

**Director's Leadership Report
Regular Board Meeting
September 22, 2021**

Good evening Trustees,

It has been a busy start to the school year. Although we are only 10 days into the school year, we have ample evidence that being a part of a school community is a vital experience in a student's life.

As Director, I am grateful for the staff who make online and in-person learning possible. Thank you, Trustee Woo, for acknowledging your teacher who made a difference. We are committed to doing everything we can this year to minimize disruptions and focus on what matters most – student learning, belonging, equity and mental health and well-being.

Tonight's Director's Leadership Report will include:

- The Leadership of the Senior Team,
- Speak about Orange Shirt Day and September 30 – National Day of Truth and Reconciliation
- In closing, I will celebrate some of TDSB's amazing students.

Over the past few weeks, I have been part of conversations about how we can be more purposeful as staff in ensuring students' lived experiences and identities are respected and reflected in their learning and interactions, because we know it leads to greater academic achievement, equity, and well-being.

There is increasing evidence that we will be defined not only by achievement and well-being but how well we create conditions for students to feel confident in who they are, understand the identities of their peers and have the ability to pursue justice and human rights.

It will take a different kind of leadership to undertake this urgent transformation. I am incredibly proud that the senior leadership in TDSB, is for the first time, starting to reflect some of the lived experiences, or similar ones, to the communities we serve. The TDSB Senior Team might be one of the most diverse executive teams in Canada. Congratulations to everyone who has sponsored the individuals on our team including the Board of Trustees.

This diversity encourages us to think beyond ourselves and our own experiences and to hear different perspectives and voices and collectively work together to support *all* students.

Representation matters but it is just the beginning. While we serve as role models, mentors, we must also disrupt the barriers that different groups faced to earn a place at this table and many other tables in TDSB. As someone said, we must shake the table.

I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to leverage our lived experiences to make more informed decisions, to propose different solutions, to address the impacts of our policies and programs that have previously gone unidentified, and to challenge ourselves to demonstrate, each and every day, the global competencies we expect from students and staff.

Around our senior team table, we have welcomed 16 new faces in the last 18 months which is 16 opportunities to bring new perspectives to our team.

Among the recently appointed members of the team is, Tanya Senk, System Superintendent of Indigenous Education. Tanya guided by the Elders Council, working with the UIEC and collaborating with the entire senior team will create systemic change for future and current Indigenous students and all students in the TDSB.

Superintendent Senk's leadership with the Urban Indigenous Education Centre has been pivotal as we recognize the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30 as well as Orange Shirt Day.

I see many in the meeting wearing orange shirts tonight.

Orange Shirt Day has become a symbol of the horrific legacy of residential school system for First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and communities.

The day itself was inspired by a student named Phyllis Webstad who was excited to wear her new orange shirt to the first day of school in 1973, but when she arrived at school – a residential school, her shirt was taken and never returned.

The TDSB acknowledges and honours lives of thousands of children taken in residential schools by wearing orange shirts and engaging in learning in our classrooms about the legacy of residential schools and Indigenous education. Students have taken an extra step to launch a couple of initiatives of their own. Both Central Toronto Academy and Northern Secondary are selling pins on September 30. Each school has chosen a local Indigenous organization to donate the proceeds to; CTA has chosen Anduhyaun Inc and Northern Secondary has chosen the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre.

And next month, on October 5, the UIEC has organized for Phyllis herself to virtually share her experiences with staff and students. I have no doubt this will be a memorable lesson for all participate in understanding the impact of settler colonialism. I hope you can all find time to attend and listen.

Finally, it was a joy to return to schools this year and reconnect with students and staff. My passion, first and foremost, is as an educator and being around the students, hearing their ideas, their concerns, and experiences, both grounds and inspires me as Director. This was also true when I met briefly with the three student trustees.

On Friday evening, I also had the pleasure of watching the in-person performance of ***Is My Mike ON?*** a CanStage Production in High Park featuring the talents of students, ages 12 to 17, from nine TDSB schools.

They each submitted an audition video and were selected from among 200 submissions for parts in the play. Jordan Tannahill's play, asks from a young person's perspective: How do we move forward from here? Their powerful voices assert that they will no longer be able to avoid the consequences of climate change, racism, and other issues, we have so far failed to adequately address.

A review said: *They speak to the adults in the audience, holding them to account, questioning the choices that have not been made, the ones that children will be forced to make, and describing the future they stand to inherit.* This production underscored our obligation to be good ancestors as parents and educators. I wholeheartedly applaud the actors and the team who produced the play.

Their performances were a powerful example of the brilliance of our students and I am optimistic about their ability to lead us toward a better future.

Thank you, Chair Brown. That concludes my Director's Leadership Report for this evening.

As Director, I will be prioritizing engaging with and learning from students in the year ahead.