

# Name of Committee: Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee

**Meeting Date**: **Tuesday, September 21st, 2021**

**Time: 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

## Attendance: via Zoom:

**Core Voting Constituents:**

Present: Elder Dr. Joanne Dallaire, Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, Tanya Senk (System Superintendent, Indigenous Education, TDSB), Christina Saunders (Principal, TDSB), Ryan Neepin (Teacher, TDSB), Mary Doucette (Administrative Liaison, TDSB), Marilyn Hew (TYRMC), Tracy Mackenzie (UIEC, TDSB), Dr. Bob Phillips (Community), Adrienne Plumley (Instructional Leader, TDSB), Natasha Gleeson (Instructional Leader, TDSB), Robert Durocher (Vice-Principal, TDSB), Selina Young (City of Toronto), Isaiah Shafqat (Indigenous Student Trustee, TDSB), Waabshka-Mkwa (2Spirits), Bonnie Johnston (Social Worker, TDSB), Shannon Judge (Community), Melanie Laking (Community), Susan Dion (York University), Howard Munroe (Community), Kelly Hashemi (Community), Melissa Hamonic (Native Child and Family Services)

**TDSB Trustees:**

Present: Trustee Alexander Brown, Trustee Jennifer Story, Trustee Trixie Doyle, Trustee Dan MacLean, Trustee Michelle Aarts, Isaiah Shafqat (Indigenous Student Trustee, TDSB)

**TDSB Staff:**

Present: Jim Spyropoulos (Executive Superintendent, Human Rights and Indigenous Education, TDSB), Barbara-Ann Felschow (Retired Principal, TDSB), Michael Griesz (Principal, TDSB), Michael Sanders (Principal, TDSB), Ixchel Bennett (Vice-Principal, TDSB), Danielle Noel (Vice Principal, TDSB), Michelle Blackie (Vice Principal, TDSB), Saby Chandi (Principal, TDSB), Bonita Uzuoro (Student Success Teacher, TDSB)

**Guests**: Stan Williams (Community), Joe Rock (City of Toronto, Early ON), Robert Savage (Dean of Facility of Education, York University)

**Regrets:** Elder Pauline Shirt, Traditional Knowledge Practitioner Clayton Shirt, Stephen Hepburn (Vice-Principal, TDSB)

| **ITEM** | **DISCUSSION** | **MOTION /RECOMMENDATION**  |
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| Call to Order, Traditional Opening, Review of Meeting Etiquette, Code of Conduct | Elder Dr. Joanne Dallaire chaired the meeting, conducted a traditional opening and spoke to the code of conduct for UICAC members and guests. Introductions from the membership in attendance.  |  |
| Approval of Agenda | The agenda of October 12th, 2021 |  |
| Review and Approval of the minutes | The minutes of September 21st, 2021  |  |
| Declaration of conflict of interest, Terms of Reference | None declared |  |
| UICAC Priorities for 2020-21 Re-visited:* Facility, 16 Phin – Mobility, Accessibility, Health & Safety, Renovations.
* Indigenous TDSB Trustee
* Hiring practices, recruitment, retention, and mobility.
 | UICAC Priorities:**Tanya Senk (System Superintendent, Indigenous Education, TDSB)** Facility, 16 Phin – Mobility, Accessibility, Health & Safety, Renovations.* Tanya will meet with the team in the near future to provide an update about facility and moving forward

**Isaiah Shafqat (Indigenous Student Trustee) TDSB*** Along with Student Trustee Jyoti Dadhich, Tanya Senk, Robert Durocher, and UIEC staff, Isaiah has been working on an extension of the Orange Heart Project started by Eva Goldthorpe. Students have been making orange clay hearts. It was noted that this does not compete with Orange Shirt Day events through the UIEC. This project will act as a fundraiser and all proceeds with go to Anduhyaun Woman’s Shelter in Toronto.

**Trustee Alexander Brown (TDSB Chair/Trustee)** * Regarding the issue of Employee Services and hiring policies, Trustee Brown recently had a conversation with the Trustee Vice Chair and Director Russell-Rawlins who is aware of some of the concerns that exist and is committed to taking a serious look at issues moving forward.
* At some point, when the policy committee group is ready, it will be constructive to invite Director Russell-Rawlins to listen and speak as she can be very helpful in moving these things forward.
* Trustee Brown will ‘flag’ this to the Director, as he is aware of her interest to come to a UICAC meeting in the future.
* Trustee Brown will connect with Tanya to discuss the process on preparing the policy required for presenting to the Trustees.
* Trustee Brown will also confirm the process on submitting to the appropriate committees for board approval at the next UICAC meeting

**Tanya Senk (System Superintendent, Indigenous Education TDSB**Hiring practices, recruitment, retention, and mobility is highlighted. * Pardeep Nagra will be providing updates with regards to hiring practices, recruitment, retention, and mobility at an upcoming meeting still TBD.
* To reiterate what was brought up in the May UICAC meeting, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, need to be centered in all of our policy making, so that there is recognition of self-determination and sovereignty of First Nations, Metis and Inuit staff. For example, hiring Indigenous staff is a ‘front and center’ issue, and to acknowledge that distinction so that there is an ability to hire, recruit and provide mobility within the TDSB. Indigenous applicants continue to be impacted by the Collective Bargaining Units that continue to be barriers to hiring Indigenous candidates into positions, particularly as they pertain to Indigenous-focused schools and sites, as well as the Urban Indigenous Education Centre. We are going to continue having conversations to discuss this and determine how to change and operationalize this.

**Christina Saunders (Principal, TDSB)*** There has been a large teacher turnover at KWSS which led to discussing the Boards policies and procedures of advocating and disrupting systemic barriers, enabling the school to receive a list of candidates for hire from Pardeep. Wandering Spirit school was able to staff with 5 self-identifying teachers for this year’s school term. Some new teachers came from the Waaban Teacher Education Program, and some from other faculties of education.

**Jim Spyropoulos (Executive Superintendent Human Rights & Indigenous Education)** * Continuing to work through the information and support of the UICAC, and with specific individuals is able to make important moves in respect to hiring, however while those moves have been critically important, it is based on conversations between, Pardeep and Audley Salmon in Employee Services. We have not been able to create the level of systemic change yet that is needed. One of the things to think about is the comment Christina noted “I hope to be able to keep them (new staff)”. There is a need to know how we can move beyond hope, to making sure staffing and hires that come into Kâpapâmahchakwêw would be exempt from regular staffing procedures and from collective agreement avenues. The journey taken so far has been so painstaking for so many of the candidates. There is a need to create a level of stability, knowing that jobs will be protected by a system that begins to decolonize by addressing it through elements like collective agreements, using formal employee language.

There are a considerable number of Trustees who are the ultimate decision-makers of this board. From a community and staff perspective, it is time to create special provisions for schools like Kâpapâmahchakwêw.* When discussing collective barging, it is important to know there are two parties at the table, and there is a need to look at inviting the union presidents, as they need to hear from the communities to become willing to make special provisions. If we could have both parties come together it will come much easier. It would be worthwhile to hear from the president of OSSTF and ETFO and to get a commitment from them on how we move to the next steps.

**Elder Dr. Joanne Dallaire*** There is a need to do some structural work around policies and procedures, with a commitment from the board to make policies and procedure changes moving forward.
* This is an extremely challenging time, with getting and retaining Indigenous language teachers because our school system has not encouraged that. It is never considered anywhere in Canada as an important second language and this is something, we are paying close attention to.
* It is important to be mindful that often people who speak an Indigenous language may not have the teaching credentials required to be hired at the Board or other school districts. We need to have an open and welcoming environment to include them in the process, as it is part of Truth and Reconciliation.
* Having the ability to welcome language speakers remotely that don't live in the city to teach, would benefit and give us a larger pool of options.

**Stan Williams (Community)** * As a parent, raising the issue of Indigenous language teaching and instruction in TDSB schools. There is language gap, and it is frustrating and concerning as young people often begin to lose interest in learning their traditional language. This a critical issue and needs to be a priority.

**Jennifer Story (Trustee, TDSB)*** With conversations with Tanya regarding language and teaching barriers, would like to recommend moving forward with creating a motion that can be pushed forward for changes to the rules, provide incentives, and create a reduction to the barriers that would improve the current situation for access to language instructors. Trustees need to press the Ministry to make changes to provisions for encouraging people to get into teachers’ college as well. Looking for guidance from anyone within the UICAC, and would be happy to play a role with facilitating and bringing this issue forward to the board. If interested in participating, please email: Jennifer.story@tdsb.on.ca

**Melissa Harmonic (Native Child and Family Services)*** Are there opportunities for alternative learning strategies that might make it easier for language speakers to connect with students? Melissa shared the idea of potential opportunities for outdoor language camps.

**Dr. Susan Dion (Faculty of Education, York University)*** There is a need for short term and long-term plans for responding to the language needs known and discussed. In conversation with Tanya, Susan has some ideas in the ways that the Faculty of Education at York University can support this.
* There are currently three fluent Indigenous language speakers in the Waaban Teacher Education Program, and the intention is to build on this. The idea of bringing people into the program remotely is supported and there is a need to think creatively about how to solve these problems. Susan will connect with Tanya and Jennifer to further discuss specific ideas for short- and long-term solutions on how we can address this.
 | Pardeep Nagra to present second report in the Fall of 2021. Date TBD |
| Elders Update:Staff Update: | **Elder Dr. Joanne Dallaire*** Support the policy request put forth by Tanya Senk.

**Elder Dr. Duke Redbird*** Acknowledge and support the policy request by Tanya Senk.

**Tanya Senk (System Superintendent, Indigenous Education TDSB)*** A board motion was passed on the Boyne outdoor education facility. It is now an Indigenous land-based education program. There are repairs

required before full use of the facilities. Tentative operational date of September 2022. We look forward to planning programs and getting back to the land.* Tanya has asked all schools to fly their flags at half mass to honour the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and to acknowledge a moment of silence.
* The UIEC have planned events with sharing resources for Orange Shirt Day. David A Robertson and Phyllis Webstad have been invited to hold conversations with schools, students, and teachers including Wandering Spirt.
* We are working on professional learning with revised First Nation, Metis and Inuit study courses with the opportunity to learn and work with Indigenous guest speakers through our partnerships that are also vetted through the UIEC and Elders Council.
* Tanya proposes a policy statement with TDSB acknowledging that Indigenous rights are distinct from equity seeking groups as mentioned earlier with reference to the Constitution Act, 1982 Section 35 for implementing this policy. Tanya is asking Trustees for their direction as to how we bring this forward to the board.
* Trustee Brown will connect with Tanya to discuss the process with preparing the policy documentation required for the Trustees to bring forward to the Board.

**Christina Saunders (Principal, TDSB)*** It is welcoming to see our students returning to school and following the COVID 19 protocols from K – 12.
* We have had some challenges with busing that is impacting our attendance due to these issues. We continue to work on getting this corrected as quickly as possible.
* Working with Grandma Pauline and Luanna on centering Grandmother Moon and the Seven teachings into the space. The dialogue is moving forward on our cultural and traditions into the Ontario curriculum.

**Michael Sanders (Principal, TDSB)*** Enrollment has increased by 30-40 additional students
* Struggling with attendance due to the lack of response with the in person/virtual learning forms that were due back in August. Working on getting our students back in the classroom.
* Staff were invited to a community circle that was led by our parent circle and was greatly appreciated by our staff.
* Students and staff are very happy to be back in school.

**Saby Chandi (Principal, TDSB)*** Great start to the year and having our students back and getting settled.
* Our program currently has 16 students, and it is nice to see.
* We continue to work on building relationships with our students.
 | Trustee Alexander Brown will connect with Tanya to discuss the process on preparing the policy required for presenting to the Trustees.Trustee Alexander Brown will confirm the process on submitting to the appropriate committees for board approval at the next UICAC meeting. |
| New and Other Business | No New and other business  |  |
| Future Topics: | Indigenous Board Trustee Recruitment Committee (Susan Dion) |  |
| Traditional Closing: | Elder Dr. Joanne Dallaire  |  |