

## February 2022 DPAC Chair & Vice-Chair Report

This past month has been busy for DPAC making sure that we are representing the parent voice, concerns and feedback at numerous district level working groups in addition to our regular advocacy work and finishing up on a Section 11 Appeal to the Ministry of Education. Since December there have been a number of series working group meetings that DPAC has been attending and providing input at including (but not limited to):

- ByLaw 4 Working Group: working collaboratively with many other key Rights and Stakeholders to change the parent protection bylaw that lays out how appeals (parents contesting decisions made by the district at any level or on any matter affecting their child's education or educational experience) process occurs and the resources available to parents throughout any appeal
- Calendar Committee: working with the district and other Rights & Stakeholders to determine the school calendar for the upcoming 2022/2023 school year and the implications to future (2021/2024) school year
- Daycare Policy Development
- Catchment & Capacity
- PACs, Schools & Principals Best Practices Working Group
- Weekly touch base and feedback sessions with Superintendent Cindy Heitman

There continues to be an ever-increasing ability of parents to bring their voices, experiences and stories to the table as our district grows, which is a positive thing. Upcoming there will be budget consultation series sessions as our District works through what and how money will be available and spent in the coming year. Additionally, the Special Advisors report will be completed and out by April and there will be additional learning and opportunities coming from that.

On January 26<sup>th</sup> I provided the following presentation to the Board of Trustees at the monthly Public SD57 Board Meeting, which included for the first time the two newly elected Trustees:

*Good evening trustees, and to all Rights holders & Stakeholders, and Ministry Special Advisors.*

*I want to start by acknowledging that I am presenting to you tonight on the beautiful, unceded ancestral lands of the of the Lheidli T'enneh. I also want to acknowledge all the children and families who we have failed, who we have lost, and who have suffered and whose stories and truth are now being told. Senator Murray Sinclair said it perfectly and so I will simply echo his words:*

*"It is precisely because education was the primary tool of oppression of Aboriginal people, the and miseducation of all Canadians, that education holds the key to reconciliation...Truth and Reconciliation is all about the education of children. Educational initiatives are how we reveal to Canadians the true and complete story of that system. The story of the schools, in an obvious sense, is a lesson in education."*

*I also want to welcome our new trustee's Rachel Weber and Milton Mahoney. DPAC looks forward to working with you and this board in improving our district, working with the Special Advisors recommendations on addressing inequity and inequality in our district, and working through the challenges our district faces through the critical lens of Truth and Reconciliation.*

*This month has been rough - we have all felt the deep and real impact of Covid in our families, schools and communities this month. I want to say a deep and heartfelt thank you to all the teachers, educators, and support staff in our school communities - I want to acknowledge the amazing job you continue to do in light of the staffing and resource challenges, and so as a fellow front line worker (and I speak both as a mom and as a nurse) I say on behalf of all parents: we see you, we feel you and thank you.*

*On a positive note, DPAC has really appreciated being actively involved with the Capacity and Catchment work that the district underwent recently and while we know there is much more work to be done moving forward, the truly collaborative and constructive discussions and analysis that we witnessed and were a part of were a truly positive experience. We understand and realize that there is much more work and planning that needs to be done to address the capacity challenges facing our district and school communities, and the work these last two months are just the beginning. However, if we continue with the collaborative and inclusive approach that we started with then I know we will be able to address these challenges. On behalf of DPAC and parents I also want to recognize that the first meeting of the Bylaw 4 Review Working committee met this past week and that it was a truly open, honest, engaged and collaboration meeting and fulsome discussion that gave me true hope for the work we will be doing to reimagine what ByLaw 4 should be - and I believe will become. We are really excited about the work that we started and will continue with.*

*Additionally, DPAC has had a unique issue these past months - our calendar has been so full with consultation and engagement meetings that we are very literally struggling to cover attending them all. But we welcome this challenge because it means we are at the table and parent voices are being heard in district decision making and processes and I obviously don't need to say it but I will - this is awesome so we will rise to the challenge and be there. Because as I mentioned last month, that is what we as parents do as well - day after day. We show up. We care. We engage.*

*And so, on that note I want to say that while there is no denying that there are still large and significant issues in our district, these two last months have also shown what can be accomplished with collaboration and open engagement and as we move into the second half the school year and the challenges that will be coming, do not forget that we as parents are ready to share our voices, knowledge, and experiences to keep improving education in our district. Let us do better, let us learn from our past.*