

27 October 2020

Inini McHugh

We [I] would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather tonight is the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People. The territory where my family has lived for over 14 generations. Where it will end with me as I am the only living male relative left on our territory. My Bloodline dies with me. So my legacy is to teach and support the next generations of first peoples, to hold on to their traditions the best way they can. By supporting our young people we support our self in our own life journey. Life is never ending, here on this earth or in the spirit world. In the spirit world is where my son and father are, they give me strength today to write this email to you.

Hello, my name is Chip McHugh, I'm a Bonnechere Algonquin First Nation, all my relations know me as Nopiming Inini ( Man of the Forest ), I'm Bear Clan. An Ohiskwabawis (a helper to the Elders) and a fire keeper for Miitig Lodge. I have over 30 years of experience working with and advocating for children & youth in Ottawa and the valley. I have worked in educational settings as well as in community non-profit agencies throughout my career. Currently, I am very involved in the Ottawa Education Community. I am a member of the OCDSB Indigenous Educations Advisory Council, as well as the Advisory Counsel on Equity. I am currently employed as the Student Support Services Coordinator for the Silatuniq Inuit Youth Engagement Program for Inuquatigii Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families.

Over the years I've realized that Elders and knowledge keeper and helpers are passing down original traditional teachings such as healing/teaching lodge, sweat lodge, 7 grandfather teachings, medicine wheel, sacred medicines, land, history, languages, residential schools and their impacts, and current issues of Indigenous peoples. Many of these teachings will be lost if indigenous people do not have access to Elders, knowledge keepers, indigenous support staff and safe spaces to grow and learn in traditional ways. Our elders and knowledge keepers are aging, and the time to act is now.

The original peoples of this unceded territory, the Algonquin Anishinabe, always lived in balance with Mother Earth. Their connection to the land is a shared universal element of all indigenous cultures. Historically, this connection to the land and to each other has been lost through the formation reserves, residential schools, generational trauma, land expropriation and the forced urbanization of indigenous peoples. The disconnection from the land and cultural identity has caused the people much suffering and many difficulties. Mental health issues, emotional health issues, physical health issues and a loss of spirituality are prevalent throughout the population. Our people will attempt to repair this broken cultural and spiritual connection. Indigenous people believe that life is all about relationships; our relationships with ourselves, each other, Mother Earth, and communities and living life in a good way. The time to act is now. As advocate for my people and to other first people of this land, the relationship with the OCDSB as a partner in our quest to help, heal and educate.

The following are the points I would like to raise at the upcoming board meeting about the Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap:

- Being confined to four minutes would not allow me to speak my mind fully and does not align with my own traditional cultural practices and ways of expressing myself, I understand there may need to be a policy change in the future for others like me to discuss items to the board and to Trustees in First Nation lens. I hope that the board will consider revising this requirement ( Policy change ) in light of the systemic and structural barrier it presents and will give me the time I need to express myself.
- I have seen the real need for First Nation, Metis and Inuit children in the OCDSB. The current and proposed human resources are not sufficient to meet the First Nation, Metis and Inuit needs of students. It is not only about needs, it's about our First Nations, Metis and Inuit rights.
- **I would like the board to hire 3 additional Graduations Coaches – Metis Graduations Coach, Inuk Graduations Coach and Graduations Coach to support others bands and Nations that do not fall under the others Graduations coaches.** Example my son is a **Lakota** Sioux, so he does not fall into First Nations, Metis and Inuit.
- **I would like the board to invest in a Full time Social worker, Full time Itinerant Youth Worker (CYC), a full time Mental Health Counsellor and Full time Psychologist to be a part of the Indigenous team.**
- Given that graduations rates for first people is only about 60 %. I think these support would make an excellent impact on the lives of our young people.
- After talking a hard look inside, I feel using the word Indigenous lumps me in with Metis and Inuit. I'm Algonquin, Proud to be one, Proud to be the last living male from my whole family that live on my territory. It is my responsibility to represent my family line to the best of my ability. As Knowledge keeper for my people it is imperative for me to stand tall, speak when I need to speak and listen more then to talk. My Elder once told me, we have two ears for a reasons. We all have a journey, my journey has brought me to this point, do I speak or do I listen. Our people are quite in nature, I've learned over the years I enjoy the quietness more and more. Being in the bush is my happy place
- **I want that every dollar invested in indigenous peoples and education be spent in a way that directly supports indigenous students and has greatest impact.**
- If you ever want to learn about empathy, listen to Brené Brown is an American professor, lecturer, author.
- **In future, the wish that OCDSB can hire culture employees that can pass knowledge down to increase cultural awareness to all who want it.** That they can deliver services in a culturally appropriate way in accordance with the TRC and United Nations Declaration.
- **Hiring more professional people will support, building relationships is the key, when we are vulnerable with each other it fuels connection to one another.**

Thank you for taken the time to listen to me today