

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

October 22, 2020

6:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Members: Albert Dumont, Monique Manatch, Inini McHugh,
Jennifer Lord, Benny Michaud

Staff and Guests: Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Wendy Hough (Trustee), Jennifer Jennekins (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee), Justine Bell (Trustee), Joy Lui (Student Trustee), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Michael Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Jody Alexander (Vice-Principal, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education), Charles D'Aoust (Coordinator, Budget Services), Chantel Verner (Indigenous Education Itinerant Teacher), Kareen Butler (Indigenous Education Itinerant Teacher), Kris Meawasige (Indigenous Student Support and Re-engagement Coordinator), Kyl Morrison (Indigenous Graduation Coach), Joe Ross (Science Instructional Coach), Romaine Mitchell, Ali Dusome, Pauline Mousseau, Lili Miller, Katlin Markwell, Keith Sarazin, Azia Seicher-Hamel, and Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Opening

Elder Albert Dumont opened the meeting.

Vice-Principal Alexander invited the participants of the council meeting to introduce themselves.

2. Presentation

2.1 The OCDSB Budget Process Overview and Indigenous Education Funding (M.Carson)

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carson expressed his gratitude for the invitation to listen to the Council discussions. He shared the budget development process followed to develop a budget. Though a budget is set annually, balancing the funding occurs within a three year period: the year previous, the current year and the following year. A budget is developed based on the resources in place, new

funding that the province is willing to commit to programming and contingency planning for the future of upholding a set standard of education.

Eight years ago the province began to provide specific funding to support Indigenous students and to improve the understanding of Indigenous history, along with current Indigenous issues in Canada. CFO Carson reviewed the pre-circulated memo on the Indigenous Education Funding Allocation. For each student enrolled in the District, the Ministry of Education provides \$12,000 to support the education of that individual student. Funding of \$90- \$100 million dollars is dedicated to supplement the services provided to students accessing special needs. These funds are set aside separately by legislation and may only be used in the designated area. The term “sweatered funding” was explained by CFO Carson; approximately \$750,000 per year is designated funding, strictly to support Indigenous students. A calculation is based on population information found in the Federal Census. The majority of Indigenous students attend provincially funded schools. When the province began to fund Indigenous education they divided the funding into a number of different sections: Indigenous Education Per Pupil Amount, Indigenous Lead funded through Program Leadership Grant, and Board Action Plan on Indigenous Education Allocation. In addition, a growing number of funds are apportioned to the number of secondary students who have chosen to enrol in Indigenous Studies Courses. In total, \$3,000,000 in funding is generated through the Indigenous Education allocation, and from that amount, \$1,300,000 is directed specifically towards supporting Indigenous students by employing permanent Indigenous staff and training resources for non-Indigenous staff. A major achievement in the creation of Indigenous studies classes is that all students have a better understanding of the nation’s history and the history that occurred long before the settlers arrived in Canada.

CFO Carson reported that part of the annual budget exercise is to meet with various departments to review current practices and determine which initiatives are identified as priorities. Senior staff meets as a collective to discuss in-year strategies derived from the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. From there determinations are made to support initiatives and compromises are decided upon based on the funds available to execute new ideas.

CFO Carson welcomed suggestions on areas that the Council believes requires more attention in education or if there are programs that may benefit from being accelerated in the planning process.

In response to questions and comments, the following points were noted:

- Additional education assistants (EAs) are required to be in assigned classrooms on a consistent basis in order to serve the needs of special needs students, like children in care and others with severe learning disabilities stemming from fetal alcohol syndrome. CFO Carson responded that an ongoing challenge the District confronts is the need to provide

additional supports in classrooms. In the last two years 100 EAs have been added across the school sites, increasing the staff complement by 20%. This allocation of EAs is managed by the Learning Support Services (LSS) Department in consultation with school principals and the superintendents of instruction. Superintendent Baker noted that in discussions with LSS, she has promoted the advancement of Indigenous EAs who may connect with students using culturally relevant knowledge. There is a plan in place for specific support of this nature;

- Establish a section in the budget that specifically identifies Indigenous Education. Expand on this piece to breakdown the costs involved in Indigenous Education to enable a greater understanding of expenditures;
- Hire additional Indigenous graduation coaches;
- Structure the Indigenous Education Team similarly to the way the LSS Department is staffed, including a physiologist, a mental health worker, and a social worker;
- An inquiry was made as to how many Indigenous students in the District access a special needs program. CFO Carson responded that the information may be available in the results of the 2020 Valuing Voices Survey which will be shared by the Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division later in the 2020-2021 school year; and
- Put transition support in place for students who move from Nunavut into the Ontario schooling system. They often have a significant disadvantage in their English comprehension abilities. Superintendent Baker noted that Mr. Meawasige, who works with Indigenous students on re-engagement, brings many community leaders together in support of this issue.

Mr. Meawasige provided an overview of the history of the Indigenous student supports, which advanced from the year 2016 under the guidance of Ms. Nancy Henry. A hiring sequence of Indigenous staff brought forth the establishment of an Indigenous Education Team. Today they have begun work in collaboration with LSS with a newly appointed part-time Indigenous social worker, Courtney Valeyev. Mr. Meawasige's role is to provide cultural and academic support to Indigenous students in kindergarten to grade 12. He is rewarded through the time he invests with the young people and their families. Building these relationships fosters trust. Educators today are working within an education system that has not benefitted the Indigenous people in the past and therefore one of the most important elements of the work is to continue to grow trusting relationships. Once the trust is stable, only then can momentum build to assist the student on their education journey and advocate for their increased opportunities within the system. Through empowerment, the student finds their voice and realizes their potential. The education system was not constructed to understand the Indigenous ways of knowing; part of the work of the Indigenous Education Team is to help the system understand Indigenous culture and suggest changes to the system to support the students.

Ms. Nadon-Campbell queried whether there was any community outreach to Makonsag, and Indigenous preschool program that fosters cultural awareness and early learning for children and their families. Mr. Meawasige reported that early in his career with the District, there were valuable meetings with Makonsag to work together on transitions and to highlight the work of the Indigenous Education Team. Over the years there has been staff succession in leadership at Makonsag, however they are hopeful that a working relationship can be re-established.

Ms. Nadon-Campbell requested clarification on the role that the Indigenous Education Team plays in assessment testing for Indigenous students who may benefit from special education support. Mr. Meawasige volunteered that, in his own experience, should a parent or guardian raise a specific concern, they are able to help navigate the process with the family, as the experience may be overwhelming or confusing. Mr. McHugh contributed that under the Child First Initiative, Inuit children, from the time they are born until they become the age of 17, are ensured access to health, social and educational services and supports, including mental health assessments, under the Canadian Government. He suggested employing Indigenous psychologists to complete assessments with Indigenous children.

Vice-Principal Alexander highlighted that her team does a large amount of work with LSS. They have spoken to them about the Child First Initiative and Jordan's Principle, which aims to ensure Indigenous children can access all public services in a way that is reflective of their distinct cultural needs. LSS and the Indigenous Education Team collaborated on professional development sessions in the 2019-2020 school year.

Mr. Meawasige welcomed some new students to the meeting and requested that space be made on the agenda to listen to the voices of the youth. From a request by a student, Superintendent Baker provided a brief overview of the purpose of the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC). The Council has a goal of providing guidance to the Board, as it pertains to Indigenous Education, well-being and achievement and providing support to its Indigenous students, families and educators. The Council collaborates with the District on the development of the Indigenous Education Board Action Plan. Discussions focus on supporting teachers in their learning and engaging the community in partnership and collaboration. Further considerations are given to the use of data and how to support Indigenous students in measuring successes using milestones that appeal to Indigenous ways of learning. She emphasized that students are always at the centre of the conversations and play a role in decision making. It has been students who guide the discussions, present their experiences and share suggestions. Those same ideas are incorporated into the Board Action Plan. Trustee Hough is the appointed trustee to IEAC and she is aware of any recommendations that are made to the Board of Trustees from the Council. Vice-

Principal Alexander offered to have further conversations with the students about their interest in attending IEAC.

A student sought further information on the communication plan between class teachers for the Individual Education Plans (IEPs). A view was expressed that IEP follow-up requires more diligence on the part of teachers, as both this individual and peers are experiencing a lack of one-on-one support and a shortage of EAs in certain courses. Superintendent Baker demonstrated concern that the supports in place were not benefiting the student, as staff has been increased for 2020-2021 in the areas of Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) and Social Workers as a part of the COVID emergency support funding measures. CFO Carson stated that at times there are room for practice improvements that are not related to monetary amounts. He noted that when students and teachers share their experiences the gaps can be identified. Ms. Nadon-Campbell, who sits as the Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), invited the student to appear as a delegate to bring the concern to LSS and the committee dedicated to special education.

Ms. Lord stated that in consideration of the allocations specifically directed towards Indigenous students and special education, perhaps greater support may be provided to these students if there was additional information on how many Indigenous students have an IEP in place. She queried the amount of EAs that are on staff to solely support Indigenous students. If this issue was driven by a needs-based approach, future budgets may be shaped to adequately support these students. Superintendent Baker responded that at the end of a typical school year, an annual Indigenous Education Report is presented to the Committee of the Whole (COW). This document provides an elaborate funding breakdown. She offered to provide the reports from previous years.

A student requested to learn more about the difference between online and in-person schooling for Indigenous students. Superintendent Baker noted that access to technology, WiFi, cultural and academic supports were all areas that posed difficulty in the spring when the province ordered the closure of schools. While the delivery of education underwent a pivot to remote learning practices, challenges and opportunities presented themselves. The solutions continue to evolve. Through 'education hubs', driven by a grant awarded to Inuuqatigitt and the work of Mr. McHugh, Indigenous students can access supplementary online support throughout the week. Mr. McHugh added that online learners have access to their guidance counselor from their home school.

Mr. Meawasige reported that young people are experiencing a change in the way that they relate to their educators due to the switch between the physical spaces. He has heard that there is an impact on students with the strain of using a computer screen for extended periods of time, effecting on both mental and physical well-being. He hopes that there are opportunities for the students to talk about how they are managing in this new learning environment. There are virtual sharing circles run by Josh Lewis, offering support. He urged students to reach

out to the staff in Indigenous Education and community partners in this time of shifting realities.

CFO Carson thanked the council for allowing him and Mr. D'Aoust to join the Council for the presentation and discussion. He offered to return to the Council during the 2020-2021 school year as budget planning develops.

3. Community Discussion

3.1 Report 20-080, Consultation Plan to Review Police Involvement in OCDSB Schools(M.J. Farrish)

Superintendent Farrish thanked the Council for the opportunity to provide an update on the consultation plan to review police involvement in schools. She explained that when the District reviews a policy, a plan to consult must accompany the plan. She acknowledged IEAC invested a great deal of time in the 25 June 2020 meeting discussing experiences with School Resource Officers (SROs). She noted that the June meeting report will inform the coming review, to assist both her and Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner with insight from IEAC. She described the scope of the review encompassing an overview of the Ministry of Education's directive in The Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol 2015, an overview of the Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools Policies in the City of Ottawa, an overview of District governance documents that stipulate a partnership with Ottawa Police Service (OPS), an assessment of when the administrators are involving the police in schools, and recommendations for the way forward to create schools that are safer for all students. The review will be focusing on intended and unintended outcomes. The exercise includes the creation of a formal report of recommendations to be published and brought forward in the spring of 2021. The release of the report is scheduled ahead of the policy revision.

Superintendent Farrish advised that the engine of change will be the voices heard in the consultation process. The goal is to improve outcomes and experiences of all of our youth, but with a particular focus on the youth and the employee groups that we know are disproportionately represented in negative outcomes as a result of police involvement. It is important that this type of consultation is performed in a way that is respectful. Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner will be supervising engagement with those telling their story to ensure that the commitment to human rights is reserved.

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner shared that the vision for the consultation is a collaborative process and one where recommendations arise out of the review. The steering group guiding the work should be comprised with a half percentage of student representatives. Other representative would include members of the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) and the IEAC, community members, and parents. This steering group would be engaged throughout the

entire process to ensure the right questions are being asked, the right voices are being heard and all the interpretive information is being considered. She invited the Council to share their perspectives on the plan to consult with the school community.

Mr. McHugh suggested that a counsellor be present in the event that a contributor requires support in the recollection of a traumatic event. Superintendent Farrish recognized that the terminology referring to a “do no harm” approach is perplexing because harm is apparent when this kind of information is sought. A minimal harm pathway is a realistic achievement in this kind of a review. Counselling services were built into the plan, including culturally appropriate supports. Outreach to organizations who specialize in working with youth will be contacted to aid with engagement.

Ms. Manatch expressed an interest to participate in the steering group and requested information on applying. Superintendent Farrish replied that an application process was not being considered at this time, however she acknowledged that a certain number of people are optimal and they will seek to balance perspectives as well. She and Advisor Tanner recommended that the advisory committees of the Board could decide on a representative to come forward to participate in the review.

Ms. Miller queried the likelihood of further recommendations to allocate the funding for SROs in other areas of the District, for instance a youth social worker or a conflict resolution expert. Superintendent Farrish explained that the timing of the review will coincide with the budget deliberation process. This could be a part of a larger budgetary conversation.

In a response to a query by Ms. Miller, Advisor Tanner explained that though she has not conducted a review of this nature in Canada, since the year 2001 she has worked in Uganda and Nepal to consult on changes to legislation to protect human rights, cultivated community engagement and worked with traditional communities to structure a bridge between a formal colonial structure and an existing traditional structure. She reiterated the importance of obtaining the advice from the steering group to build a series of evidence-based recommendations.

Vice-Principal Alexander thanked Superintendent Farrish and Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner for their time and noted that any further comments or guidance can be forwarded to them by email. Vice-Principal Alexander offered to make any connections that the Council may request.

3.2 Update on Education Hubs (I. McHugh)

Mr. McHugh thanked the Board for supporting the Inuuqatigitt application for the

educational hubs. These hubs provide added support to Indigenous students with online learning. There are two classrooms wired for virtual support at the Hardini Centre and a third servicing a youth building. Nine teaching positions are available and 20 interviews are scheduled. The positions include three teachers, three EAs and three cultural advisors. Some of these candidates have experience teaching in Nunavut. Registration numbers are high and there are only six spots remaining for the last hub. The goal is to be running the program for students by 9 November 2020.

Trustee Hough mentioned that she had the honour to read and contribute to the application. She was impressed by the written proposal in its entirety. She noted that if other groups wish to move forward with this type of model, they should approach Inuuqatigitt for input.

3.3 Council Facilitator

Deferred until 10 December 2020.

4. Reports - Deferred

4.1 Superintendent's Report

Deferred until 10 December 2020.

4.2 16 January 2020 IEAC Report

The IEAC report of 16 January 2020 was received.

4.3 17 September 2020 IEAC Report

The IEAC report of 17 September 2020 was received.

4.4 IEAC Action Tracking Log

Deferred until 10 December 2020.

5. Information and Invitation

5.1 Report 20-053, Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap, 2020-2023

The final version of the Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap 2020-2023 was included for information.

6. Closing

Mr. Dumont offered a closing at 8:22 p.m.