

**Parent Involvement Committee Meeting**  
**Tuesday, March 20, 2007 at 7 pm**  
**Rainbow District School Board**  
**Board Office – 69 Young Street - Sudbury**

**Attendance:**

PIC Executive: Leo Bisson and Stephanie Cooke  
RDSB: Trustee Grace Fox, Trustee Jeanna Miller, Trustee Ruth Ward, Trustee Gord Santala, Trustee Judy Hunda, Norm Blaseg, Sharon Speir, Nicole Charette, Monique Filo, Judy Noble, Ron Hodgkinson, and Barb Blasutti  
Guests: Dr. Pamela Toulouse, Laurentian University  
Parent Reps: Sherry Goudie-Merrill, Gordon Apolloni, Martha Musicco, Paul Giommi, and Sharina Appanna  
Regrets: David Muldoon

**1. Welcome:** Leo Bisson

- Agenda approved
- Approval of Minutes: January 16, 2007 – Approved  
February 13, 2007 – Amendment: Trustee Gord Santala was omitted from attendance, change made. Minutes approved.

**2. First Nations Cultural Awareness as it relates to the Classroom**

Presented by Dr. Pamela Toulouse, Laurentian University

- Seven Good-Life Principles: Respect, Love, Wisdom, Bravery, Honesty, Humility and Truth
- These are the Principles on which First Nations base their education
- There are 500 nations located within North America
- There are five ways that First Nation students learn:  
Global, Holistic, Visual, Reflection and Collaborative Approach
- Learner applications which help students in the classroom:  
Agenda Maps: Able to see what will be discussed during class from beginning to end  
Discussions: With themes and metaphors  
Visual Organizers: Presentations  
Reflection: Provide time for contemplation, i.e. math problems  
Small Groups: in classroom environment, working with other students
- For more specific information on Native Americans, please visit the website [www.KTEI.net](http://www.KTEI.net)
- Currently 3% of all RDSB students are First Nations; RDSB currently has 11 tuition agreements in place
- Dr. Toulouse can be reached at the University should there be any more questions:  
(705) 675-1151, ext. 3276

**3. First Nations Cultural Awareness as it relates to the Community:**

Presented by: Trustee Grace Fox, Rainbow District School Board

- Trustee Fox has been a Trustee with the Board for two years.
- The language of Native Americans is what makes them distinct. To understand Native People, you have to understand where they come from.

- The Indian Act determines Eligibility
- Social and economics affect First Nations: Poverty, Poor Housing, Water; Reserve system dictates living
- The Youth are looking to the elders to learn more about their language and heritage, they are looking to the schools for this education.
- Presently, there is an initiative Framework by the Ministry for Aboriginals in schools.
- Trustee Fox read an article from the Globe and Mail: **Let the Objections Finally Cease** (Attached to the minutes)
- APTN – is an excellent Television resource for those who would like to learn more about natives; they are profiling reserve schools
- Aboriginals don't need more money to succeed, we need to be included without restrictions
- "You don't ask everyone to conform to the same system, you ask the system to include everyone"
- Aboriginal education is a priority for the Provincial Board
- Assembly of First Nations "Making Poverty History" [www.afn.ca](http://www.afn.ca)

#### 4. **New Business:** Corporate Communications and Strategic Planning, Nicole Charette

- Parent Involvement Committee received \$25,000 from the provincial Parent Engagement Office. A video of literacy strategies is being produced with hand-outs for parents/guardians to be distributed with school newsletters during the 2007-2008 School Year.
- School Council Parents Reaching Out Grants Applications: (News Release is available on the Board's website – rainbowschools.ca.)
- Volunteer Appreciation Night: Trustee Ruth Ward: April 10, 2007 is a special night for all School Council Members. It will be held at Lockerby Composite School at 7 pm. This is an opportunity to recognize all contributions made by School Councils. Invitations will be formally sent to all schools. Please plan to attend. We wanted to ensure that all School Councils are represented.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Annual School Council Symposium is going to be held at the end of April; each school board is asked to send three Parent Representatives, one Principal and one Teacher

#### 5. **Communications Report:** Corporate Communications and Strategic Planning, Nicole Charette

- Website: "What's New" 2007 – 2008 School Calendar is available
- First Day of school in September is now Wednesday, September 5, 2007
- School Council Chairs: Access your email account – if it has not been used, please have your Principal email the request to have account re-activated and password will be provided
- Request for tips on how \$500.00 can be spent – please see list online, approximately 26 tips listed

#### 7. **Next Meeting Dates**

- Tuesday April 10, 2007 - Topic: School Council Appreciation Evening (Lockerby Composite School)
- Tuesday, May 8, 2007 – Topic: School Council Appreciation Evening (Espanola High School)
- Meeting adjourned.

## Let the objections finally cease

JOHN IBBITSON -  
Friday, March 16, 2007

The challenges facing Canada's aboriginal people are so complex that they invite paralysis. Bad housing and poor drinking water and broken families and substance abuse and urban homelessness are each other's cause and effect.

Because the ideal solution must be comprehensive, and because comprehensive is beyond the capacity of government, too little gets done.

Which is why tangible progress depends on forgetting about everything else and obsessing on one thing. That one thing should be high-school completion rates.

Michael Mendelson, of the Caledon Institute, recently completed a study for the federal government that contained this astonishing fact: Aboriginal Canadians who complete high school are every bit as likely as other Canadians to attend and graduate from college and university.

So why is there so much aboriginal unemployment? Because only 40 per cent of on-reserve Indians complete high school. Among the Inuit, the figure is 25 per cent.

Sometimes, blinkers are a useful tool. So let's put them on. Let's think about nothing else except improving high-school completion rates for aboriginal Canadians.

How do we do that? Consider this: The federal government manages native education by cutting cheques to reserves and expecting band leaders to build schools and hire teachers. But the reserves are often remote, and the band leaders are unable or unwilling to keep schools operating.

The solution would be for Ottawa and native leaders to let provincial governments -- who actually know how to run an education system -- assume full responsibility for native schools.

The provincial governments, in turn, would sign a charter guaranteeing that every child on every reserve received an education equivalent to that of children in the nearest off-reserve school, no matter what it cost.

Those close to this issue are shaking their heads. They know the federal government would never surrender jurisdiction, the provincial governments would never agree to assume it and native leaders would never give up control.

All true. But the alternative is simply to fail. Yes, creating native school boards (which permit the pooling of resources) gets you partway there. Tailoring the curriculum to aboriginal needs also gets you partway there.

But integrating native schools into the provincial school systems is the only solution that gets you all the way there. And all the way there is where we desperately need to get.

Objection: No child can learn properly if the house she lives in is falling down, the family situation isn't stable and food and water are insufficient or unreliable. Answer: That's where you come in. Corporations, not-for-profits and other non-governmental organizations have resources and expertise that can help out struggling reserves. They are hampered by laws that make it easier to send private aid to Africa than to Nunavut. Those laws need to be changed. And everyone outside government has to get involved in providing support for those who need our support. That means you and the people you work for.

A lot of people say it's time native Canadians take responsibility for their own lives and communities. Fine. So what are you doing to help them reach that independence?

Objection: None of this will help the 70 per cent of aboriginal Canadians who live off-reserve. Answer: That's why equal resources need to be deployed in urban Canada, by helping aboriginal friendship centres and other community organizations provide education, training and social support. Here, private-sector participation can have even more tangible and visible results.

Objection: No, forget the objections. Let's stop making excuses. Let's say to each other: We will bring status and non-status Indian, Inuit and Métis high-school completion rates up to the national average in this generation, and we will not let jurisdictional disputes, funding shortfalls or anything else keep us from reaching that goal. And we will hold our politicians, our native leadership and, most important, ourselves to account.

All we have to do is do it.