate, discrimination, illegal activity, profanity, violence, drugs and alcohol, or objects affixed to clothing that threaten health or safety. The revision will require adoption on the part of staff, students, and parents, as change is embraced. Explanatory posters and other communications strategies will be implemented in the fall.

Vice Principal Young introduced the new criterion of Policy P.032.SCO Safe Schools (Managing Student Behaviour). The different school sites can adopt board policy as school policy, rather than develop their own separate policies. The District will continue to work on progressive discipline approaches that are focused on prevention and developing environments that promote and foster positive behaviours. The new approach minimizes the disruptions to students' learning when considering interventions. Vice Principal Young emphasized that the central direction to school administrators is that greater attention is to be focused on bias awareness, particularly with respect to the discriminatory application of progressive discipline that affects certain groups protected under the Human Rights Code.

In response to questions during the presentation and in discussion the following points were noted:

- A standalone Modified Days Policy is underdevelopment;
- Elder Dumont expressed the importance of providing healing opportunities for those students who are deemed in contravention of the policies. His direction was that Indigenous students should have access to a Lodge with the support and advocacy of a member of the Indigenous Education Team, a councillor or an elder when discussing a policy breach. Superintendent Farrish responded that restorative and healing practices have been incorporated into the policy revision;
- McHugh noted the benefits of the Tragic Event Response Teams (TERT) and enlisting psychological first aid resources;

- The dress code incorporates the positive expression of cultural traditions;
- The use of the phrase 'progressive discipline' was rejected by many council members. The words "progressive discipline" contains negative, punitive, fearful connotations for Indigenous families. Requests were made to soften the language to better reflect the intention of creating a whole school positive climate;
- A recommendation to explain the policies to students as part of their preliminary school orientation at the beginning of every school year; and

Indigenous Student Support and Re-engagement Coordinator Meawasige suggested the policy describe a mechanism to remind students of their options to have a cultural support person present should a policy breach occur. Vice Principal Young noted that this language is in the current revised policy and she will verify that it is clearly stated. She said that it will be incumbent on administrators to uphold the delivery of this support at the school level. Mr. Meawasige agreed to consult with Vice Principal Young on the specific language to be included in the policy.

5. Reports

5.1 Indigenous Education Team Update

Vice Principal Alexander provided an update on the on-going work of the Indigenous Education Team for the 2020-2021 school year:

- Mental health check-ins with students and families;
- Advocating for students;
- Working in collaboration with teachers to ensure Indigenous students are obtaining credits and graduating;
- Professional development for library technicians, teacher librarians, training for the Grade 11 NBE course, and Itinerant Educational Assistants;
- Book clubs;
- Supporting the New Teacher Induction Program with presentations;
- Celebrating graduating students with recognition and care packages;
- A virtual Indigenous Youth Symposium;
- Supporting students at Innuqatigiits education hubs;
- Summer Learning Program planning;

- Original Voices Youth Council (OVYC) support;
- Creating newsletters and a Google Currents resource page;
- Offering mental health support circles;
- Working with superintendents to disrupt anti-Indigenous racism and decolonize education;
- Learning sessions on land acknowledgements and treaties;
- Access to elders for students; and
- Regular 'Speakers Series' programming featuring various community partners and Indigenous knowledge groups.

Vice Principal Alexander reported that the District's Board action plan for Indigenous education guides the support of Indigenous students and educators. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many of the events held in the past were not possible for the 2020-2021 school year. Many activities that the team delivers are not associated with a funding expenditure. Several events which took place were "grassroots" and student-led.

Mr. McHugh recalled that he and Graduation Coach Morrison delivered Christmas baskets to Indigenous families in need during the month of December 2020.

Mr. Meawasige noted his enthusiasm about building on the summer learning program, piloted in the summer of 2020. More news on the program will be publicized in the upcoming Indigenous Education newsletter.

A student shared that he enjoyed the fun of the summer learning program. He contributed that the OVYC supports him to feel more at one with his Indigenous culture.

Superintendent Baker spoke highly of all the achievements that the Indigenous Education Team had been involved with this year.

5.2 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Baker addressed some questions that arose from the meeting of 22 April 2021. She has confirmed with Superintendent Smith that the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) courses are available and accessible to the students who are enrolled in the Urban Aboriginal Alternate High School. There are some limitations, as the courses are staffed with two teachers. Where the teaching staff does not hold the appropriate qualifications, they liaise with staff from other schools and community connections to offer a broader course range.

Superintendent Baker noted that in response to the question of land-based learning and opportunities for the outdoor education centres to support those initiatives, the Indigenous Education Team and Continuing Education plan to visit to MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre at the end of May 2021 to walk the land and discuss how the land might lend itself to increased learning opportunities.

Trustee Scott shared that the matter of having an Indigenous Trustee position in all school boards will be raised at the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA) annual general meeting in June. The Limestone District School Board has proposed that OPSBA seek to have the Ministry of Education revise the regulation or provide an alternative mechanism to allow all school boards to include an additional funded designated Indigenous trustee. If this resolution is adopted at the OPSBA annual general meeting, it will become part of the provincial association's advocacy to the province. She noted that if OPSBA's advocacy is successful, all boards would thereby benefit from an Indigenous presence at trustee meetings.

Superintendent Baker announced a change to the Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) in relation to the Indigenous funding streams. The Indigenous Education grant is expected to provide close to \$1.9 million in additional revenue. The District's grant consists of a base amount to support the Board's action plan on Indigenous education, a per pupil amount reflective of the enrolment of Indigenous students and an Indigenous studies amount, which provides funding based on student enrolment in qualifying secondary panel courses. The increase in funding relates primarily to Indigenous studies where 3,503 pupil credits are anticipated as compared to the 1,900 pupil credits assumed in last year's budget. The increase is attributable to enrolment in compulsory English credit courses (NBE) which qualify for the supplemental funding.

5.3 IEAC Report, 22 April 2021

The IEAC report of 22 April 2021 was received.

5.4 Committee of the Whole Report (L. Miller)

Ms. Miller reported that at the 20 April 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting, amendments were made to the District's Recruitment, Hiring and Promotion Policy. She noted that the District is working to broaden the diversity among all staff groups.

Ms. Miller reported that at the 11 May 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting, a notice of motion was put forward to introduce a French immersion program at Cambridge Street Community Public School in September 2022. The motion was defeated. Ms. Miller expressed her concern with this decision. She maintained that if education is a human

right, should the education be offered in both official languages, made equally available in each school. Superintendent Baker confirmed that more discussions around this topic are forthcoming.

6. Standing Items

6.1 Algonquin Meeting Protocols

Superintendent Baker confirmed that after conferring with Ms. Manatch and Elder Dumont, the Algonquin meeting protocols will continue to be developed throughout the summer months and revisions will be shared at the launch of the 2021-2022 school year.

Elder Dumont spoke about Suquamish Chief Seattle who once said, "We know the sap which courses through the trees as we know the blood that courses through our veins. We are part of the earth and it is part of us." He explained that Chief Seattle was referring to the people of his homeland and territory. Elder Dumont stated that he can say the same about Algonquin territory; the sap coursing through the trees carries the memory of his ancestors. He noted that the Algonquin People have been on Turtle Island for 10,000 years, according to scientific research; however his people believe they have been on the land for a much longer time. He reminded those attending the meeting that the land met upon is unceded, unsurrendered. He urged people to remember that the Algonquin People were never conquered and they do not appreciate being treated as though they were. All Indigenous people have protocols specific to their own nations, which serve as a guideline on expected conduct. Elder Dumont asked those at the meeting to be respectful of the parameters set forth in the Algonquin protocols. The protocols are designed to bring wellness and health to all entities on the territory. He stated that he will embrace those that arrive on the territory with a good heart, a respect for the original inhabitants and the ways of the territory's protocols.

7. Information and Invitation

Ms. Miller acknowledged that National Indigenous History Month will be celebrated in June and hoped that people will celebrate in ways that best suited them and through pow pows.

8. Closing (Elder Albert Dumont)

Elder Dumont offered a closing at 8:01 p.m.