

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
OF SCHOOL DISTRICT 82 (COAST MOUNTAINS)
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2023 – 4:30 P.M.
VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING**

PRESENT WERE:

Chair - M. Warcup
- S. Duncan-Green
- E. Harrison
- W. Jones
Vice Chair - K. Jonkman
- J. Sundell

NOT PRESENT:

(A meeting invitation was not provided to Trustee Maxim due to extenuating circumstances.)

Superintendent of Schools - A. Callaghan
Secretary Treasurer - G. Fuller
Recording Secretary - C. Gagnon

District Staff:

Director of Instruction, Indigenous Education - R. Clifton

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE TERRITORY & CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Warcup acknowledged with respect the school district's business being conducted on the unceded traditional territories of the Gitksan, Haisla, Nisga'a, Ts'msyen and Lheidli T'enneh Peoples. We are honoured to work with their children and privileged to live on these lands.

Board Chair Warcup shared that Trustee Sundell was attending the meeting virtually from Prince George.

The meeting was called to order at 4:24 p.m.

2. DECLARATION OF QUORUM

A quorum was declared.

3. AGENDA ITEM:

3.1 Board approval to utilize Local Capital Reserve Funds in the sum of \$25,000 to support the Indigenous Education Department's learning opportunity and experience of New Zealand's Māori education, schools and systems in mid-November 2023.

Board Chair Warcup asked Superintendent Callaghan to speak to this agenda item along with Secretary Treasurer Fuller and Director Clifton for a better understanding of why this item is presented to the Board at this Special Board Meeting.

Superintendent Callaghan referenced Director Clifton's report of last week at the Regular (Public) Board Meeting held October 25, 2023 regarding long standing plans for staff to participate in a professional development opportunity in New Zealand to have first-hand discussions embedding the Māori language and culture. A similar trip already was realized around B.C. by school districts in Victoria and Prince Rupert who brought pieces of the Māori education, schools and systems, and embedded into their programs.

Director Clifton shared that three members of the Indigenous Education Department - Director Clifton, District Vice Principal Azak and District Teacher Mentor, Anna Ashley, along with Indigenous Administrators, Jackie Robinson and Louise Ormerod would participate in the trip to New Zealand in mid-November for a weeklong learning opportunity hosted by our Māori relatives. The learning experience is designed to assist us to build and activate partnerships with community to support learning and well-being, to witness effective culturally respectful and relational learning spaces and pedagogical practices that focus on learning to learn and teaching for learning, to learn how to lead for culturally responsive transformation, to be clear about our impact and the actions that will bring about the desired state for Indigenous learners where culture and language are at the centre of that experience.

Superintendent Callaghan noted funding for the trip is partly from each participant using their professional development funds to contribute to the cost of this learning journey, and the Indigenous Education Department discretionary funds which the district has full use of these funds. These discretionary funds would be the same for these people to travel to a conference in Vancouver or Toronto.

Superintendent shared a letter was received from the Inter-Tribal Education Committee representative of our local Nations which coincides with the provincial announcements for Indigenous Councils. The letter draws concern the New Zealand Trip is using Indigenous Education Department dollars and they were not in the collaboration of the use of these dollars and have concerns regarding the transparency around the funding of these dollars.

Director Clifton elaborated that the funds from on-reserve learners have more than equitably been used across the school district. The letter asks to put the trip on hold or cancelled. There are/were there multiple conversations occurring within the ITEC members – at any one time the ITEC members were going to participate in the trip, however at the end of the day there were no members attending.

It was noted although we have the funds for the trip, out of respect of the ITEC letter received, Superintendent Callaghan, Secretary Treasurer Fuller and Director Clifton asked Trustees how the district should move forward with the letter.

Secretary Treasurer Fuller indicated the ask for \$25,000 from Capital Reserves would fund the balance of the trip with \$14,000 to \$15,000 in personal professional development funds that would allow the trip to go forward and this would not impact the Prince Rupert School District who have jointly booked this trip with Coast Mountains School District. Or cancel the trip which would impact Prince Rupert personnel travelling on the joint trip with less funding from our school district to put forward towards this trip.

Superintendent Callaghan referenced the discussion held yesterday and brought Board Chairperson Warcup into the discussion. This trip is a professional learning experience primarily for our Indigenous learners and all learners. The things we have read about, these are the learnings we want to bring back to our school district. The ITEC letter notes the value this trip will bring to our school district. We wanted to bring this trip to the Board out of respect of this letter, tap into the Capital Reserves, go back to our partners and First Nations to speak to the value of the trip while at the same time note the funds are not coming from the Indigenous Education Department.

Secretary Treasurer Fuller shared from a finance perspective the funding would have to come from other than 1.31 funds. We do have a budget in place that could handle that cost whether we absorb the cancellation cost of \$10,000 or go ahead at a cost of \$25,000. The only way to go ahead with the funding would be to use the local funds, however, that is completely the Board's decision to tap into the Capital Reserves which would have to be recorded by motion at a Regular (Public) Meeting. Secretary Treasurer Fuller noted this is how we are proceeding, as we haven't had sufficient time to research this issue. She indicated she is working on the amended budget with the possibility there could be funding in Core dollars, but too early to tell.

Director Clifton noted one thing not captured is the cost of the administrators' airline tickets which are non-refundable tickets with an approximate \$16,000 in cancellation costs. Do we want to speak to the contractual obligations to professional development as set forth in the contract for excluded staff – the direction of how those monies are spent are autonomous. Director Clifton welcomed input and conversations.

Director Clifton further noted he has written several grants and has been successful in the past. He is currently writing an application for dual applicant grants and he has approached one entity who is interested and also approached another with funds up to \$40,000 if successful. It is an extensive grant application that he co-partnered on previously. The Indigenous Education Department has started to review this grant application which is due November 22, 2023. Another letter written from the Metis Association of BC provides general support of \$127,00 for Metis learners and share their support of this funding in professional development and are aware of other Indigenous leaders who have taken similar trips and see the revitalization and decolonization efforts in New Zealand as valuable not jut building relationships and enhancing the way we do our work in this district.

A discussion ensued relating to questions asked by Trustees regarding the use of Capital Reserve funds, the purpose of 1.31 funding, why this trip wasn't presented to the Board using the same process as student/field trip travel plans, grant applications secured prior to booking the trip, will the Metis Association of BC provide funding support, the optics of this being an exotic trip using public money, the uncertainty of the money used from the Capital Reserve would be returned, it is a big risk to the Board to have \$25,000 coming out of Capital Reserves with the perception that grants may be possible, and if we choose not to do it, we lose \$16,000.

Trustees noted they were not questioning the value of the trip, it is the use of Capital Reserves, thus postponing the trip until grant money is available must be considered. The Board has to be responsible to the people who elected them. Trustees are dealing with that perception, the optics, and the fact it is public money, there is no simple solution.

Board Chair Warcup indicated there will be no motion coming forward from the Board. This matter is referred back to Superintendent Callaghan and Director Clifton to figure how they will handle this matter.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:33 p.m.


Board of Education Chair


Secretary Treasurer