



# Supporting

## Parents as Partners in Education

➤ E-newsletter from DDSB Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)



### Message from PIC Co-Chairs

As we emerge from winter, the days are getting longer and the nights are getting shorter. The first day of spring has passed and we are on our way to warmer days.

With that, your Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) has been hard at work with our community partners.

Recently, many of you joined us for an evening with Dr. Pamela Palmater who spoke about "Myths vs. Facts About Indigenous Rights" in a fantastic night of community engagement. The recorded presentation can be viewed on the [DDSB YouTube channel](#).

Your PIC members are also hard at work designing a new brochure for parents and families, with key points to help navigate the DDSB's Human Rights Policy.

We are also in the planning stages for our 2023 Durham Partners Symposium. As a result of our Parent Survey feedback, this year's event will focus on ***"Fostering Resilience in Children: Supporting Mental Health and Well-Being"***. We will be joined by a keynote speaker as well as several special guest speakers. Stay tuned for more details.

As always, we value the input from our school community. Please make sure to join us at an upcoming meeting.

Thank you,

**PIC Co-Chairs**

Huma Choudhary & Jim Van Allen

# PIC Community Survey

This past winter, the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) conducted a community survey to assess the concerns and needs of parents/caregivers within the school board. The survey was shared via the newsletter and emailed to all schools and affiliated School Community Councils (SCC). The survey sought to learn:

- ▶ **Demographics (location of school, child(ren)'s grade and stream of study, language).**
- ▶ **School and community support programming as it relates to well-being, safety, and equity/diversity.**
- ▶ **How to support/increase engagement in local SCCs.**
- ▶ **Provided an opportunity for respondents to offer suggestions that are relevant to their community and region.**

We are pleased to share that the results of the survey reflected feedback from parents/caregivers throughout the region. In all, 244 responses were received. Most of the respondents have children in the elementary system, followed by secondary and then early years. The results also indicated the need to focus on mental health and wellness for parent/caregiver learning sessions with suggested topics such as coping with stress and anxiety, self-regulation and understanding a child's emotions, bullying, cyberbullying, and fostering healthy relationships. For that reason, we have chosen the theme, ***"Fostering Resilience in Children: Supporting Mental Health and Social Well-Being"*** for this year's Durham Partners Symposium. **The program will take place the morning of May 27 at the DDSB Education Centre.** We hope for an enthusiastic turnout.

Lastly, the respondents voiced concern regarding communication between SCCs and school communities. From the information collected, parents/caregivers would like clear and consistent transfer of information regarding:

- ▶ **Volunteering opportunities.**
- ▶ **Meeting times and locations.**
- ▶ **Joint projects between the school and community.**
- ▶ **Developing a strong connection between the school and community.**

This year, the PIC has conducted virtual SCC training sessions that provided tools and resources to increase the efficacy of the SCC and its engagement which will ensure the areas of concern can be adequately addressed by SCCs through meetings and initiatives.

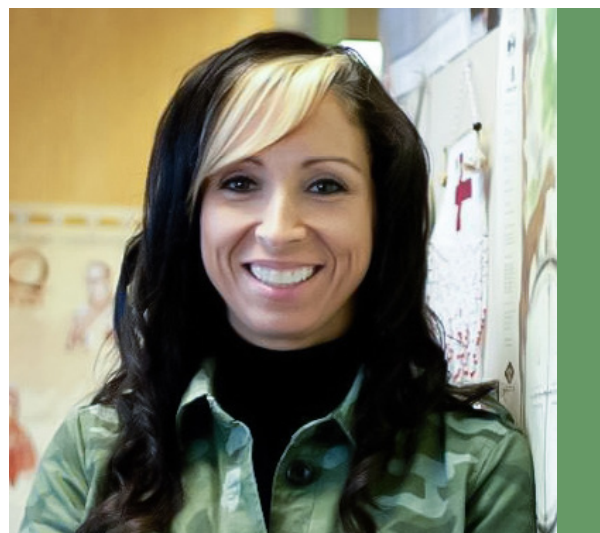
*We would like to thank you all for your participation in this initiative as it was extremely informative and helpful in directing the work of the PIC.*



# Parent Engagement Series

The Parent Engagement Series sessions are back and the focus for this year's sessions is Indigenous Rights.

The first of two of these sessions took place virtually on **March 8, 2023** featuring **Dr. Pamela Palmater** with a presentation entitled, **"Myths vs Facts about Indigenous Rights."** Dr. Palmater is a Mi'kmaw lawyer, professor, author, and social justice activist from Ugpi'ganjig (Eel River Bar First Nation) who took the opportunity to educate and inspire close to 150 attendees about Indigenous Rights, powers and relationships. Those present had the opportunity to submit their questions and receive live candid responses to their thoughts and queries.



The recorded presentation can be viewed on the [DDSB YouTube channel](#).



The second Parent Engagement Series session will take place virtually on **May 9, 2023** featuring **Dr. James Makokis, a Nehiyô (Plains Cree) Family Physician** from the Saddle Lake Cree Nation in northeastern Alberta, focusing on celebrating indigeneity and his experience in winning Season 7 of the **"Amazing Race."** We hope you take the time to attend and learn how Dr. Makokis implements his philosophy of leadership based on kindness, honesty, strength/determination, and sharing in his medical work and community empowerment initiatives.



[Webinar registration - Dr. James Makokis: The Amazing Journey Continues!](#)

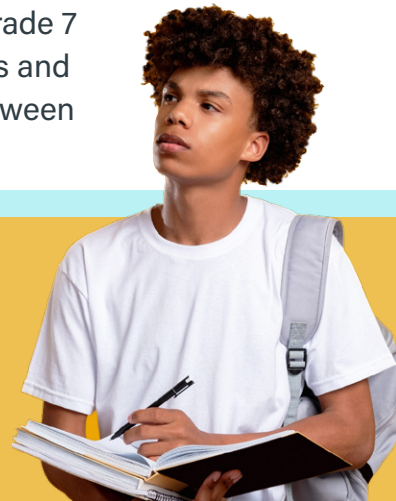
# Celebrating Equity and Diversity in the DDSB

The DDSB continues to support equity and diversity in our communities by celebrating the various experiences that students bring to our classrooms and schools. In April and May, students who identify as Black will have the opportunity to participate in the following programs and events: the Durham Black Educators' Network (DBEN) Cultivating Possibilities Awards as well as the Cypher and Empower Her Conferences.

## Cypher: Black Male Empowerment Conference

The DDSB will once again host the Cypher: Black Male Empowerment Conference at Durham College this year. The Cypher conference is customized to reach Grade 7 to 10 students across the District and aims to break barriers to student success and dismantle anti-Black racism in Durham. Cypher is the result of collectivism between the DDSB, DBEN, and Durham College.

***“The purpose is to provide a platform and space for Black males, Grades 7 to 10, to connect with each other, network with Black male role models, [and] explore a wide range of academic pathways, all while eliminating barriers to success,”*** explains Kokhulani Yasodaran, Co-Chair of Cypher.



One of the most important components of Cypher is the connection that is developed between the students and role models.



***“It is a safe place where they can be themselves, they can have a voice and relate to Black men who look like them, talk like them, and understand their challenges,”*** says Lynda Dortelus, Co-Chair of Cypher. ***“It is important for Black male students to see successful Black men who broke the negative barriers that society has on the Black community.”***



## DBEN Cultivating Possibilities Awards

As part of our continued work to support and highlight Black excellence, the DBEN Cultivating Possibilities Awards Scholarship focuses on motivating, cultivating, and encouraging students. The DBEN Cultivating Possibilities Awards (formerly the DBEN Activating Student Success Awards) shines a light on students from the Black Diaspora, who emulate excellence and exceptional leadership within their schools and community. These awards are open to any self-identified Black students in Grades 7 to 12 in the DDSB.

## Empower Her Conference

The Empower Her Conference is for students in Grade 6 to 8 who self-identify as Black and female. The overarching goal of the Empower Her Conference is to uplift, inspire, and give voice to young Black girls across the DDSB. Bringing young Black girls together allows them to see the importance of setting high goals to achieve their full potential and become leaders and change-makers in their schools and society. The second annual conference took place on March 30. It was a fantastic day with inspiring guest speakers and insightful information that supports success and well-being.

## Black History Month and Bangladeshi Heritage Month

DDSB staff, students, and parents/guardians continue to celebrate the diverse experiences in their communities. Schools across the District recognized Black History Month in February and in March we recognized Bangladeshi Heritage Month and the beginning of Ramadan. Our schools uplifted those voices through a variety of initiatives and activities that help support a better understanding of their stories and contributions to our local and global societies.



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## Connect with Us



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