



# EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACISM COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021

5:30 pm – 7:00 (Virtual Meeting Via Microsoft Teams)

## ATTENDANCE

**Community Members:** Dr. Robyn Bourgeois, Brock University  
Emily Kovacs, Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre  
Kim Ansell, PFLAG St. Catharines & Niagara  
Nyarayi Kapisavanhu, TOES Niagara

**Parent Members:** Nina Jain-Sheehan  
Carole Moss  
Maurice Grant  
Amber Dyck  
Tassia Gabbidon

**Student Members:** Joy Ge  
Kya Steinbach-Parker  
Manara Abdelgadir

**Trustee Member:** Shannon Mitchell

**DSBN Administrative Staff:** Warren Hoshizaki, Director of Education  
Kelly Pisek, Superintendent of Education

**DSBN Staff:** Pratima Burton, Administrator, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism  
Zakia Hamdani, Consultant, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism  
Maryam Safdar Ali, Human Rights Advisor  
Erika Smith, Secondary Teacher, Grimsby Secondary School  
Layal Aboukors, Elementary Teacher, Dalewood Public School

**Recording Secretary:** Jennifer Reid

## WELCOME AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Chair Shannon Mitchell opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples. She also acknowledged the importance of the verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial.

## **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Moved by Dr. Robyn Bourgeois

Seconded by Nina Jain-Sheehan

“That the agenda be approved.”

**CARRIED**

## **MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS**

Consultant Zakia Hamdani called upon members of the Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Community Advisory Committee (EIARCAC) to introduce themselves. In addition, each member was asked to include how they felt and what they are bringing to the committee. Members shared that they felt honoured, hope, excitement, fortunate, grateful, inspired, passionate, and a responsibility due to the passion and importance they felt about the work involved with this committee.

## **OVERVIEW OF DSBN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Director Hoshizaki shared a brief overview of the DSBN organizational structure including how this committee’s work will be included and reported to the Board through Chair Mitchell at the Equity, Inclusion and Anti- Racism Trustee Committee.

## **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND ROLE OF MEMBERS**

Superintendent Pisek explained the structure of this meeting and future meetings. The framework for each meeting will include, current initiatives, feedback, and input.

Superintendent Pisek outlined the roles of this committee. Members at large were selected intentionally and will participate with the lens from their role as a student, parent, community member and staff. It was added that during meetings, questions, feedback, and input from the committee will be gathered in the following order, students, parents, community members and staff.

System Administrator Pratima Burton reviewed the commitment as a member of this committee. This includes attending meetings with an open heart and mind and in the spirit of working together for the good of the community. Bringing forth items in advance for inclusion on the next agenda. Engaging in open dialogue that promotes understanding and cooperation as the basis of all interactions.

System Administrator Pratima Burton added that this committee may establish working groups beyond this committee to deal with specific concerns raised by equity seeking groups.

Superintendent Pisek explained that a meeting schedule following a quarterly cycle will be set for the EIARCAC. In the 2020-21 school year two meetings are scheduled to allow for some momentum and an opportunity to get to know each other. The schedule for the 2021-22 school year will be shared at the May meeting.

System Administrator Pratima Burton added that a google survey would be sent following each meeting. This will provide members an opportunity to share additional feedback or input beyond the structure of our meeting and agenda.

## **CURRENT INITIATIVES**

Superintendent John Dickson presented a slide show outlining the purpose and importance of the Student Census. This PowerPoint will be attached to the minutes.

Consultant Zakia Hamdani presented an overview of Our Learning Pathway. The DSBN with the support of Director Hoshizaki and the Senior Team has made a commitment to make equity and inclusion the DSBN’s focus.

This includes educators, support staff, administrators, board office personnel and superintendents. Through the equity employment audit, it was revealed that DSBN staff identities are not representative of student makeup. Therefore, it was important to begin the learning by looking at ourselves, examining our social identities, and reflecting on our different values and beliefs, and recognize how this influences how we operate in our schools. This is being done through monthly professional development sessions at every staff meeting including both elementary and secondary schools and at the system level.

## **FEEDBACK**

System Administrator Pratima Burton shared that DSBN Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism webpage was updated this year to include information for families. It was explained that the Creed Accommodations, previously titled Religious Accommodations, and the DSBN Equity Action Plan are currently under review. The updated information added is a work in progress and changes have been made to reflect best thinking. Moving forward the DSBN Equity Team wants to specifically share some of the work and what it will look like next year. This will give the community a glimpse of the work as well as what actions have been accomplished.

System Administrator Pratima Burton invited the committee to share feedback on how the website can be more useful, informative, and beneficial.

Students shared the following:

- Emphasis on ableism.
- Adding resources on how to approach these issues would be helpful.
- Promoting on social media would be helpful.
- Realize it's a work in progress, but more resources for Indigenous students would be something to look into.
- Religious accommodations, what exactly is this? System Administrator Pratima Burton explained that this has been changed to Creed Accommodations for a broader range to support students. For example, a student celebrating Ramadan may need accommodation for a place to pray.
- Changes to curriculum – when is this expected? System Administrator Pratima Burton explained through PD on Equity with teachers, teachers will be able to make lessons more inclusive. Teachers need to look at their own identities and then ensure that students feel their identities are included in the classroom.
- Pride and Joy document - F slur was used as an example of a derogatory statement. Recommendation was to censor the word in the document.

Parents shared the following:

- This a great start, definitions are good, but adding some resources for parents for what equity, inclusion and anti-racism are would be beneficial.
- Who is the website created for?
- Hard to locate the link on the DSBN website.
- Need to consider accessibility.
- As a parent it's not easy to find.
- Resources for parents on how to have difficult conversations with kids would be beneficial.
- Is there a place where contact information for the Equity Team can be available? System Administrator Pratima Burton shared that concerns should always start at the school level, but that having the Equity Team's contact information added is something to consider.
- Needs to be more visible for parents and students.
- Accessibility options to consider; bigger texts, colours, for anyone with vision issues.
- The resources are most beneficial when they are visible. It would be beneficial to have information on interrupting bias and practical steps the community can take towards promoting equity as well on the board and school websites. It would be wonderful if some of the training videos used in the professional development sessions for staff be added to the website for parents.

- Pride and Joy tab have practical information which is informative and helpful.
- Adding links to the Indigenous and Special Education webpages would be helpful.
- Include videos for accessibility would be beneficial

Community members shared the following:

- Asked if the same thought process for this committee can be applied to the website – students – parents – community
- Was the website human centered designed?
- Ableism would be helpful and more supportive, as well as ESL interpreter information, need to advocate for everyone.
- Equity as it relates to data – is there some way to think about asking students how data can be brought in? Access to digital platforms to make the website prominent.
- Continue asking the equity community, what is missing?
- Don't see Indigenous or a lot of student presence on the webpage – it would be amazing to have student contributions, bringing their ideas forward to show that it is more student centered.
- Not seeing student centered. Do not see typical dark skin or students with disabilities on the cover
- Needs to be a bit more accessible. Remove barriers for access.
- Pride and Joy – PDF only available in English – need documents available in other languages.

Superintendent Pisek shared that after listening to the feedback, DSBN will need to reflect on school websites to ensure equity, inclusion and anti-racism resources are available.

#### **INPUT**

Superintendent Pisek thanked the committee for the thoughtful and informative feedback and invited the committee to continue the conversation by completing questions on how to engage our school community at large by completing the following questions through the google doc that System Administrator Pratima Burton previously mentioned.

- How do we as a committee consider doing this?
- How would you in your individual role do this?
- How do we as the DSBN Equity team do this?

#### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Trustee Mitchell thanked committee members for their participation, sharing their lived experiences and giving their exceptional feedback.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved by Erika Smith**

**Seconded by Emily Kovacs**

“That the Equity and Inclusion Community Advisory Committee be now adjourned.”

**CARRIED**

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.