

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

October 17, 2019

6:00 pm

Gloucester High School

2060 Ogilvie Road

Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Albert Dumont, Pauline Mousseau, Jo VanHooser, Inini McHugh, Romaine Mitchell, Sebastien Pilon, Raiglee Alorut, Junior Ittusardjuat, Jesse Kavanaugh

Staff and Guests: Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Olga Grigoriev (Superintendent of Instruction), Jody Alexander (Vice-Principal), Lili Miller, Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Opening

Vice-Principal Alexander called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

Albert Dumont acknowledged the meeting is taking place on Algonquin Territory. He opened the meeting by offering a smudging and a teaching.

2. New Business

Superintendent Baker recalled the suggestion in the prior meeting, where new business within the circle is open for discussion at the beginning of the meeting.

Ms. Miller requested that the IEAC meeting dates be posted on the District's Indigenous Education web page.

Ms. Miller expressed concern that while touring the residential schools exhibit at the Museum of Civilization, the tour guide knew very little about the history of residential schools. The guide was indifferent towards much of the material on display and omitted important contextual details of Indigenous culture, such as the reason a residential school student hid his rattle from the teachers, RCMP execution of sled-dogs, and the dehumanization of the "Eskimo Identification System"(numbered tags) forced upon the Inuit people in place of their given name. Ms. Miller has written to the museum to emphasize her disappointment and noted that the tour is accessed by the District's secondary students. Mr. Pilon, a former employee of the Museum, offered to send Superintendent Baker the name of the person in charge of training the interpreters for information.

Mr. McHugh reported that through efforts by the Silatunig team and support by the District, the creation of a weekly Inuit Youth Sharing Circle is advancing. These circles will be held by a Knowledge Keeper or Elder, along with a youth mentor, on a weekly basis in the Lodge at Gloucester High School. Sharing Circles help youth gather together to share their experiences and express their feelings in safe environments. The youth mentor will help to facilitate a meal. Youth who attend will receive gift cards and bus tickets. Mr. McHugh is considering how to encourage a wider network of students from across the District to participate. He, and others in the circle, acknowledged District administration for their work on developing strong partnerships to facilitate new programs.

Vice-Principal Alexander introduced Director Williams-Taylor, who appreciated the welcome and noted that the work of the Council will inform the district.

3. Presentations from Staff

3.1 Board Action Plan for Indigenous Education

Vice-Principal Alexander distributed the draft 2019-2020 Board Assessment Tool to council, and noted that the tool provides the District and Ministry an overview of key successes and areas for improvement within Indigenous Education. The tool supports the development of the 2019-2020 Board Action Plan in the area of: supporting students, supporting educators, engagement and awareness building, and using data to support student achievement.

Mr. Mitchell contributed that this document is used provincially to evaluate the work accomplished in all four school boards. Since the implementation in 2012, the Tool has been useful to determine the shifts in focus as the knowledge within the school system increases.

Vice-Principal Alexander provided examples of successful initiatives and “promising practices” implemented by the Indigenous Education Team. In response to her request for input on other priorities, the council contributed the following suggestions:

- A request was made to permit feedback by email, after an opportunity to read and reflect upon the information;
- Name the community partnerships involved in actuating the assessments;
- Refer to the IEAC minutes of the past year to identify challenges and feedback;
- Under the Supporting Educators assessment page, implement at least one online course on Indigenous Cultural training, certified by the

Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), mandatory for the all District educators;

- Empower District staff to self-identify as Indigenous, to create role models for Indigenous students;
- When Elders come in to teach the students, cultivate an opportunity for non-Indigenous teachers to connect with the Elder on a one-to-one basis;
- The use of beading to teach math was commended, and led to the suggestion of netting for geometry lessons; and
- Issue credits when a student learns in their language and consider alternative testing practices for projects accomplished in community languages.

A broad discussion ensued on the challenges encountered when Indigenous people migrate from the Arctic to the southern parts of Canada. Ms. Alorout stated that as the Inuit travel to other parts of Canada from the North, they cease to continue to learn culture from Elders. She described the loss of connection with The Land and The Spirit; Grandchildren no longer have the opportunity to watch their relatives fish for food. The depth of impact plays upon the Indigenous ways, the languages, the families and identities. Ms. Van Hooser echoed the feeling of being overwhelmed in the big cities where, in her work at the Children's Aid Society, the youth she assists are desperate to balance between the two paths the city offers: one of new promises or one of diversions.

Albert Dumont spoke on the importance of teaching children to be proud of their bloodline. Superintendent Baker noted that there may be ways to intersect land and culture within the curriculum. Mr. Pilon highlighted that schools are gathering spaces and could be used as opportunities for Indigenous families to connect with each other. Mr. Mitchell shared the experience of working with another school board where an Elder frequently organized an Indigenous Family Night. First Nations, Inuit and Metis descendants came to eat corn soup and fried bread. There was no set agenda in these meetings. Occasionally an elder was scheduled to speak. From these meetings, a Native Student Leadership program was developed which began as a small group of 15 and today there are 125 self-identified students. He noted that in isolation it is difficult to demonstrate pride in one's heritage.

4. Reports

4.1 Meeting Report of 19 September 2019

Superintendent Baker combined the meeting report of 19 September with the Superintendent's Report to efficiently respond to the recommendations brought forward in the last meeting.

4.2 Superintendent's Report

IEAC reviewed the report of 19 September 2019.

Transportation Discussion

Inini McHugh expressed concern about Indigenous students on cross boundary transfers who are no longer eligible for Presto passes. He proposed that the Board policy be revised to ensure that any Indigenous student be provided with free OC Transpo Presto passes.

Approval of the Agenda Discussion

New Business from the circle participants was moved to the beginning of the meeting.

Teaching in OCDSB Lodges Discussion

Superintendent Baker highlighted Mr. McHugh's initiative on conducting Inuit Youth Sharing circles in Gloucester High School, and advised that the District is committed to exploring student programming which involves teachings by Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

Teaching Life Skills Discussion

Superintendent Baker followed-up with the Indigenous Education Team on available life skills courses. These courses are taught in the secondary schools. She requested to discuss the topic further with Mr. McHugh to identify the current need for life skill training.

No Scent Policy for School Bus Drivers Discussion

Superintendent Baker reported that schools annually communicate with Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) about individual students who possess sensitive or life-threatening allergies to ensure this is communicated to drivers. This information has been received by OSTA for the 2019-2020 bus routes.

The Single Day of Recognition for all Indigenous Peoples Discussion

Superintendent Baker stated that the District is examining ways to work with staff to build awareness of the rich diversity of Indigenous culture on an ongoing basis.

Superintendent Baker concluded her report by distributing an info-graphic on the Identity-Based Data Collection Survey. Between 26 November 2019 and 13 December 2019 the District will invite all students in K-12 to

complete a survey called Valuing Voices, Identity Matters. She stated that community focus groups are a part of the continuing dialogue in informing the process.

5. Information and Invitation

5.1 Indigenous Youth Symposium 24 October 2019

Vice-Principal Alexander reported that 135 students are registered to attend the Indigenous Youth Symposium on 24 October 2019. Bus transportation has been arranged. Ten workshops will be offered three times during the day. Twenty-eight community partners will attend to assist with the programming. Non-Indigenous teachers have been invited to attend the booths to learn about Indigenous culture and supports available to students, with three teacher-focused sessions planned. She invited the circle to attend.

5.2 Indigenous Education Advisory Council Schedule of Meetings 2019-2020

A schedule of IEAC meetings for 2019-2020 was included in the package for information.

6. Closing

Albert Dumont suggested that the students in the circle may consider writing a report on the items that were discussed. He suggested that if students undertake the work, honorarium would be provided for their services.

Albert Dumont offered the closing.

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.