

**Meeting of AYSCBC Member School Council Chairs**

January 5, 2023

Yukonstruct (Northwestel Room) / Zoom

6:00 pm

***Draft* MINUTES**

In Attendance:

**Sandra Henderson – FH Collins Secondary School Council / AYSCBC Chair**

**Brent McDonald – Co-Chair Robert Service School Council / AYSCBC Vice-Chair**

**Amy McKinnon – AYSCBC Secretary/Treasurer**

**Sheri Graham – Porter Creek Secondary School Council / AYSCBC Director**

**Jessie Dawson – Elijah Smith Elementary School Council / AYSCBC Director**

**Robin Smarch – FH Collins Secondary School Council / AYSCBC Director**

**Heather Milford - FH Collins Secondary School Council / AYSCBC Director**

**Christine Aikens - Golden Horn Elementary School Council**

**James Smarch - Khàtìnas.àxh Community School Council**

**Rachel Hrebien – Jack Hulland Elementary School Council**

**Lorraine O’Brien – Tantalus Community School Council**

**Caley Boulter - Co-Chair Robert Service School Council**

**Cassandra Malach – Co-Chair Whistle Bend Elementary School Council**

**Brian Laird – Co-Chair Whistle Bend Elementary School Council**

**Megan Cromarty – Elijah Smith Elementary School Council**

**Andrew McLeod – Elijah Smith Elementary School Council**

**Angela Drainville – Chair, Porter Creek Secondary School Council**

**Laura Lang – Co-Chair, Ecole Whitehorse Elementary School Council**

**Jerry Zahora – Secretary / Treasurer for various school councils**

**Elaine Taylor, AYSCBC Executive Director**

1. **Call to Order 6:03 pm**
2. **Review of Agenda**

**Motion to accept agenda as presented.**

***Moved by Sheri Graham. Seconded by Laura Lang.***

1. **Introductions**
2. **Special & Inclusive Education Review**

**Opening Remarks:**

As a member of the Advisory Committee on Yukon Education, AYSCBC has been engaged in discussions regarding the topic of inclusive and special education and the findings of the [report that was commissioned](https://yukon.ca/sites/yukon.ca/files/edu/edu-inclusive-special-education-final-report-2021.pdf). While the association is supportive of this important work, AYSCBC remains concerned regarding the lack of clear and tangible deliverables, cost estimates and measurable indicators for implementing each of the recommendations. Mental health, as we are aware, is directly related to the delivery of programs in support of Yukon students’ well-being. As we learned in the last pandemic learning survey, 49% of students reported that the pandemic has negatively and very negatively impacted their mental health and wellness. Given the cumulative effects of stress, anxiety and/or depression on students’ ability to learn as well as attend school, and in light of the significant role schools play in the lives of children and youth, AYSCBC has and continues to advocate for making increased mental health services and resources readily available in Yukon schools throughout the territory.

**Comments:**

* Resources to address mental health should be available in all schools. A consistent use of resources ought to be applied across all schools in the territory.
* Families need to be part of the solution. Tr’ondëkHwëch’in, for example, has been successful in securing funding for positions (clinical counsellor & education support workers) who have served an integral role in building relationships with the students and serving the needs of children.
* Truth & Reconciliation funding should not replace Yukon Government’s responsibility to provide the needed supports in schools.
* Information should be made available to families and caregivers regarding Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Student Learning Plans (SLPs), Behaviour Learning Plans (BLPs) and Student Support Plans (SSPs). Information should include what the eligibility criteria is for each plan, the difference between the plans, how the plans are applied and measured. It was suggested that each school ought to request an overview of the current number of students on IEPs, SLPs, BLPs and SSPs as well as over the past five years.
* Waitlists for assessments were raised as another concern. Because assessments are not readily available, families are taking it upon themselves to secure assessments with their own funding, thereby creating inequities in education, noting that not all families are in a financial position to fund assessments on their own. It was noted that access to education is a human rights issue and that the delivery of supports should be treated the same way as those requiring supports for a physical disability. It was noted that inclusion cannot help anyone if assessments cannot occur.
* Educating parents is key; it’s time to make some noise.
* The review on special & inclusive education, as recommended by the Auditor General’s Report on Education, was recognized as a good first step. In order to measure progress, it was noted that data showing levels of numeracy and literacy among students in 2019 to now, is needed. Questions regarding the metrics being used for compiling data was raised.
* Emphasis on prevention and putting kids first was highlighted as a priority, noting that Yukoners are our most important resource.

**Recommendations:**

1. Communication tools regarding the definition of an IEP, SLP and BLP should be prepared and made available to families across the territory.
2. Data needs to be made available to each of the schools and the school communities. Examples of data include:

* Number of students on IEPs, SLPs and BLPs broken down over the past five years
* Number of students awaiting assessment
* Student performance in numeracy, literacy levels over the past five years
* Assessment of available mental health supports in schools
* Other - as otherwise identified

It was suggested that the Association produce and make this information available to the schools and school communities – if the association does not have the funding, school councils could pool their existing resources to fund these initiatives. It was further suggested that a letter to the Department of Education demanding action, be issued.

1. **Education Planning Initiative**

**Opening Remarks:**

AYSCBC was asked by the F.H. Collins Secondary School Council to lead an education planning process that would engage affected school councils in a strategic discussion about education priorities (programming & infrastructure needs) and possible solutions. As explained, F.H. Collins has surpassed 700 students with more students projected to arrive at the school next year as a result of continued growth in French Immersion. To meet this immediate growth, portables are being made available. As noted by the school, this is not a sustainable option.

The association worked with the school council to develop a project understanding and scope of work. As outlined, AYSCBC requested the opportunity to work with the Department of Education to collect information such as:

* Student enrollment numbers (current and projected)
* School catchment areas
* Inventory of programs delivered at each school (ie. First Nations, French and experiential programming)
* As otherwise determined

A representative from the department was also requested as a primary contact for ongoing communication regarding this initiative. Letters of invitation were sent to a number of school councils in the Whitehorse area and a Zoom call was hosted last year to discuss the proposed initiative further. Subsequent discussions were also held last fall with the Minister of Education and the Deputy Minister via in person meetings and written correspondence. The association is pleased that the department recognizes the importance of capital planning and that it will be proceeding with a school capital planning process. Despite having announced a school capital planning initiative almost a year ago, there have been little details provided since.

**Comments:**

* Elijah Smith Elementary School has requested a replacement public announcement system for years, all to no avail. No information regarding a school capital planning process has been made available thus far.
* École Whitehorse Elementary requested public consultation be undertaken to determine whether a new school ought to be built or rebuilt. This was not undertaken. There has been little information made available regarding the construction of a new school other than what was announced earlier this year.
* Concern was noted that an overall plan indicating where we are building schools in the territory in the short to long term, is not in place. As noted, it is difficult for individual schools to plan for the future without having an overarching plan to guide developments.
* Whistle Bend Elementary School Council highlighted the good work of Colliers Project Management to develop a plan for the construction of a new school at Whistle Bend and suggested this approach be adopted for future school replacements.
* Porter Creek Secondary School indicated the school could accommodate another 70-120 students. PCSS has developed a vision for the school, otherwise known as PC 2030. As relayed, the hope is that the school will serve as the primary learning centre for delivering experiential learning. An application to the Arctic Inspiration Prize for building traditional Indigenous learning structures, has been submitted. Memorandum of Agreements with Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Ta’an Kwach’an Council and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations have also been created, resulting in own source revenues for advancing various initiatives at the school.
* Jack Hulland Elementary School has requested a cell phone booster at the school due to poor connectivity. The booster would ensure students and staff have reliable access to emergency services if and when required. It was further pointed out that a student is unable to open doors at the school thereby questioning safety practices at the school. As relayed, people’s safety is being jeopardized due to the inability to have these issues addressed in a timely manner (2 years).

**Recommendations:**

1. A letter to the Department of Education outlining the importance of having a capital plan available to all schools to guide new construction, renovations and additions, should be issued. As relayed, the plan should incorporate school enrollment projections, facility condition, health & safety factors, availability of land and other items.

1. **First Nation School Board Timelines**

**Opening Comments:**

Last month, a news release was issued by Elections Yukon, the Department of Education and the First Nation School Board with respect to the process for other schools to join the First Nation School Board is now available. This afternoon – January 5th, a subsequent news release was issued by Elections Yukon announcing that the Minister of Education is now accepting resolutions from school councils and petitions from school communities requesting their school join the First Nation School Board.

The Department of Education must receive all resolutions and petitions by 4 p.m. on January 30, 2023 to be included in the 2023 referendum vote. Elections Yukon will conduct a vote in school attendance areas in February 2023 where the Minister has approved resolutions or petitions. School council resolutions and community petitions are separate and independent processes – either or both may be submitted until 4 p.m. on January 30, 2023. Petitions must be signed by 20% of eligible electors in the attendance area. Any school council or community member considering submitting a resolution or initiating a petition should contact Lori Choquette for additional information.

Elections Yukon will host a virtual town hall on Wednesday, January 18 at 6:30 p.m. to answer any questions about the voting or petition process.

Elector eligibility is the same as for school council elections:

* A Canadian citizen; and
* At least 18 years of age; and
* Either: a resident in the school attendance area for three or more months, and/or a parent of a student who attends the school.

The Submission period is from Thursday, January 5, 2023, to Monday, January 30, 2023. The Department of Education will accept resolutions from school councils and petitions from community members requesting their school join the First Nation School Board.

**Comments:**

* Concerns were raised regarding information not being readily made available to schools / school councils.
* As relayed, the process as set out, has not allowed for schools to make their voices heard as to why some have chosen not to move forward with joining the school board. That is, sharing information regarding the work already underway, for example, to address the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations in a particular school(s). In regards to school councils who have agreements in place with First Nation governments, no decisions will be made unless directed by the affected Nations.
* It was suggested that information sessions regarding the process & procedures, catchment areas for the purposes of voting, and the School Board itself should be made available.
* As relayed, the St. Elias Community School joined the School Board following years of frustration and lack of answers from the Department. The school council together with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations brought the question / conversation to the community which led to the referendum / decision to join the school board. As noted, the School Council did not know how to fix the issues and therefore looked at the alternative. While the school hasn’t seen a lot of changes a year later, it is hopeful changes will be made for the overall betterment of the school.
* Concerns were raised regarding the overall direction of the territory and the divisions that are occurring.

**Recommendations:**

1. Work to arrange a stand-alone information session for school councils interested in learning more about the First Nation School Board and the process for joining the board.
2. It was further suggested that consideration be given to newly elected school council members being sworn in immediately following the election to enable members to meet over the summer months. It was noted school council AGMs should also be held in the spring and that funding be made available for councils to meet over the summer months, following an election, to enable a smooth transition.
3. **2023 AYSCBC Annual General Meeting / Spring Conference**

**Opening Comments:**

As noted, each spring the association holds its Annual General Meeting. In years past, AYSCBC has combined the AGM with a spring conference. The association is interested in hearing if school councils are interested in this same approach or whether members would prefer to only attend the AGM (which is usually a half day). Suggested themes for a spring conference and topics of interest you would like to see discussed, should this approach be adopted, would also be appreciated.

**Comments:**

* Concerns were raised by some members regarding hosting a conference during a week day due to work commitments. Other members voiced their support for keeping this approach.
* Another suggestion was to consider making a bi-weekly / monthly speakers series dedicated to professional development and/or other topics. By making the sessions available online and during the evening, members may be more inclined to attend.

**Recommendations:**

1. A survey requesting feedback as to whether a school councils' spring conference ought to be held in conjunction with the AYSCBC AGM or whether members would prefer a standalone AGM, will be issued. The survey should also include alternate options such as a monthly speakers series dedicated to professional development which could be held in addition to the annual meeting.
2. **Next Steps**

A meeting summary will be prepared and distributed to members for their review and consideration. A meeting of AYSCBC and the Deputy Minister of Education will also be arranged for the purposes of sharing what was heard during the meeting of January 5th.