

## TRUSTEE LIAISON COMMITTEE REPORT

### Trustee McKay

#### Secondary Student Voice – Discussions with the Superintendent

##### Notes:

I was invited to attend a student voice session the Superintendent hosted at the DAC Board Room on February 28, 2022. Students from each high school were invited to attend. Other participants included: Aunty Joan, Knowledge Keeper; Tim Davie, Deputy Superintendent; Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer; Don Balcombe, Assistant Superintendent; Dale Burgos, Director of Communications, and Michelle Krall, Learning Alternatives Teacher (attending with a student).

This was the second student voice meeting held this school year, although the first in-person. Superintendent Saywell shared a brief district overview with the students, and then we participated in an exercise that allowed each of us to consider where our ancestry comes from and how far back, we can connect ourselves to those places. This allowed the group to consider what it means to be connected to land and place for thousands of years in the way that Snuneymuxw people are, like Aunty Joan.

Aunty Joan shared a vision of understanding what it means to be connected to land and all living things. She asked the students to consider what the world would be like if we loved each other as family members, or if we loved the land as our family member.

Students then shared their comments and questions on a variety of issues that included:

- Should there be a mandatory course related to the truth of Canada's history as a graduation requirement?
- Indigenous education courses should be supported by Elders and knowledge keepers – this will ensure the teachings are shared in way that allow Indigenous students to feel safe when they learn in those classes
- What does the district do to train staff regarding anti-racism? Discussion included and understanding of appropriate language when talking about sensitive topics
- Drug use, vaping, smoking – Recognizing that it would be helpful for staff to have readily available information/resources to share with students regarding addiction. Less of the “do not do this” talks and more “if you are experiencing this, here is how you can get help.”
- Students shared that community losses of fellow students have been incredibly difficult to go through.
- Course availability: How do smaller schools access courses without a critical mass of students? Can these be shared courses between a couple of schools? Online?
- Mental health was a strong theme throughout all conversations
  - Masks protect us, but also make us feel less connected to each other.
  - The world has become desensitized in the past couple of years (to the numbers of COVID cases, loss to opioid crisis)
  - Recognized the effect of residential school children recovery on families and students
  - They want to be taught tools and coping mechanisms, so they don't see their peers or themselves turn to substances to cope
  - Meeting the needs of living (home/food/clothing) is imperative to good mental health
  - Mental Health conference was success at Cedar Secondary with hopes for another in the future

- Wellington is working on a project to bring student leaders from across the district together next year for a conference

**Possible areas of support from the Board for future planning/budgeting**

- Financial and other supports for leadership conference
- Possible replication or expansion of the mental health day conference at Cedar
- Course programming: Is there a way to offer instruction of courses to students at multiple schools simultaneously?

**Next Steps:**

- The group will be meeting one more time this year after spring break. Discussion on environmental stewardship is a topic the students want to continue from their first meeting.