

# Equity Advisory Circle Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 9:30 AM.**

Held via Zoom and in person in the North Bay Board room

## **Present:**

Louise Sargent, Trustee  
Lisa Lamoureux, Principal of Student Well-being, and Equity  
Alison Clarke, Acting Principal of Special Education  
Chantal Phillips, Trustee  
Howard Wesley, Trustee  
Sarah Spence, Principal of Student Achievement and Wellbeing  
Kelly Nootchtai Huston, Indigenous Education Lead  
Amanda Mathias, Indigenous Education Lead  
Lana St. Louis, Mental Health Lead  
Deborah Robertson, Multi-Cultural Society  
Jeannie Vaillancourt, North Bay Metis Council  
Margaret Soroye, NNDSB Teacher  
Nathan Moore, CAS Teacher Liaison Youth in Care  
Seth Compton, Outloud North Bay  
Marcus Etienne, PIC Chair  
Tim Graves, Superintendent of Education  
Melanie Gray, Superintendent, Teaching and Learning  
Melanie Allard, Executive Assistant

## **Regrets:**

Sandra Zurbrigg, Community Member  
Jennifer O'Driscoll, Nbisling Secondary School  
Ashley St. Pierre, Indigenous Trustee  
Laura Forget, PIC Chair

## **Land acknowledgment by Principal Lamoureux**

## **Talking Circle - Introductions**

- Superintendent Gray welcomed everyone to the meeting and had introductions around the circle.

## **Near North Equity Update and Resources**

- This is the first in person EAC meeting with the next one scheduled in April but with an online option where needed.
- Principal Lamoureux directed everyone to the guiding principles for respectful conversations.
- The demographic data report was shared at the January Board meeting and the data analysis with principals and staff. The data will be used to help identify what programs and support are needed and where.
- Equity coaches participated in several PD sessions and have received a book to support their professional learning. They have been meeting in small groups and doing great work in schools.
- Several schools have been working with Marcus Etienne to support anti-racism learning with students.
- Classes have made huge gains and students are now helping support other schools.

- Marcus confirmed that it has been a joyful and humbling experience working with these students and it is the hope that this also leads into students' homes. He looks forward to continuing this work.
- Principals Sarah Spence and Emily Samuel are working alongside Principal Lamoreux on an administrative guideline for responding to discrimination in schools. This will provide steps for schools when dealing with discrimination.
- The Egale summit in Ottawa brought together equity leads from across the province to discuss what is happening in schools and what support is needed for students. The group was encouraged to go to Egale's website as they have great supportive resources.
- International Day of Elimination of Racism – Celebrating Diversity Through Acceptance and Unity is taking place on March 21, 2024. Marcus Etienne will be the keynote speaker for this event.
- There is a new student well-being newsletter being shared out monthly to all Near North students, staff and families that will highlight resources and supports each month.
- The grade 7/8 mental health modules are available, and an intro video has been included in the newsletter.
- Signage has been distributed to all Near North schools promoting the acceptance of all students, staff, and families.
- The links in the PowerPoint will be circulated out to the committee for easy access.

### **Next steps**

- Questions such as what can educators do to support all our students in feeling accepted in school be answered? School teams will look at the data and compare by region, attendance and student achievement data and work on supports for students who are struggling.
- Student profiles can help provide the appropriate supports.
- To ensure we have culturally responsive and relevant resources to support student learning.
- To ensure programs, supports, anti-racism and gender identity education are available for all students.
- The group agreed that it was very encouraging to see the Board's progression.

### **Reports/Updates**

#### **SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee)**

- Trustee Phillips relayed that SEAC had a recent excellent presentation on FASD from Michelle Irvine.
- FASD is the most common developmental disability and often goes undiagnosed.
- September 9<sup>th</sup> is International FASD day and Trustee Phillips encouraged the committee to get involved in raising awareness in partnership with the Anishinabek Nation.

#### **FNAC (First Nations Advisory Committee)**

- We welcome back Amanda Mathias to the Indigenous team.
- PD took place with Pamela Toulouse on curriculum and Indigenous perspectives on all subjects.
- Grad coach's positions are going well with youth accessing centers within schools.
- IYC are working on two initiatives. One is working on giving back to communities by collecting items to be shipped up North. The second is working on grade 7/8 transitions and introducing leadership opportunities.

- The most recent FNAC meeting took place at Wasauksing First Nation where the education service agreement process will be a priority.
- They are in the early stages of planning a Board wide City pow wow that is supported by the mayor. George Couchie is involved in the planning.
- RHT annuity payments will be received shortly and IYC is doing some awareness building around this as they may hear different comments flow in.
- Teaching and learning events are being planned with this year's focus on round dances.
- The annual language conference will be taking place shortly in the Sault.

### **PIC (Parent Involvement Committee)**

- Two meetings took place on November 1<sup>st</sup> & December 13<sup>th</sup> along with a PRO sub committee meeting.
- The meetings help support school councils with best practices, networking and reaching out to communities.
- Parent reaching out grants are available and are to support school events that encourage parent participation.
- Twelve schools have been approved, leaving approximately \$4500 in funding. Another round of approvals will go out shortly.
- The next PIC meeting is on May 1<sup>st</sup>, along with a survey asking what school councils would like to see and would be helpful for the following school year.

### **Trustee Update**

- Trustee Sargent asked if the committee members could be included in the monthly student well-being newsletter.
- Some Trustees will be attending the public education symposium this week, which will allow Trustees to network with others across the province. Great discussions and presentations take place with a focus on equity.

### **Community Agencies Update from Multicultural Centre, CAS, OutLoud, Marcus Etienne**

- Seth from OutLoud has been at this for a few years working closely with students and communities. Kids have been struggling and they do their best to support them at OutLoud. There has been a bigger intake of kids lately with a number on the spectrum. They partner with schools on parent nights and try to support parents around student identity and how it affects mental health. They are always looking for ways they can partner with the NNDSB. The Lighthouse has just opened its doors in Sturgeon Falls.
- The multicultural Centre is busy working on proposals as they need to re-apply for funding. Some of this is to help strengthen and expand the SWIS program. The International Day of Elimination of Racism has been taking place over 30 years now and the re-focus for the day will be on anti-racism that will include book readings and learning packs for classroom teachers. They will adjust with the needs in the coming years.
- Marcus has been working with Alliance school and Principal Kadlec on some great ideas. In the planning stages for May is a ted talk around reducing the stigma of mental health. CMHA, CCC, Community living and OutLoud will be represented for interactive booths. He encouraged that this be promoted as much as possible to enable a large turnout.
- It was suggested that local resources/services are brought into high schools, so students see the services available to them.

- CAS is working with schools on student meetings for support and planning for kids in care. They are doing spring check-ins as students transition into new classrooms. Post secondary applications are due February 1<sup>st</sup>. There are resources, awards, and bursaries available to kids in care and Nathan is happy to share this information with the committee. The Elmwood CAS location has been re-branded as community space where programming can take place for all, such as HANDS, Big Brothers and Sisters and the Indigenous Friendship Centre. The gym is complete, and the kitchen is close to approval for use. Spaces can be booked. Programs are evolving and changing such as the 18–23-year-olds who enter into an agreement with the agency and are supported to meet their goals and milestones in education, health, family, and social relationships. Resources, programming, and events are posted on CAS's Facebook and Instagram. The video shared on what CAS does was well received by administration and staff.
- The NNDSB mental health team has launched a SharePoint site for staff to easily access all documents and information in one space. Staff have received more training in holistic arts programming and is finding this helpful in schools. Staff have also been trained in small talk, suicide assessment for children under the age of 12 years.

### **Group Activity: Group Discussion on Supporting All Students**

- The group discussed three questions posed:
  - What is your confidence level in having difficult conversations regarding race and gender identify of students?
  - What are some difficulties you have come across with supporting racialized and 2SLGBTQI students in our community?
  - What do you think would be most helpful in fostering inclusion for racialized and 2SLGBTQI student in our communities?
- The group discussed not calling it a “safe space” as this can not always be guaranteed however rephrasing it to a “brave space”.
- Confidence comes from what we know and educating and learning is key as most difficulties stem from non-education.
- The fact that people are talking about this is key as many generations did not talk about this. Now kids are talking to their parents and parents are learning alongside. Biases can be a barrier and education is key.
- The group was reminded that it was equally important to listen. Understanding where people are coming from and what they have been struggling with. We can't solve all problems however we can help empower people to solve their own problems and be equipped to deal with their circumstances.
- It is so important to do the work and give people the tools and education to be more informative when speaking. Also, to be able to direct people to the best available sources of support.
- There has been some push back from parents because of the lack of education and knowledge. They can get upset with different supports or events taking place in schools. Moving forward, having as much information out to parents is key. Wellness nights can be a great venue to listen and understand their concerns.
- Social media can be a challenge as it can't be controlled, and parents sometimes don't know what kids are seeing.
- Kids having their own identity and not of their parent's belief.

- It can be challenging having conversations in the community with someone who doesn't share these beliefs.
- Culture in North Bay needs to be more than just a "trend" and happen daily. Helping kids feel like they belong and to not compete with social media.
- Instilling educational bravery in teachers, as they can be afraid to "say the wrong thing". They need to recognize where they are on their learning journey and continue this path.
- The city calls for proposals and partnerships with groups and it was suggested when schools have events that they look at who they can invite. Also making sure the career day speakers match the composition of classes.
- Student voice needs to be heard and recognized.

**Next meeting date:** April 24, 2024