



INTRODUCTION

I am grateful to have been entrusted with the role of “Indigenous Education Designate” at UHS for the 2020-2021 school year. The irony of this position being filled by a white settler is not lost on me and I have to admit that it brings a certain level of embarrassment. However, I have made a number of sincere commitments in my personal and professional life to prioritizing reconciliation work and I am excited to dive into that work at UHS in a good way, until the moment that this important position can be more appropriately filled by someone with a First Nations, Inuit or Métis background. I will endeavour to produce this Bulletin to coincide with the weekly school staff/parent bulletin with a view towards increasing the profile of Indigenous Education within the York Region District School Board, drawing particular attention to the Indigenous communities of Turtle Island, their languages, artists and elders. In addition, I will highlight each week one of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Report of 2015 whose ongoing goal it is to discover and reveal past injustices, particularly as they occurred in Canada’s reprehensible Indian Residential Schools and to establish and maintain a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country.

WOLASTOQIYIK

Wolastoqiyik (also Welastekwewiyik or Welustuk), meaning “people of the beautiful river” in their language, have long resided along the Saint John River in New Brunswick and Maine, and the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. Historically, the Europeans referred to the Wolastoqiyik by a Mi’kmaq word, Maliseet (or Malecite), roughly translating to English as “broken talkers.” The name indicates that, according to the Mi’kmaq, the Wolastoqiyik language is a “broken” version of their own. Today, there are six Wolastoqiyik Maritime communities in Canada and one in Maine. For more information on this beautiful community, visit maliseetnationradio.ca

JEREMY DUTCHER

A member of the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick, Jeremy Dutcher is an award-winning performer, composer and musicologist who has done ground-breaking work in transcribing Wolastoq songs from wax cylinder recordings of the early 20th century. “Many of the songs I’d never heard before, because our musical tradition on the East Coast was suppressed by the Canadian Government’s Indian Act.” Jeremy heard ancestral voices singing forgotten songs and stories that had been taken from the Wolastoqiyik generations ago. For more information on the work of this outstanding artist, visit his webpage at jeremydutcher.com

FROM THE YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

The Indigenous Education and Equity Strategy provides direction for actions in classrooms, schools and the system to foster the development of high levels of critical consciousness and transformative practice that fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, foster accessible and equitable schools and classrooms and improve outcomes for all students.

CALLS TO ACTION (FROM THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION REPORT, 2015)

#1. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by: Monitoring and assessing neglect investigations, providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside; Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools; Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing; Requiring that all child-welfare decision makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers.