

## A Discussion Paper

This submission is to gauge the interests of further developing the current Aboriginal Advisory Committee with the Toronto District School Board. Rather than the advisory capacity we now hold, is there a will of placing ourselves as “working partners” with TDSB? By establishing the current Aboriginal advisory committee to an actual and a working partnering stakeholder with the TDSB is surely an important consideration for our children and youth enrolled within the system. Not to mention the future generations to come due to the fact the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing right across the country.

The intended vision of conducting a “**working agreement**” speaks to the need to **bridge** the past and the present in such a way as to allow/encourage our Aboriginal children and youth to be a part of the twenty first century without betraying the fundamental philosophies and principles of the ancient covenants. Such a **bridge** can be built with a close working cooperation between our committee, the Aboriginal community and with TDSB. By suggesting the potential developing of a working agreement, the children/youth will have the essential role of ensuring that the philosophies and principles are interpreted to their surviving and living needs in the contemporary social, economic and political circumstances.

The **Spirit** is to reflect the current and future needs from the hearts and eyes of children and youth. To ensure our present level of support and advocacy will be the empowering educational variables in allowing our children/youth to grow with a positive and strong cultural values being centered with holistic balance. In accordance to the recent news release which states that **Aboriginal education is vital for all students** and changes are required to address significant gaps. Surely, this also includes the TDSB and our involvement or lack of delivering comprehensive strategies with consistent dual efforts to overcome the negative barriers. Therefore, we must work together by sharing our qualified human resources through a centered balance approach to correct all barriers. Certainly, we must not understate the positive legacy and strides that were made through the Aboriginal Education Centre and its past years of operation and leadership.

Some areas we may need to review and perhaps further construct:

### **Organizational Development:**

Since the suggestion is move beyond the current advisory capacity towards a more contributing partnership, we may have to review the current organizational structure. Thus the need to create **a Spirit guiding updated mission statement** identifying the GTA Aboriginal demographics. It should reflect our past accomplishments and the need to include our present and future endeavors with realistic needs.

Some further organizational purposes:

**Aboriginal Employment Program:**

Due to the under representation of Aboriginal peoples being employed with the TDSB, there is a tremendous need to begin the process of increasing the number of Original people within the system. The frontline workers such as teacher hiring should be continually encouraged. Original ancestry of elementary and secondary school principals can be sum up with one hand. There are no Aboriginal superintendents or representation at the Trustees level.

Strategies must be developed so we can make the changes necessary to reverse the current situation. One of the employment strategies is to also open discussions with the unions who have collective agreements with TDSB. They are a realistic force we must deal with because they prevent our people of entering the variety of working careers within the system due to some of their collective conditions. With the TDSB support, we can research the provincial employment standard guidelines and the human right exemptions we can request so the Original applicants can gain access to employment opportunities. Thus, the fairness of outreaching to the qualified Original population will entrench with serious consideration to future hiring. What must be kept in mind is that TDSB is a public corporation and by creating an Aboriginal Outreach Employment Program.

**Funding:**

As stakeholders to the education portfolio, we should know the actual tuitions agreements involving present enrollment all of original students despite of what government(s) classifications. Do we know the funding formula and who made up the costing contributions. As our population is identified as off reserve I do believe we should be privy to the information. Once possessing the actual knowledge then it will give us avenues to further develop educational successes of our children/youth. As topic of further discussion, why not at some point offer the Chairs a financial allowance for their leadership and services.

**Human Resources:**

The working agreement would place us in a position to assists TDSB of creating a pool of Original human resources they can draw from for a specific Aboriginal posting. In addition, it will boast of potential Aboriginal employees who can and are capable to work anywhere within TDSB. Another possibility is providing alternatives to dealing with problematic situations concerning Original descent employees with the endorsement of the union and TDSB.

## **Cultural Development Policy**

The creation of a effective **Knowledge and Wisdom Keepers Council**. As TDSB ventures into Aboriginal sphere and with incentives of requesting our involvement, this council can be a pivotal entity. With one sector of the society dominating the education perspective for the longest time and then invites another group who have been ignored, there will be growing pains. As the ignored party participates there has to be an educational process dealing with the 7 Grandfathers Teachings/ the Grandmother's Guiding Stories of that group's experiences with their history of colonization. From the Original point of views, that education needs to move towards clearly defined goals for life, addressing self holistic development. The incorporating of life's preserving values, attitude and habits, including the preparation of the overall family life. It also touches on individual's responsibility and accountability in a holistic manner. Furthermore, with the ongoing cultivation the needs to be of service to the community by advancing leadership capacities. Finally, in relation to the Aboriginal Education Centre promote the need of the required knowledge, skills to compliment the successful attitudes for the workplace. My vision is to establish the Knowledge and Wisdom Council to work with Aboriginal Education Centre, so it can be readily proactive of dealing with potential problems.

### **Restorative Justice:**

Although the TDSB has Restorative Justice in place, the process was taken from the United States and using the Maori approaches from New Zealand. My goal is to enact and use our local means of Restorative Justice. By properly implementing our Justice Circle approaches, it can potentially create:

- A reduction of disciplinary action and behavioral referrals,
- Diminish absenteeism and attendance problems,
- Increase motivation for school and learning,
- Improved academic achievement and grades,
- Enhanced self-esteem and cultural pride,
- Gain a framework to balance the western and traditional approaches towards holistic education.

The above points are just a few to mention, but it could also be inclusive to the employees of TDSB when it comes to Aboriginal contact and involvement. Our way is very real and can be a true alternative of dealing with the challenging situations of our population.

### **Membership:**

If a "**working agreement**" is establish, then we must also review our membership. The **Spirit** of intent is not to eliminate community participation, but rather seek consistent representation.

Considering the extreme importance of our children and youth education, we will need to establish a governing structure to oversee the agreement. That itself is an important component. Besides the large committee being available as it is now, we will or may need sub committees towards some of the components. Thus, a term of reference may be an additional requirement.

**Conclusion:**

The above sub paragraphs are just an entering stage to the possible development of a partnership with TDSB. It should not be construed as the actual but rather a simple intro towards developing the real ending document. Since the election of the Board of Trustees, it is my hope we can have a concrete document be constructed, develop and presented soon after the trustees are in place. With the group of people we do have on the Advisory Committee the human resources of Aboriginal experts is truly available to see the agreement through. Some other areas we can consider as a developmental process:

- **Organizational Purpose**
- **Planning**
- **Implementing**
- **Evaluating**
- **Managing Relationships**
- **Motivation**
- **Providing Resources**
- **Developing Competency**

Thus, the year ahead will be very interesting for all parties concern. I believe this agreement can be a realistic document.

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